

Theological Education

Volume 42, Number 2
2007

ISSUE FOCUS

Technology, Teaching, and Learning: Reports from the Field

Cross-Cultural Learning as a Paradigm for Encountering Educational Technology

Gayle Gerber Koontz

Technology in the Classroom: A Missiologist's Perspective

Arun W. Jones

Using Film to Teach Theology

Linda Mercadante

Beyond Entertainment: A Rationale for the Pedagogy of Technology in the Classroom

Kenneth D. Snyder

Information Technology for Theological Education at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Elizabeth Van Kleeck

Technology Development at Ashland Theological Seminary

Vickie Taylor and Dale Stoffer

The Times, They Are A-Changin': How a Training Seminar for Online Education Changed a Seminary One Faculty Member at a Time

Jeff Groeling and Lester Ruth

A Case Narrative of Bethel Seminary's InMinistry Program

Kristin M. Anderson

Taking Control of our Future: Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

Sebastian Mahfood

Establishing Social Presence in Online Courses: Why and How

Mary Hinkle Shore

Web Site Design as a Dynamic Companion in Developing Learning Resources

Barbara Anne Keely

OPEN FORUM

A Dozen Qualities of the Good Dean

Mark G. Toulouse

Using Participatory Action Research in Seminary Internships

Cameron Harder

What's in an Instrument? The Answer from the Profiles of Ministry Program

Francis A. Lonsway



The Association of Theological Schools
The Commission on Accrediting

ISSN 0040-5620

Theological Education
is published semiannually by
The Association of Theological Schools
IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA
10 Summit Park Drive
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15275-1110

DANIEL O. ALESHIRE
JEREMIAH J. McCARTHY
VICTOR KLIMOSKI
NANCY MERRILL
LINDA D. TROSTLE

Executive Editor
Editor
Issue Editor
Managing Editor
Assistant Editor

For subscription information or to order
additional copies or selected back issues,
please contact the Association.

Email: giehll@ats.edu
Web site: www.ats.edu
Phone: 412-788-6505
Fax: 412-788-6510

© 2007

The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by means of any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act, or in writing from the publisher.

Permission is hereby granted without charge for the reproduction and distribution of this work, or any of its parts, for educational purposes by the faculty or administration of member institutions of The Association of Theological Schools, provided that no fee or compensation is charged for copies, use of, or access to such information beyond the actual cost of reproduction or access, and that the copyright notice is included intact.

Requests for permission for all other uses of any part of this work should be addressed to the author(s).

Views expressed in the journal are those of the writers. Publication does not necessarily signify endorsement by Theological Education or The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

This periodical is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database® and is available in electronic form in ATLASerials® (ATLAS®), both produced by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606; Email: atla@atla.com; Web site: <http://www.atla.com/>.

Theological Education

Volume 42, Number 2
2007

Issue Editors' Introduction: Technology Will Not Fix Teaching iii
Victor Klimoski, Jan Viktora, and James Rafferty

Continuing the Conversation: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Technology vii
Arun W. Jones

ISSUE FOCUS

Technology, Teaching, and Learning: Reports from the Field

Cross-Cultural Learning as a Paradigm for Encountering Educational Technology 1
Gayle Gerber Koontz

Technology in the Classroom: A Missiologist's Perspective 11
Arun W. Jones

Using Film to Teach Theology 19
Linda Mercadante

Beyond Entertainment: A Rationale for the Pedagogy of Technology in the Classroom. 29
Kenneth D. Snyder

**Information Technology for Theological Education
at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary** 35
Elizabeth Van Kleeck

Technology Development at Ashland Theological Seminary 49
Vickie Taylor and Dale Stoffer

**The Times, They Are A-Changin': How a Training Seminar for Online Education
Changed a Seminary One Faculty Member at a Time.** 57
Jeff Groeling and Lester Ruth

A Case Narrative of Bethel Seminary's InMinistry Program. 67
Kristin M. Anderson

Taking Control of our Future: Kenrick-Glennon Seminary 79
Sebastian Mahfood

Establishing Social Presence in Online Courses: Why and How 91
Mary Hinkle Shore

Web Site Design as a Dynamic Companion in Developing Learning Resources 101
Barbara Anne Keely

OPEN FORUM

A Dozen Qualities of the Good Dean 109
Mark G. Toulouse

Using Participatory Action Research in Seminary Internships 127
Cameron Harder

What's in an Instrument? The Answer from the Profiles of Ministry Program 141
Francis A. Lonsway

Continuing the Conversation

Theological Education invites responses, of up to 1,500 words, to articles published in the journal in order to foster conversation among its readers. Reader responses may be emailed to the managing editor at merrill@ats.edu. Responses are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for length.

2006–2008 Editorial Board

Kevin O'Neil, Chair
Washington Theological Union

Barbara Bowe
Catholic Theological Union

John H. Chapman
Huron University College
Faculty of Theology

Judy Fentress-Williams
Protestant Episcopal
Theological Seminary in Virginia

Donald C. Guthrie
Covenant Theological Seminary

Stephanie Paulsell
Harvard University Divinity School

Editor's Introduction: Technology Will Not Fix Teaching

Victor Klimoski, St. John's University School of Theology–Seminary
Jan Viktora, Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity
James Rafferty, Educational technology consultant to seminaries

When Fred Hofheinz, the former program officer for the Religion Division at Lilly Endowment, convened the first set of ATS schools awarded educational technology grants, he spoke about a new generation of learners and the expectations they were bringing to seminaries and schools of theology. Among those expectations were a heightened sense of the role of digital technology in communication, immediate access to information, new ways of cognitive processing, and multiple paths to learning. Hofheinz did not suggest to his audience that technology was the answer to the challenges of teaching and learning, but he was clear that the Endowment was encouraging schools to experiment with the potential it offered. That accounts for why grants could not be used to develop or expand distributed learning programs even though some have argued that preparing faculty to teach at a distance was an excellent way to engage technology as an educational tool. For the Endowment, the dominant concern was the quality of teaching and how efforts to understand the impact of a mediated culture on learners might deepen and enrich the pedagogical capacities of theological teachers.

This generous initiative by the Endowment did not set out to “fix” teaching as though it assumed it was broken. The Endowment had already turned its attention to issues of teaching and learning as its staff listened to seminary administrators and faculty discuss the perceptible shifts in the dispositions, readiness, and abilities of students enrolling in their schools. The establishment of the Wabash Center, the funding of projects like Keystone and the Lexington Seminar, and the support of ongoing efforts at ATS in the area of teaching and learning all signaled a significant commitment to a renewal of teaching. If a focus on technology was not a “fix,” it was an occasion to reengage the fundamental questions of what comprises good teaching and effective learning. Richard Nysse, Hebrew Scriptures professor at Luther Seminary and a leading expert on technology for learning, often says that a poor teacher without technology will likely be a poor teacher after technology unless he or she has wrestled with questions about the purposes and outcomes of instruction.

The essays in this volume reflect the experience of individual teachers and schools as they have engaged their concerns about teaching and learning with the applications technology offers. It will become apparent quickly that there is no template for an individual teacher or school. Technology does not homogenize pedagogy unless, of course, it becomes the end toward which all attention is directed. What the authors in these essays generously share is their encounter with pedagogical issues and questions and their distinct responses. While students increasingly do have expectations about the role technology

plays in how they learn, the use of technology as a resource for teaching is seldom effective if it is cobbled on as an accommodation to student preferences or their perceived boredom. When accommodation is the major motivator, teaching becomes leaden and notions of technology-as-entertainment gain an unfortunate foothold.

The following essays are narratives written from different points of view. Most are by individual faculty members who discuss their use of technology as a teaching tool, describing some of the details of what various applications required. More importantly, these reflective teachers provide a commentary on the issues, concerns, and pedagogical values that led them this way or that in making technology choices. There is no hard sell in these narratives because the issue is responding to learning needs, not using the tools technology offers.

We have invited colleagues from two schools (Asbury Theological Seminary and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary) to focus on the ways their schools provided support to faculty as members experimented with and adapted technology in their approaches to teaching. It is clear from the ATS project on Technology and Educational Practices that systematic support and training, tailored to the evolving needs of faculty members, are essential for moving technology from an interesting curiosity to an integral component in a teacher's pedagogical repertoire. Additional essays detail the stories of how three institutions—Kenrick, Bethel, and Ashland—encountered, tested, and integrated technology as part of their educational missions.

The authors used the strategic planning model developed as part of the ATS educational technology project (see *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 [2006]). The linear character of that model, while an accurate reflection of key phases schools have experienced in the adoption of technology, is ideal in its sequencing. What these three essays demonstrate is that schools each address key questions posed by the model but in a sequence conformed to the needs and culture of their institutions.

As the ATS study of educational technology consistently has argued and what is clear in these essays, the final measure of whether to use technology in the classroom is whether any application serves learning. We know that before an instructional moment occurs, teachers return to core central questions. First, who is in the room and what do they know? Each class of learners is unique, bringing background knowledge, experience, and expectations that help guide what needs to happen if they are to actively engage new ideas, perspectives, and ways of understanding. Second, knowledge of students links to the articulation of outcomes: what does the teacher want them to know, think, and do as a result of their studies of this subject matter and in relationship to the wider goals of the curriculum? Third, what are the assumptions of teachers about the practice of teaching embodied in their preferred styles and strengths as instructional leaders? Finally, given this analysis of the context for teaching, what methods and practices show the greatest promise to cultivate knowledge, build competence, and enable students to demonstrate proficiency?

During this three-year ATS project of educational technology, the discussion has grown more sophisticated and probing. The realities of how institutions and individuals change account in part for that development. More significantly, the ability to reflect critically on the early assertions about what technology would do for teaching and learning produces a more grounded appraisal of what it takes to actively involve students in bodies of knowledge and practice in which faculty deeply believe. These essays model that critical spirit.

Victor Klimoski is director of lifelong learning at St. John's University School of Theology–Seminary in Collegeville, Minnesota. Jan Viktora is assistant professor of pastoral theology at The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. James Rafferty is the former director of instructional innovation for the Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools and is a consultant to seminaries on technology for teaching and learning.

* * *

In the Open Forum section of this volume, Mark Toulouse, dean of Brite Divinity School for eleven years, offers “A Dozen Qualities of the Good Dean,” which he has gleaned from observing others in the position and from his own experience as dean. This article was an address to the Chief Academic Officers Society of ATS in 2006, and *Theological Education* requested permission to include it in this volume. Toulouse’s description of the multifaceted vocation of the academic dean will be helpful to those new to the position, to academic leadership search committees, and may also provide a new insight or two to those who have held the office for some time.

Cameron Harder of Lutheran Theological Seminary draws on exceptional examples of contextual education he witnessed in rural settings in four countries to advocate for the use of participatory action research in seminary internships more broadly. He examines several highly effective programs, identifies what made them successful experiences for students, offers five categories of contextual education, and then makes the case for the benefits of participatory action research. Among its benefits, according to the author, are students learning to minister to and with the people they serve, acquiring skills that can apply to a variety of other settings, and helping congregations to become learning communities.

The Association’s Profiles of Ministry program has served theological education for more than thirty years by providing participating schools with criterion-referenced instruments for understanding the characteristics of their students and by helping seminary students to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and their possible influence on their future ministerial leadership. Francis A. Lonsway, who directed the program for ATS from 1992 to 2005, recently conducted a thirty-year survey of the program to determine the continuing relevance of the traits and attitudes expected of persons beginning professional ministry in North America. His article, “What’s in an Instrument?” examines the development and efficacy of the instruments—*Casebook*, *Interview*, and *Field Observation*—and their validity and reliability over time.

Continuing the Conversation

Theological Education invites responses, of up to 1,500 words, to articles published in the journal in order to foster conversation among its readers. Reader responses may be emailed to the managing editor at merrill@ats.edu. Responses are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for length.

Thoughts from a Cross-Cultural Perspective on Technology in American Culture: A Prelude to Thinking about Technology in North American Theological Education

After a two-week study tour to the islands of Bali and Java in Indonesia and experiencing the use of the latest digital technology in that context, I am again struck by how digital technology (like any technology) is appropriated and used for different purposes in different cultures. This observation goes against the grain of much thinking in our own North American context about technology, which sees in technology the possibilities of revolutionizing (for good or ill) not only theological education but also culture and even human beings themselves: suggestions have been made that young people who grow up in a digital world “actually process information and learn differently” than their elders.¹ I am frankly rather skeptical about claims that technology can change the fundamental ways in which we relate to one another and the world around us.² For example, we may live with the illusion that because of modern technology the world has become smaller and we are more in touch with one another globally, but the bloody history of the past century, which continues into the present, shows us that technology has not really bridged any crucial gaps in our abilities to understand and relate to one another and, in fact, has exacerbated our differences as much as it has developed or manifested our commonalities.

The fact of the matter is that our forebears have quite imperceptibly passed on to us deeply ingrained ways of living and being, and technology is appropriated by us to exist as we have been taught. This

truth was brought home to me when I taught high school for an academic year in the mountains of northern Luzon in the Philippines in the early 1980s. The youth I taught were the first literate generation of their people. And indeed, these students could do things and comprehend worlds that their parents and grandparents could not. Yet the students who could read and write did not belong to a new people or culture in comparison to the older illiterate generations; what they had done was to add something on to their parents’ way of life. Literacy and a Western education made a difference, to be sure, but it did not make one generation radically different from the previous one. What we do when we receive new technologies is to add on dimensions to our preexisting way of living: the foundations remain, albeit adapted. In the nineteenth century, there were great predictions in India that the railroads would break down the caste system, that caste could not survive the mobility and proximity of people that trains would bring. Indeed, due to the railways, great numbers of Indians traveled great distances in great numbers. Yet the caste system did not break down: it merely adapted to a new reality. In fact, over the past century there has been incredible violence and destruction because people in non-Western cultures were taught that a Western education and/or Christianity made them a different people from their parents. As a result, tremendous energy and resources have been spent by “modernized” generations to destroy their links to a past that does not seem to let go of them. The moderns were only marginally successful in their attempts to erase their history, and now it seems that in many places of the world, the past has returned with a vengeance to lay claim on them.

My basic thesis, therefore, is that digital technology in North American theological education is not changing the fundamental realities of our culture and the way we live. If I were to describe the basic culture of Americans, I would look at the people who form its foundation. America has for the most part been founded, and continues to be replenished, by people who are immigrants: they are individuals who have chosen to cut geographical and familial ties in order to begin a new life in this country. The operative words here are *individual*, *choice*, and *novelty*. We Americans think of ourselves as individuals, not first and foremost as members of preexisting networks of a clan or tribe or people on this earth. We also live by choice: we choose our life partners, our professions, our political leaders, where we live, where we go to worship (or whether we go to worship), how many children we have, and so on. This is highly unusual for most of the world's people. We persist in our culture of choice even when we know that this culture often does not lead to happiness (in marriage or career, for example); even when we know that so many of the choices we make are false choices (McDonalds or Burger King?); even when we know our love of choosing opens us up to gross manipulation (hence the power of advertising). Finally, we are a people who are fascinated by novelty, which is why Americans love technology. Even if we do not invent the latest gadget (e.g., the automobile), we are the first to try and use it as much as possible, to mass produce it so everyone can use it.

The significant exceptions to this broad cultural portrayal are the descendants of two groups of people who did not choose to come here and start a new life: African slaves and Native Americans. One of the great tragedies (or travesties) of American society is that the majority cannot comprehend how to relate to such groups of people who do not buy into its mindset, its culture. So more often than not they are oppressed—even isolated—unless and until they participate in the American way of life on its terms.

New technology, including digital technology, does not in any way undercut or question these and other fundamental characteristics (such as democracy) of Americans. How could it? It was born in this culture. New technology, in fact, reinforces and pushes to new limits the fundamental American characteristics: it makes us more self-reliant as individuals, gives us more apparent choice and more novelty. Our children are doing to us what we did to our parents: there is no fundamental shift in culture taking place here. A good example is the weblog or blog. While it purports to create community, it, in fact, merely creates the illusion of community for the promotion of individual voice. Community, after all, is a group of people who are mutually responsible to one another in their daily living. Members of a community constantly impinge on each others' autonomy and freedom, which is what causes both the joy and the pain of community. In community, each member learns to bend to the wishes of others. In the weblog, the individual speaks his or her mind with no real responsibility toward the others sharing in the conversation; other people simply become foils for each person's thoughts and expressions. The power of the individual, of personal choice, and of novelty continue to reign supreme: in fact, they are reinforced by our new technology. Theological education in our culture will have to continue to work within these cultural realities, with or without digital technology.

Arun W. Jones, Associate Professor
of Mission and Evangelism
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

ENDNOTES

1. John P. Jewell, "What Does All *This* (Technology) Mean for the Church?" *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (2005): 23.
2. This includes the way we undertake theological education: contra Mary Hess, "What Difference Does it Make? Digital Technology in the Theological Classroom," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (2005), 77–91. For a negative view on how technology can change us, see Debra Dean Murphy, "PowerPointless," *Christian Century* (July 25, 2006): 10–11.

Cross-Cultural Learning as a Paradigm for Encountering Educational Technology

Gayle Gerber Koontz

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary

ABSTRACT: This essay compares some of the attitudes, perspectives, and skills needed for appropriating educational technologies to those needed in cross-cultural learning. These include willingness to learn a new language and patterns of communication, thoughtful response to culture shock, and the ability to deal with disempowerment and change. The author, reflecting on her own encounter with developing technologies, suggests that this cross-cultural perspective may help faculty who grew up before or near the beginning of the computer age better understand their own experiences with electronic technologies as well as that of older students and students who come from settings where computers have not been readily available to them. The article further argues that while institutional and individual investment in the powerful tools now available can enhance teaching and learning, electronic technologies must serve, not drive, learning goals and interactive teaching.

A consultant at a technology in theological education workshop on our seminary campus several years ago commented that educators who had not grown up during the computer age faced a task comparable to that of someone moving from one culture to another. This passing comment illuminated my experience with new technologies in teaching. Not only was it essential for me to learn a new language and habits of communication, but there were implicit values at stake, educational possibilities that required change, the lure of the exotic, and the frustrating sense of disempowerment that comes from being “voiceless” and lacking adequate common sense in a dynamic new land. I suspect this comparison rings true to many professors and students more than 30 years old as well as to those who have grown up in school systems or households without computer access.

Despite the fact that I have lived with developments in computer-based technology now for twenty-five years and have learned to use some powerful tools for educational purposes, my skills in using them are modest. I still speak with a strong accent. And I am grateful sometimes for the critical distance my status as a “resident alien” in this foreign culture offers. I have become increasingly convinced that technologies must serve, not drive, learning goals and processes. Over the years I have come not only to greater confidence in the use of these tools but also to a clearer sense of their place in education.

The lure of the exotic

Educational technology is not new, though it became considerably more sophisticated between my parent’s blackboard-and-chalk generation and my

*Cross-Cultural Learning as a Paradigm
for Encountering Educational Technology*

own. Yet each new development captivated teachers and students. Tools and devices such as filmstrip projectors, slides and 16 mm movie films, phonographs, and PA systems enhanced my formal childhood education. By the time I was in college, educators had adopted overhead projectors—flexible blackboard-like machines that permitted color-coded writing and projection of previously prepared outlines and graphs. As graduate students, my husband and I delighted in the invention of self-correcting typewriters, which lifted the tedious stress of clean-copy paper writing.

When I began teaching at Goshen College and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in the early 1980s, educational technology consisted mostly of the tools that had marked my own education, with the addition of cassette tape players. Television was not a significant classroom tool for my fields of theology and ethics in either setting. I adopted familiar educational technologies, without much thought, as ways to bring some aural and visual variety into the classroom.

Facing preparation of two doctoral dissertations, my husband and I invested in what was in 1981 an extremely expensive cutting-edge technological innovation, a Superbrain computer with 64K memory and two 5¼-inch 160K disk drives. That began my cross-cultural journey into the land of computer-based educational technologies. Fortunately my introduction to computers came gradually as the technology developed and became standardized. The initial transitional stage was relatively smooth because I used a computer like a glorified typewriter, and because my husband, Ted, who is also a professor, did most of the background work for hardware and software decisions. We bought a desktop PC later in the 1980s, but I learned only what I needed to learn in order to use the technology for modest practical purposes. I did not use computers in teaching except for preparing and filing my own lecture and class preparation notes until the advent of email and the beginning of institutional computerization at AMBS at the end of the 1980s.

In 1994–95 the seminary began to provide desktop computers for each faculty office, approved the use of some scholarship grant funds for hardware and software purchases for teaching and research purposes, and installed an office email system. These boosted my motivation for learning more software applications related to teaching and research (Citation, a bibliographic program, and Microsoft Outlook, for communicating with students and other colleagues both inside and outside the institution). Email was the first “new technology” that directly began to change my teaching. It is a simple tool but remains one that I value highly as a way of communicating quickly and easily with students, many of whom are part time, live off-campus, and are extremely busy. Email has essentially replaced phone contact with students in my experience.

Since the mid-90s, the possibilities for the use of technology in teaching seem to have increased exponentially. I am still rather breathless: PowerPoint, LCD projectors, Internet, FrontPage Web design fairly quickly replaced by Blackboard (many thanks to the Wabash Center), AMBS library computerization, scanning, digital cameras, and electronic paper submission and grading. I found that engaging these resources in teaching required some of the at-

itudes important in intercultural or language learning: willingness to work hard, to experiment and perhaps make a fool of oneself, to ask “stupid” questions without shame, and to maintain hope that passing through initial high learning curves would result in value later.

Immersion in a new culture has its exotic edge. Curiosity and intrigue with what is new and different provides motivation and energy for learning. I continue to be amazed by what library computerization and Internet access means for discovering and retrieving information for me and my students. (I’ve accessed the Internet for information twice already in writing this essay, saving considerable time in research.) I admire the power of hard drives and software programs that make Bible searching and textual comparisons enjoyable, that assist me in responding to and storing student work, and that help me organize and locate teaching plans and material. Because computer-based technologies enhance research, teaching, and learning as well as make possible global networking with former students, pastors, and theological colleagues, I am able to be more charitable about the painful aspects of facing and adapting to the changes educational technology has demanded.

Living between cultures: the struggle to adapt

The initial romance of engaging a new culture often wears off in about a year, resulting in culture shock. The new culture is no longer so intriguing. Its shadow side becomes visible. Early progress in language learning tapers off and the learner’s lack of competence in mastering a complex new linguistic system and its implicit meanings become obvious. Homesickness for the old and familiar and a critical attitude toward the new characterize this period. Though my experience with educational technology was not as intense as my experiences living in other cultural settings, the struggle to persist in learning in the face of discouraging realities was similar.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the culture of educational technology, at least in the early years before standardization, was the way it confronted me with constant change. I would begin to learn one set of commands—then they would change. I would develop habits for one system and have to break myself of them for another. The seminary began to provide some institutional support for faculty who had their own computers in the late ’80s. Because a number of us had begun to use the academic software *Nota Bene*, the seminary agreed to train a couple support staff in the use of this program. But as administrative offices became computerized, some using *WordPerfect* and some *Microsoft Word*, I increasingly felt the awkwardness of working in an environment where faculty and staff used multiple software without integration possibilities. During this period I remember complaining about system incompatibility and about the lengths one needed to go to in order to read documents that kept appearing in different “dialects.” It was a relief when AMBS decided to standardize software in 1996–97 with the ascendancy of *Microsoft Windows* and *Office*. Subsequent versions built on previous ones so that learning was not lost in the way previous software work seemed to be.

But industry standardization did not remove the technological glitches that were part of introducing computer projection into the classroom in the twenty-first century. The first three years I used LCD projection in teaching, I am sure I ran into almost every conceivable problem there could be. I do not think I would have had the ability and motivation to keep growing in the use of educational technology while the on-campus technical problems were being worked out, the industry's equipment and software was being improved, and my proficiency with the technology was passing through the irritating awkward stage, without the intelligent, responsive, patient, individualized faculty support by the computer staff at AMBS.

Living between pre- and post-computer cultures also meant increased work and complexity in teaching during the transitional period between print and digital forms of communication with students. If faculty were to explore new technologies, we had to be prepared to provide all materials to students in both electronic and print form. It was not until 1999 or 2000 that the seminary instituted a policy that all students were expected to have regular network access through a personal computer, an on-campus seminary student computer, or a public library computer.

As faculty we were first introduced to Web design for use in theological education by a workshop in FrontPage. For the first two years I worked awkwardly with FrontPage electronic resources for students and provided everything to them in hard copies as well. When it was recommended that we switch to the Blackboard course rubric, I worked for at least a year with Blackboard as a framework and linked FrontPage pages to the Blackboard site. During 2003–04, I dropped FrontPage and moved all electronic communication with students to Blackboard. Although I provided an initial course outline on paper, all course development and assignments were available *only* online. Beginning in spring 2005, I requested that students submit papers electronically; I commented on them electronically and returned them electronically. The past two years, for the first time since computer-based educational technologies began to be introduced in our seminary a decade ago, I felt I could “speak the language” without thinking, that is, use a variety of simple, available technologies smoothly enough that they truly became gracious servants of teaching and learning.

As educational technologies become more pervasive, faculty more competent in using them, and more theological students at home in the computer-based culture, the need to be discerning about the *use* of technology in theological education will increase. While there are many guidelines that might be suggested, four came to mind when I considered the development of my own use of computer-based technologies in the teaching of Christian theology and ethics.

Use of educational technologies should nurture active and critical learning.

Growth in my vocation as a teacher over the past twenty-five years has impacted my thinking about technology as a teaching resource. I have moved more consciously toward a focus on teaching and learning as an interactive process. This is especially important in education of adults with considerable

life experience, though I believe it enhances learning for students of any age because it takes seriously the questions and theological profile of the learners. In addition, deeper critical thinking in the areas of theology and ethics is often best learned as participants exercise thoughtful engagement with the material being studied and challenge each other's responses to it.

As a younger teacher, more insecure in my role, I was ready to admit, "I don't know," when a student asked a question I couldn't answer. But I did not feel as comfortable letting go of "control" of the classroom. Lecturing for most of a class session can be appropriate for some purposes, but it is also a way to maintain control of the common space. A lecture can be planned ahead of time and delivered; it does not require the kind of vulnerability that interactive teaching requires—asking probing questions "on your feet," engaging student responses as discussion flows to deepen their perceptual and critical awareness, encouraging students to address each other's thoughts and experiences. Opening space for improvisational conversation around course content makes possible challenge and conflict as well as the exchange of multiple and rich insights among students. It requires more time since the goal is to elicit insights from the group, not only to most efficiently present them. Such opening requires risk; the group may be silent or shallow or irritable. Opening space for interactive learning requires that a teacher trust his or her intellectual and personal ability to lead fruitful and perhaps emotionally laden discussion. And it requires trust that the group does indeed have the potential to teach and learn together.

