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Presentation of **Online Journalism** unit  
(curriculum innovation) as part of  
**The Vice-Chancellor's Showcase of  
Teaching Excellence at Monash University  
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# Online Journalism

- **Online Journalism unit has two strands:**
  - The Independent Journal – an online student newspaper where only newsworthy, fair and balanced well written stories get published.
  - Multimedia news projects – a web news project where students work in a team of 3-4 to create a special issue web site similar to a special issue lift-out in a newspaper.

# Online Journalism

- **So, what is it the unit tries to accomplish with these multimedia news projects?**
  - Get students to work in teams;
  - Work on an issue or a news theme;
  - Project management;
  - Work in a team environment;
  - Multitasking and time management;
  - Web design and presentation skills;
  - Using basic What-you-see-what-you-get software such as FrontPage to create web sites
  - Understand the changing nature of news online;
  - Pick up skills in photojournalism;
  - Pick up skills in audio editing;
  - Honing in the basic skills of journalism - news writing, news reporting, interviewing techniques etc.

# Online Journalism

- **In 2004 and 2005, we used WebCT (CE) to create group presentation areas for the teams to share their files, to create their multimedia web sites.**
- **WebCT (CE) activities were also useful in providing students an opportunity to get to know each other and the World Wide Web, where the definition of news and presentation of news are rapidly changing.**

# Online Journalism

- **Challenges for students:**

- Students do find the unit challenging and interesting!
- The unit is particularly challenging and/or interesting for Distance Education students, although WebCT does assist in overcoming some of the off-campus issues.
- Students learn to make editorial decisions about their web sites, and they learn to organise themselves better.
- They learn new skills in web page design, audio recording and editing, taking and inserting photographs on a web page etc.
- They realise as they progress through the project work that it is the 'professional' attitude of the teammates that is the guarantee for success. Many new friendships have been formed out of the project work.
- Students are excited about the publication of their news stories online as part of *The Independent Journal*.

# Online Journalism

- **Challenges for staff:**

- The unit is taught across Gippsland, Berwick, Caulfield, Distance Education and Singapore (also Malaysia in 2006) – this fact adds to the unit's administrative load.
- Finding an appropriate online environment where students can share files and work in groups is a challenge
  - \* WebCT (CE) is being dismantled for 2006, not sure if WebCT (Vista) will provide the same opportunity.
- Organising availability of equipment on each campus (can take more than 3-4 months).
- Organising a suitable computer lab for teaching the unit on each campus (can take more than 3-4 months each time).
- Dealing with group dynamics and encouraging students to persist and be fair to each other.

# Online Journalism

- I would like to specially acknowledge the support I received from the CeLTs Education Design unit staff in making this idea of getting students to work on news web sites a reality.

# Online Journalism

- **Of a large number of positive comments I have received from students, I quote a few:**
  - “I really enjoyed Online Journalism this semester. I found the subject informative and interesting. I learnt many skills that will be very helpful when I finally enter the workforce and become a journalist!”
  - “For the unit that I took as part of my journalism minor, I learned more about how an online journalist works, as well as other elements of online journalism such as digital photojournalism and writing for news web sites. I found all of it engaging and sought to learn more in class each week by participating in the weekly class activities. All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed myself in this unit.”
  - “The skills learned in this subject this semester will be invaluable to my career as a journalist. With the direction the world has taken towards new technologies and the globalization of the world, largely due to these technologies, it is important to know how to adapt the basic journalistic skills to apply to this changing world.”
  - “I found the whole project to involve a great deal of work, however it was overall a really engaging and fulfilling learning experience.”

# Online Journalism

Please go to

<http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/humcass/independentjournal> web site to view some of students' works for Online Journalism unit.

Please note, multimedia projects site is for 'demonstration' purpose alone since you cannot view the projects on the JRN2903/3903 WebCT site. There were many more quality projects which have not been included here.

As the unit coordinator, I do feel amazed at the work students put in when given a chance to work on a creative assignment.