

MirandaNet E-Zine

May 2001

I hope you all received my update report on MirandaNet activities over the last 4 months which took the place of the April ezine. As you will have seen the team has been as busy as ever with lots of interesting work going on, both here in the UK and with our international partners.

I have recently returned from a 4 day visit to Prague which you can read more about below. I am also off to Vancouver later this month on behalf of the British Council and the DfEE. Selling the UK again... An exciting new development for MirandaNet is the securing of a three year project in Wapping where we will be using ICT as a catalyst for change in teaching and learning with the local schools and the community. I have been appointed as Project Director of this project. This is a really great opportunity to put some Fellowship ideas into action in the 14 schools in the Docklands.

Read carefully for the events where the company and the food will be good! We know that we cannot build our Fellowship entirely on line.

MirandaNet women take the helm at Brands Hatch

Those of you who can make the European Union Women of Achievement lunch at the Grosvenor Hotel on 13th July will be treated to the sight of past MirandaNet winners Bozena Mannova, Sue Heightman and me whirling round the Brands Hatch cross country track in clouds of dust earlier this month. Jane Dorner will put some stills up on the web as well so that you can admire the fearless women you have in your midst, sponsored by Oracle. The video is to be entitled something like: EUW women in the fast track, the woman in front is an EUW winner; or maybe, women who know where they are going.

Don't be fooled. I don't know if the earth moved for Sue or Bozena, but in my case the trouble started when my engineer dresser pulled the tight helmet down over my ears and my earrings pinged into my cleavage. After a short discussion about who would retrieve them, (no, I'm not going to tell you) I was bolted into about eight seat belts that cut into what was once a waist. I was fitted up with a mike for conversation, I thought, with the woman driver as we sauntered round the track. But after she had answered my question about how many children she had, (3), she seemed rather preoccupied with the driving. Not really the chatty type. My visor had fallen over my face, so I couldn't see much, but the engine sounded very strained, and there was far too much jolting. Maybe the suspension was faulty. On the other hand, I hoped that the 8 vibrating belts might have the effect of a slimming machine and I would recover my young waist when they let me out. The effect might have been the same as I felt so shaken up I nearly refused the high tea afterwards – but the cream cakes won in the end.

If you like fast women and food, MirandaNet Fellows are invited to apply for a tickets sponsored by Oracle for the Grosvenor House lunch on Friday 13th July. Please let me know if you would like to attend. Our other partner companies will be receiving a mailing encouraging them to support the European Union of Women by buying a ticket or a table!

April 25th Dinner – Thinking on Our Feet

Having worked so hard on research and development into Think.com, on innovative models for teachers ICT professional development, and on the Web Resources for Teachers by Teachers, the MirandaNet team is now focusing on the best ways to communicate our knowledge to teachers, teachers educators and the wider community.

I bribed the MirandaNet Advisory Council to evaluate our first group presentation with a supper at the Royal Overseas League in Mayfair on the 25th April. Jane Dorner worked on a theme of

'hummmmming' that pulled together the thread of the projects that Jane Field, Anne Sparrowhawk, and Francis Howlett have been managing. Jane referred to the five Ms of MirandaNet as Mission, Motivation, Milestones, Making connections and Meeting points. She then up-ended the Ms to create a W for the Website which she has made such a valuable focus for all our work.

I'd like to pay a tribute to the talented core team for the quality of their work. Their commitment is greatly appreciated. In the context of the DfEE Web Resources for Teachers by Teachers project a special thanks to Tanya Keable who is currently celebrated for making sure that we produced quality work for the DfEE and met all our tight deadlines. Not many people can manage a bunch of educators with calm, good humour as she does. Francis Howlett also managed to populate the site with 1,000 plus resources as a result of spectacular organisation and attention to detail. Anne Sparrowhawk provided the template for evaluation, Jane Field developed the e-mentoring service, Jane Dorner wrote on copyright and edited the final report. So confident in them was I that I kept my appointments in Florida and Washington...

Our presentation was well attended by industry, government departments and agencies, and MirandaNet Fellows. Many thanks to those of you who made the time for this. The presentation outlined our work to date and a number of new initiatives. The feedback was very useful and one main point was to add more work from all of you in the Fellowship so that teachers can see what you are actually doing in the classroom.