While I have found this kind of teaching most successful in classes that are small enough to permit broadly shared exchange as a whole group, elements can be adapted in larger classes. In both settings I continue to struggle with the discipline of shortening the time I devote to presenting the many "good ideas" I've collected over the years, in order for students to articulate their own views, often discovering those good ideas in conversation. There is always opportunity for me to enrich the discussion by adding material I have in hand—though I may not know at the outset of a class just what I'll find important to add. Preparation for this kind of teaching is just as challenging, if not more so, as preparing a lecture—it is important to review, update, and rethink the structure of the material and questions before each class in order to be able to offer or improvise mini-lectures on relevant themes.

Two of the educational technologies that I have found especially effective in supporting this kind of community-based interactive learning are LCD projection and Blackboard.

I use LCD projection in most classes, but I have moved away from long PowerPoint presentations that tend to promote passivity in learning, especially after lunch. Depending on the quality of the equipment, I also find that the room may be too dark for good eye contact among the group. When I use PowerPoint I do so in order to make visual material (photos, art work, graphs, cartoons) available to the whole class, to project an important but hard-to-follow quotation, or to provide a simple, not detailed, outline for a lecture. I prefer simplicity to glitzy or even artistic effects that are time consuming to prepare, choosing, rather, to give priority to spending my time engaging students

or pondering the material they are reading. I have moved increasingly toward using Word documents and sometimes PowerPoint to project a question for the group to ponder. Then I use these tools to focus, redirect, and record the discussion that flows from it. Using computer projection in this way—like a super chalkboard or whiteboard—has numerous advantages:

- I do not need to have my back to the students but can remain in the circle of conversation.
- The dynamic of discussion flows better because my writing is much faster and less intrusive.
- Typing permits a much more detailed and accurate record of ideas and questions that we can refer back to later in the discussion.
- The computer page is indefinitely expandable unlike a chalkboard.
- What is written can easily be erased or adjusted as we go.
- The words are always legible.
- I can quickly edit and clarify the record after class and post it on Blackboard.
- The process makes visible the fact that students have been learning from and with each other as well as from and with me.

To increase interactivity in larger classes, I introduced Blackboard groups where clusters of students can exchange their papers electronically before a class session, leaving primary time for small group discussion when they meet face to face.

Different learning styles among students may also require different uses of technology. Many students need visual reinforcement of material presented orally, so I do use PowerPoint in some situations with that in mind. Introverts, students without theological background, those who lack self-confidence, or those who for whatever reason feel disempowered in quick moving conversation may appreciate the opportunity to share their thinking with other students electronically after a class is over. Other students strongly prefer not to engage others via computer. This is one reason I require only limited postings on electronic discussion boards but make a variety of optional boards available.

Use of educational technologies should build personal relationships.

While the previous guideline emphasized participatory learning, this one emphasizes the importance of personal relationships between faculty and students and among students. Learning that is important for pastoral formation and theological understanding includes practice in such things as speaking the truth in love, dealing hospitably with theological and ethical differences, and connecting critical theological thinking with personal experience. Electronic resources, when used, should contribute to self-awareness and interpersonal understanding, not frustrate it or disembodiment those who are the bearers of it.

This is another reason why I encourage only limited use of electronic discussion boards. I have found that the majority of my students so far have tended to interact in more superficial ways in postings than they do in a class set-

ting. In face-to-face exchanges, conversation more readily builds and deepens, weaving emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual dynamics together in a time- and space-bound rhythm of action and response. In addition, in dealing with controversial ethical issues I have found that the potential for miscommunication and offense among students interacting on discussion boards is greater than in a moderated face-to-face discussion.

Further, while I highly value the way email can enhance communication, it, too, has a shadow side. I can recall situations when email communication was substituted for direct encounter because someone wanted to avoid a potential face-to-face conflict or was choosing to use power in a way that was easier to do without the physical presence and immediate response of the other person. These uses undercut rather than build relationships and are practices that theological leaders and pastors should avoid.

Use of educational technologies should be appropriate and sustainable.

“Appropriate” technology is goal and situation dependent. Summer teaching I did in Burundi and Rwanda, where appropriate technology included a chalkboard and a few handouts copied at a tiny copy shop in the neighborhood, required a different approach to teaching with technology than the situation at AMBS, though I encouraged interactive learning in both.

The question of sustainability, too, is situation dependent. At a small, standalone seminary like ours, appropriate and sustainable technology must be relatively modest, given the significant financial investment required for purchasing, replacing, and upgrading equipment and maintaining staff, to say nothing of educating faculty to use it. Several years ago, as a faculty representative, I questioned the direction in which a large group of administrators and board members seemed to be moving—toward installing videoconferencing equipment for distance education. There were valid concerns for making faculty time and theological education more widely available as well as a number of practical technological issues that gave the group second thoughts when it more carefully considered the question. I was concerned, however, about pedagogical integrity, which had not been clearly in focus in the discussion. No one had commented on the fact that some of the practical problems affected the possibility for quality interactive teaching and class discussion. The demonstration of the equipment we saw better suited lecture and question-and-response style teaching. With the equipment we were considering there were significant time delays between sites; the system could not handle immediate speech and response between participants, which gave a frustrating, unnatural character to discussion. The sound system picked up some voices in some positions in the rooms involved much better than others. The motion of the camera was voice activated and jumped awkwardly at odd noises. The faculty member’s movement was limited by the positions of the cameras. I’m sure technology has improved. But in such situations, decisions to make a substantial investment in educational technology should not only consider its financial sustainability but also its appropriateness to the various styles of teaching and learning important for the education and formation of church leaders.

Use of educational technologies should build confidence and respect.

Beginning to use even modest computer-enhanced technologies for teaching and learning as I have done raises problems for some students. This is especially acute in transitional periods when some faculty and students are comfortable using such technology and others are not. As educational technologies are introduced, overtaxed institutions may not recognize the need for or have resources to put in place support systems for students who require instruction in the skills needed to use educational technologies or to do appropriate Internet research for academic purposes. Students who do not know how to type or to type efficiently (there are usually a few each year) are at a serious disadvantage. Older students who are new to computer technology feel the weight of the learning curve that is needed simply to communicate, which on top of course work demands, can be discouraging. And there is an economic justice issue at stake as well: students who do not have or cannot afford a computer are disadvantaged in the educational setting.

My own relationship with educational technologies has made me much more aware of the excitement and struggles that many of the older students who populate our seminaries face. Theirs, too, is an adventure in cross-cultural learning. I am more sharply aware of the importance of asking students up front about their relationship to various technologies. I continue to meet among my students, along with a few computer geeks, some students—and not only international students—who are still relative strangers to computers. This past summer I had a student in class who thought Blackboard was not user friendly; she did not know she should click on underlined terms for more information. An Episcopalian student who had rarely watched movies expressed concern about how to deal with the emotional impact of several assigned films. And for the first time last year I received two papers that cited only or almost only Internet sources, not all of them trustworthy.

In response to the current need for orientation to educational technologies at AMBS, the seminary has designed a Blackboard course for new students. Like a host who smoothes the way when one enters a different country, this online resource is designed to teach students how to use Blackboard, to solve certain computer-related problems, to find other electronic resources at AMBS, and to direct them to a Web site for learning how to do acceptable Internet research for academic purposes.

Teaching and learning in a bicultural mode

As a result of experimentation and conversation at our seminary, made possible by a Lilly Endowment grant awarded through ATS, I am more confident in asserting what I see as the possibilities and limitations of various technologies in theological education in my teaching fields in our setting.

As I consider the future, I sigh knowing that I will inevitably need to deal with continuing technological changes. I've barely begun to consider the implications of the open source and free software movement (like blogging and Wikipedia) for higher education, and I know nothing about "folksonomy"—an attempt by Internet users to organize information, primarily on the Web—

except that our computer technology staff person says it exists. But looking back twenty-five years gives me hope for the future. In the long view it is evident that I have become acculturated to a number of computer-based technologies for teaching and learning—slowly at first, dramatically in the past six years. While computer technologies will never be my first language, I am able to draw from them judiciously to support seminary teaching and learning in ways I never imagined when I began teaching.

Gayle Gerber Koontz, professor of theology and ethics, has been a faculty member at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, for twenty-five years. During that time she and her family spent two years at Silliman University Divinity School in the Philippines. In addition to teaching and serving as dean for several years, she has published articles on peace theology in relation to Christian feminism and religious pluralism.

Technology in the Classroom: A Missiologist's Perspective

Arun W. Jones

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: While educational technology seems to be at the service of all theological disciplines, the author offers a reflection on how one's discipline may set norms and expectations for how one chooses to use technology as a resource for teaching. This method emerges as he considers the ways in which the power of visualization provided by the new media is not a matter of illustrating a point being made in a course. Rather, the illustration itself becomes another text requiring attentiveness and care in its reading and interpretation.

Because missiology is “the conscious, intentional, ongoing reflection on the doing of mission” and is thereby a multidisciplinary scholarly endeavor, missiologists come with a wide variety of personal experience, academic training, and scholarly interests.¹ The Association of Professors of Mission, for example, has members who are variously trained in the fields of anthropology, biblical studies, church history, linguistics, and systematic theology. These scholars are Roman Catholics, independent Evangelicals and conciliar Protestants (i.e., relating to the National or World Council of Churches), with mission experience in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania. All of us do missiology because we bring our particular training, experience, and ecclesiastical traditions to bear on the study of the mission of the church universal. Because it is helpful for us to know what backgrounds and perspectives each of us brings to enrich our common conversation, let me note that I am a United Methodist who has lived for twenty years in India and the Philippines and for longer than that in the United States. I was trained as a historian, and history is still my first scholarly love. I teach mission and evangelism at a Presbyterian seminary. In addition to an introductory second-level course on the theory and practice of mission and evangelism, my courses focus on the church in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and on movements of Christian renewal and growth in the United States.

Due to the subject matter of my courses, I find that I am often dealing with material that is even more unfamiliar to students than modern academic biblical studies or systematic theology. Even though seminary students in their first year might be shocked and distressed at the ways they are being taught to think of their Bible and their God, most of them are still dealing with material that their pastors have dealt with, and thus their minds have in subtle ways been exposed to the thinking that they meet with full force in seminary. When it comes to subjects such as world Christianity, ecumenism, and even evangelism, many of my students are trying to get a grasp of a real and imagined universe that is quite outside the realm of their experience. Not only do I talk

about Christian traditions such as the Aglipayan Church from the Philippines or the Kimbanguists from the Congo, but I ask them to consider seriously and incorporate the experience of non-Presbyterians such as Roman Catholics and Pentecostals as part of their own growth and learning. Many of my students have real difficulties in thinking about one or more of such traditions as part of the church universal.

To bridge the experiential gap between my students and me, I enrolled in a workshop at the Wabash Center in the summer of 2004. My goal was to learn how to span in my teaching my students' universe and mine as well as the worlds of North America and Europe and the world of people in places such as New Guinea and Bolivia. As part of my learning experience at Wabash, I started to think about and experiment with the use of technology that I had not used with any frequency or systematic thought in my teaching. Having been educated and trained since the first grade in institutions that relied almost exclusively on lectures and on printed texts, I was at a loss as to how to use educational tools besides books and the human voice in the educational endeavor. At Wabash, however, I was encouraged to reflect upon the use of electronic technology for my teaching. Thus I am slowly introducing the world of images and sounds into my teaching. My students are years ahead of me, and I am grateful to them for their patience and understanding as I fumble with photocopying machines, scanners, computers, projectors, videotapes, CDs, and DVDs. My experiments are basic, and hence these reflections on them are quite rudimentary.

Technology in the service of core commitments

My reason for using modern technology is tied to my commitment to be a better teacher of missiology in a world that has changed around me. Missiologists are keenly interested in the ways the Christian faith becomes incarnated in different cultures; we are continually talking and writing about inculturation, acculturation, contextualization, and so forth. We firmly believe that in order to be true to itself, the Gospel needs to be expressed differently in different contexts and cultures so that it always remains relevant and fresh for each situation.² This is just as true when the Gospel calls us to be counter-cultural: it needs to be counter-cultural in relation to a specific culture. Being counter-cultural in the highlands of Peru is different from being counter-cultural in the Colorado Rockies. And just as the Gospel needs to be incarnated or inculturated, so does theological education. Because it needs to be relevant and appropriate to the context and culture in which it takes place, my discipline forces me to use the tools of the culture around me in my vocation as a theological educator.

Visuals as texts

My Wabash experience taught me two things about using technological resources and tools for teaching. First, all good teachers try to improve their teaching, which includes expanding and strengthening their repertoire of pedagogical practices. Second, good teachers do not attempt that which is clearly

beyond their capabilities. As a result, I have slowly been introducing electronically produced and reproduced materials into my teaching. Such material includes resources such as videotapes, slides, projected photographs and Web sites, and CDs/DVDs. I have not yet done a lecture with PowerPoint. I find that I am using these newer audiovisual materials in three different ways: illustrations, discussion starters, and reading visual texts.

Illustrations. At the end of a recent term, I was taken aback when students in an introductory course on the church in Africa criticized a textbook because it did not have pictures—something incongruous to my understanding of a graduate-level text. What I came to understand was that students were looking for visual representations of Christian places, traditions, and people that they have not encountered. A problem with illustrations, however, is that they can easily become texts themselves. In other words, illustrations do not simply demonstrate in visual or audiovisual form what I have said in lectures. Like books and articles, illustrations communicate their own messages and, as such, demand to be comprehended, interpreted, and mulled over in their own right. For example, after explaining the ancient and indigenous Orthodox Church in Kerala, South India, I showed a short video clip of a church procession in Kerala as an illustration of how Christian celebrations can sound and look quite different from those with which we are familiar. I was quite pleased that my timing for the class had been just right: the clip ended a minute before it was time to go. Yet as the students were about to leave, one of them asked if we were going to be talking about the video. Obviously, there were questions and thoughts that had arisen from the illustration independent from the lecture I had given, and these needed to be discussed. The illustration was a text on its own, not simply a visualization of the text I had presented orally.

I have found that some of the most successful illustrations come from students who use artifacts, pictures, and PowerPoint presentations coming out of another culture in which they have lived, to describe their experiences. However, students are not simply telling about their experiences and illustrating them; they create interaction between the vocal and the audiovisual as each interprets the other. In a sense, there are two or more simultaneous texts being spun out for the class. Thus I need to be attentive not to assume that an illustration merely accompanies a lecture or reading assignment. It can often open up new discoveries and inquiries and become yet another text.

Discussion Starters. I have been least successful in using technology as a way to present visuals that will stimulate conversation. My practice has been to introduce something that students know little or nothing about, show it, and then expect them to generate their own ideas. Having seen a video on how the Roman Catholic Church in Africa, for example, has created indigenous rites for the Mass in a number of different countries, students did not quite know what to say. My assumption had been that bringing an experience to life through video would get students engaged, but that was not the case. Technology can silence and numb as much as stimulate discussion. I have concluded that for discussion to start in instances like this, students need something familiar to connect the new, unfamiliar experience with something they already know. For instance, in considering use of segments from the movie

The Apostle in a class on revivalism, I can assume that the movie will be both familiar and strange to the students as they think about what they know or don't know about revivalism. Yet, I need to be more precise in how I will use the segment. What do I want to be discussed? The nature of "true" Christianity? The promises and pitfalls of revivalism? Issues of race and class in different Christian traditions? The crossing of Western and non-Western religiosity in American revivalism? All these can be topics of discussion, and I need to prepare questions and prompts that enable students to move into the movie segment just as I would for a book. The segment is not simply a way to open the discussion. By the very questions I construct to help students learn from it, I am making the "discussion starter" a "text."

Visual Texts. Videotapes, CDs, DVDs, and PowerPoint presentations are frequently used to enhance teaching and learning. Yet they are not the only media available. I have in my small collection of missionary photographs a picture of a missionary teaching a Sunday School class in Andhra Pradesh, India, around 1910. The scene is outdoors. The missionary is sitting on a chair at a table, and the Indians are sitting on a rug in front of him. The picture portrays the dynamics of missionary activity in the heyday of the imperial era. The missionary is in charge; the natives are at his feet. The missionary is Western while the natives are Oriental. He sits on a chair as they sit on the ground. The missionary is the directing agent for the Indians who are obedient followers. In a very real sense, the photograph is a text as it tells a story that claims to tell the truth. Yet like all texts, this one can also be questioned. Who took the picture, and for what purposes? Was it for a missionary journal, and if so, to what extent is this picture a well-arranged composition, meant to show the people in the missionary's homeland that the missionary is in charge and doing a wonderful job? What do we think has happened before the people gather? What do we think shall happen after the people disperse? What might the Indians be talking about to themselves, out of earshot of the missionary? What kind of agency will they assume once the missionary's back is turned or even once the camera's lens is averted? We know that the vast majority of Christians first hear the Gospel from one of their own people: How does this knowledge affect our interpretation of the photograph? The picture is a text, waiting to be understood, believed, and interrogated by its readers.

This text of a picture can also be put in conversation with other picture texts. One could, for example, find a photograph from the same collection of a catechist and his family. The catechist and his family are well dressed compared to the Indians in the Sunday School picture. The catechist and his family are seated on chairs and look heavier and therefore healthier than the Indians seen in the first photograph. Read together as two texts, the two photographs would raise all kinds of questions about agency, privilege, access to power and authority both in the church and the empire. My point is that all visuals are texts that need to be read, understood, interpreted, and, again, pondered. Thinking of them as auxiliary ways to "say the same thing" underestimates their interpretative power.

Learning from technology in educational practice

After my limited experimentation with educational technology, I am left with two conclusions and a question. The first conclusion is that all visual and audiovisual materials are at some level to be thought of as texts. They have a message, a claim, and an argument of their own, and we need to be thinking about what they might be saying to the audience, both explicitly and implicitly, and about how we should deal with them as such.

My second conclusion runs in the opposite direction of the first one. Audio and visual presentations are not simply texts. They bring to our teaching an aesthetic dimension that has a power of its own, and aesthetics do make a difference to the way in which our message is apprehended. In a recent lecture to the American Society of Missiology, Stephen Bevans of the Chicago Theological Union used a beautiful PowerPoint presentation. The pictures were highly artistic, carefully chosen, and extremely apt for the purposes of both the lecture and the international audience. The pictures clearly added something to the lecture that words could not themselves convey. The total presentation awakened emotions and connected with the audience in a way that would not have been possible otherwise. The pictures went beyond and were different from the cognitive dimension, yet at the same time were not disconnected from the cognitive.

Of course, propagandists are skilled at doing this, arousing emotions along with our thoughts so that thoughts and emotions, and ultimately will, are changed to suit their purposes. We have witnessed throughout history the crass manipulation of people through the use of aesthetics, and the reaction of the Reformed tradition, at least, has been to avoid the aesthetics when speaking "the truth." Yet I believe we are rushing to drastic and ill advised solutions to this problem by not differentiating what propagandists do from why they do it. In other words, those of us who teach sometimes fail to differentiate between pedagogical technique and pedagogical purpose. By shunning the aesthetic in trying to convey truth, we deprive the good and the true of the beautiful, which not only impoverishes us but impoverishes the good and the true as well. Let me illustrate by another serendipitous lesson I received in the classroom.

In the spring 2006 semester on the day after Easter, students came in exhausted for an 8 a.m. class on the introduction to the theory and practice of mission and evangelism. By sheer coincidence (or grace), instead of lecturing or holding discussion sections that day, I played a recording of Eugene Lowry's "Jazz and Christianity."³ Lowry is professor emeritus of homiletics at St. Paul School of Theology and a jazz musician. In this recording, made with bassist Milt Abel, Lowry explores the deep connections between jazz and the African-American church as he lectures and plays piano with Milt Abel on the bass. Both to my delight and disappointment, a number of students told me afterwards that this was the best "lecture" they had heard all semester. I had to agree with them. It was not simply that Eugene Lowry taught us something about jazz and the church, and by extension about the extremely complicated transactions that are always occurring between culture and Christianity.

Lowry and Abel had also reached into a part of our being with their music where words alone, no matter how eloquent, could not. In the process, the duo taught us something profound about God, the world, the church, and God's workings in the world through the church and the church's ministry that we shall never quite fully be able to put into words or thoughts. This experience taught me that we are reached and taught by music, art, film, and photography in ways that complement but also go beyond the words we hear and read and think and write.⁴

Finally, let me name the question these reflections leave with me. I spoke at the beginning of this essay about the principle in missiology that the Gospel always needs to be incarnated in specific cultures and contexts. Hence, theological education needs to be culturally and contextually appropriate (even when it is being countercultural). Somewhat to my discomfort stemming from my own rather conservative inclinations, there is something in my discipline that urges me to experiment and use tools for theological teaching that are available in the culture around me. The issue of available technology in teaching is not simply a practical or pedagogical issue; it is also a disciplinary issue. My question, then, is what is the relationship, if any, between the discipline in which we teach and the way we teach that discipline?

I cited the missiological imperative to use the tools in our culture for theological communication, including education. However, things are not as simple as that. One of the other corollaries to the principle of inculturation is that missiologists are inclined to look sympathetically on various incarnations of the Gospel in cultural contexts. We do this for historical reasons, recognizing that too often in the past Western missionaries and theologians have erroneously disdained and dismissed non-Western expressions of the Christian faith as heresies or freakish human inventions. Yet modern technology, innocently used, can perpetuate such Western chauvinism. I have shown in one class on mission and evangelism a clip from the video *Rise Up And Walk*, which is about African Independent (or Initiated or Indigenous) Churches. In order to illustrate the uniqueness of African expressions of Christianity, I have shown a segment of a worship service of the Jericho Christian Church in Zion, founded by Bishop Elijah Vilakazi. At the height of the service, worshipers are running rapidly around a pole in the center of the room that is believed to connect earth to heaven; they are chanting ecstatically, led by the bishop. Suddenly the bishop senses the presence of evil spirits, and so he jumps up on a table near a wall with a long pole in his hand and swats at a piece of cloth over the window in order to drive away the evil spirits who are trying to invade the worshipers' ritual. To students with little exposure to African (or other non-Western) expressions of Christianity, this illustration probably leaves the impression that African Christians are bizarre at least, if not downright crazy and wholly unorthodox. Such impressions, in turn, would lead students to accept uncritically arguments such as those made by Philip Jenkins in *The Next Christendom* that non-Western Christianity is a potentially dangerous, at times fanatical expression of the faith.⁵ In this case, a rather straightforward use of "technology" that is urged upon me by my own discipline of missiology undercuts another principle of that discipline, which is to try to understand

various expressions of the Christian faith as much as possible from the “inside” before entering into dialogue and mutual edification and mutual criticism with sisters and brothers in the faith. If I do not have an hour to unpack the video segment of the Jericho Christian Church in Zion, then I believe it is better for me not to show the video and rely on a straight lecture instead, where I can raise important issues, caveats, and explanations with regard to African Initiated Churches. In this case, I need to use modern technology with a third tenet of our discipline in mind, and that is that culture is to be used discriminately in living out the Christian faith. In other words, we always need to ask whether we are using various tools and aspects of our culture to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to live a life worthy of that Gospel and of the reign of God proclaimed by Christ.

Keeping perspective on what technology can and cannot do

Thus, how we use technology depends not only on our context, on the tools available to us in that context, and on our own proficiency and levels of comfort in using those tools but also on the fundamental assumptions and tenets of our scholarly discipline. I am relatively new to the process of exploring possible connections between what I am teaching, how I teach it, and the role and use of particular technologies in the process of teaching a particular discipline. Yet it seems to me that the principle that technology should be appropriate to the subject matter at hand is not a new consideration but an ancient one. The rabbis, for example, have taught that the human voice is not an appropriate tool to utter the name of God, while the human hand can write it and the human eye may read it. Similarly, there is a strong Jewish (and Christian) tradition that the human eye cannot be used to gaze directly upon God (or the glory of the Lord), even though the voice can talk about it. In more contemporary discussions with colleagues, I know there is a hesitancy among some homiletics and liturgiologists, at least, to have pictures and images accompanying sermons. I, as a teacher of evangelism and as an heir to the Victorian missionary who for decades used the “magic lantern” all around the world, really cannot appreciate that objection. Discussions such as these lead me to believe that decisions about using particular technologies or their products are not simply practical or even pedagogical ones, and our disciplines have a role in helping us decide what tools to use in our teaching, and how to use them. This moves us beyond fascination with technological or any other resource to the heart of what we have been called to do.

Arun W. Jones is associate professor of mission and evangelism at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas, and teaches courses on mission and evangelism as well as on the church in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

ENDNOTES

1. A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 633. A Roman Catholic source defines missiology as “a multidisciplinary

branch of theology which studies the mission of the Church in all its aspects" in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 2003), vol. 9, 676.

2. For my purposes, the best exposition of this foundational principle in missiology is found in Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in the Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 3–54.

3. Gene Lowry, *Jazz and Christianity*, performed by Gene Lowry and Milt Abel (bass), recorded live at the 1995 conference of the Association of Unity Churches, Unity Village, MO, compact disc produced by Soundrek.

4. Of course, words can also be used for aesthetic purposes, most notably in poetry; what I am getting at is the difference between apprehension through cognitive analysis and apprehension through aesthetics.

5. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Using Film to Teach Theology

Linda Mercadante

The Methodist Theological School in Ohio

ABSTRACT: A twenty-year experiment with film started with a new professor's desperate effort to connect with students and lessen their anxiety about theology. The author began developing this pedagogical tool with only meager equipment, little expertise, and hardly any existing research or readings about it. Now, however, advanced technology, useful texts, grants, research, and increasingly media-savvy students have helped her refine the technique. In addition, she now teaches ministerial students to use film as a springboard for theological discussion in their churches.

It was hard looking at thirty pairs of eyes, giving me that “deer in the headlights stare,” at our first session of Introduction to Theology. But they were new at seminary. They thought theology was hard, like math. They were a little afraid of it, weren’t sure they needed it, and figured my class was something they’d simply have to endure before doing what really mattered—ministering to the hurting and needy. I realized right way that my course was not going to be fun for anyone unless I could tap into the imaginations and the hearts of these students.

It was twenty years ago, and I was brand new at The Methodist Theological School in Ohio. My students at that time were mostly Midwesterners from rural or suburban backgrounds. Although many were adult learners with much life experience, most had not traveled extensively or grown up with much ethnic diversity. And although many were active in the church, few had any serious religious education, much less theology. In contrast, and without meaning to put them off, I nevertheless may have come across as an intimidating East Coast person, with a shiny new PhD from Princeton; a strange mixed-faith, mixed-ethnic background; and a subject matter that might threaten their faith. But they were deeply dedicated believers, and I wanted to connect with them, put them at ease, and open a window to theological reflection.

I had always loved movies. In fact, my head usually swarmed with scenes and clips and dialogue that, to me, illustrated abstract concepts and meaningful insights. Surely my students were film-goers, too. So, right there, that first day, desperately searching for a connection point, I got the idea to ask what films and scenes stood out in their memory . . . and why. We had no fancy equipment—no equipment at all, in fact—so we could not illustrate our points. But I was convinced that scenes etched on memory—even if not accurate, or especially if not accurate, because of how their minds had played with them—were windows into my students’ souls, just as they were to mine.

The students were taken aback by this strange direction, but they warmed to it and began to participate enthusiastically. The films and scenes they chose—classics like *It’s a Wonderful Life*, science fiction like *Star Wars*, or drama like *The Color Purple*—told me more about their hopes, fears, dreams, and vi-

sions than any more direct approach. I shared some of my most memorable scenes, too, and together we explored how everyday conversation and actions can have profound theological import if one takes the time to look for it. With this insight into my students, I was then able to begin showing them how theology is simply “faith seeking understanding,” having to do with meaning, life and death, hope and transcendence, things that many films treat also. The class ended well that day and the students began to think theology might be relevant after all. Thus was born, out of desperation, a teaching technique that I have used continually ever since.

I soon realized that more than one problem was being addressed by this approach. Not only did theology become less frightening and more accessible to my students—paving the way for an openness to traditional texts and questions—but this technique proved invaluable with adult learners. Often years away from their last academic degree, with rusty study skills, some impatience with traditional pedagogy, and holding tight to their faith stance, our students made it especially hard to guide them from their implicit (or embedded) theology to self-reflective (or deliberative) theology. Using film as a discussion starter helped smooth this transition. Analyzing the life choices and situations of characters on the screen, discussing the perspective of the filmmaker and the trajectory of the story line helped us realize how many of the “big questions” implicitly inform or guide our actions. Students began to see how, in order to bring this to the surface, interpretation and intention are necessary when applying theology to life or extracting theology from life.

One characteristic discussion happened about the film *Forrest Gump* (1994). I was not especially fond of this box-office hit, but students insisted it was all about providence and the leading of God. They defended this view by pointing to the image of the feather floating through several scenes and the way Forrest always seemed to be involved in historic events. A few objected, asking whether the film images were in fact about the Spirit’s guiding breath or simply implying life was random, deterministic, or even ultimately pointless. This debate opened the way for us to examine historic and contemporary Christian positions on this topic.

In retrospect, my desperate technique may have had the hubris of youth, for although I loved films and knew many, I had only taken one course in the field of filmmaking in my entire educational career. But my technique was in service of pedagogical and theological goals. Because of that, at the outset, it didn’t matter that I wasn’t a trained film critic or someone with advanced skills in film studies. It didn’t matter that we had only the most rudimentary equipment for this work. It didn’t matter that the class never made it to the high plane of “art” films but discussed everyday, popular box-office hits. And I barely noticed that there were virtually no texts or articles on film and theology, which meant we were flying blind into this new interdisciplinary world. None of this mattered at the outset because I had a specific theological purpose in mind and simply needed a pedagogical tool that would help me accomplish it.

In fact, at first I couldn’t even explain why this tool seemed to work so well. Now, years later, having done research in the field, spent several sabbati-

cals studying it, writing articles,¹ getting up to date in technology, and using the technique with a variety of church and secular audiences, I understand much more.

Why does film work?

I now realize that film is an effective way to cut through the impasse caused by the perceived distance between theology and life. There are many reasons for this. Film has become a common parlance in our culture, less likely constrained by class, culture, and age divisions than literature or other meaning-makers. It is our communal “dream factory,” comparable to what myth and storytelling have been for other cultures. Film is important because it engages a wide audience, cuts to the heart of issues quickly, and provides an accessible meeting place. This medium can project our lived reality in a way that enables us to see it from a different perspective. It is no longer, if it ever was, “merely” entertainment. Although there is a legitimate pleasure principle involved, there is more. Film feels especially satisfying because it takes the jumbled, unclear reality we live in and endows it with an aura of order and meaning.

In fact, it is so effective at this that for many—even churchgoers—it can take over the purview of religion (i.e., providing a source of values, comfort, and guidance in identity and character formation). There is almost a facsimile of worship here as viewers sit in the dark with others, keep a “reverent” silence, and stare at a focal point together. Of course, film can also spread a cultural hegemony as effectively as any missionary enterprise. Even when the language is not well understood or subtitles are inadequate, much is communicated through sound, picture, and effects.

It is not stretching the point to suggest film functions for many as a type of “folk” or “vernacular” religion. Why, for instance, is the classic film *It’s a Wonderful Life* shown repeatedly on television every Christmas even though when it first came out it bombed at the box office? One reason could be that it insists that our life has value even when we can’t see it. This has become an especially important message in an age that has lost its consensus on the meaning of life.

We are all affected by this “religious” quality of film, especially those with fewer resources for meaning-making or those especially charmed by this medium. Film has become increasingly dominant in the shaping of values, goals, and character as Western society looks less to traditional religions for this function. Yet although film is persuasive and clearly influenced by economic, racial, gender, class, political, and entertainment considerations, it is not solely manipulative. Audiences are not merely passive sponges. Instead, audience analyses prove that film can be appropriated in various ways. Meaning is made through interaction. Here is where theology can hook back in, but are we capitalizing on this opportunity?

The uneasy relationship of theology and film

There are some inherent problems that might stop us. Until recently, graduate religious education has ignored the field of film criticism/studies in the same way as the field of film criticism/studies has shown very little interest in religion (and none in theology). But even when we in theological education do use film, we have tended toward the more artistic films rather than bothering with the popular ones, assuming them to be shallow or sensationalistic (thus Ingmar Bergman or Fellini, rather than Scorsese or Spielberg, and certainly not Disney). In addition, film's realism makes it a hard place to portray the intangible aspects on which religion focuses. (How well can you portray a heavenly vision, divine guidance, or the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist, for example?) And then there are the practical difficulties of using film smoothly and efficiently in existing classrooms—often poorly equipped or with lack of trained help—or in courses having other heavy demands on class time.

But more specifically, many have hesitated to use film as a source for theological reflection. Again the reasons are understandable. We receive specialized training revolving around written texts, not visual or oral media. We often develop the habit of dividing cultural expression into high and low forms. Many contemporary movies are considered rather plebian. We have a legitimate fear of losing the distinctiveness of our message, and, especially for Protestants, we inherit a suspicion of images and idolatry in favor of word. But this hesitancy has become counterproductive, especially in a culture moving toward a "second orality"² where sound, voice, image, and gesture are reunited with word. Because theology is part of culture, too, we need to take more seriously and engage more fully vernacular expressions of faith. Theology and the other "heritage" disciplines cannot afford to ignore the influential medium of film if we seek to regain a place at the table of meaning-making in our culture.

In fact, this medium presents clear advantages in linking our fields and the broader culture. The need for innovative approaches to teaching foundational subjects will only increase as students come with little preparation, much apprehension, and many fields to master while in seminary. While this is quite true for adult learners, for younger students already immersed in the second orality, such an approach is a necessity rather than simply an aid. Links to traditional resources asking core questions similar to those concerning society today also need to be developed, so students can connect contemporary insights with their Christian heritage.

Film is not as alien to religion as we may at first think, for images have always been important to faith. Today people get their images from media, film, television, ads, magazines, etc. rather than from the walls of cathedrals—their mental images often more from country music than from sermons. Nevertheless, meaning is conveyed by film (although we may not always agree with that meaning) but—it is crucial to realize—meaning is also *made*. We need to be there as meaning is constructed with this material. The field of theology in particular needs to take advantage of such a place of meaning-making in order to make its insights accessible.

Film helps us compassionately appreciate how in a culture where there is a paucity of traditional and religious resources for many people, grace may still be present in very idiosyncratic ways as people draw from many sources, including popular film, to derive meaning for life. (I've heard more than one example of a film like *Rocky* giving someone the courage to try a difficult task.) We also fail in the evangelistic and apologetic task if we can't see this and build on it. Finally, we need to learn to separate the moral and aesthetic elements in film, which is a problem on both sides. We may hesitate to use a film—no matter how well made or pleasureable—that seems to champion an amoral approach to life. And critic/filmmakers' fear of moralism can make them loath to consider being guided by moral issues in a film. Moral reductionism can exist on either side.

Studying film has another advantage for seminary students, professors, and congregations: it gives us a window into how the culture has regarded religion, ministers, and traditional theological ideas. Just compare the portrayal of priests from *Boys Town* (1938) to *The Boys of St. Vincent* (1992). Or note how the minister in *Contact* (1997) is made to seem completely ineffectual as he tries to comfort the child whose father has just died. Film and religion have had an uneasy relationship from the beginning. In a way they have been competitors for the hearts and minds of contemporary people. Film has looked at religion and religion has looked at film, and both have kept an arm's length away. Over the decades since film became a key social phenomenon, the relationship of religion and film has varied between cooperation, using, and opposing each other, depending upon the respective cultural power of each. The one thing we have kept in common, however, is that both religion and film are frequently engaged with questions of meaning, value, and sometimes even morality.

Because of our sometimes oppositional relationship, students can come with a very suspicious view of movies and the film industry. I have had several students refuse to see a film the rest of the class has chosen (*Dogma* [1999] being a typical example) because they were afraid it would harm their faith. This is a teachable moment but also something a seminary teacher will have to deal with at the outset, before his or her use of film will be productive in the classroom. Pointing to the meaning-making that is so key to film's role in culture today, is one way to do this. Extracting the theological import of certain appropriate films (and not necessarily explicitly religious films, either) is another way. Much can be gained by reading some works on the religious nature of film.³

Lessons and mistakes

Through making film an integral part of my theology courses from the beginning of my teaching, I learned much about our students' thought processes and theologies. Theology became more accessible and connected to real life. However, I wasn't satisfied to stay with the basic quality of my initial technique. My uneasiness began as I realized our students seemed either overly uncritical or overly critical of film. Students often found "Christ fig-

ures" everywhere (sometimes any leading character with outstretched arms or someone victimized; for example, the murderer on death row in *Dead Man Walking* [1995]) or ignored ones that did not fit expected formulas (such as the German woman tourist in *Bagdad Café* [1990]). They prematurely baptised films as "Christian" (often ones where some good prevailed), were sometimes more enthusiastic about films that simply entertained, or were satisfied with formulaic treatments of difficult issues.

Perhaps it was because this was a theology class. For even when I dissuaded them, students seemed compelled to force comparisons and analogies with Christian themes and stories (seeing too many Christ figures, giving the filmmaker too much credit for having an explicit theological agenda, applying biblical categories and stories where they really don't fit). Sometimes students gave a sort of Gnostic cast to the task of film interpretation, assuming the "real" meaning of the film was only available to those who understand the theological categories.

Conversely, there were those who felt compelled to reject—to greater or lesser degree, depending on their theory of Christ and culture—those films that did not conform to their theology or that they felt did not have any theology at all. One class chose *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971) as an ideal candidate for theological discussion. But when it came time to choose a key scene, some students in our addiction counseling degree program chose the tavern celebration of the engagement of Tevye's daughter to a much older village man. Students played the clip of the Jewish men drinking and dancing, insisting this was proof of their debauched, alcoholic immoral behavior. I didn't know whether to worry first about potential anti-semitism in their analysis or about their over-reading of addiction into everything. But we eventually moved our conversation to the filmmakers' use of stereotypes, how contemporary Jews might view this film, and how Christianity has treated Judaism over the years. It was a very teachable moment.

Other students focused too much on the manipulative and commercial aspects of film, thus missing the ways it might be used positively to transmit values to people or ways in which viewers themselves can use film as a resource in the creation of meaning. In every class, part of my practice was to collaborate with the class on the films we chose to analyze. I saw this as a clue to their theologies but also as a better way to engage them in the process than simply assigning films I thought were "important." The same problems cropped up here, but by making the process open, learning happened.

Oftentimes I gave an assignment for students to use film with their congregations. The results were mixed. In some churches, this led to exciting theological discussion. In others, students, although eager to connect with culture and use modern media, failed interpretively by falling back on simplistic sermon illustrations. Using isolated clips in worship—a practice I did not encourage—they sometimes ended up distracting congregants, getting hung up on technology and expense, "proof-texting" the clip, or disrupting the flow of their sermons. When film was restricted to small group sessions, it worked better, but even so only some students were able to get behind a church group's acceptance or rejection of a particular film, much less congregants' often finding

film in general more satisfying than worship. While these experiences were sometimes frustrating or puzzling to students, they also encouraged further research and theological reflection on the power of media, image, genre, and filmic convention.

It was inevitable that we would commit several interpretive and strategic errors. Although we were all sophisticated viewers—as is much of the world—most of us were unaware of film techniques, tending to regard film uncritically or, conversely, with great suspicion. We often brought a predetermined theological agenda to it, did not understand filmic conventions, were unaware how technical aspects influenced our interpretations, and were only vaguely cognizant of the commercial considerations. Through this process, I learned that such a cross-disciplinary foray needs to be done with some care if it is to be credible and useful. Students need to be taught that

- some films are frankly more amenable than others to theological engagement;
- it is counterproductive to impose predetermined theological categories or arrive with a largely catechetical goal;
- there will always be a diversity of interpretation;
- we cannot expect meaning to be expressed in traditional vocabulary.

Therefore, simply giving students “permission” to use film with congregations is not enough. It is necessary to teach this technique *to* them, not just use it *on* them and expect them to get it.

But I have also learned to trust my students’ instincts. Sometimes they see things I have missed or allow engagement to proceed in ways well suited to their congregations, even if I find the theological interpretations unsatisfactory. Using a cultural marker film like *The Matrix* was a good choice for a student who worked part-time as a youth minister, especially because his youth group insisted it was a Christian film. The student built upon his youths’ enthusiasm rather than dampening it as he would have by simply showing how the film conveys a conglomerate of very mixed, often conflicting, messages from various spiritual perspectives. By allowing the youths to defend their point of view—at the same time challenging them to learn the religious perspective of their own and other traditions—our student provoked them to deepen their theological abilities.

In our experiments we learned that, far from being passive sponges, audiences create meaning when they view films. Similar to Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons,” much depends on what viewers bring with them and how they interact with the film content. So when I judged my students’ film choices, the fault was sometimes mine, and I had to learn to appreciate how seemingly trite themes or predictable genre treatments can tap into deep, valid human longings.

Despite the mistakes and hard lessons, I continue to use film and am enthusiastic about it. When done with care, a guided approach to film connects with “lived experience,” elicits core questions, and makes persons more able to “hear” traditional texts and positions on these subjects. Students become

enthusiastic about theological discussion and begin engaging friends, family, and congregants in the work with little prompting. Once students become comfortable in making good film choices and connecting them with core issues, they have a ready, popular, and affordable vehicle for promoting theological discussion in the local church.

Taking it further

There is no way to stand still in this work. Over the years, students have become increasingly media savvy, my own audience has expanded beyond the bounds of the seminary, research is growing rapidly, and many technological developments need to be mastered so we can use film even more effectively. I have had to keep up with the expanding conversation on religion and film, learn new equipment, participate in conferences, write journal articles, and test the technique on increasingly diverse audiences.

Especially helpful was the sabbatical I spent as Visiting Scholar in Media and Theology at New College, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and at the Interdisciplinary Center for Social Communications at The Gregorian (Rome)⁴ made possible by grants from Louisville Institute and The Association of Theological Schools. Given the considerably different theological attitudes toward the use of images in Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions, there were great advantages in observing both approaches.

Besides participating in classes, I conducted many film discussion groups with international audiences who taught me much about meaning-making. These groups helped me realize that it is hubris to simply bemoan the determinative effect of U.S. concepts and film on non-Western people. Instead, I met many internationals who were well aware of U.S. media dominance yet showed tremendous self-determination, resilience, and unexpected interpretations of these American exports. They also introduced me to their own initiative in creating distinctive filmic expressions of their own cultural issues.

While I continue to lead many film discussion groups and give presentations at churches, the most culturally adventurous thing I have done is to present a film discussion series to a secular audience on a cruise. Although this was not exactly a hardship assignment, it was intellectually challenging because I wanted to test my theory that film functions like religion for many today and, as such, should be a springboard to theological discussion. Teaching on a rolling deck during a storm required effort, but the experiment proved successful. By the fourth session, we were using such films as *Contact* and *The Matrix* to discuss such things as the existence of God, teleology, and life after death.

Teaching methodology

In my doctrinal courses, such as Christology, film is not considered until after the foundational aspects are mastered. But I have found that students refine their theological insights by analyzing cultural attitudes toward Christ as expressed in film from different decades. Recently, the film *The Passion of the Christ* offered many opportunities to crack open the usually difficult subject of atonement theories with students, their congregations, and adult groups.

In Christology, I usually offer a small selection of films for students to choose from in making their presentations. We separate these into “Jesus Films” and “Christ Figure” films, focusing on both male and female Christ figures. But I am also ready for suggestions, and students have surprised me with the creativity of their ideas. In these mid-level classes, film analysis is one possibility as a final project option. Some other classes, such as *The Doctrine of the Church*, are also amenable to the use of film. One can draw upon films with the theme of community, for existence (such as *Places in the Heart*) or use films directly related to church such as *The Mission*.

In the upper-level Theology and Film class, I begin differently. I show a set of film clips, first with sound and then without, asking them to write reflections we then discuss. It is only in the Theology and Film course that we have time to study film as a genre, along with theological reflection on it.⁵ We learn about the influence of technical aspects (such as camera angle and lighting), ratings, commercial aspects, sociological context, history of film, types of film, and filmic conventions. Clips are used extensively, as well as directors’ cuts and textual resources from cinema studies. We also explore changing cultural attitudes toward religion as seen in film. Then we focus on theological themes with students doing weekly presentations, both individually and in groups. They illustrate with film clips and provide contextual background. Projects are thematic, doctrinal, historical, or focus on a particular film. We use foreign films when we are prepared to reflect on how such films illustrate other cultures’ values and beliefs. In each course, I encourage students to draw from the growing Internet resources on film.

Other assignments can include contextual research on the time period when the film was made, trying to “exegete” how this plays a role in the film’s meaning. Students also discuss actors as cultural role models and why certain ones are chosen in a given period, asking how much in this is commercial and ready-made. Papers can analyze one film, genre, or time in film history according to one or more core theological themes. Students can give a cultural critique of, for instance, Jesus in film through the decades or the changing quality of Christ figures. They can analyze the changing treatment of religion in film and discuss this in relation to cultural values. Oral presentations, with carefully chosen film clips, work well as an assignment, with the side benefit of giving visual learners an advantage.

Over time, my use of film in the teaching of theology has changed greatly. I no longer simply illustrate points with clips or use film as a springboard for discussion. Now we explore changes in religious sensibility, youth culture, and issues around truth, revelation, and perception. For theological education, learning to use modern media and technology is a challenge but probably not the most important one. More crucial, we need to deal with the changes in perception, spirituality, and communication that come along with this technology. We need to train viewers to better interact with modern media, rather than seeing them as passive recipients. We need additional ways to help seminaries and churches make electronic media a focus of theological work and engage others outside the church in this task.

Linda Mercadante, is professor of theology in the B. Robert Straker Chair of Historical Theology at The Methodist Theological School in Ohio and is ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Her most recent book is a spiritual memoir, *Bloomfield Avenue: A Jewish-Catholic Jersey Girl's Spiritual Journey* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 2006).

ENDNOTES

1. See, for example, Linda Mercadante "The God Behind the Screen: *Pleasantville* and *The Truman Show*," *The Journal of Religion and Film* 5, no. 2 (October 2001), www.unomaha.edu/~wwwjrf/truman.htm and "Bess the Christ Figure?: Theological Interpretations of *Breaking the Waves*," *The Journal of Religion and Film* 5, no. 1 (April 2001) www.unomaha.edu/jrf/bessthe.htm.
2. Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981; Binghamton, NY: Global Publications, 2000).
3. For instance, Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Ostwalt Jr. in *Screening the Sacred* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995) identify three main types of criticism that can be used when addressing religion and film: Mythological criticism looks for universal mythic archetypes, potentially defining religion in that way. Ideological criticism looks at the political and social effects of religion. And theological criticism focuses on specific religious traditions and belief systems.
4. Jolyon Mitchell in Edinburgh and Lloyd Baugh in Rome were especially helpful.
5. Some texts I have used in this class include: Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby, *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997); Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000); Clive Marsh and Gaye Ortiz, *Explorations in Theology and Film* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997); Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Ostwalt Jr., *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); John R. May, ed., *New Image of Religious Film* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1997).

Beyond Entertainment: A Rationale for the Pedagogy of Technology in the Classroom

Kenneth D. Snyder

*The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity
of the University of St. Thomas*

ABSTRACT: Assumptions about educational technology as impossibly complex for the average instructor or reserved for those who might like to experiment with a computer prevent faculty members from fully considering ways in which the use of computer technology can enhance the teaching-learning process. Even the adoption and adaptation of relatively small innovations like the use of course Web sites or thoughtful use of PowerPoint can respond in surprising ways to the needs of diverse learners while serving the intellectual and formative goals of a seminary classroom.

Long before I began using technology in the classroom, there was a sign on the back of my office door that I saw as I left the room. It simply read, "It's Showtime!" This reminded me to increase my energy and enthusiasm as I prepared to begin another day of class. As much as I dislike notions of teaching as entertainment, I am more effective as an educator when I can personally engage student interest through my own level of enthusiasm and through other means that capture their attention. This is not done at the expense of substantial content. However, what I learned years ago as a musician was that you can play all the right notes and still leave an audience uninspired by a lackluster performance. I found that to be true in my teaching as well, and my early forays into the use of technology were mostly an attempt to spice up the classroom experience, to add variety, zest, and even a little punch to my delivery of information. I quickly learned there were far greater benefits.

Making adoption of technology manageable

With more than a decade of experience in computer-enhanced instruction, I still consider my use of technology to be rather modest. I offer the story of my own odyssey for the novice instructor or perhaps even for the more seasoned professor who has yet to experiment with technology in the classroom. For many, using technology is a question of time and energy. Entry-level users must be willing to invest these precious commodities because course preparation initially will require greater effort. Others may have lingering questions of whether there is enough benefit to be gained to offset the investment of time. As a church historian, I have experimented with numerous applications of technology that have paid great dividends at both graduate and undergraduate levels. They have strengthened my overall effectiveness as an educator

and significantly improved the classroom experience of my students. Many of the methods that I have adopted can transfer quite easily to other theological disciplines. My first piece of advice for those willing to take the plunge: start with small steps and then build incrementally, gradually incorporating new uses of technology in subsequent offerings of a particular course.

The Web site

A valuable, yet manageable first step in my use of technology as a teaching aid was the development of course Web sites. More than anything, these began as repositories of information: copies of syllabi, course assignments, review sheets, and other general information in electronic form as a backup to the paper copies distributed in class. The Web sites, however, quickly expanded to include background information on reading assignments, links to related Internet sites, copies of PowerPoint presentations, or other visual aids used in class. Accessing course Web sites soon became a significant element in the students' preparation for class. The Web site enabled me to cover in advance much of the generic background on a given topic or reading. This increases the amount of time for substantive treatment of issues during contact hours in the classroom. Reflection questions also focus student attention on particular areas that I intend to emphasize, improving both the efficiency of their study time and the quality of class discussions. Unlike the experience of even a decade ago, today's students are accustomed to spending substantial time in front of a computer. Creative design of course material accessed online generally increases the amount of time, energy, and quality of effort they are willing to devote to their outside preparations for class.

Discussion boards

The electronic discussion board for "asynchronous chat" became another valuable Web site tool, especially for nontraditional undergraduates taking evening courses and for commuting students. Not only did it provide a way of building community and rapport among class participants, but the discussion board gave those who might otherwise be reluctant to contribute in class a way to share their insights in a less threatening manner. The greatest challenge was determining the ideal way to encourage student involvement by making contributions to the discussion board a graded requirement or completely optional. I experimented with different alternatives with varying levels of success. Rarely did I encounter problems with students failing to show respect for one another or for the diversity of opinions that were expressed. My stated expectation was that the electronic dialogue be an extension of the classroom experience and that people exercise the same decorum and courtesy that they would practice in person. I found it best to be open and flexible and not too prescriptive about the discussion board's content. My usual suggestion was that students use it to spark discussion on anything of interest or to ask questions on issues that we did not have time to discuss at length in class. This frequently yielded very fruitful and thought-provoking conversations.

It was also good practice to delay my own comments until after students had sufficiently weighed in on a matter, lest they consider the conversation closed once the instructor had spoken. Classes in which there was frequent and creative use of the discussion board were by far the most meaningful and enriching for students and for me. In my current position at a small Roman Catholic seminary with a residential student population, the discussion board is less beneficial. Students have ample opportunities to interact and exchange ideas on an almost continual basis, and the need for an electronic forum that encourages discussion outside of class is significantly diminished. Quite frankly though, I miss the lively debates that were often fueled within this medium, and I am convinced that it remains a powerful and effective tool for the exchange of ideas in other educational settings.

PowerPoint

For more advanced technology users, PowerPoint may be utterly passé, while for others it conjures up nightmares of darkened conference rooms and a droning voice reading word-for-word an endless series of truncated bullet points. We all have experienced bad uses of PowerPoint. Yet, I would argue that this resource can provide tremendous opportunities to engage students in ways that respond to different learning styles while enhancing the teaching and learning experience in the classroom. It has become, in fact, the primary means by which most educators bring technology into the classroom. Using PowerPoint to its best effect, however, requires considerable trial-and-error as one determines the best ways to use this tool based on a person's particular style of teaching.