If you have some good stories and pictures about your work in the classroom, especially Think.com, please let me know. Video clips and pictures will help to create a rich knowledge base that we can all draw on when we are asked to present.

We are now going to share our knowledge with the Ultralab team and build up some good case study examples. Oracle UK is supporting this development and OracleUS are creating a cyber overview of Think.com and a self-study pack to support their training visits. We are also planning a range of helpful publications to follow How to Think.com.

Prague

I now have the 22nd Prague stamp in my passport. Yes, I do know how lucky I am. I never tire of Prague, no matter what the weather - although this time it was sunny and warm as well.

I had been invited to present the MirandaNet work to the Ministry of Education as one of their advisers on the new Information Society programme. As a result the British Council is supporting a bigger seminar called Thinking Together organised by MirandaNet on the 15th June when I have invited several of our colleagues to share developments in the UK.

The seminar will focus on the Czech State Information Policy in Education which is being launched under three programme headings:

Teacher education
Education and information resources
Technological Infrastructure

Speakers will encourage reflection and discussion about these topics from the perspective of existing Anglo-Czech co-operation in the field. Presentations and workshops will include :

Strategies for global teaching and learning.
Professor Niki Davis, Iowa University and the Institute of Education, University of London

The UK Perspective on Education Resource Development - The National Grid for Learning
Doug Brown, Director of the UK National Grid for Learning, Department for Education and Employment.

Creating curriculum exchange projects online : Anglo Czech Achievements
Bozena Mannova, Chair of the Czech Miranda, Czech Technical University

Developing Anglo Czech Professional Development Opportunities
Christina Preston, Director of MirandaNet International, the Institute of Education, University of London

Developing Resources Together : Industry Education Partnership
Managing Director of Oracle, Czech Republic

Making the most of ICT funding opportunities for ICT research and development
Jack Pfeffer, European Development Officer, the Institute of Education, University of London

Participants will be invited to join workshops to discuss ideas, find UK partners and develop funding bids. These are all names you know.

Teachers' International Professional Development Bursaries

Building on these links, the Czech Miranda will be hosting a school exchange visit in the October half term. We shall be publishing detailed explanations of how to join these projects and get your funding soon. Keep an eye on the deadlines.

We have also applied to the EU Minerva project for an exchange project that includes the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

For details and potential exchange partners contact me at christina@mirandanet.ac.uk. Membership of MirandaNet can be important in the success of your application. Schools in Canada, US, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic are particularly keen to receive visits from MirandaNet Fellows. You need four from one school or nine from an LEA. MirandaNet will help you apply for these grants.

Teachers Action Research Bursaries

The DfEE is once again offering up to £2,500 to teachers who want to develop an action research project in the classroom. MirandaNet Fellows won more than £30,000 of grants last year. John Cuthell and Anne Sparrowhawk have some experience of how to apply. If you are interested email me about this. However the closing date is 31st May. I am also aware how exhausted some teachers are feeling just now and hesitate to press this idea.

Web Resources for Teachers by Teachers WEBRITTe Project

The pre-pilot phase of the WEBRITTE project has come to an end culminating in an excellent report based on the project findings and recommendations. This report can be viewed on the MirandaNet website later on this month. I would like to thank everyone who worked so hard on this project and congratulate the whole team on reviewing over 1500 resources which are now up on the TeacherNet site. We also did a small piece of research on the Teacher Resource Exchange, the outcomes of which will lead to improvements in the site. This report will also be available on the website soon. We hope that MirandaNet will be able to be involved in the next phase of this exciting work with the DfEE and are awaiting further news re the tendering process. We will keep you informed of developments on this one.

Thinking Space

Caroline Hook the Think.com project director has just been awarded the overseeing of Think.com expansion into Europe, Middle East and Africa which bodes well for those of you who enjoy cybertravel. If you have not yet sorted out your Think.com registration now is the time. caroline.hook@oracle.com

E-mentoring: Ten heads are better than one

The 10 willing and able mentors are awaiting your questions on ICT related issues or specifically about building online education communities. If you want to send in a question, a challenge, a concern or a thought for discussion then go to the mentoring site on MirandaNet and post us your contribution now!