My motives for using PowerPoint were largely self-serving. An aversion to chalk dust, frustration with perpetually dried-out whiteboard markers, and the desire to move about the classroom freely during lectures all contributed to the decision to organize lecture notes into PowerPoint slides. The immediate effect was better organization of my information and notable improvement in the clarity of its delivery. Although the overall outline of a class was readily apparent to me, it occasionally remained murky for students. Now the outline is more accurately and efficiently communicated through a series of prepared PowerPoint slides that act as a navigational roadmap for the day's material. I usually distribute copies of the outline view of the presentation so that students have before them the main points and structure of the lecture, making it easier for them to follow my train of thought and to see how various elements interconnect. This has had the added benefit of freeing students from the need to write down all of the pertinent information. This in turn facilitated a noticeable improvement in classroom dynamics as students engaged in more active listening and frequent participation in class discussions. PowerPoint outlines can also act as a convenient tether back to the prepared lesson plan should discussion stray too far from the main content. The danger, however, is becoming a slave to one's agenda. As more students bring laptops into the classroom, I have added the practice of supplying the PowerPoint presentations for them, either via a thumb drive that makes its way around the room or as a download

from the course Web site. This is not just an added convenience for the students, but an asset to the learning process as it improves on moving meaningful information from instructor to student. Finally, because I provide students with copies of the information, I frequently and deliberately ignore or violate what many would contend are the accepted rules for PowerPoint slides concerning font size, number of lines, the amount of information on a single slide, and/or the amount of time a slide is shown during the presentation. For example, if a particular class calls for the discussion of a lengthy quote from a primary source, I will project this on the screen even if it is a bit difficult to see from the last row, knowing that students can consult the hard copy I have given them. I would argue that the use of PowerPoint in the classroom is significantly different from that of a sales pitch or a boardroom presentation, and therefore worthy of a different set of guidelines. As with any resource or tool, teachers should determine what works most effectively for their particular circumstances and not be too quickly swayed to adopt someone else's criteria.

Visualization of content

All words and no images make for dull presentations. After producing outlines of lectures, I search for ways to enhance delivery with visual content. Accustomed to receiving visual stimuli in almost every context, students will generally respond more readily if verbal elements are accompanied by images. Many students are visual learners and process and recall information much more effectively if it can be charted graphically or illustrated in some way. For those with other learning styles, visual aids may still be beneficial by providing a different perspective or additional information that augments their understanding of an idea. We do a disservice to our students, and perhaps even handicap the learning of a great number of them, if we limit ourselves to a teaching style that is exclusively verbal or auditory. Merely decorative additions to PowerPoint presentations may at first seem gratuitous; however, their inclusion may be the key to drawing attention to an important detail. Ideally, most if not all visual images should serve a specific instructional purpose.

Historians, of course, are fond of timelines, but these can be effectively used in other disciplines as well. Timelines not only date persons and events, but they also provide a very succinct way of highlighting the concurrence or sequencing of episodes and the progression of developments or trends over time. Moving beyond timelines, many topics lend themselves to summaries or overviews that can be represented in charts or diagrams. Just as a large corporation might use an organizational chart to depict the flow of information within its bureaucracy or the chain of command for decision-making, theologians can illustrate relationships between concepts in a visual diagram that captures in a single glimpse what might take pages of text to explain. Many theological developments occur as the result of interaction between different ideas or the culmination of a series of events, and visual diagrams can demonstrate the intricacies of these correlations in concise and insightful ways. I have designed numerous charts to visually clarify complex issues including: the early development of Christological doctrine, cosmologies found in

Gnostic texts, the causes and effects of the East-West schism, the influence of different religious traditions on the formation of Christianity in diverse parts of the world, the relationships between liturgical families and denominational groups, and many, many more.

Diagrams and charts have become essential teaching tools as I seek to respond to different learning styles in an age of media savvy and visually oriented students. Imbedded in PowerPoint presentations, they are an integral part of the classroom lecture rather than a mere decoration or a simple handout that is given to the students to decipher on their own. Although a more traditional drawing on the chalkboard or a transparency with an overhead projector could provide similar content, computer-generated graphics make more efficient use of class time and can have the added advantage of using animation, color, or the superimposing of other images and information to emphasize more vividly and actively a particular idea or interpretation. The creation of these images is not accomplished overnight; their design and production require considerable time and creative energy. Some of my charts are fifteen years in the making, with ongoing modifications and amendments as I think of better or more effective ways to represent a particular idea. But here again, modern technology makes it easier to incorporate alterations on an ongoing basis.

Enhancing integration

Perhaps the greatest advance in my teaching as a result of the use of technology has been the integration of a fully interdisciplinary approach in all of my courses. Through an extensive array of visual images including maps, photographs, drawings, audiovisual recordings, or linking to outside texts and resources on the Internet, I regularly bring into the classroom the contributions of archeology, geography, art history, architecture, numismatics, music, literature, theater, film, genealogy, and cultural anthropology. Although not an expert in all of these areas, I introduce students to the myriad ways that other disciplines can inform and complement their study of theology and church history. Colleagues in other theological subdisciplines have had comparable success when they have adopted a similar approach.

Incorporation of a variety of perspectives and insights broadens our understanding of the connection of theological studies to other areas of life and academic interest. It further increases the likelihood that students with varied individual tastes will be more thoroughly engaged and drawn to deeper inquiry of the course material. In my current role of preparing others for public ministry, I believe this approach also creates well rounded and informed individuals who will be able to relate to the people they serve on a variety of levels. So-called smart classrooms permit easy access and retrieval of much of this information and its transmission or display within the immediate context of a lecture or discussion, thereby reinforcing the applicability and value of a multidisciplinary approach. Many of the links I make to other disciplinary resources would be little more than a casual reference or a passing remark were I not able to bring these ideas to life and center stage through the use of technology in the classroom.

Technology's role in developing resources

Although I continue to develop and improve upon the resources for in-class presentations, my attention and efforts are once again moving out of the classroom and back into cyberspace. I hope to design more online instruments that will not only assist the students enrolled in my courses, but also be of interest to the wider community. For students, I am constructing additional ways to review material with podcast technology or other new software that will deliver shorthand versions or audio/visual summaries of class presentations. For the wider community, I am developing standalone modules that could be accessed online by anyone via the Internet (alumni, clergy, parish staff, or curious parishioners) as short tutorials in various areas of church history and historical theology. These will make use of many of the same methods and lessons I have learned through years of tinkering with technology in the classroom. In this way, the mission and expertise of the educational institution can extend beyond the walls of the seminary to fulfill a need for quality and accessible adult education in the wider church.

The use of technology in the classroom and across the educational experience has tremendous advantages for improving the learning process. Whether the starting point for one's consideration is the needs and learning style of students or the desire of the instructor to be a more organized and effective teacher, sound educational practice includes use of the tools such as those I have described. While other, more sophisticated and advanced means are available, I have found these simple tools to be an effective entry point for those wanting to experiment with the use of technology. They do not require an inordinate amount of personal expertise or technical support from one's institution (although a certain amount of the latter is necessary). They do require a desire to enrich student learning and perhaps the courage to move away from what is familiar or comfortable toward a new way of teaching.

Although it is probably true of individuals in other academic areas, theologians seem to be the last to discover the richness and value of innovative teaching skills, many of which require some use of modern technological advances. Convictions about traditional methods and objects of study that are inextricably tied to *written* texts may inhibit or preclude an interest in visual aids or other computer-enhanced techniques. Hopefully, this brief and personal description of my experience with the early stages of technology adoption will encourage others to explore even in modest ways how technology might contribute to their teaching practice. Encouraging students to use multiple senses in the learning process or tapping into our own personal creativity should not be interpreted as mere entertainment, but good, solid, sensible and effective pedagogy.

Kenneth D. Snyder is assistant professor of church history at The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Information Technology for Theological Education at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Elizabeth Van Kleeck

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary began in 1997, with a grant from the Lilly Endowment, to plan and implement the Information in Theological Teaching project, to integrate information technology into teaching and learning in its basic ministerial programs. The faculty was consulted to identify teaching challenges that might be addressed with information technology, including how to convey a large amount of information, particularly in introductory classes; how to introduce complex ideas; how to involve students in building knowledge; how to increase participation in classes; and how to increase communication in large classes. Workshops, seminars and faculty incentive grants helped spread solutions that were found in one area or discipline to others in the institution. Most important lessons learned were in the areas of providing student access to the tools of information technology, modeling of technology use by faculty, and training and support.

"... Technology merits a place in the theological educational process not because it is there but because it supports the purposes of theological education."¹

Where we started

In 1997, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (LPTS) and twenty-nine other theological schools received grants from Lilly Endowment, in cooperation with the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, to integrate information technology into theological teaching. At that time, we had a rudimentary network and there were computers on a few desktops. Any multimedia equipment used for teaching was stored in the library and moved to classrooms as necessary by library staff. Email was used sparingly and only by administrators.

As we began planning for the project, we felt it was important to "... first tend to the pedagogical and theological challenges and potentials ..." and then to "... shape the technology to [our] purposes, rather than being distracted or even derailed by the technology,"² a strategy suggested for all theological schools by Raymond B. Williams, president of Wabash Center. So the first step in implementing the Information Technology for Theological Teaching (ITTT) project was to initiate conversations with faculty about teaching challenges that might be addressed with information technology.

Once we had decided on the teaching challenges to address, we created the infrastructure and support services to meet those challenges: a campus-wide network that provides access to email and the Internet, laptop computers for faculty, equipment for digital multimedia presentations and Internet connectivity in all classrooms, a faculty technology center, and a permanent position to provide training and support for faculty in their use of IT for teaching. A permanent position to provide on-call classroom support and continual maintenance of equipment was added two years later.

Teaching challenges identified

Challenge

How to convey a large amount of information, particularly in introductory classes, when there is a wide difference in ability in languages and/or background knowledge of the Bible, writing ability, and analytical ability.

Our solutions

Offer multiple ways of accessing information, both in class and outside of class, providing more learning opportunities for students with all levels of ability and experience. As Van B. Weigel suggests in his preface to *Deep Learning for a Digital Age*, use technology to “enrich and extend the student’s exploration of new territory.”³

Elements of biblical Hebrew

Hebrew is a required first-year course that meets three times a week. The professor used Microsoft PowerPoint for lectures and to display the words and music of Hebrew songs students sang in class, bolstering familiarity with words and syntax.

The group also practices reading from the “big screen,” allowing students to read and listen at the same time and to focus as a group.

In order to accommodate multiple learning styles and to increase access to materials, the professor digitally recorded audio clips of vocabulary, compressed them, inserted them into Microsoft Word, and posted the documents at the Blackboard course site. She also produced a series of audio CDs, made available to students at cost in the seminary bookstore.

Student evaluations including such comments as “We couldn’t have done this course without the PowerPoint presentation” show that the professor was using technology to teach in a new way, a way that would have been impossible without computers.

Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT)

The MFT program requires that students learn a large body of material in order to pass licensing examinations. To meet this challenge, a professor uses

PowerPoint to organize lecture notes, creates programmed learning on CDs, and makes materials available over the Internet.

In class, he finds that using PowerPoint not only helps him “chunk” lecture notes for presentation but also gives students who are hesitant to contribute in class more time for thought and, thus, stimulates discussion.

He converts his PowerPoint lecture notes to PDF (Adobe portable document format), burns them to a CD, and then makes the CDs available to students. He has also converted the files to rich text format to post at a Blackboard course site. These techniques make review materials available in class and also on the Internet with standard word processing software or free downloads. He finds that offering class materials this way has not reduced attendance but has freed students from writing frantically during class and enabled them to engage and interact more, leading to a much higher level of discussion.

Another strategy to teach a large amount of material is his use of WinFlash software to set up practice tests on CDs, which are made available to students on the first day of class. His exams randomly choose from practice test questions, and he has found that those who use the practice tests score higher on exams than those who don't.

This professor also uses a digital voice recorder, provided by Library and Information Technology Services, to record lectures for Doctor of Ministry students. The lectures are recorded in Windows Media Audio format and then burned to CD for distribution through the mail.

Christian Historical and Theological Studies (CHATS)

LPTS church history faculty feels that its field benefits especially from being visualized and, therefore, lends itself to the use of digital multimedia. In the CHATS introductory class, a professor uses PowerPoint to display maps, art, architecture, and timelines to add a different dimension to teaching and to help create a starting point for students who come to seminary with limited biblical knowledge and experience. The images make graphic concepts or places and can even help convey the humanity of Christ.

Our faculty recognizes that there is not only a wide difference in abilities of seminary students but also in economic privilege. The use of images in a digital slide show helps to lessen those differences—those who have not had the opportunity to see the Sistine Chapel or to visit the Mediterranean can be given a clearer idea of the starting point of the class—a sense of place.

Evangelism and mission

Christianity and World Religions used a Blackboard course site, enabling the professor to contact her students before they even came to campus to alert them to online readings meant to prepare them for class discussions. Word documents created on the professor's laptop were converted to rich text format before they were posted, enabling students to access them with any word processing software.

For Evangelism and Modern Society, the professor wanted students to share journal entries with one another. Although there were only nine students, each made ten to eleven journal entries; without the use of a Blackboard course site, the volume of paper would have made this instructional strategy awkward if not impossible.

The short time a five-day J-Term (January) class meets face-to-face made it even more important to use the Web to support class activities. Eleven students in the Women Doing Mission Theology class wrote book reviews, saved them in rich text format, and posted them in a discussion forum. This process enabled students to use one another's papers as research for their class projects and for large amounts of text to be shared without taking extra time and wasting paper. The professor felt it would be almost impossible to distribute that volume of material in any other way. She had done a J-Term class before and wasn't eager to do one again, but the Blackboard tools have made it possible for her to accomplish her teaching goals. She now will teach short J-Term classes but not without Blackboard.

This professor feels using a Web site for classes creates an "openness," a place everyone in the class can get to. She used technology to communicate and to transcend boundaries.

Challenge

Very complex ideas are difficult to convey. Students seem to gain from actually taking part in the building of the knowledge.

Our Solutions

Richard E. Mayer, in "Multimedia Learning: Are We Asking the Right Questions?" cites the hypothesis that "meaningful learning occurs when learners construct and coordinate multiple representations of the same material, including visual and verbal representations." He proposes a generative theory of multimedia learning in which the "knowledge constructor . . . actively selects and connects pieces of visual and verbal knowledge."⁴ Our faculty has noted the significant role of multimedia in conveying complex ideas, especially in Biblical Languages, Church History, and Pastoral Counseling.

Hebrew Exegesis

In Hebrew Exegesis, images of archeology, ancient culture, and timelines on PowerPoint slides can represent concepts—not just places or objects. Concepts that are hard to explain verbally can be pointed out visually on the big screen, with graphics helping to show ideas in relation to each other. This professor sees talking as a "narrow stream, one-dimensional way of communicating"⁵—she uses images to add another dimension.

Pastoral counseling

Digital video, diagrams on PowerPoint slides, and cartoons from the Web, either accessed from the Internet during class or downloaded, help students

understand the complex interactions taught in Family Therapy classes. Some examples are Monty Python clips from Monty Python's Completely Useless Web Site, <http://www.intriguing.com/mp/>, and short films and animations from www.Atom.com.

Basic preaching

In homiletics classes, instructors were queuing the VHS tape to the preaching examples they wanted to show, taking valuable class time moving between clips. We digitally captured portions of the VHS tape, producing video clips that were then presented in class on PowerPoint slides. This method allowed the instructor not only to save class time but also to easily stop midclip for a closer examination and even replay the clip in whole or in part.

Introduction to practical theology

Student contributions to the construction of knowledge during class are lost without a way to record them. LPTS does not record most classes, but instructors are equipped with laptop computers and word processing software. Typing student comments and questions into a word processing document and displaying them with the digital projector provided a way to save student contributions to stimulate further discussion.

Practices and Skills to Support a Parish Ministry

Students help to construct knowledge when they work collaboratively, either face-to-face or online. In an award-winning course—Practices and Skills to Support a Parish Ministry—LPTS combined the new idea of online discussion with the ancient monastic practice of *lectio divina*, or “sacred reading.” Students agreed the first day of class on a book of the Bible on which they would commit to reading and reflecting. They worked alone for four days of the week. Then, on the fifth day, they were required to post reflections of their reading in a Blackboard discussion forum. On the sixth day, they read one another's posts.

The professor observed a new level of sharing and accountability that “cannot happen face-to-face.” Overhearing one another's prayers brought a “surprisingly intimate” level of community, one that the Internet made possible. Students learned “more deeply and creatively.”⁶ Another benefit of online discussion suggested by Mary Hess of Luther Seminary is “. . . easing the pressure to perform that often attends such groups when run in real time.”⁷

Challenges

Communication is often difficult with very large classes, as there are more people to be out of sequence, out of town, ill, etc.

We need a way to invite students to pose questions about readings or assignments as they encounter concepts for which they would like clarification, to get in touch with the professor at the “learning moment.”

Our solutions

Email, class addresses, and Blackboard course sites have improved communication and provided a way for students who could not be present to review class materials and lectures. As professors provide more material online, and establish “office hours” via email, opportunities for student interaction with the professor and with one another around questions that arise outside the classroom are increased.

Large introductory classes such as Hebrew, Hebrew Exegesis, Greek, CHATS, and IPT use email extensively to communicate with students. Class addresses created each term on our server and publicized through email and on the LPTS Intranet provide a quick, efficient way for professors to reach students and for students to reach one another.

Blackboard Web course sites are used to post lectures, sample quizzes, assigned readings, links to Web sites for research, and homework assignments—a version of Steve Delamarter’s “virtual para-classroom.”⁸ The numbers of these sites have increased from just one in 1999 to sixteen in 2004–05, with 61 percent of LPTS students enrolled in Blackboard course sites and 28 percent of courses taught by full-time teaching faculty supported. In Hebrew, students who missed several days of class were able to keep up and even step right back in and pass quizzes because of the materials available to them through Blackboard.

A recent addition to our variety of methods of communicating with students is an MFT professor’s use of Yahoo! Groups for his nonlocal Doctor of Ministry students. This tool gives the professor and his distant students a more convenient and accessible way to communicate, without the need to request from administrators the creation of a Blackboard site.

Challenge

Scott Cormode, in his article on “Using Computers in Theological Education,” suggests exploring “multiple routes to teaching and learning.”⁹ We recognize that multimedia can be one of those routes, but multimedia for teaching is not easily available. Assembling a slide projector, slides, and a screen is time consuming and difficult to accomplish. The other alternative is passing around books, but that doesn’t allow students to experience and discuss the image simultaneously. Maps used for history courses are outdated and fragile.

Our solutions

Before the addition of multimedia equipment to our classrooms, a history professor had been using the awkward, cumbersome method of passing framed prints and art books around the room to include visual art in her theology and history classes. Once equipment for displaying digital multimedia had been installed in every classroom, she began inserting digital versions of the artwork onto PowerPoint slides, making it possible for a class to experience the artwork as a group. Reflecting on this new teaching technique, she said in 2002, “Given the impracticalities of sojourns in distant times and places . . . I continue to employ PowerPoint as a medium for incorporating visual art

into the classroom, recognizing all the while its tendency to produce a disembodied, decontextualized learning environment."¹⁰

An index of digital images, audio and video that can be found in our library and online, arranged by category and continually updated by Library and Information Technology Services staff, is posted at the LPTS Web site, along with permissions information. The Librarian for Academic Computing Support forwards to faculty URLs of new online collections of multimedia that may apply to their discipline.

In the early days of the grant, the library and IT funded the outsourcing of conversion of analog video and audio in formats that included LPs and cassette tapes to digital multimedia, including video of examples of preaching styles and music based on passages of Scripture. More recently, LITS Media Services has added staff, procured the hardware and software to do this work in-house, and now trains professors to capture, convert, and produce clips they need for classes.

Instruction is offered throughout the academic year and in summer workshops for Web searching, with special attention given to searching for multimedia. Once professors have learned how to locate high-quality multimedia, they can take advantage of instruction in image, audio, and video editing for use in PowerPoint, Windows XP, and Adobe Reader. One of the fastest-growing areas of multimedia use at LPTS is digital audio and video played from the Internet, CDs or DVDs.

Instruction is also offered throughout the year to faculty, staff, and students in the use of digital display hardware. Every classroom has multimedia capabilities, with projectors, DVD/VCR combos, lapel microphones, tape decks, and speakers in the larger rooms and XGA monitors and DVD/VCR combos in the smaller rooms. These capabilities, along with instructions for the use of the equipment, are posted at the LPTS Web site for easy access by faculty and support staff.

Our professors have told us that the equipment, training, and support offered by the seminary have made it possible for them to be more confident and spontaneous in their use of technology for teaching. A 2003 library and IT survey showed that 82 percent of our full-time teaching faculty had used information technology in their teaching, 100 percent used email, 59 percent used presentation software, and 53 percent used a Blackboard course site to supplement face-to-face classes. Seventy-one percent had used information technology in their classroom teaching.

Challenge

Writing on the blackboard requires simultaneous thinking, talking, writing, and spelling, and it means putting your back to the students.

Our solutions

Use of software, especially presentation software, with projectors or monitors allows for lectures to be prepared for presentation before class and for additions or modifications of materials during class. After experiencing problems with their own laptops in the classroom and needing to use a circulating

laptop from the library, several professors have begun backing up their presentation files to the network and even presenting from the network or from their own USB drives. This option helps to reassure them that their hard work in preparing for class will not be wasted because of last-minute equipment failures.

Seminary students, even the younger ones with good eyesight, have noted how much easier it is to see what professors are presenting when they use the projector instead of the blackboard or an overhead projector with transparencies.

Equipment for using multimedia in the classroom has also made possible simple, inexpensive solutions for hearing-impaired students. Instructors use lapel microphones, and a small FM transmitter is plugged into the mixer. The student is provided a digital FM tuner and instructed which frequency to tune to. A solution for smaller classrooms where there is no sound system is the Pocketalker Pro, a small personal amplifier carried by the student.

Challenge

Participation. In larger classes, six or seven people often do all the talking. The discrepancy in participation is a result both of some people not preparing and some people really enjoying talking.

Our solutions

Participation by those reticent to contribute in class is enhanced by the additional communication of email with the faculty member and other students. In addition, more visually oriented students will interact with material on the big screen, taking the opportunity to study the material longer than others in order to prepare for classroom discussion.

Palloff and Pratt report that research indicates that introverted students “will probably become more successful online, given the absence of social pressures that exist in face-to-face situations.”¹¹ Online discussions, like *lectio divina* in the Practices and Skills to Support a Parish Ministry course, may provide a way for these students to contribute more fully to the class conversation.

Seminars, incentive grants, and special projects

Information technology faculty seminars

The Library and Information Technology Services initiated Information Technology Seminars for faculty, which were scheduled several times during the academic year. These were facilitated by the librarian for academic computing support, and speakers were professors who demonstrated their use of IT for teaching. The speakers were chosen for their ability to transmit to others what they had done and to encourage others—we chose replicable strategies and techniques rather than those on the “cutting edge.”

Special projects

Professor Amy Plantinga Pauw received a grant for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion from Wabash Center for a project whose purpose was “. . . to explore new ways of teaching ecclesiology.” The goals of the project were “(1) to make vivid the centrality of practices in the life of the church, (2) to make extended use of PowerPoint software to draw in the images and sounds of the church’s ritual, music and nurture and outreach, and (3) to explore more generally the resources of the Internet and other modern media for teaching theology in academic settings.”¹² The result of the project, “The Church as a Community of Practice” was taught at LPTS in spring 2000.

Practices and Skills to Support a Parish Ministry

This course—Practices and Skills to Support a Parish Ministry—was conceived as a way to introduce students to the combination of technological skills and spiritual practices they will need for preaching, teaching, and administration in the parish. It is an overview of technical skills such as using electronic and Web-based tools for exegesis and research and creating PowerPoint presentations and congregational Web sites combined with the practice of maintaining a daily schedule of spiritual nurture with *lectio divina*. One of the most important emphases of this course is to help students understand how to continue these practices and skills on their own when they may no longer have access to an academic library or a technology consultant.

The practice of *lectio divina* not only provides the opportunity for spiritual nurture but also models for students how computers might create connections and community online and even support a collective memory for the group.

Doctor of Ministry

The Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree is a professional credential offered to persons who are already engaged in ministry and who wish to develop excellence in ministerial practice. Doctor of Ministry students are on campus for two weeks a year for a seminar, with a total of five seminars. In January 2006, we started posting online readings, experimenting with methods that would allow students with dial-up accounts to access the readings as easily as those with broadband connections. We found that scanning articles and small portions of books using Adobe Acrobat allowed us to compress the files enough to make them accessible over dial-up. For those that were too large to save the entire reading as a PDF, we scanned one page at a time, saved each page as a .jpeg, and then uploaded those images to a Blackboard Learning Unit so that each page had its own screen. The images were easy to print, one page at a time.

Dean David Hester was the first to create three different types of discussions for a DMin seminar. He based his plan on Palloff and Pratt’s idea in *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace* of promoting community by providing not only areas for work and reflection but also for “chit-chat” and more casual conversation.¹³ This design for seminar course sites has encouraged DMin students to keep in touch and support one another from widely distributed areas.

Faculty incentive grants

In 2001, the LPTS Information Technology Task Force invited faculty to apply for stipends from the Lilly ITTT grant. Six stipends were awarded over a two-year period.

To provide feedback, representatives from the IT Task Force, including one faculty member, evaluated the use of technology either by attending a class session where it was used or in some other appropriate way. Those who received awards were required to report on their projects at an information technology seminar.

The criteria for selection were stated as follows:

- a. What new uses of exploration of technology (particularly for initiates to the technology) do you anticipate this project will represent for you? Or, how does your project build upon your prior use of technology, particularly with regard to creativity and ingenuity?
- b. The anticipated learning and production time in the proposed application of technology
- c. The feasibility and availability of hardware and software
- d. Projected areas of expenses and estimated costs
- e. How will the proposed use of technology function in or enhance your pedagogical method within the stated purposes of the course?

Preferences

- a. An added benefit of past proposals has been that we have had models established that have made it easier for other faculty members to do what a previous recipient did or to start from where their proposal left off and advance the entire seminary's information technology experience. Proposals that would lead others to consider adopting information technology in their teaching will be preferred.
- b. A proposal with a greater amount of anticipated learning and production time will be preferred over one with less.

LPTS information technology grants were awarded for a variety of proposals

- Use of Internet resources to locate multimedia for the development of PowerPoint presentations and a Blackboard course site for review modules for Elements of Biblical Hebrew.
- Expansion of a project involving the use of PowerPoint in Scripture I lectures and the development of a set of two CDs compiling music based on passages of Scripture. The expansion would include not only more music based on Scripture but also visual art and other aesthetic interpretations of passages of Scripture. These would be organized by books of the Bible and coordinated with bibliographies and other information that will make the history of interpretation of these books more readily available to students.
- Development of a series of photographs presented in PowerPoint for the course Understanding Mission through Biography that would depict six

figures in their mission contexts. Journal entries, documents from mission societies, letters, and other forms of communication that might be better portrayed in their original form could also be included in the collection.

- Use of Contexticon, a computerized Web-based lexicon developed by the New Testament Language Project designed to assist lay persons, students, and scholars in the study of the New Testament. This tool was used in a New Testament exegesis course to enable students to see that the meanings they find in translations, lexicons, and Bible dictionaries are products of interpretation.
- Expansion of the use of technology for four core Marriage and Family Therapy courses and the MFT program exit examination. The two phases of the project were
 1. Develop a series of programmed tests for four MFT courses, each of which requires mastery of a discrete body of knowledge that undergirds clinical practice and all future certification testing.
 2. Develop a programmed learning module for core MFT concepts and methods to allow students to enhance their study and retention of basic MFT knowledge areas.
- Use of digital camera to create images of street, congregational, and home scenes to be used in PowerPoint presentations for Christian Education with Youth that would provide a focus for reflection and discussion in class.

Lessons learned

Outside of specific uses of technology to support and even transform teaching and learning, faculty stressed the importance of being mindful of student access to technology and the need to model the use of technology for students who will need to make use of it in the parish or in other ministries.

Student access

When using the Internet, it is important to remember students with fewer resources, including dial-up Internet connections or no Internet connection at all. For these students, Internet assignments could mean either a trip to the local library or a long wait or even disconnection (“timing out”) as they wait for materials to download. We take extra time in development of Web-based materials to make them accessible for those with all levels of Internet access.

Providing multiple ways of encountering learning materials—including paper, CDs or DVDs, and the Internet—increases students’ opportunities to learn and makes it more likely that they will use the materials.

Modeling use of technology

A good reason for using technology in theological teaching is to model its use for students who may go on to a variety of ministries. Through faculty use of IT for teaching and through training offered by the library and information technology services, LPTS students are exposed to the use of IT for preaching, teaching, administration, and research—and particularly to the Internet for communication and creation of community.

Training and support

Having training and classroom support available whenever it is needed has had a very significant impact in integrating information technology into our teaching and in encouraging students to use IT for their class presentations. We started by offering to faculty classroom training sessions in Microsoft Office applications and Internet searching. After several years, we opened the training to students and staff and added training in Blackboard, Web authoring, Windows file management, and multimedia production.

With limited classroom support staff, we have emphasized to faculty, administrators, staff, and students the importance of taking advantage of training offered each term on our multimedia classroom equipment. And Media Services makes every effort to be flexible and to schedule extra training sessions as they are needed.

We feel that the key to maintenance of equipment so it works well for the largest number of users is a combination of physical security for the equipment, training, and setting and publicizing policies for equipment use. LPTS has gathered such policies into Information Technology Guides for students and employees and made them available at the LPTS Web site.

The future

We believe we will see increased use of technologies that are more democratic, with control coming from students instead of from administration. We are getting increased requests from students to post their own material online, and we expect to see more use of technologies such as blogs, wikis, and non-password-protected online discussion sites such as Yahoo! Groups.

Digital student classroom presentations are increasing, with students using the library's circulating laptops, their own laptops, or even video iPods. Such use of equipment for presentation in the classroom and on the Web will press support staff to keep current with their knowledge of emerging technologies.

Although those over 30 who are teaching with technology may feel like Mark Prensky's "digital immigrants" who "can never be as fluent in technology as a native who was born into it,"¹⁴ we are finding more and more of those "natives" in our classes, with higher and higher expectations, pushing us to be ever more creative, more inspired and inspiring in our uses of technology for teaching.

Elizabeth Van Kleeck spent eight years with Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary as librarian for academic computing support, helping faculty to integrate information technology into their teaching through workshops, seminars, and faculty incentive grants. While at LPTS, she developed and co-taught the award winning course, Practices and Skills to Support a Parish Ministry. She is now employed as an educational technologist at Loyola University Chicago, developing and conducting faculty workshops and supporting the implementation of technology into course curricula.

ENDNOTES

1. Louis Charles Willard, "Technology and Educational Practices," *Theological Education* 38, no. 1 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2001), 114.
2. Raymond B. Williams, "Information Technology in Seminaries," *The Christian Century* 118 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001): 7.
3. Van B. Weigel, *Deep Learning for a Digital Age: Technology's Untapped Potential to Enrich Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002), xiii.
4. Richard E. Mayer, "Multimedia Learning: Are We Asking the Right Questions?" *Educational Psychologist* 32, no. 1, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1997): 1–19.
5. Trisha Tull (A. B. Rhodes Professor of Old Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary), interview by author, written notes, Louisville, KY, February 2006.
6. Kathryn L. Johnson (Professor of Historical Theology and Paul Tudor Jones Professor of Church History at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary), interview by author, written notes, Louisville, KY, February 2006.
7. Mary Hess, "What Difference Does it Make? Digital Technology in the Theological Classroom," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1, (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2005), 86.
8. Steve Delamarter, "A New Tool or a New Way of Doing Theological Education?" *Theological Education* 41, no. 1, (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2001), 110–111.
9. Scott Cormode, "Using Computers in Theological Education: Rules of Thumb," *Theological Education* 36, no. 1 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 1999), 101.
10. Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Teaching Theology with PowerPoint," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 5, no. 1, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002): 40.
11. Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 8.
12. Amy Plantinga Pauw, Wabash Center Grant Report, Spring 2000.
13. *Ibid.*, 102.
14. Mark Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants" in *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (NCB University Press, October 2001): 1–2.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cormode, Scott. "Using Computers in Theological Education: Rules of Thumb," *Theological Education* 36, no. 1 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 1999): 101.
- Hess, Mary. "What Difference Does it Make? Digital Technology in the Theological Classroom," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2005): 84.
- Nysse, Richard W. and James L. Boyce, "Technology and the Classroom: Inevitable and Better," *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry* 18, no. 4, (St. Paul, MN: Luther Seminary, 1998): 419.

Material for this article also came from personal interviews in February 2006 at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, with Frances Adeney, William A. Benfield Jr. Professor of Evangelism and Global Mission; David C. Hester, Dean of the Seminary, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Professor of Christian Education; Amy Plantinga Pauw, Henry P. Mobley Professor of Doctrinal Theology; and Loren Townsend, Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling.

Descriptions of Information Technology Incentive Grant projects were taken from proposals by Frances Adeney, William A. Benfield Jr. Professor of Evangelism and Global Mission; Susan R. Garrett, Professor of New Testament; David C. Hester, Dean of the Seminary, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Professor of Christian Education; Amy Plantinga Pauw, Henry P. Mobley Professor of Doctrinal Theology; Loren Townsend, Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling; and Patricia Kathleen Tull, A. B. Rhodes Professor of Old Testament.

Technology Development at Ashland Theological Seminary

*Vickie Taylor and Dale Stoffer
Ashland Theological Seminary*

ABSTRACT: Ashland Theological Seminary, like other seminaries in the United States, has been in a technology development phase that has dominated the last five years. We, by no means, have a grand master plan, but we have found ways to deal with issues of fear and institutional support that have been important to our progress. We have also discovered some practices and techniques that may be helpful to other institutions. This article is a brief overview of our journey and some practices we developed along the way.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to share with other seminaries the process that Ashland Theological Seminary followed, both intentionally and unintentionally, to help us arrive where we are today with respect to technology. This paper is clearly more structured and organized than the process in which we engaged. Our disclaimer is that we by no means followed a scientific approach to our technology development but rather, by God's grace and our immediate needs, we were able to arrive at a place where we are effective and comfortable.

We were not always effective and comfortable with the use of technology on our campus. We were driven by cultural forces that pushed us into areas we were not yet ready to explore. These forces were both internal and external; some were good and others were not. Regardless of the context, the cultural factors played and continue to play a significant role in the use of technology on our campus and in our classrooms.

The first cultural influence we addressed was an external one. Like many other schools, we noticed that more of our students were coming straight from undergraduate institutions where technology permeated their learning experiences. Their needs and wants began to drive our decision-making and our strategic planning. In order to meet their needs, as well as recruit and retain like-minded students, we needed to develop our technology on campus and use it in areas of student support and student services. Where once there were no student computing centers, today a computer lab is hardly sufficient. Wireless networks, tablet PCs, PDAs, and mobile Internet are what students expect to find at educational institutions, not to mention music downloading, file sharing, remote access to campus services, and even video on demand. The seminary was not prepared to offer all these services.

These same students came expecting to see technology in use in their classes. It is no secret that these Gen X and Y students are more visual and technologically advanced. They came and continue to come to Ashland ex-

pecting online registration, Web forms, and online paper submission, along with the use of technology in the classroom. According to William Hook, these same students come to our campuses expecting and assuming that all the digital tools and resources will be there for them.¹ These students became the impetus for us to develop our technology on campus and to offer services in new ways that challenged both our faculty and administration.

The second influence for technological change was our internal culture. Ashland is blessed to have a faculty that is committed to teaching and learning. Our faculty members are innovative and willing to experiment and learn. They saw the desires of their students and understood quickly that they were educating a new generation with skills different from those in their own educational experience. When our institution faces change, our faculty explores, questions, and researches the proposed changes. Technology in pedagogy was no exception. With the assistance of the Media and Technology Committee² composed of faculty representatives of every academic department and administrative members, the seminary researched the proposed areas of change, expressed the need for institutional support, and developed a strategic technology plan that included a rationale for all the changes being proposed. This committee, formed as a response by the faculty and administration to the need to address issues of technology, became the driving force behind our growth in the use of technology. Some of the steps the committee followed will be addressed later in this paper. Throughout the process, committee members addressed the needs of the students, the faculty, and the administration. They listened to the fears and the excitement and worked diligently to address the fears and capitalize on the areas of excitement.

Addressing the fears

According to Rhonda Epper, most college faculty will express and experience both fears and excitement when faced with the topic of technology in teaching.³ We were no exception. From an administrative perspective, the excitement seemed to far outweigh the fears. Fears and questions did arise: Will I manage the technology well when I'm in front of the class? Will institutional support be available when I need it?

Fear of inexperience

The fear of not appearing competent and assured in the classroom is a valid fear. Day after day faculty members are in front of students, doing what is comfortable for them: giving information to students. The emergence of new technology requires new learning and ongoing training, which can and does seem cumbersome to many faculty. Today, not only are faculty expected to stay current in their research fields, they also are encouraged to stay current with the latest technologies.

Technical support. Changing the way information is delivered can change the way faculty view themselves and their abilities. To alleviate this fear, we needed to assure faculty members that they would be well-trained and well-supported. In Epper's essay, she states that "most faculty prefer to have tech-

nical support delivered 'just-in-time' when and where they need it. As a result, a number of individual academic units (e.g., colleges or even large departments) employ a technical support person who can work one-on-one with faculty as needed."⁴ Our Media and Technology Committee first recommended hiring a technical support person to work for the seminary. It then, along with the director of technology resources, set out to develop a multifaceted training plan. This was one area in which we proactively engaged in planning and development. The details of this plan will be explained later in this paper. It is the role of the director to work with the Information Technology Department at Ashland University to study the new technologies, determine what is useful for educators, and develop ongoing training as well as to pastor the faculty as they learn and develop technology skills. It was imperative for the director to be available and flexible to meet the emerging needs of faculty with the just-in-time training. As they developed confidence, both in themselves and in the support they received, fears subsided and excitement and risk-taking permeated the campus. For a period, new ideas and suggestions were flowing faster than we could digest them. From faculty ideas, the administration had a foundation for the technology strategic plan.

Training. To address the fear of inadequate training and preparation, we promoted and encouraged finding the time for training. Many faculty members already face incredibly busy schedules with teaching, course development, committee meetings, conferences, and research. Adding one more item to their busy schedules meant we needed to assist in creating space for learning. Because we already have monthly faculty meetings, we capitalized on this space to become, in part, a place where group training occurred. The Media and Technology Committee instituted a "Share the Wealth" segment of the faculty meeting beginning in fall 2001 through spring 2005. In these sessions either a member of the faculty or the director of technology resources shared a concept or practice with other members of the community. From the mundane to the complicated, faculty were exposed to various technologies, such as burning files to a CD, using WebCT as a course enhancement, creating class photo rosters, and developing personal Web pages to enhance classroom instruction.

Some academic departments also use department meeting time as training venues. They used the time to discuss pedagogy in specific courses, to demonstrate tips and techniques in creating syllabi for the Web, and to illustrate ways to use PowerPoint to enhance lectures. We believe that carving out time in already planned space was an encouragement to the faculty and an expression of institutional commitment.

Fear of insufficient institutional support

The seminary's administration realized early on the need to understand faculty fears and to show strong and active support both with budget and personnel. In July 2001, Ashland hired a director of technology resources whose first item on the job description was to train and support faculty in incorporating technology into teaching and learning. Having a "go-to" person for the faculty was beneficial in allowing us to implement training plans and to communicate the needs to the administration. In addition to budget and

personnel support, new computers with the necessary tools for faculty to use inside and outside the classroom became a priority. We instituted a three-year replacement cycle on faculty computer systems with the newest systems being a reward for faculty who use technology most frequently. From this point forward, annual budgets for technology were born out of faculty needs and wants for classroom instruction and course development. Annually, faculty members were asked to dream of the technology they wanted to use, how they planned to use it, and what training they would need. From there, a budget and plan were developed. The hope of the administration and the director was to create a culture of dreaming and creativity.

Developing the training plan

Ashland Theological Seminary decided to approach training in two ways: group training and individual training. The training was developed by the Media and Technology Committee. While written in a linear fashion, it by no means was a linear process. It looked more like a web process whereby multiple events were happening simultaneously.

Before we moved forward too quickly, we needed to establish a minimal level of skill for all faculty. Trying to run before learning to walk is not effective. So, we started small. First we required all faculty to begin using email. In 2001 we facilitated the basic use of turning on the computers, reading messages, and responding to them. For some of the faculty, this was an easy step; for others, it took some prompting and prodding. The goal was to bring everyone to a common level. Administrators were already required to use email and they were a source of help to faculty.

Next, in fall of 2001, we surveyed the faculty to see which areas of training were needed and desired. These surveys gave the director of technology resources and the Media and Technology Committee information on what needed to happen next. As a result of the surveys, group and individual training sessions were planned including the "Share the Wealth" demonstrations discussed above. We used faculty meetings to offer small demonstrations by the director of technology resources and other faculty members of what they were doing in their classrooms or what they were learning from the training sessions. This peer-to-peer learning was valuable in encouraging the use of technology in the classroom and in sharing ideas and passion. The faculty trained one another on pedagogy and technology. Training and experimentation led to new ideas and new plans of implementation. We began to wonder if we had indeed created a monster.

Training required institutional support, and as faculty began to use the technology in their classes, the administration had to budget continually for new equipment both in the classroom and in the faculty offices. We began adding computers, scanners, SMART Boards, and eventually videoconferencing classes. We had a campus with what we call smart classrooms and gave faculty what they needed to use their newfound skills effectively. The counseling center, whose main function is to train counselors by offering free or reduced counseling services to the community, was, in 2001, equipped with observa-

tion rooms with cameras, microphones, and speakers for supervision and a means to record sessions for review. The center now creates its own teaching materials from these sessions. With all this innovation and support, the fear of the faculty was overcome. Ashland now had rooms fitted with the latest technology and a support person to ensure the rooms were in working order when the professor entered the room for class.

Launching institutional support

The administration's first demonstration of support to the faculty was the hiring of the previously mentioned full-time resource person, the director of technology resources. It was a move that helped address the fears of the faculty and give direction to the administration. The person hired for the position is a generalist in the use of technology and a pastor. The philosophy of the director was to train faculty using her pastoral skills: patience, understanding, and a listening ear to their fears, challenges, and expectations. Through this, the director was able to understand the classroom/faculty member relationship. All the faculty members could trust that the director would be there to assist them when necessary. It was the consensus of the administration that the director would first and foremost be a resource to faculty. We prioritized the functions of the director's office first for teaching and learning, then for administrative support. This prioritization spoke to the value of the faculty's commitment to technology in teaching and learning.

The greatest asset to Ashland Theological Seminary, however, is the relationship we have with Ashland University. Being attached to a university has enabled us to advance with little investment in personnel and resources. In 1988, Joseph Shultz, then president of Ashland University, expressed his vision of the university launching into the use of teleconferencing and having technology in the classrooms. Since that day, Ashland University has consistently given thought and vision to the advancement of education through the use of technology. In 1996, it embarked on a major financial initiative to fund technology advancement. This initiative began with a task force established in 1994. Through the study of this task force and recommendations made to the administration, the 1996 program was launched with a budget of \$3.375 million to fund the fiber-optic network of all facilities, off-campus access for students and faculty, installation of network servers, faculty personal computers, computerized classrooms, software purchases, addition of support services, and training venues. This activity was not without its issues. Funding such a large vision did tax resources, but it resulted in the technology that today supports our education, recruiting, and admissions and our expansion to other counties in Ohio and to Detroit, Michigan. The university has a full Information Technology Department that is staffed with network personnel, hardware and software technicians, a Webmaster, and content developers for online education. In just a few short years, we have come to realize that technology will always be a major institutional investment and priority, and both the university and the seminary have made commitments to support technology in teaching and learning.

Much of our ability to advance with technology is due to the solid working relationship with the university. In the beginning, the commitment of the institution as a whole allowed Ashland to advance rapidly with little of its own investment. The seminary budget allowed us to create our own culture of technology. We purchased equipment and upgraded facilities based on our needs and the needs of our incoming students.

The seminary, nonetheless, still needed to demonstrate strong institutional support for technology use on its campus. Training and new course development were accomplished through some course reductions. In 2004, the Media and Technology Committee drafted a distance education policy to present to the faculty and administration. The policy included remuneration and course reductions for faculty and teaching administrators. It captured both the priorities of the administration and the needs and desires of the faculty—all of which encourage alternate deliveries of education to our students across the state and in Michigan.

Distance education, however, is an ongoing conversation for us. Once we were comfortable that our faculty were well equipped and trained in using technology in teaching and that the administration was aware of the needs of the faculty and of the students, we were able to move forward into discussions related to distance education. In September 2002, we dedicated a full faculty retreat to a discussion of distance education rationale.⁵ We polled the faculty and asked them to submit questions and comments related to distance learning. We sorted the questions and comments into categories of rationale, policy, and other. We then created a rationale document that addressed all the issues, questions, and comments that had been presented. From this document and further discussion we were able to determine that distance education does fit in our mission of educating men and women for ministry in the church, that we need to have a coherent strategy for online education, and that we desire to maintain a level of academic excellence in both our face-to-face classes as well as our distance education classes. We are clear that we do have a strong rationale for offering classes through distance education; having a rationale, however, is far from having a final product.

Where we are today

From the time the first fiber optic wire was laid at the seminary in 1997 until now, we have made great progress in using technology in teaching and learning as well as in student services. Although we are pleased at the progress we have made, we are aware that we are on a journey with miles yet to be traveled.

The development of our Web site has allowed us to put many student services online that benefit especially our extension students who are in Columbus, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; and Detroit, Michigan. These students, along with our Ashland campus students, enjoy a variety of online resources: schedule and syllabi, forms for the registrar's office, registration, unofficial transcripts for grades, and student newsletters and other publications. Our faculty now submits grades online, prints their own class rosters, puts course notes on personal Web pages, and uses online discussions to supplement face-to-face classes.

We are still in the midst of discussion on distance education, however. Although, as stated earlier, we have completed both a rationale document and a policy that outlines teaching online and videoconferencing classes, we have yet to deal with philosophical issues related to alternative delivery systems and we have not yet developed a program. Last year we received approval from The Association of Theological Schools to offer up to six classes per degree program as distance education classes. We have yet to put online more than the two courses we had done prior to the approval process. In December 2003, our first videoconference class, Hebrew I, was delivered from Ashland to the class in Columbus. This trial class offered a means by which we could evaluate the delivery system as well as understand the needs of the faculty member and the students at the remote site. From this trial, suggestions were made that were subsequently addressed in our distance education policy. These suggestions were to limit class sizes, to make improvements at both locations, and to continually evaluate feedback from both instructors and students.

Our next step is to have the philosophical discussion about distance learning delivery systems, which should occur in the next academic year. Currently, we are in the midst of a three-year curriculum review process and are gearing up for our accreditation review self-study. We hope these two major initiatives will drive our strategic planning process and lead to changes in how we teach courses. It may be that through this process, online education will have its birth at Ashland Theological Seminary. Strategically, we have in place all that we need to move forward, specifically, a fully functional videoconferencing classroom, a distance education policy for faculty and administration, ATS approval for our distance education classes, smart classrooms, and faculty members trained and certified by the university to teach classes online.

If one were to ask today, "What best practices could we share with other seminaries?" we would have to say, "Develop a culture of communication." That means communication between faculty and administration, faculty and students, administration and students, as well as with constituencies one serves. It also means communicating through the budgets that fund technology, with a strategic plan that includes both faculty and technology development, and with personnel who can research, test, and train. That sounds rather low-tech for our hi-tech culture, but that is what has helped us develop our culture of technology at Ashland Theological Seminary.

Vickie Taylor is the director of technology resources at Ashland Theological Seminary. Dale Stoffer is academic dean of the seminary. Both have a role in faculty development and the delivery of curriculum at the seminary.

ENDNOTES

1. William J. Hook, "Implications of a Digital Age for Theological Education," in *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (Pittsburgh, PA: The Association of Theological Schools, 2005): 57–62.
2. The Media and Technology Committee was born out of a Technology Task Force established in the 1993–94 academic year to research technology needs and to draft the initial technology strategic plan. In the 1996–97 academic year, the task force was established as the Media and Technology Committee. The mission of the committee was to provide vision, impetus, and support so that all suitable technological resources could be employed to better fulfill the mission of Ashland Theological Seminary.
3. Rhonda M. Epper, "The New Economy Meets the Ivory Tower," *Teaching Faculty How to Use Technology* (Westport, CT: Oryx Press, 2001), 1.
4. *Ibid.*, 10.
5. Copies of both our Rationale Document and our Distance Education Policy are available upon request by email to ats@ashland.edu.

The Times, They are A-Changin’

How a training seminar for online education changed a seminary one faculty member at a time

Jeff Groeling and Lester Ruth
Asbury Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: Dealing with technological change is becoming a way of life for some seminary faculty. These technological changes have forced people to change the way they think, learn, and communicate. Effective training in the implementation of newer technologies is as important as the technology itself. At Asbury Theological Seminary, all new faculty are required to teach online as part of their contract and attend a week of ExL (Extended Learning) training to prepare them for the online experience and to create a syllabus for their online course. Some challenges faced during the training include: the amount of time required for reworking a course, the change in pedagogy, and the differences in face-to-face and online communication. Other lessons learned include the importance of interaction and discussion in the classroom and the impact ExL training has had upon face-to-face classes taught at the seminary.

Some may remember the Bob Dylan song from 1964, “The Times, They are A-Changin’” but Dylan’s message still rings true today. Much of life has changed from 1964 and will continue to change as time marches on. Much of this societal change has been brought about by developments in technology, which has changed the way we think, learn, and communicate.

Framing technology

In 1998, the Boyer Commission on Education published a report about the state of teaching and learning in education and made the statement, “We know that emerging technology is ceaselessly changing and will continue to change the ways in which the world functions and the ways in which people live.”¹ The Boyer Commission statement spoke to society at large, but the point was also applicable to the more specific theological educational context. In theological education, understanding the implications of the Boyer statement can be made manifest in the increased technological expectations of current and future students as well as the professor who uses technology, whether a whiteboard or a chatroom, appropriately and effectively.

Theological institutions must be careful to remember that technology is a tool and not a goal. In the context of higher education online learning, Stanley Katz, voicing a concern about technology as a goal argues, “The virtual commercial efforts of an increasing number of universities are evidence that the tool has become the goal. The larger question is whether the nonprofit university is subverting its mission in a quest for income from information technol-

ogy.”² Katz expresses concern that the aggressive expansion of the technology to support online courses without proper planning and pedagogy is a dangerous game for educational institutions to play.

Technology has always been part of the educational enterprise, but the cost of computers and networking technology as compared to more traditional classroom technologies, such as pens, paper, and textbooks has made the risks associated with the increased costs significantly greater. Victor Klimoski, writing about innovation in theological education, points out, “Technology is expensive, heightening the need of a well-considered educational technology plan linked to clear learning outcomes.”³ The cost of technology is not limited to the institution proper; there are also personal costs. As institutions continue to invest in and implement technology throughout the organization, there is a trickle-down cost effect for faculty, although the cost may not be so much a question of money as an investment of time. Many faculty have always used technology in some form or other to supplement their content in the classroom, but they have lacked training both regarding technology and in the integration of the technology into the curriculum.

Importance of training

Organizations usually don’t have much difficulty justifying the investment of financial resources in technology. Technology investment and return on that investment can be easily quantified. Also, it is easier to justify the purchase of technology because it is a tangible, physical asset that sits in a rack or on a desk as evidence of the purchase as opposed to something less tangible such as training or consulting. Further, it is generally easier to provide the rationale for purchase of a innovative new technology than to come up with funds to maintain or upgrade old technology. However, what good is new or old technology if people do not know how to use it? As with any investment in technology, it is important to balance the investment with proper training so that the technology can be used as it was intended in its given context. According to Klimoski, “The purchase of [technology] best follows decisions about what faculty want to do, what tools they need now, and what tools they will need as they gain proficiency.”⁴ In the classroom, good technology training will hopefully translate to better pedagogy as well as better teaching and learning interaction between the instructor and student with the expected end result of improved cognitive learning.

At Asbury, the primary means of faculty technology training and instructional design takes place in our annual ExL (Extended Learning) training. As new faculty come to Asbury, teaching courses online is written explicitly into their contracts as part of their overall teaching load. Before teaching their first class online, new faculty are required to attend ExL training at the end of the spring semester. As part of this training, faculty are introduced to the online classroom and available resources, and they spend a significant amount of time developing a syllabus. The creation and revision of the online syllabus is the primary focus of the week. By the time faculty leave at the end of the week, the goal is to have a reasonable facsimile of a finished course syllabus.

Online courses at Asbury are expected to match the learning objectives of the comparable face-to-face courses. This requirement can cause consternation from faculty trying to translate their course from a lecture-based course to an online course. The initial instinct for a faculty member starting ExL training is to recreate the face-to-face course online. However, pedagogies that work in the face-to-face classroom may not work well in the online classroom, so the instructor is faced with the challenge of rethinking a course from the ground up in new and creative ways.

Challenges of online course design

There are three primary challenges to rethinking or restructuring a course for online instruction: the amount of time required for a wholesale reworking of a course, the change in content delivery, and the changes in moving from a face-to-face to an online communication medium.