Alternatively if you want to know more then email Jane Field, the e-mentoring programme manager on jane@educationanddevelopment.co.uk

UK Teacher Zone

The UK Teacher Zone started to come on-stream in March at the first Hot Seat is currently in progress. The UK Teacher Zone is a think.com community for all teachers. The aim of the community is to provide a range of professional development activities, opportunities to exchange experiences about think.com, a bulletin board, and an opportunity to consider how to put findings from current research into the classroom - or support for your own action research ideas. Watch this space ... or use the search facility on think.com to find your way to the UK Teacher Zone.

Seminars

The final Think.com seminar in this academic year will be on the 21st May. Spaces are still available. Please look at the MirandaNet site under the diary of events for details and the booking form. If you have a Think.com pilot your fares will be paid.

New MirandaNetter

We have a delightful new member of the team, Una Sapietis, our events organiser. Una who is half Latvian has organised many community events before and brings new knowledge and networks to the team.

Technically challenged; Wired Woman

Una, who has only just met me, must think I am a technical whizz-kid. Those who have known me for some years will be surprised. I have been working with Una, Paresh my Apple engineer and a flotilla of engineers from the Institute to turn me into the infallible Wired Woman. My new Palm diary is on the web for anyone who blags a password, and the Palm is beamed into my Apples in Croydon, my pcs at the Institute and my new, wear everywhere, infrared mobile phone. You can reach me anywhere in the world and I can surf the web on my mobile half way up a tree in Chile should I be so inclined in theory ... in fact somewhere in a pub in cyberspace you will find the Heathrow cleaner who pinched my Palmtop from the magazine basket of seat 18 C on the 19:05 from Prague trying to figure out how it all fits together. What a punishment!

Talking of Chile

Many of you will have heard me praising the Enlaces team in Chile for the pioneering work they have been doing in online learning for teachers and students for over a decade. Some of you know Enrique Hinostroza who has been a MirandaNet Fellow since 1994 when I was invited to work with them on developing La Plaza, a national web based learning environment which was a world leader. What impressed me so much was the opportunity they had seen to use this technology to increase democratic participation after Pinochet. Also the strategies they use to engage indigenous groups like the Mapuche in the education process.

Enrique who did his doctorate at the Institute of Education, University of London, where MirandaNet is based, has just been promoted to Deputy Co-ordinator of Enlaces, appointed by the Minister. What is really exciting for us is that the Enlaces team have been chosen by Oracle to do the first translation of Think.com into Spanish ... where next?

Developing business and community involvement in young people's learning and school improvement

This event is for businesses and community organisations keen to develop effective strategies for working with education. The International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre and the Business Links Unit are presenting this event.

The seminar will present the school improvement agenda and explore how this takes account of young people's needs. There will be opportunities to explore how organisations can best contribute to learning and for networking.

MirandaNet companies might be interested in attending this event on Wednesday 20 June 2001 from 1.00 – 6.00 pm at the Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London WC1

The Website

Fellow of the Month

The May Fellow of the Month is Douglas Butler, a MirandaNet Fellow and Director of the ICT Training Centre at Oundle School, who reports on a recent seminar tour of India and the use of technology in education. Visit the site for further details.

Think.com project of the Month

The May Think Project of the Month is Boston Spa School. Richard Robinson of Boston Spa School was awarded a DfEE scholarship in the summer of 2000. The aim of his project has been to explore the use of ICT and online learning environments in English and he has been using the work of talented year nine students on Think.com to evidence his study. Read more about this on the website.

MirandaRose Awards

The May Educational-site-of-the-Month MirandaRose Award goes to:

TeachPE which underpins GCSE and A level Physical Education and has resources for coaches and teachers. Interactive tests, downloadable worksheets and page links to relevant information. TeachPE.com will be NGFL badged this month and has gained the SportsMedia PE award.
<http://www.TeachPE.com>

Fellows' Byte by Ben Franklin

Please get in touch with Ben to book your space (benjamin@franklin77.freemove.co.uk).

MirandaNet exchanges to Bulgaria and South Africa will be reported soon. Please send items for next month's Ezine to Tanya who is keeping track of all our events (communications@mirandanet.ac.uk). Let me know about anything I can do to improve MirandaNet.

All the best

Christina