The amount of time to rework a course

The first challenge, time, is something that is precious to everyone. Faculty are hesitant to invest time in changing a teaching method that has worked (or perhaps even something that has not worked) for so many years. But time is a key ingredient when considering change, whether pedagogical or technical. Jan Viktora, asserting the need to examine teaching praxis in theological education, states, “As theological educators, we need to continue developing new pedagogical competencies that increase our understanding of and empathy for our students as they enter a new world of learning while enabling us to embrace more gracefully the role of teacher as facilitator of learning and designer of learning environments.”⁵ When used appropriately and effectively, technology can be a powerful tool for teaching and learning, and as long as technology is used in meaningful ways, teaching and learning can be transformed via the use of technology. Pedagogical change does not occur by accident or happenstance. Reflection and examination of our fundamental instructional assumptions requires significant investments of time and thought. Likewise, familiarization with the continual changes of technology for effective use in instruction can require a significant investment of time. The content and message of the instructional process may remain static, but because of technological change, the medium for delivery may require updating of skills or a large learning curve. For some, the time invested in the technological learning curve can be a fearful or frustrating process resulting in hesitation or resistance as part of the innovation process.⁶ The investment of time is only one challenge to restructuring a class for online learning.

The change in content delivery

The second challenge to rethinking or restructuring a course for online instruction is presenting content in new and creative ways, which can be both an implicit and explicit barrier for some instructors. The implicit barrier regarding the presentation of content is the tendency of faculty to teach the way they were originally taught. The lecture teaching style learned by faculty in

graduate school at the feet of their professors is the preferred pedagogy with which most faculty are comfortable. However, as explained by Viktora, the pedagogy learned by instructors during their own graduate study “could not have prepared us for the demands of teaching and learning in a digital age.”⁷ Stepping outside of the comfort zone provided by indoctrinated pedagogy requires a level of intestinal fortitude that can be difficult for some instructors to address.

The explicit barrier many instructors face in presenting content in new and creative ways involves the challenges associated with finding content appropriate for other means of delivery and presenting it in a way that provides opportunity for critical or alternative thinking. Finding content that can be delivered effectively via means other than the traditional lecture format can be a challenge. Lester Ruth, professor of Christian worship at Asbury, reexamined his instructional habits when participating in ExL training in the spring of 2001. In the previous academic year, he had taught pastoral liturgy in an on-campus lecture format supplemented by videotape to introduce his students to different styles of worship and then assessed student learning through the use of objective exams. After two semesters of classes, he and his students were frustrated with the content and one another. The means of content delivery were not working for the traditional lecture-based classes.

In ExL training, Ruth rebuilt his pastoral liturgy course from the ground up. Rebuilding his course for the online medium gave Ruth the opportunity he needed to re-examine the learning objectives, content, and teaching style for both his online and traditional classes. The low-bandwidth restrictions of online courses are not well suited for lecture-based content delivery, so he was presented with the opportunity to explore alternatives for delivering content. The required change in content mandated a re-examination of course objectives, which led to a reorganization of how he developed not only his basic worship course but also three other related worship courses, resulting in a cohesive introductory worship curriculum of four classes with specific learning objectives and compelling theological premises for each class.

Despite the shift from the traditional lecture-based class, Ruth did not give up the use of lectures entirely. He understood that he had to become more efficient in the use of lectures and more selective about their purpose. As a result, only the lectures deemed foundational to their respective courses were recorded and digitized. These lectures became part of a collection of resources he had used in classes along with pictures of worship spaces and worshipers, short video clips of services, and musical pieces that formed the foundation for a multimedia CD produced internally by the seminary. Additionally, to supplement the other digitized material for each course, a semifictitious congregation at worship was created based on a real church. A formative aspect was added through the use of a body of Wesleyan hymnody and a collection of liturgical texts, unique to each class, with the intent of directing the students toward a deeper love for God. The alternative content was then compiled on a CD-ROM and mailed to the online students who returned them at the end of the semester.

The presentation of the CD-based content provided new ways for students to engage the content critically. The CD content provided alternatives to hard-to-find published material or demonstrated a particular viewpoint useful to students that inspired critical thinking. For on-campus students, a schedule directed how and when to use the multimedia content on the CD in preparation for class. Because the CD provides opportunities for out-of-class work, more in-class time is available for activities such as practicing worship, evaluating worship services, role playing, and assessing their work and assignments. Students also interact with the content on the CD to work out theological premises in worship, providing them a richer course environment. While the change in course content provides a significant problem for those restructuring a course for online instruction, there are other challenges. The issue of change in the communication medium is yet another challenge that must be addressed.

The change from a face-to-face to an online communication medium

The third challenge to restructuring a course for online instruction is addressing the change in the communication medium from face-to-face to online. Several factors contribute to this challenge in addition to the reluctance of faculty to address standard lecture teaching praxis as mentioned earlier.

There are inhibiting factors involved with providing instruction at a distance. Communication scholars have developed a body of research on the technological mediation of communication including models such as Social Presence⁸ and Reduced Social Cues.⁹ In the Social Presence model, the focus is on the individual's perceptions of the ability of a medium to translate the social presence of another individual. Various media are ranked on the degree of social presence they provide, with face-to-face ranked as the ideal and richest of all channels. In the theological classroom, it could be argued that the perceived ideal is the face-to-face lecture style because it is a richer medium and better suited to communicating complex theological and philosophical concepts. In the Reduced Social Cues model, the focus is on how a medium restricts or removes social context cues from communication. Again, face-to-face communication has the advantage of including nonverbal cues and verbal inflections. How can these limitations imposed by media other than face-to-face be overcome?

One means of overcoming the change in the communication medium is to challenge the assumption that face-to-face communication is, in fact, the ideal means of communication. The traditional face-to-face, lecture-based class can be fraught with its own set of disappointments. Ruth, in his first year of teaching worship in the traditional lecture format, had class sizes of sixty students. Difficulties would arise when his lectures or videotape presentations resulted in extended discussion or debate, setting back his class schedule.

Rather than looking at online communication as substandard in comparison to face-to-face communication, it is better to understand it as simply different; each medium has its own strengths and weaknesses. Online communication may seem not to measure up to face-to-face communication either in

terms of Social Presence, because the speaker is not physically present, or in terms of Reduced Social Cues, because nonverbal and verbal cues are absent.

However, online communication provides a means for addressing these limitations. In the case of online social presence, research has shown that relational communication can change from impersonal to more personal over time, a change difficult to accomplish in a large lecture class.¹⁰ Regarding reduced social cues, an entire subgenre of language has evolved specific to online communication called, among other things, paralanguage¹¹ or netlingo.¹² Netlingo can compensate for concepts difficult to communicate online such as humor or sarcasm by providing objects (emoticons) or abbreviations (acronyms and "shorthand") for the verbal or nonverbal cues. While netlingo does not entirely overcome the limitations imposed by the electronic medium, it does address some of its shortcomings. The change of medium requires a change of pedagogy. As part of Asbury's ExL training, Ruth appreciated how technology was shaping his online course. Because Asbury's ExL courses were typically centered around asynchronous email-based threaded discussion, the primary role of faculty was to facilitate interaction among themselves, the content, and other students.

The importance of interaction

In the Asbury online Extended Learning classroom, quite simply, classroom interaction is the primary feature of quality instruction. The fact that online learning is conducted via mediated communication channels is largely irrelevant. Some of the same issues in face-to-face communication also carry over to online communication. In particular, the nature and quality of interaction are important components in the classroom.

Communication (or interaction) is central to the learning process. More specifically, it is the interaction between student and teacher that is of primary importance. Michael Moore, speaking primarily about the distance learning context, provided a typology for better understanding classroom interaction.¹³ He outlined three types of interaction: student-content, student-instructor, and student-student. Moore defines student-content interaction as the process of intellectually interacting with content that results in changes in understanding, perspective, or cognitive structures of the learner's mind. Student-instructor interaction is communication via curriculum and assessment of student learning with feedback from students on the teaching procedures provided by the instructor. Student-student interaction is the communication that occurs between individual learners in group settings and with or without the real-time presence of the instructor. As technology continues to impact teaching and learning more significantly each year, good pedagogy and course development will embrace Moore's three types of interaction in order to use the communication medium to its potential.

Using ExL training as an illustration, the emphasis is on the instructor facilitating all three types of interaction. Regarding his ExL training experience, Ruth commented, "Early in the training and subsequent teaching experience made it quite evident that my primary role as teacher would be to facilitate

the best use of this discussion center as they interacted with each other, with the course content, and with me.” He acknowledges the change in dynamics and emphasis from the traditional face-to-face lecture-based class to an emphasis on content with the following comment, “Not being able to stand in front of the students to lecture made it difficult to be the center of the class. The dynamics of an online class made me put the students’ useful interaction with the course content at the center of the class. I became less of a mediator between the student and the course content. I became the one who arranged the most hospitable table for students together to encounter the significant concepts of the course.”¹⁴

In the course of training and in practical experience it became apparent to Ruth that all three types of interaction (student-content, student-student, and student-instructor) would be required for the course to function well. The successful emphasis on interaction in the online classroom carried over to Ruth’s face-to-face classes, with the students interacting with the content and one another, with guidance from the professor. By anticipating discussions and envisioning the different ways students could assist one another in learning the material, Ruth was able to focus on other means for improving the class.

In ExL training, faculty are required to divide their content into objectives-based modules that are introduced sequentially as the semester progresses. Ruth used the start of each new online module as an opportunity to foster interaction. For example, he would pose a question or pastoral situation to allow students to express what they understood about the material while attempting to engage it more deeply. This discussion starter changed the learning process from recitation back to the instructor to using the course content to engage and involve both the instructor and students in the learning process. Introducing discussion is only a part of the faculty role in the classroom. Facilitating effective interaction in the classroom involves knowing when and how to contribute to a conversation, learning when to diffuse a tense disagreement, and knowing when to remain silent. Instructors finding their “voice” online is gleaned via experience, and as with most things new, finding that voice requires patience.

Impact of online classroom on face-to-face classroom

One of the most surprising outcomes of Asbury’s ExL training has been the indirect impact that it has had on the traditional face-to-face classroom. As has been found in other graduate theological contexts after revising and reorganizing their syllabi to teach online, faculty have found it beneficial to themselves and to their students to adapt many of the teaching principles used in the online environment to the face-to-face classroom.¹⁵ For example, in Ruth’s worship course, online students gave more favorable responses on their semester evaluations than the on-campus students. That such a gap could exist between on-campus and online versions of the same course encouraged him to apply aspects of the online course to the face-to-face setting. He began to gradually change his on-campus classes and the results have been encouraging. However, he admits, without the need to rethink fundamental structures

in order to teach online, there most likely would have been no impetus for making changes to the on-campus sections, or, in the alternative, he would have had little idea how to change them substantially.

Asbury has also collected other data and analysis that support the anecdotal findings presented here. One measurement, common to all theological institutions, are course evaluations. At Asbury, course evaluation scores have been rising for both face-to-face and online classes from year to year, but the average course evaluation rating for face-to-face classes is still higher than online classes although the gap has narrowed over the previous year.¹⁶ Further research is required to determine which variables, such as instructor experience, improved pedagogy, or “grade inflation,” are responsible for the increase. Other research conducted at Asbury compared seven face-to-face and online classes taught by the same professors over the same semester. In one instance in this study, a professor was regularly absent from his online section while maintaining his presence in his corresponding face-to-face course. The scores for online quality and quality of student-instructor interaction were significantly lower for the online class than for the face-to-face section of the same course.¹⁷ The online students not only recognized the lack of presence of the instructor but also compensated by increasing the quality and quantity of student-student interaction with one another. In the same study, a factorial analysis was conducted looking at the medium and the instructor to determine if main and interaction effects existed for student cognitive learning outcomes. Results revealed a main effect of the instructor on cognitive learning outcomes.¹⁸ While most people in education know these results to be intuitively true, a comparison of learning outcomes in a quasi-experimental study—while holding the instructor and content constant—provides quantitative substantiation. The role of the instructor in teaching, whether online or face-to-face, is critical to the learning process. No addition or subtraction of technology will change that fact.

Conclusion

The demands of teaching and learning in a digital age require a change in understanding of what is required to be effective in the classroom. In the educational context, technology for the sake of technology, without an underlying goal of how and why it is to be used is a mistake. Further, technology without training is a dead-end street, as is instruction without instructional design. Great technology used poorly or with bad pedagogy still results in bad teaching. Great teaching can also be significantly impaired by the poor use of technology.

At Asbury Theological Seminary, pedagogical and technological training conducted via the ExL training program has helped equip faculty for the transition to the digital age. The training has had unintended benefits for on-campus classes as well, strengthening courses by offering resources in varying formats as well as providing opportunities for discussion that would have been previously unavailable. Our hope and plan at Asbury Theological Seminary is that our faculty can support their great teaching with great technology.

Until the phenomenal growth of the Internet and the increased emphasis on other digital technologies beginning ten years ago, lecture style courses were sufficient for imparting theological education to the minds of students. One of the key components of the teaching and learning process in the digital classroom is an understanding of how those technologies impact the interaction that occurs. Because interaction is central to the learning process both face-to-face and online, the increased focus on discussion and interaction within today's classroom has continued to form the way we think, learn, and communicate.

Jeff Groeling is executive director of information technology and affiliate professor in information technology, and Lester Ruth is the Lily May Jarvis Professor of Christian Worship at Asbury Theological Seminary.

ENDNOTES

1. The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities* (Stony Brook, NY: State University of New York, 1998), 25, <http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf/> (accessed May 28, 2005).
2. Stanley N. Katz, "In Information Technology, Don't Mistake a Tool for a Goal," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 15, 2001): B7.
3. Victor Klimoski, "Planning for Innovation: A Framework for Reflective Practice," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2005): 8.
4. Ibid.
5. Jan Viktora, "Not Just One More Good Idea: A Reflection on the Integration of Digital Technology in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2005): 41.
6. Klimoski, "Planning for Innovation," 1.
7. Viktora, "Not Just One More Good Idea", 41.
8. John Short, Ederyn Williams, and Bruce Christie, *The Social Psychology of Telecommunications* (New York: Jon Wiley and Sons, 1976).
9. Lee Sproull and Sara Kiesler, "Reducing Social Context Cues: Electronic Mail in Organizational Communication," *Management Science* 32, no. 11 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1986), 1492–1512.
10. Joseph B. Walther, "Interpersonal Effects in Computer-mediated Interaction: A Relational Perspective," *Communication Research* 19, no. 1 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1992), 52–90.
11. John Carey, "Paralanguage in Computer Mediated Communication," in *The 18th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics and Parasession on Topics in Interactive Discourse: Proceedings of the Conference*, ed. Norman Sondheim (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1980), 67–69, <http://acl.ldc.upenn.edu/P/P80/P80-1018.pdf> (Accessed May 30, 2006).
12. The NetLingo Web site was given as an example of the codification of online communication by one of the participants in our most recent ExL Training event. It can be found at <http://www.netlingo.com>.

13. Michael Moore, "Three Types of Interaction," *The American Journal of Distance Education* 3, no. 2 (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 1–6.
14. Lester Ruth as told to Jeff Groeling.
15. Mary Hess, "What Difference Does it Make? Digital Technology in the Theological Classroom," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2005): 83.
16. The results are based on internal data collected by Asbury Seminary's Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation.
17. Jeff Groeling, "Does Technology Make a Difference in the Classroom? A Comparison of Online and Traditional Courses Employing Models of Competence and Uses and Gratifications" (PhD dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2004), 123.
18. Ibid., 129.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Lorin and David Krathwohl. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Rev. ed. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2001.
- Ascough, Richard S. "Designing for Online Distance Education: Putting Pedagogy Before Technology." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 5, no. 1 (2002): 17–29.
- Chickering, Arthur and Stephen Ehrmann. "Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as a Lever." *AAHE Bulletin* (October, 1996): 3–6.
- Hillman, Daniel. "A New Method for Analyzing Patterns of Interaction." *The American Journal of Distance Education* 13, no. 2 (1999): 37–47.
- Ko, Susan and Steve Rossen. *Teaching Online: A Practical Guide*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
- Laurrillard, Diane. "Using Communication and Information Technology Effectively." In *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers* 10th ed. Edited by Wilbert McKeachie. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999: 183–200.
- Simonson, Michael, Sharon Smaldino, Michael Albright, and Susan Zvacek, *Teaching and Learning at a Distance: Foundations of Distance Education* 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005.

A Case Narrative of Bethel Seminary's InMinistry Program

Kristin M. Anderson

Bethel Seminary of Bethel University

ABSTRACT: In 1995 Bethel Seminary launched the InMinistry program and began a journey with this distributed model of education. InMinistry combines instructional technology and online learning with face-to-face on-campus intensive instruction. Students actively engaged in ministry form a rich learning community that spreads across the United States and around the world. In the midst of nearly continuous change, Bethel has endeavored to make wise use of technology in the service of transformative teaching and learning. This case study examines the history of the program's development through three phases of growth and then utilizes the Framework for Reflective Practice as a lens through which to understand Bethel's journey and the path ahead. Bethel's story is one that can serve other seminaries exploring distributed models of education.

Introduction to Bethel's case narrative

Leadership gurus have said that institutions undergo change either because they have a burning platform or a compelling vision. Bethel Seminary had both when the InMinistry distributed learning program was launched in 1995. The burning platform (or the potential for it) is not unfamiliar to the broader seminary community. It may come as a result of changing seminary student demographics and their impact on enrollment FTEs or from the delicate relationship between cost of education, tuition, gift income, and shifting economic realities. While Bethel Seminary faced many of these, we also had a compelling vision that kept us looking forward. Historically, Bethel Seminary has been an institution of higher education dedicated to equipping men and women for the ministry to which God had called them. As a distributed learning delivery system, the InMinistry program gave us the flexibility to bring a quality seminary education directly to students. The interaction between academic course work and real-life ministry engagement has created a powerful, transformative educational model.

In one sense Bethel's experience is unique for the boldness and entrepreneurial spirit with which we have undertaken it. We have willingly participated in an ongoing process of growth, experimentation, and learning. The fruit of this has been the creation of a sound program, which serves students from North America and many countries around the world. This narrative will tell InMinistry's story with the intent that others will benefit from it. Before getting to the narrative, it will be necessary to give a basic overview of the InMinistry model. Having established a baseline understanding, the narrative will unfold by describing three phases the InMinistry program has gone through

thus far. Finally, the “Strategic Plan for Integration of Educational Technology: A Developmental Model” will be used as a lens through which to reflect on our journey.¹

The InMinistry model

Understanding the distributed framework and central values of the InMinistry model create a foundation for the narrative to come. The distributed model incorporates both distance and face-to-face learning components. Both individual courses and entire programs can be considered distributed, and the InMinistry program is distributed in both senses. Added to this framework are four central commitments that inform the character of the program: student involvement in ministry, cohort-based communities of learning, faculty leadership of courses, and technology that serves teaching and learning. For InMinistry, both the framework and these commitments are essential.

The distributed framework is evident in the design of the InMinistry schedule. Figure 1 gives a sample schedule for a “full-time” InMinistry student.² Eight aspects of the schedule are highlighted here.

- 1. The year is divided into four terms that are each ten weeks in length.
- 2. There are three types of courses—intensive, distance, and contextual. Each uses online courseware and the full array of instructional technology.
- 3. A full-time InMinistry student will take two courses in an intensive term and one course during fully distance term.
- 4. Intensive and distance terms alternate, using all four quarters of a calendar year.
- 5. Contextualized courses stretch over three consecutive terms to allow time for formation.
- 6. Courses paired in an intensive term come from different disciplines of study, generally one in biblical or theological studies and another in leadership or spiritual formation.
- 7. All disciplines are represented proportionally in distance and intensive modes according to their distribution in the curriculum.
- 8. Courses scheduled in intensive terms follow a consistent pattern of study (see Figure 2).

Summer Term	Fall Term	Winter Term	Spring Term
1. Hermeneutics 2. Introduction to Pastoral Care	Evangelism for Discipleship	1. Systematic Theology I 2. Transformational Leadership	Systematic Theology II
	Mentored Leadership Development I		

Figure 1: Sample InMinistry Year (1st year MDiv)

Pre-Campus	On-Campus	Post-Campus
4 weeks	2 weeks	4 weeks
Students participate in learning activities that are introductory and/or preparatory for the intensive.	A week-long intensive is held for each course a student is taking. Each intensive involves 30 hours of contact time with professor and fellow students. A full-time student stays two weeks.	Students participate in learning activities that involve independent research as well as synthesis and integration of material from the course.

Figure 2: Average Intensive Term

Wrapped around the distributed framework are four central commitments. The first of these is indicated in the name itself. Every InMinistry student is engaged in a ministry setting. Most students are paid staff at a church or within a parachurch organization. Some are bi-vocational pastors and others are active lay leaders within their congregations. There are many benefits to this. These students come to seminary because they see its value. Further, they are motivated to find connections between theoretical constructs and their own ministry context. There is, however, a challenge inherent in working with students in ministry. For many, education is a third priority registering behind their personal/family and ministry responsibilities. This is not uncommon for an adult learner. It is not unusual for adult students to moderate the pace of their education.

The second commitment of the program involves the use of cohorts to build a rich learning community. Students begin their studies in an intensive term so that they can meet the other members of the cohort early in the program. The cohort is instrumental to establishing a vibrant community of learning. It also plays an important role in student retention. Administratively, the cohort scheduling contributes to predictability and a measure of efficiency in advising. However, cohorts, like any system, have strengths and weakness. Simply putting students together does not ensure vital relationships will be formed. When appropriate attention is given to the health of each cohort, the potential for authentic community and the impact on transformative learning is substantial.

In the third commitment we turn our attention to the faculty. The institution requires residential faculty members to teach in the program as part of their normal teaching load.³ As in any educational setting, it is a necessity for InMinistry faculty to give leadership and demonstrate presence in each course. Leadership begins with the design of the course and continues throughout its implementation. It is demonstrated through regular emails or announcements that introduce new units of study. It may also involve using instructional media that move students through course content. Presence involves ongoing interaction with students during the course. Answering emails, returning calls, providing feedback on recent assignments, or interaction within a discussion forum are all activities that demonstrate presence. When professors observe online course interaction but do not themselves participate in it, the student experience can be likened to sitting in class waiting for a professor to arrive.

Tools may differ between traditional distributed educational contexts, but the importance of faculty leadership and presence is essential in both.

The fourth commitment of the InMinistry program is that technology must serve the needs of effective teaching and learning. Clearly, the InMinistry program is dependent on the presence of reliable technology. It is used to provide online courseware, develop instructional media, as well as assist in many key administrative functions. Technology is an important tool, and great care is given to its incorporation in educational settings. Before a new tool is introduced, it is evaluated for cost effectiveness, educational benefit, and enduring value. Student and faculty readiness are also taken into consideration. The overzealous use of technology, reluctance to experiment, or inadequate technical infrastructure would hinder the program. Careful discernment and planning allows us to use technology without being led by it.

The story of InMinistry program's first eleven years

While the framework and commitments of the distributed model have remained the same, the InMinistry program has undergone substantial change over the last eleven years. Many factors contributed to this development, including:

- addition of new degree offerings;
- growth in student enrollments;
- introduction of new technologies and improved uses of existing technologies;
- incorporation of new faculty (residential and adjunct);
- development of a gifted support team;
- deepening understanding of learning theory and effective practice;
- benefit of learning from experience.

These factors of change can be seen in each of the three phases the InMinistry program has gone through thus far. In the first phase we sought to be as good as traditional seminary education and in the process established an identity unique to our educational context. In the second phase we met program growth with ongoing innovation and application of new pedagogical insight. The third phase introduced new opportunities to apply what we have learned and to expand our dialogue with others.

Phase I: Keeping up with the Joneses (1995–2000)

In the first five years of the program (1995–2000), InMinistry faced the challenges of any young family. We defined our values and established our identity. Many questioned whether education within distributed learning generally or InMinistry specifically could be *as good as* that offered by traditional programs. As a result, we tried to emulate traditional models in a distributed context. In effect we were trying to keep up with the Joneses.

The program started at the initiative of Bethel University's president.⁴ He directed the executive vice president overseeing strategic initiatives and infor-

mation technology and the executive vice president and provost of the seminary to explore new models of seminary education.⁵ With input from many within the institution, support of the trustees, and approval from The Association of Theological Schools, two nontraditional programs were launched. Both were designed to increase student enrollment without undercutting existing programs.⁶ InMinistry was one of these programs and began by offering the Master of Divinity degree. The framework created for the MDiv became the template used as additional degrees were added to the program.⁷ By 1997, further steps were taken to ensure the success of the program. First among these was placing leadership of this program within the seminary administrative structure.⁸

Faculty took on the challenge this new program presented and worked to integrate their courses into this new model. Perhaps the realities of the burning platform described previously had an early impact on faculty responses. More likely it was the presence of a compelling vision and faculty willingness to accommodate change. Faculty received technical support and were paid stipends for developing courses in the new model. This helped sustain faculty commitment and honored the investments being made. The initial members of the InMinistry team were hired in order to provide this support to faculty and students. Staff hired had strong aptitudes for technology and respected the needs of professors and students. As the team grew, many had seminary degrees or were current students. Though not instructional designers by training, their educational background and seminary experience gave them insight into a professor's teaching style as well as instructional goals of classes. Course designs were the product of a collaborative effort between faculty members and InMinistry staff. Over time, distinct patterns emerged about "what worked" (i.e., what students responded well to and what faculty found helpful) and what did not. The willingness of faculty to adapt and innovate, along with the support of the InMinistry team, set the program on firm footing in this first (and subsequent) phases.

By today's standards, the format and feel of early courses in the program were quite traditional and used only the most basic computer technologies. Course materials were mailed to students and modest levels of interaction took place through telephone conference calls and online discussions. Initially, student interaction took place on a local listserv. Quickly this was replaced with the resources present in America Online (AOL). All InMinistry students and faculty were required to have AOL accounts. Use of AOL allowed for better interactivity in its discussion forums; however, the chronological listing of discussion posts (rather than organization by "threads") made tracking the flow of an online conversation somewhat cumbersome. Beyond AOL, students and professors participated in conference calls with the assistance of staff from Bethel's telecommunications department. All courses included online discussion and at least one conference call to introduce the course.

The original InMinistry MDiv curriculum was established using the traditional program's English language MDiv as a model.⁹ This curriculum was then adapted to the unique needs of the online learner. The needs of our students were addressed in a new required course, Computer Applications for

Ministry. This course was created to help students develop the technical skills needed for program participation and ministry effectiveness. Learning activities involved requiring students to demonstrate competence with copying, cutting, and pasting text as well as attaching documents to and downloading them from an email. Students were also equipped to use databases, spreadsheets, and the Internet. The thought of teaching these basic skills seems almost humorous now, but at the time, our students were new to computer technology. The modification of supervised ministry courses built on ministry experience students had already obtained. Each of these curricular components has been upgraded numerous times since the program's inception. Significant among these improvements has been the successful incorporation of biblical languages.

In this first phase, instructional media was used to a limited degree in fully distance courses. Some professors made audio or video recordings of their lectures in other teaching contexts. These were duplicated and mailed to InMinistry students. The presence of audio or video components was a relief to professors and students in the normally reading-dependent distance courses. However, the quality of this media was inconsistent, which limited its usefulness. Because the tools were created while the professor taught other students, those enrolled in the online environment became mere onlookers to the instruction. Additionally, some faculty who had recorded large portions of their classes failed to engage the learners in the online environment. This unreflective use of media may have improved courses in one sense, but in another, it exacerbated the impact of physical distance between professor and student. It wasn't until fall of 1998 that a new model for using audio was introduced in an online C. S. Lewis course. Audio recordings (approximately fifteen minutes in length) were produced for each week of the term, introduced the week's topic, and led students through the course. Regular email interaction further guided students and provided constructive feedback along the way. Observing the success of this class, we clarified our values for production and use of media being developed.

By 1998, enrollment in the InMinistry program was beginning to climb, and technological advances were having an impact. Information technology services introduced the university to Web Course in a Box (WCB), online courseware that replaced our costly dependence on America Online. WCB offered superior discussion tools compared to AOL and the capacity to update courses readily. The introduction of WCB brought with it an administrative shift, giving the InMinistry team responsibility for creating and managing courses.¹⁰ Faculty training began in earnest. Though it was our original intent to have faculty create their courses within WCB, it became clear that imposing this expectation could distract faculty from their primary tasks. Our focus shifted to equipping faculty to function well in this online learning environment rather than becoming technical specialists. InMinistry staff constructed most courses within WCB as a service to faculty.¹¹ Small group training was available that acquainted faculty with WCB, and one-on-one appointments were scheduled to help them conceptualize their courses and develop skills for using WCB.

Feedback from students and faculty during this phase influenced how interactive tools such as the telephone conference calls and online discussions were used. Students suggested that the introductory conference calls had become perfunctory. We discussed this with faculty and then removed the requirement. Instead faculty welcomed students to their class via email. Conference calls, we reasoned, would be reserved for situations in which synchronous, voice-to-voice interaction would be particularly beneficial (e.g., guest speakers or discussion of student verbatims). Faculty also brought us feedback. Some expressed dissatisfaction with the level of student dialogue on discussion boards. We learned that syllabus instructions needed clarification so that both student-to-professor and student-to-student interactions were required. As a result of this process, a rather basic model for discussions became normative. In this model, professors posted an initial question to the class. Students were required to respond directly to the professor's question by midweek. During the remainder of the week, students responded to one another's posts. This improved the quantity of discussion forum participation. However, it tended to create a stilted conversation that felt more like a quiz show than actual dialogue. Ongoing advancements would be necessary in this important facet of online teaching and learning during subsequent phases.

As we concluded this phase of program development, two new degree offerings were added to the InMinistry program.¹² These programs increased enrollment, the number of courses created each term, as well as the number of faculty (adjunct and residential) who needed training. They also had a positive impact on our assumptions about teaching and learning in this distributed context. All of this will be reviewed in the following section. Approval to launch new programs came as affirmation that we were meeting our goal. This young program had established itself not only as a respectable educational model but also as a delivery system with some serendipitous benefits. Our identity, values, and structure had taken shape. While facing numerous challenges resulting from growth in programs and the emergence of new technologies, we were confident we could keep up with the Joneses.

Phase II: Keeping up with ourselves (2000–2005)

The InMinistry program grew rapidly in these next five years. As a result of this growth, it was necessary to create an infrastructure that more efficiently and effectively supported the program. Beyond systemic advances, we took steps to strengthen the community of learning, upgrade our curriculum, and incorporate new faculty. We were like a maturing family moving in multiple directions as we tried to keep up with the needs of each member. We no longer worried as much about keeping up with anyone else. We were, in effect, trying to keep up with ourselves.

Creating a strong community of learning has been a priority for us throughout the history of the program. Initially, relationships were formed readily because the program was small and participants were eager to connect. Incoming MDiv students had a de facto cohort. New students started together in the program and were quick to build relationships. Due to limited course options, students typically stayed together as they registered for courses throughout their

degree program. As enrollment increased, more course options were created to accommodate the needs. This allowed students who had started together to register for different courses and inadvertently move out of the community they had established. An InMinistry team member observed that newer MDiv students did not seem to enjoy the same relationships we had observed among their predecessors or in the cohorts of newly formed MA programs. Conversations with students and faculty confirmed this, and as a result, we proceeded to redesign the MDiv schedule around a formal cohort model.¹³

Though not a technological innovation, the cohort model was central to the effectiveness of our online learning components in this phase. Students who interacted with one another in a cohort established the trust necessary for genuine online discourse. Sometimes familiarity between students led to casual banter unrelated to course work in discussion areas. Faculty members who included discussion forums designated for personal interaction found that students were better able to focus in course-related interaction. We learned that attention to the placement of a course in a cohort's sequence informed the way discussions were used. For example early classes in the program may not be able to require rigorous dialogue because students are getting to know one another and are finding their footing as online learners. The Master of Arts in Children and Family Ministry (MACFM) intentionally attended to and incorporated the cohort's development in the design of concentration courses. The introductory MACFM course included learning components that had the added benefit of building community within the cohort. In subsequent courses, students built on this as they facilitated online discussions. In the third year, students were stretched further as they provided peer reviews in a distance course. This served as preparation for the upcoming intensive course in which students developed their teaching skills and provided constructive feedback to their peers during a teaching practicum. Readiness for each of these components was directly related to the developmental stage of the cohort. In contrast to the positive benefits of cohorts, we witnessed the challenges that can emerge as well. One of these involved the negative patterns of communication that can develop. We learned that faculty need to interpret the values, norms, and communication patterns in the cohort in order to effectively enter the cohort's culture and lead them through the course. Although challenges like this presented themselves, our experience was that the benefits of the cohort to creating a vibrant learning community outweighed the potential costs.¹⁴

Many technological changes came during these five years (2000–2005), including the introduction of a new course management system and improved capacity to produce quality instructional media. The first change involved replacement of Web Course in a Box by Blackboard as the institutional course management system. This offered more robust learning tools online but also increased the complexity of the system and necessitated more training. In addition to the transition to Blackboard, the InMinistry program incorporated new technologies that improved our capacity to develop instructional media. The Master of Arts in Transformational Leadership led the way in this endeavor. This degree's commitment to best practices raised the bar on the use of media throughout a program.

When various digital media were first created, they were streamed for students to watch online through RealPlayer. The small viewing area of RealPlayer and the inconsistent bandwidths available to students compromised the effectiveness of these tools. As a result, we created CDs (and more recently DVDs) for distribution to students. Production of instructional media was done in-house at the seminary using a variety of computer applications, including:

- Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator (generating graphics and illustrations);
- DV Rack (captures video in a digital format directly to a hard drive);
- Adobe Premiere (video editing);
- Adobe/Macromedia Flash (links audio and video to graphic elements and text);
- Adobe Audition and Audacity (audio editing);
- GarageBand (podcast development).

Students benefited from products that worked in conjunction with free software programs.¹⁵ Faculty worked directly with instructional technology staff to create media that supported a course's learning objectives. These tools have been used increasingly across disciplines, degree programs, and delivery systems.

The biblical studies faculty were among the first to have media produced for their courses. These efforts made it possible for us to develop a model for teaching biblical languages. First we created a prototype for teaching Greek (a four-course sequence). This sequence was offered twice as an option for students who requested language study in the MDiv degree. During these two sequences, InMinistry staff and faculty met six times with students to request feedback on the learning experience and discuss ideas for improvement. After the Greek model was established and we were confident about its effectiveness, we explored the development of a similar Hebrew model. Student feedback reinforced our commitment to include instructional technology and substantial human interaction. Audio and video tools were developed for these classes. Additionally, student coaches proficient in the languages were hired to give personal attention to the online language student. Students participated in conference calls, individual phone calls, and exchanged emails that provided accountability, support, and feedback. In each four-course sequence, three courses required an on-campus intensive so that students could work through more challenging aspects of language learning while together with the professor and coaches. Once we were able to offer a quality language program, the InMinistry MDiv curriculum was upgraded to require completion of either the Greek or Hebrew course sequence.

Growing programs led to a need for more courses and therefore more faculty (many who lived at a distance from our campuses). This snowball effect stretched our use of a personalized approach to training. With residential faculty, we knew what computer resources would be used and were available to support and train. Adjunct faculty, particularly those at a distance, represented a new challenge. We provided training by phone and answered questions by

email, but we had little control over their computer resources and had a more limited capacity to create media for those who desired it. Making a distinction between residential faculty and distant adjuncts may seem artificial. In either group, those who struggled typically lagged behind in their technical skills, found it difficult to reconceptualize their courses for this delivery system, or were themselves too busy to keep up with the regular attention leadership in an online course requires. Sometimes all of these factors were at work. What differentiated these groups was the level of support the program could offer them. The impact of this was a growing disparity between our best courses and those that met our most basic standards. Entry-level quality of courses improved, but this did not narrow the gap. As improvements were made in some classes, student expectations were raised for others. What would have been considered an acceptable baseline course in our program early on paled in comparison to leading-edge courses (those in which use of media, faculty presence, and student engagement were strong). Clearly new models of training and supporting faculty needed to be developed in order to ensure quality educational experiences for students throughout their program of study.

Technological advances, increased use of media in courses, growth in enrollment, the addition of new degree programs, and incorporation of new residential and adjunct faculty kept us occupied in these second five years of the program. Keeping up with our own growth and providing a quality experience to students and professors received the majority of our attention. We became less concerned with keeping up with the Joneses and found ourselves sufficiently occupied keeping up with ourselves.

Phase III: Reconnecting with the Joneses (2005–present)

Recently we have moved into a third stage. We have benefited from creating identity that is distinct from other models and an infrastructure to support the needs of the program. Now what we need is to take stock, consider the future, and mature in our approaches to teaching and learning. This reflection will be richest if it includes faculty, students, and colleagues from other schools. We have come to a place where dialogue and cooperation with others will be mutually beneficial. We are ready to reconnect with the Joneses.

Many areas warrant reflection and planning for the future. The first of these is the development and more consistent incorporation of media across all courses and degree programs. Similarly, a plan for training new faculty, especially adjuncts, must be developed. Both of these steps will help reduce the quality gap, but the later will also help shift the task of course updates within Blackboard to experienced faculty and teaching assistants. Any training plan will incorporate both the mechanics of course management and a reevaluation of our pedagogical assumptions in general. Training teaching assistants to help with course updates and management will factor into this process. Student training programs will also need to be developed.¹⁶ Others have done important work in the areas of faculty development, online learning, and preparation for online learners. It will be engaging to reconnect with the Joneses—confident that we have much to offer and plenty still to learn.

Looking through the lens of a development model

The four movements Vic Klimoski presented in “Planning for Innovation: A Framework for Reflective Practice” have been present at each stage of InMinistry’s history.¹⁷ Our history demonstrates the way these movements (discerning, structuring, institutionalizing, and sustaining) build on and interface with one another. During Phase I, Bethel attended to the tasks associated with discerning and structuring. As we moved through Phase II, we began work in the area of institutionalizing. We continued to engage the elements of discerning and structuring as new degrees were introduced and programs grew. In our present phase, Phase III, we added the tasks associated with sustaining and continue to pay attention to those in the other three movements. Shifts in enrollment, degree offerings, and technology will necessitate an ongoing commitment to evaluation as represented in all four movements.

While each of the model’s movements are represented in our journey, there have been factors at work that are not easily encapsulated in any of the movements. The first of these factors involves how and where decisions about technology were made. Some major decisions about technology were not the seminary’s or InMinistry team’s to make. For example, the institutional decisions regarding course management tools were made by the department of information technology services. This department weighed the needs of traditional college and seminary students as well as nontraditional adult students (including InMinistry students) when making their decisions. In situations like this, the InMinistry program responded and adapted itself to the choices made by others. A second factor that cannot be easily accounted for in the model involves the difficulty of engaging in reflective practice during seasons of considerable growth and change. This was evident in the second phase of our journey in which reflection gave way to responsiveness. In some ways a consistent pattern of responsiveness left the InMinistry program back on its heels, less able to anticipate and lead into the future. In the third phase, we have an opportunity for proactive reflection. Capitalizing on this will allow us to make necessary improvements as we move into the future. The areas addressed in each of the four movements will constitute core aspects of consideration during our ongoing reflection.

The development of the InMinistry program would have benefited greatly from the presence of the planning model that has been developed. As noted, we will do well, even now, to use it as a template for our ongoing reflection and planning. In the end, the richness of the model involves a commitment to the thoughtful incorporation of instructional technologies to effective processes of teaching and learning. As evidenced in the InMinistry program, these processes will involve the commitment to creating vibrant learning communities and instructional contexts in which faculty leadership and presence are evident. If these are in place, instructional technology will take its place as an important tool for ongoing educational effectiveness.

Kristin Anderson is director of InMinistry Distributed Learning at Bethel Seminary of Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota. She has been with the InMinistry program since 1996, one year after the program’s launch.

ENDNOTES

1. Victor Klimoski, "Planning for Innovation: A Framework for Reflective Practice," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2005): 1–15.
2. In this case, the term "full time" indicates that the student is taking at least seven classes in a calendar year as prescribed on his or her schedule. This is not to be confused with criteria used in figuring enrollment statistics, financial aid requirements, or similarly precise definitions of full time stipulated by accrediting or governing entities.
3. The use of adjunct faculty is proportional to that of other delivery systems at the seminary.
4. In 2005 Bethel College and Seminary became Bethel University.
5. The initiative taken by George Brushaber (president), Tom Johnson (executive vice president), and Leland Eliason (executive vice president and provost) was instrumental in the program's early success.
6. To ensure we did not recruit students to InMinistry who might have gone to a residential program, prospective InMinistry students were required to live at least seventy-five miles from the seminary when the same degree was also offered in a residential format.
7. Bethel Seminary started the InMinistry program by offering the Master of Divinity degree. Currently Bethel offers the following Master of Arts degrees: Transformational Leadership, Children and Family Ministry, Christian Thought, and Global and Contextual Studies. These programs had a combined enrollment of approximately 325 students during the 2005–06 academic year.
8. The InMinistry program continues to benefit from the ongoing support of senior leadership at the seminary.
9. At this time, the challenge of offering course work in biblical languages was more than we could have managed technically or pedagogically. Had we required languages from the beginning, our limitations would have exacerbated the difficulty of language learning for students.
10. The InMinistry team grew in small increments. In 1998 it was comprised of three people whose InMinistry hours together equaled less than two full-time staff positions. Currently, the team is made up of seven staff whose InMinistry hours equal six full-time positions.
11. An added benefit to centralized course production was the ability to establish consistency in course design and function for students in the program.
12. During the 1999–00 academic year, the MA in Children and Family Ministry and the MA in Transformational Leadership were launched through InMinistry.
13. A byproduct of this decision was increased predictability in the course schedule.
14. Cohorts have become valuable resources for gleaning student feedback. Each cohort has a representative that meets with members of the InMinistry team during intensives. This time is used to keep the pulse on student satisfaction. Meetings have involved discussions about upcoming program developments, interaction with new faculty regarding traits of successful courses, and technological advances.
15. Examples of current software used to interface with our media are Macromedia Flash Player, Macromedia Shockwave Player, RealPlayer, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Apple QuickTime, iTunes, Mozilla Firefox.
16. One currently in the works involves equipping students to use the library's online tools to conduct quality research.
17. Klimoski, "Planning for Innovation."

Taking Control of our Future: Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

Sebastian Mahfood
Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

ABSTRACT: Kenrick-Glennon Seminary's educational technology initiative functionally began in 2000 with the receipt of a \$300,000 grant from Lilly Endowment, made possible through the Wabash Center. The success of Kenrick's initiative lies neither in its installation of hardware nor in its proliferation of software, but in its emphasis on community-wide training on the use of appropriate technologies as extensions of both the faculty and the students in the teaching and learning environment. By training the students to be producers as well as consumers of their course content, Kenrick set in motion a pedagogical shift from transmissive to transactive teaching within its curriculum and began a journey toward a more integrated formation program. In response to its own ongoing successes, Kenrick began exporting its accomplishments to other seminaries and theological institutes around the country. This article, then, is another step in the direction of collaborative engagement as a model for learning.

Kenrick-Glennon Seminary began developing a technology program in the mid-90s when Rev. Gregory Lockwood pieced together a handful of personal computers to create the first student computer lab. The idea was simply to give students a place where they could type their papers and get access to email and the Web. Over time, though, students began acquiring a proficiency in the use of the computers that exceeded Kenrick's capacity to keep pace. New students were coming with expectations of Internet access in their living quarters and data projectors in the classrooms. In response, a coordinated effort by administrative officers and key faculty members strengthened the ability of the institution to provide students with the tools to facilitate teaching and learning.

Some of the faculty traveled to Greenville College (<http://www.greenville.edu>) in Illinois to review its developing technology program and began initial inquiries into the Wabash Center's educational technologies grants program. The Archdiocese of St. Louis, of which Kenrick-Glennon Seminary is a part, provided funds to modernize the library's card catalog system, renovate the phone system, and retrofit student rooms with data ports. Concurrent with this upgrade was a timely grant in 2000 for \$300,000 provided by Lilly Endowment that enabled Kenrick to make a significant advance in its shift into the development of appropriate technologies. The grant gave Kenrick necessary funds and opened collaborative relationships with another seventy-one theological schools and seminaries that were grant recipients. The turning point for Kenrick that millennial year was a convergence of the availability of these outside resources with Kenrick's own initiative to prepare the members of its

community to be producers of their own technologies as appropriate extensions of themselves into their teaching and learning environment.

Consumers vs. co-producers of course instruction

In the fall of 2000, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary found a technology specialist who volunteered ten to fifteen hours a week to work with Rev. James Swift, who taught systematic theology, and Rev. John Clark, who taught homiletics. At this time, most of the faculty at Kenrick relied on the Roman, or transmissive, method of conveying course content to the students through lectures or assigned readings and evaluated students on their ability to respond in the form of papers or examinations. As the first semester of the technology initiative began, the atmosphere was one in which students were consumers rather than co-producers of classroom instruction. No one really considered that students would be better consumers of course content if they were also active producers of curricular design in a cooperative process involving professors, their classmates, and their texts.

The first efforts with Swift and Clark, in fact, did not change this student-as-consumer approach. Both preferred that the technology specialist do the technical work of packaging a course based on the content they supplied rather than learn the videographic and Web-building technologies each course required. Students still felt that their main responsibility was to give their work to their professor and wait for the professor to return it. Even the creation of initial Web sites (still online at <http://www.sebsteph.com/swift> and <http://www.sebsteph.com/clark>, respectively) did little to strengthen either professor's ability to be a producer of his own technologies. At the conclusion of the semester, however, the two faculty members and the technology specialist assessed the situation and concluded that faculty members needed to learn how to do this kind of work for themselves rather than rely on a technologist to do it for them if they were going to be producers of their own technology resources for teaching.

In the spring of 2001, two other faculty members, Glenn Byer and Lawrence J. Welch, learned how to use the Blackboard course template. Students were enrolled in Blackboard courses for peer discussions and to access some course materials. Blackboard was easier to manage than the Web sites developed for Swift and Clark. Students could have discussions independent of the professor. Both Byer and Welch were comfortable overseeing student interaction even though they had not yet learned how to encourage and promote viable online discussion. Significantly impressed with the ability to manipulate a course template like Blackboard, then, what the faculty had yet to learn was to train the students on how to use the template for collaborative learning rather than as another means to merely submit their assignments. As a result, they ran into the same problem we had earlier encountered in Swift's and Clark's classes—the failure to foster within the students a culture of peer review and social interaction in the asynchronous medium of cyberspace.

Technology adaptation as process

At the end of the first year of the technology initiative, we had introduced four of our sixteen faculty members to various technologies and dragged two cohorts of students along with us. As part of our discernment process, we discovered that our first year of integrating appropriate technologies into the curriculum of each course was undergoing rapid evolution from the original idea expressed in the grant initiative—a plan that now seems rather frivolous and somewhat along the lines of “let’s buy a lot of hardware and software and hope that people figure out applications.” It turned out that the very hardware and software in which we invested was rather useless as long as the technologies had not been internalized by the community. If one’s Web site or email account remained a foreign object throughout a course of study, then it was not a viable extension of the human person or an appropriate tool for social intercourse. Training was the key, but the training had to be done in context with the needs of the teaching and learning environment, and the introduction of the new technologies was already changing that context.

We could, moreover, no longer ignore the presence of our students as adult learners, which meant that we had to involve them in both curricular design and the development of assessment procedures. Community-wide training at this level required a formal decision on the part of the faculty to undertake a coordinated, systematic, and strategic production of educational technology congruent with institutional mission. Kenrick could have easily spent its remaining grant money finishing the purchases listed within the grant and hiring someone to watch the network. Instead, at the end of that first year, Kenrick chose to create a position for a person capable of handling all the technical problems that occurred with faculty and student computer equipment and who could also teach faculty and students how to wear their technologies as comfortably as their clothes. The person volunteering as technology specialist had the qualifications to fill the position.

In the second year of the grant with a year of implementation under its belt, Kenrick restructured its original grant vision by creating an Office of Instructional Technology that was fairly comprehensive in the services it offered to the community. Two faculty members were trained each semester, which would ultimately enable us to end the second year with half of the faculty fluent in the use of cyberspace as an environment for teaching and learning. The education of the students began in earnest with workshops on Web-building, classroom presentation software, various Microsoft Office applications, and classroom hardware scheduled throughout the first weeks of the new semester. Four students were chosen, one from each year in the program, to serve as classroom technology coordinators to assist the instructors with classroom equipment. These student coordinators, moreover, would eventually serve as the nucleus for the formation in our third year of the technology grant of a department called Student Computer Services (<http://www.kenrickparish.com/scs>). That department would shoulder the ongoing responsibility for student training and technical support. Because the goal of the technology program is to ensure that members of the community understood how to use

their technologies as appropriate extensions of themselves, the focus of student interaction continues to be on sharing knowledge. If anyone is taught anything, he has to teach that skill to someone else at his first opportunity. In this way, the burden has been distributed to everyone so that it is more lightly felt by anyone.

In this second year of the grant, then, the community was willing to engage in a broad experiment. First- and second-year students grew increasingly used to the technologies being tested while third- and fourth-year students tended to endure what they perceived to be a transition that did not greatly concern them considering that graduation was on the horizon. During the second year, John Paul Heil, professor of New Testament, experienced what can only be considered akin to a Pauline conversion as he shifted two decades of reading his lecture notes to his students to new practices of collaborating with students as they prepared for group panel discussions. Heil integrated discussion boards into his curriculum design and had students use them for discussing the merits of each panel's presentation. Faced with complaints by the students of their having enrolled in his class to learn from an expert in the field instead of from one another, he included his own articles and lecture notes within the materials on which each group was to present. In short, Heil stopped simply regurgitating his lectures a la Roman method and started working with the students to become producers of their own learning. His working with students to shape them into better learners continued at Kenrick for another five years before his move to Catholic University in the fall of 2006, where he is presently exporting his vision of student-oriented learning.

In the spring of 2002, Anne Marie Kitz, associate professor of Old Testament, introduced students to Web-based exegetical research projects, structuring class assignments around students' building of Web sites to use for peer review. Students worked in teams of two, which often resulted in one student's doing a lot of the research on the topic and the other doing a lot of the Web design and formatting. Regardless of the way they divided the work, each student had to submit an individual original paper on the team's topic. Kitz's piloting of Web design led to collaboration between the way Old and New Testament studies were taught at Kenrick. Because both Heil and Kitz were co-teaching an intercultural study tour course on Turkey that spring, they explored how using technological resources might better prepare student travelers. One result was Heil's building an online itinerary with links to each of the sites the group would be visiting on his Web site (see <http://www.john-paulheil.com>). The success of the Web site preparation for the study tour led to the creation of a common template for Heil's and Kitz's courses (see <http://www.kenrickparish.com/cba>). Now every student would be required to build Web-based exegetical research projects for the first four Scripture classes in the MDiv program. The community, subsequently, has strengthened its proficiency in Web-building and in developing an understanding of cyberspace as rhetorical media.

In a sense, then, by the end of the second year of the technology initiative, a new strategic educational technology plan had emerged. Its goal lay in the members of Kenrick's community understanding themselves as pro-

ducers of appropriate technologies that serve us as extensions of ourselves in the world. Our foray into cyberspace introduced us to asynchronous communication technologies that could be used in conjunction with interpersonal communicative methods. For instance, Clark had students post their homilies for peer review (see <http://www.kenrickparish.com/homilies>). If the original educational technology plan had merely been to retrofit the building and train people how to use the tools that would be introduced into it, the new plan called for developing a vision of how our community might use these tools in parish ministry and continuing education, which was more in keeping with our institutional mission of preparing men for ordination and service to parish communities. The implications for this shift in emphasis were far-reaching, for the new plan meant that we could not be insular about what it was we were doing—we could not just focus on how Blackboard could be useful in helping students prepare for a given class; instead, we had to also focus on how our teaching the use of asynchronous communication tools would benefit future congregations. In addition, we had to consider the intercultural dimension of what we were doing, for ultimately we were part of a larger movement in theological education, and we had a responsibility to ensure that other seminaries and theological institutions would benefit from our work in ways that would enable us to benefit from theirs. We began exporting Kenrick's program in workshops, conferences, journal articles, and, most especially, cyberspace.

Moving from experiment to institutionalization

By fall of 2002, which was the final year of the technology grant, we had all the elements needed for a positive transformation of our teaching and learning environment into one that was student-oriented and administratively sound. The key players involved in this pedagogical shift had learned that it was not so much the technologies that served as the change agents but the desire on the part of those who used them to build a better program. Heil's conversion experience was the standard by which every faculty member came to be measured. The question of how to engage students as active producers of their own learning dominated most of our conversations about how to implement new technologies into a dynamic curriculum. We could say at this point that the real institutionalization of the technology initiative was underway.

With most of the faculty trained and all of the students having attended the first in-house technology conference complete with break-out and plenary sessions, we could suddenly see more clearly the role of technology within an academic program. The academic dean in this year, Rev. Edward James Richard, provided leadership by following through with the vision of his predecessor for the use Blackboard in all courses. At the end of the third year, however, we realized that all courses differ in how they engage students and that our technologies therefore needed to be appropriately designed for specific learning purposes. Pastoral theology and church history, for instance, did not benefit from the use of discussion boards in the same ways that Scripture or systematics did. For the counseling and homiletics courses, Blackboard became little more than an online syllabus. Instead of enforcing the use of Black-

board in all courses, we tailored the technology program to meet the needs of each faculty member. We loaned camcorders to students who were able to film mock counseling sessions for analysis by our professor of pastoral counseling, Susanne Harvath. We digitized all the photos of our church historian, Rev. Michael Witt, and developed a PowerPoint slideshow that enabled him to include textual references to and Web links for each of his pictures. We developed a password-protected Web site at <http://www.andrewjosephsopko.org> for our professor of Eastern Christianity, Andrew Sopko, to contextualize his hymnography collection with his course notes and publications. In short, we cultivated faculty members by demonstrating for them how appropriate technologies could enable them to do their work better while at the same time help them to teach others how to appreciate the disciplines they had themselves embraced.

Once the entire faculty was involved in its own production of appropriate technologies, it became evident that we had an opportunity for the greater cohesion of the academic program itself. By the spring of 2003, we had a fairly substantial wealth of online resources and pedagogical methods. With the exception of the sacred Scripture courses, however, none of the courses had achieved a practical interdependence that matched the goals of the academic program. For example, a first-semester, first-year student was required to take classes in rhetoric and hermeneutics, Old Testament, early Church history, fundamental theology, and pastoral counseling. None of the classes, though, interacted with one another on the functional level, and the teachers of first-semester, first-year students had no forum in which to come together to speak about the strengths and weaknesses of the students they had recognized.

By the spring semester, we used the occasion of an ATS accreditation visit to establish a global vision initiative with a coordinator bringing about the interdisciplinary and intercultural involvement of the faculty and students. It made sense that the coordinator of instructional technology, already so heavily involved in bringing interdisciplinary and intercultural cohesion to the program, would assume that role as coordinator of the global vision initiative. At a series of strategic planning meetings over the summer and into the early fall of 2003, the president-rector, Msgr. Ted Wojcicki, guided the faculty and board of directors into defining three focal points that would serve to guide our efforts over the next five years—excellence in programs, stewardship, and global vision. At this point in our technology initiative, everything we were doing was seen in terms of using appropriate media as extensions of our program. Those media were to be employed in ensuring that all academic faculty were able to articulate their work in the global vision areas and also demonstrate the connections between those areas that would emphasize opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement. Because of the degree of coordination this would entail, the task needed to be done by a full-time faculty member, so a new faculty position was created for intercultural studies, and the coordinator of the global vision initiative was promoted into the position.

Addressing technology sprawl

In the fall of 2003, our first year in the post-grant period, we had a great task before us—that of making sense of what had become technology sprawl and of promoting the connections between the various disciplines through the technologies being used in every class. Kenrick made an institutional commitment to maintain the investment we had already made in the training and support of our faculty and students because of the Lilly technology grant. This meant that we would retain the use of Blackboard, and we would continue to pay for the Web hosting costs of a hundred independent faculty and student Web sites. The annual budget included allocations for identified technology needs.

Major policies had to be established to govern our activities in this regard, and we wrote into our hiring criteria that all incoming faculty had to be proficient in the use of course templates and cyberspace or spend their first semester taking advantage of training that would achieve that end. We established a three-year computer replacement policy and allowed all faculty members to buy their old computers from the seminary at a nominal cost. We had already established a computer usage policy, in collaboration with Sopko, our chief librarian, and William Toombs, our library technologist, but we still needed to revise our copyright policy to match the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 and the Technology, Education, and Copyright Harmonization Act of 2002. The key players in the institution had plenty to do to ensure we would not lose the gains we had made and advance in those areas that would help us consolidate those gains.

While money was being allocated to continue the projects on which we had already grown dependent, the office of instructional technology had yet to find a surer means of supporting new project initiatives. For that, we either had to be creative with grant applications or persistently impose ourselves on the good will of the seminary's nonallocated program budgets. We applied for and received a small project grant that enabled us to develop a global vision Web site (<http://www.theophony.org>) intended to be ecumenical in its offerings and interdisciplinary in its functions. While the Web site did not generate a great deal of interest beyond Kenrick, its development enabled us to work through a process of dialogue across the disciplines within the academic program. We learned that while we were already accomplishing the goals of the global vision initiative in all of the courses we were teaching, we had no means to assess how well that process was working and no real interconnections among the academic formation program and the human, spiritual, and pastoral formation programs.

As often happens in automotive repair, when one part is working really well, dysfunctions in the other parts become more noticeable. Our intensive focus on the integration of appropriate technologies into the academic program had naturally strengthened intellectual formation. Some in the community argued, however, that the rest of the components important for our mission—human, pastoral, and spiritual formation—suffered. The earliest method we used to address this seeming disparity in the way the program

components were structured was to require a summative evaluation project as a capstone to students' four years of theology. The assumption was that students who invest themselves in a capstone project will naturally synthesize their learning across all four program components. While work in this area was already being facilitated by the Graduate Writing Center, created in the spring of 2002 as a student-directed initiative, there was no institutionalized coordination on behalf of students wishing to pursue a thesis for the Masters of Arts degree and no institutional requirement for synthesizing their course work for ordination. The solution, developed by Richard during his final year as academic dean and by Brennan, who returned to the post the following year, was fairly simple—make a capstone project of a thesis or comprehensive exams an ordination requirement that would allow students to earn both a Masters of Divinity and Masters of Arts in Theology upon graduation. To realize this plan, a summative evaluation seminar, in which all third-year students were to be enrolled, was established and coordinated through the intercultural studies program.

Programmatic shifts like the summative evaluation seminar were developed because we were becoming more introspective. It occurred to us that with all the ecumenical exportations of our technology initiative to the world beyond, our first and best priority was to study ourselves. We began to realize that with all the changes in the way we were approaching our program, we were increasingly demonstrating a need for curricular and programmatic revision. This also helped to form the first impressions of an idea for using our tools to offer online learning opportunities in the continuing education efforts of our alumni. In short, the first post-grant year was one in which we realized that the changes we had made because of our technology initiative required us to rethink not our mission, which is clear, but our strategy in achieving it. We were able to objectively problematize our success and consolidate our use of resources in dealing with issues that our long introspection had suddenly made manageable.

Negotiating the pharmakon

Our developing an understanding that our technologies are extensions of ourselves in the world naturally led us into a subjective approach to the use of our tools once we got over the hurdle that so many of us had experienced of viewing the tools as foreign objects. As subjective implements, we had to expect, as Paul did in his second epistle to the Corinthians, that what we are in writing, we are in person, also (2 Corinthians 10:11). What we are in our online negotiations with the course materials, we are in the classroom. This understanding, tempered by our practical experience with discussion boards on the course template, led us into exploring our virtual selves as an alternative means of engaging course work within a residential community.

That spring and summer of 2004, the office of instructional technology, for example, began exploring more deeply the idea of interactive video, of synching audio lecture materials with PowerPoint presentations or HTML documents—embedding within the lectures opportunities for the viewers to

pause the speaker and click on a link to engage a short activity. In conjunction with face-to-face classroom teaching, we learned that interactive audio could resolve long-standing issues like the need to cover great tracts of material in our Church history classes. Rev. Michael John Witt began loading all of his radio talk programs concerning modern Church history onto his Web site at <http://www.michaeljohnwitt.com>, ending the year with eighty hours of audio synched to innumerable Web links that provide detailed information on any concept about which he speaks. (He would later develop another forty-three hours of audio on medieval Church history and lay plans for sixty hours of audio on patristics.) The problem we were trying to address was that in a seventy-five-minute class filled with students without a historical consciousness, thirty of those minutes would be spent on covering general European history. The solution was quite simply to follow Plato and move, like Socrates laments in the “Phaedrus,” our texts outside of ourselves and attempt to capture them in an interpretive context that would prevent their being orphaned. No longer tied to his lecture, Witt would be able to explore new pedagogical strategies including the group-based panel presentations that were working so effectively for Heil and Kitz and role-play simulations of historical events to strengthen student understanding of why things happened the way they did and how these things affected the way in which the Church was able to interact with the world.

This combination of asynchronous lecture and lab, we felt, would further serve as the standard for future online offerings, and what Kenrick needed was to pilot a successful online course of its own even if attended entirely by residential students. Throughout the fall of 2004, then, while the faculty continued its revisions to the core curriculum, the assistant professor of intercultural studies put together a course in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (located at <http://www.kenrickparish.com/dante>) and focused on making it interdisciplinary within Kenrick’s theology program. One hundred and fifty video clips were shot representing the points of view of twenty faculty members and clergy, and these video clips were integrated into one hundred Web sites, each representing one canto of the comedy to be engaged over the course of one hundred days in the spring of 2005. Of the twelve students attending the course, one, Rev. Earl Meyer, a septuagenarian Capuchin Friar interested in pursuing continuing education, helped prove that cyberspace was a viable medium for learners who were at a distance from one another while the other eleven helped prove that online learning is equally as useful for a residential program of study. The added benefit was that almost everyone on the faculty became involved in the development of the course making it not only an intercultural experience via mediated communication technologies that could hone in on a great many aspects of popular culture in the exploration of the last great medieval work but also an interdisciplinary experience where we were able to show in an extended vignette all the theological disciplines working harmoniously to address a single issue—that of man’s journey to God.

Sitting on the edge of summer in 2005, we indeed had a prodigious number of successes with the use of educational technologies to our credit, having finally developed the preceding year a feedback structure for a faculty

cohort initiative in which all teachers of each year in the program would come together to discuss the students they had in common. The data we gathered from a broad range of assessment activities would be processed in the fall of 2005 as the first year of the new curriculum was being implemented, and it would be compared with the data gathered in the spring of 2006 as the start of a longitudinal study to determine program effectiveness as the strategic plan of 2003 continued to guide our efforts. Additional data was gathered through nonelectronic means when the summative evaluation seminar in the spring of 2005 succeeded in having shepherded all fourteen of that year's ordination candidates through the successful completion of the thesis or comprehensive exams, leading to every student's being awarded the Master of Arts in Theology. At this point, we seemed to have reached a healthy balance in the use of appropriate technologies as extensions of ourselves and of our institution, using them in conjunction with the development of the interpersonal relationships any community needs in order to prosper. We had successfully brought an entire generation through a technology initiative that started for some of them in the fall of 2000 when a lone volunteer who knew something about cyberspace stepped onto Kenrick's grounds and introduced a vision of student-oriented learning. Those who would graduate in subsequent years would have never known that a theology program could be run differently as they had all been born into a program where the use of technology was as ubiquitous as and often synonymous with the teaching of theology. What remained was to be able to interpret what we had done in such a way as to make it seem, in retrospect, the result of a linear and focused plan that established meaningful trends to help us predict the impact of our future directions. The reality, of course, is that much of what we accomplished was in response to the changes we were making rather than the result of a perfectly delineated plan. Had we waited until we had one of those, we would still be close to where we started.

Brushing against the noosphere

With the advent of the faculty cohorts came the possibility for real collaboration between the four programs of formation—intellectual, human, spiritual, and pastoral—because all faculty involved in any of those areas were also present at the meetings. To facilitate this, we instituted in the spring of 2006 the development of an online formation portfolio project, located at <http://www.kenrickparish.com/formation>, based on the assessment portfolios from Truman State University (<http://assessment.truman.edu/components/portfolio>), which will over the ensuing years use the global vision areas as tools through which the institution, the faculty, and the students will document their formation experiences. We hope in this effort to accomplish in practical terms the vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who invoked the image of the noosphere as a theoretical vision of community cohesion.

Institutionally, we can boast of recent spring 2006 successes such as our work on co-directing with Jim Rafferty, formerly of the Minnesota Consortium, and Jan Viktora, of The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity, three online ecumenical theological seminars, one on the teaching of preaching (<http://>

www.kenrickparish.com/ats), another on the teaching of sacred Scripture (<http://www.kenrickparish.com/tss>), and a third on the teaching of Church history (<http://www.kenrickparish.com/ch>) in addition to an on-land ecumenical and interfaith seminar on the Semitic experience in America (<http://www.kenrickparish.com/dotr>). Faculty-wise, we can boast of interfaith exploration in Witt's new series on the medieval Church and its preoccupation with Islam (<http://www.michaeljohnwitt.com>) and of cyber-evangelism in John Gresham's site on finding God in cyberspace (<http://www.kenrickparish.com/gresham>). Student-wise, we can boast of four-dozen Web sites that will soon be parsed according to the global vision's impact on our formation goals. Documentation of this variety will provide both immediate and longitudinal assessment opportunities, enabling us to better adapt ourselves to the needs of our student population.

Concurrent with students' expansions of their academic Web sites, furthermore, will be the opportunity for them to develop a comfort level with the Internet as a means of teaching and learning through their registration for on-line courses offered by the National Catholic Educational Association's Catholic Distance Learning Network (<http://www.catholicdistance.org>), founded in September 2006. The goal is to not only expand the range of options for elective courses but also to foster within the students a sense of their ability to continue their formation through cyberspace after they are ordained into their parishes. That is one significant way in which we can continue to be a resource for both our alumni and the alumni from other theological schools within and beyond the regions from which our students come. We sit now on the cusp of our eighth year of programmatic revision, integration, and development, and we have come to learn that what is good for Kenrick might also be good for other seminaries and theological institutes. For this reason, we hope that this brief history will be of use, and we thank our readers for having vicariously made this journey with us.

Sebastian Mahfood is associate professor of intercultural studies at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He holds a PhD in postcolonial literature from Saint Louis University. Mahfood also serves as coordinator of instructional technology and coordinator of the Global Vision Initiative.

Establishing Social Presence in Online Courses: Why and How

Mary Hinkle Shore
Luther Seminary

ABSTRACT: The social presence of the professor is a key element in teaching and learning that engages questions about the Bible's truthfulness. Social presence is defined as the degree to which a professor or student is perceived by the other as a "real person" in mediated communication. Key features of the professor's social presence are whether she is recognized as a person of faith and how well she communicates to students that they are deeply valued coreaders of Scripture. Strategies are offered for establishing and maintaining these features of social presence online.

Introduction

Biblical studies professors know that sooner or later in every introductory class, someone is going to ask a question like this: "Can we believe anything in the Bible?" The details that inspire the question vary. How hard should we try to reconcile the genealogies of Jesus in Luke and Matthew, and if they cannot be convincingly merged, did someone just make them up? Because John and Mark disagree on what day the crucifixion happened, can we trust anything else they say about Jesus? If Paul did not write all the letters that include his name, who wrote them, and why are we reading them?

For most of us, these questions are good news. They signal a move from what Paul Ricoeur called first naïveté to critical moment.¹ Given that the people with whom graduates of theological schools will be working have their own questions about the Bible, it is a good thing for seminarians to give voice to a few questions along the way. Theological faculty members would likely say that our classes were not doing what we want them to do if no one ever asked questions about the truth of the Bible.

More good news is that these questions arise whether the class is conducted face to face or in an online environment.² This fact should help quiet the fears of those who worry that online theological education will be concerned only with "data transmission," rather than the ethical character of students and their spiritual formation, deep learning, and enduring understanding. Big, hard questions arise in Web classes just as they arise anywhere people read the Bible and speak to others about what they read.

In my own teaching, the social presence of the professor and fellow students is a key element in teaching and learning that engages questions about the Bible's truthfulness. In this article, I explore how social presence makes a difference as students approach difficult questions, and I suggest ways for creating and sustaining social presence in computer-mediated communication. Social scientific research on the role of social presence in online courses is in-

creasingly available and has been helpful as I explored this topic.³ However, I came to the topic by reflecting on questions that arose in my own classes, and it is out of those teaching experiences that most of this article comes.⁴

Social presence and formation

The simplest definition of social presence is “the degree to which a person is perceived as a ‘real person’ in mediated communication.”⁵ Social presence involves interactivity and interpersonal contact that can occur in either face-to-face or online courses. It can also be absent or nearly absent in either setting. The professor who appears in a classroom and reads prepared lecture notes while making little eye contact with students, who never supplements answers to questions with personal anecdotes, and who does not attempt to learn students’ names—such a professor is likely to have very little social presence among students, and students will have little sense that they are “real people” in communication with the professor. The teacher is failing to take advantage of a factor in communication that enhances not only the satisfaction of students but also their capacity to learn.⁶

Skeptics of online theological education might point out that the question is not whether face-to-face classes always take full advantage of social presence but whether anything like real social presence is possible at all in virtual environments. It is a good question. Some researchers in distance education have argued that because social presence is communicated by eye contact, dress, facial expressions, and other nonverbal communication, courses that lack visual presence are regularly at a disadvantage.⁷ According to this view, computer-mediated teaching and learning—especially in courses that depend heavily on text-based interaction such as threaded discussions and chat sessions—will necessarily reap few of the benefits of social presence.

The conclusion that text-based courses are weak in terms of social presence is regularly disputed by practitioners of online teaching and learning, often with studies that are impressive in their methods and scope.⁸ Yet the judgment that effective social presence is possible online must continually be demonstrated, particularly for those teaching and learning at theological seminaries and divinity schools, because concern about the quality of person-to-person interaction in the online environment is the objection to distributed learning raised most frequently by those involved in theological education and by churches who send and receive students to and from theological schools. If it is true that online classes are weak as a venue for real people to interact with one another, then all of us involved in the formation of ministers have serious cause for concern. Theological seminaries and divinity schools cannot afford to lose the social connection of students to a community of learning because that connection is a key element in the formation of values, wisdom, and a lively and deep faith.

To see this point made in a slightly different way, we can look at one of the conclusions of *Being There*, a study of formation in theological schools. The authors of the study are representative of many in theological education and in church judicatories responsible for approving candidates for ordination.

Writing in 1997 of newer “delivery systems” that move away from face-to-face contact between theological faculty and students, the authors offer this critique: “We are afraid that the new formats make it less rather than more likely that students’ minds, characters, attitudes, and commitments will be profoundly shaped by their educational experience.”⁹

In my judgment, this appraisal of new venues for theological study, if it is accurate, is a deal-breaker for online theological education. If online teaching and learning does not seem to its participants to be teaching and learning accomplished by real people (that is, if social presence plays little or no role in the process), churches and seminaries cannot afford it—regardless of whether it is otherwise cost effective.

Experience teaching online has convinced me that text-based Web courses can in fact be designed and delivered in such a way as to facilitate genuine, formative social interaction among students, professors, and a curriculum. Those who criticize all online learning as disembodied and mechanistic paint with too broad a brush. Yet those who evaluate theological education are surely right to require that “students’ minds, characters, attitudes, and commitments will be profoundly shaped by their educational experience.”¹⁰ Among other things, this requirement means that whether in face-to-face courses or online, that is, *wherever* courses do not attend to social engagement and its role in deep learning and character formation, designers and teachers must either improve their work or abandon it.

“Critical moment” in a seminary Gospels class

MA and MDiv students at Luther Seminary begin the biblical studies curriculum with either a course in the Pentateuch or a course in the synoptic Gospels. The Gospels course surveys the three synoptics with a focus on one particular Gospel. I teach NT1210, *The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew*. Most of the students in the class are in their first year of seminary and many have not yet taken any other Bible division courses.

By the fourth week of class, we have read a few Bible passages closely; taken colored pencils to a synopsis of the four Gospels in order to highlight literary relationships among Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and reviewed the complexities of using available sources in a quest for the historical Jesus. At this point, some students are wary. Leander Keck captures the mood with the comment from a chapel sermon at Candler School of Theology.

We are not sure we can use our weapons. True, we have been taught how to disassemble our rifles and to name the parts—you know, J, E, D, P, Q, Proto-Luke, and Deutero-Paul. But now we have trouble getting it back together. Some of us are afraid that when we need it most, it will not work for us the way it used to; while others wonder whether there is any fire-power at all in such a scripture as the Bible turns out to be.¹¹

These fears and wonderings are welcome—at least from the teacher’s perspective.

With students for whom my synoptic Gospels class is the first opportunity to question assumptions about the way the Bible is true and meaningful, I have two goals. First, I want them to leave my class with an understanding of the Scriptures as more complex, varied, and meaningful than cursory readings of the Bible or doctrines about the Bible are likely to reveal. The experience of Scripture that Keck describes—“Some of us are afraid that when we need it most, it will not work for us the way it used to”¹²—is a byproduct of any reading that takes seriously the fact that scriptural texts were addressed to others before us and will continue to speak to humanity after we have left the conversation, as it were. Recognizing something as obvious as the capacity of Scripture to mean different things to people in different times and places is evidence that first naïveté has been lost. I aim for this loss, and more.¹³

Second, I want them to want to keep reading the Bible after they leave my class. I especially do not want to frighten or annoy them to the point that they read the Bible as little as possible in parish ministry, either because they have learned that they should just read commentaries because reading the Bible is hopelessly complicated and best left to scholars or because they fear that digging into the Bible is a sure way to lose their faith. If the goal of seminary Bible classes is to create thoughtful, informed, faithful readers who can and will engage Scripture on behalf of the communities of faith they serve, I do not want my students to flee further critical, passionate engagement with the Bible. I want them to embrace it.

So in December, I want students to know what might have been hidden from them in August: that saying how the Bible is true is not as easy as they may have thought and yet getting to know the Bible is still worth the trouble. Perhaps because the second goal does not immediately flow from the first, the social presence of the professor is particularly important as students begin to read the Bible critically and move toward taking the wager that is “second naïveté.”¹⁴ Students need some assurance that the teacher has not brought them into the wilderness to die. Recognizing that their teacher is a real person—and a person of faith—offers a degree of such assurance.

Establishing social presence in person

To review, our simple definition of social presence is the degree to which a person is perceived as a real person in mediated communication. Both of my goals are more attainable when students know that I take them seriously as real people with real concerns at stake in reading the Bible, and when they perceive me similarly. So like most professors, I engage in various practices aimed at enhancing social presence.

In an article on the vocation of teaching, Jeffrey K. Soleau relates this memory of an undergraduate history of philosophy course:

There were about fifteen students seated around two large tables in the seminar room. The Continental professor would enter the room, sit down, and read a concise lecture from his notes. From time to time, however, he would stop, take off

his tortoise-shell reading glasses, chew on one temple, and begin to explain, extemporaneously, the point he was trying to make. He was actively engaged in the process of thinking; I could see this in the energy of his eyes. Suddenly he would ask a student a question. He would lean forward in order to engage the student more completely.¹⁵

When we meet the professor in this example, described as he is at the outset with the adjective, “Continental,” and we watch him begin to “read a concise lecture,” we wonder whether Soleau is about to give us a negative example of instructor-to-student interaction. Precisely the opposite is true. In the broader context of the article, Soleau is describing one of two people who “were essential to my vocation path.”¹⁶ The details Soleau offers show how much of a real person the professor was to the young student. From his Continental reserve, to the bite marks on his glasses frames, to the spark in his eyes, the professor was real. He cared deeply about his subject matter and wanted very much for his students to understand why it was so important.

The students recognized that the professor was real and really with them in the learning process. The standard ways of communicating social presence—learning and using students’ names, listening to their opinions, offering respectful, engaged verbal and nonverbal feedback—are not ends in themselves but are instead ways to communicate that the professor and the students are equally engaged in teaching and learning. The teacher who is actively engaged in the process of thinking in the classroom does students the honor of regarding them as people who might change the professor’s mind or extend his thought in ways he had not yet considered. Something could *happen* in a class like that, both for the professor and the students. Soleau’s professor demonstrates that establishing social presence is not about introverts learning to exude perkiness nor is it a matter of sprinkling digressions about one’s personal life throughout lectures. Social presence is the way students know that the professor is not just “phoning it in.”

Establishing social presence online

The metaphor of phoning in your class provides an apt transition to a discussion of how social presence works in classes that occur online. Is a lively social presence possible online? Yes, it is. It is also harder, at least for me. For professors who did most of their learning in classrooms and who started out teaching in classrooms, creating a social presence online is something like conducting a class in a foreign language. It is not impossible; it is just more difficult and less intuitive (at least for most of us) than speaking in one’s native tongue.

As an example of how one’s social presence is created in the online environment, we can look at how students recognize that the professor has a personal stake in the subject matter she teaches. I have said that it is important for my students, as they are being pushed to see the Bible differently, to know that their teacher is also a person of faith.¹⁷ Communicating this on campus requires different preparation from communicating it online.

On campus, this element of social presence happens in ways that seem not to require much preparation. For instance, I pray out loud at the beginning of class. I might read a psalm, or another devotional text, or offer an extemporaneous prayer related to the topic of the course for the day. This is part of my class design, but I never thought of it in terms of class design until I began to teach online and recognized how odd it felt to post a prayer at the top of each week's Web page. This posted prayer felt more like "phoning it in" than the exercise had ever felt in class. In a redesign of the online course, we developed a threaded discussion forum for prayers and prayer requests and invited students to participate in both kinds of posts. The practice online is now more student-centered and more suited to our medium of communication than our original design had been.

In addition to what happens in class, Luther Seminary has chapel five days a week at 10 a.m. Faculty and students have no meetings or classes scheduled at that time. Merely by walking one hundred yards across campus and sitting in a pew, I testify to the fact that I spend part of each day in worship and prayer. This public activity may not convince students that I am a person of faith or that I do not want to destroy their faith, but it gives my on-campus students some information about me in addition to what they have from class. Whatever else they know about me, they know I sing hymns, listen to sermons and sometimes preach them, and pray with a gathered community of believers. All of this is information about the professor that my online students have no access to unless someone plans alternatives accessible to learners at a distance from the campus.

A good online class design includes just such alternatives. In our case, the media services staff work with the chapel staff to make each chapel service available online.¹⁸ Students can elect to receive daily podcasts of audio only or both audio and video, or they may opt to view services as streaming video. In weekly announcement postings for the online class, I let students know about this resource, and I draw attention to chapel services from the previous week when they are particularly relevant to questions that have come up in class. The hope is to create a small buzz like that that occurs in classes that meet just after the chapel hour, when people are reflecting on what they experienced in worship as they gather for class. When I preach in chapel, I mention it in an announcement so that students at least know that I do that sort of thing, and if they like, they can tune in from a distance.

The practice of praying before class reminds me and my students that we are engaged in more than an academic pursuit. In addition to setting up a separate forum for prayer requests that can be made anonymously if a class participant chooses, I still engage in extemporaneous prayer online. Such praying feels much more natural to me as I stand before a class on campus than it does as I type into a chat window, but I do both types of praying in my classes. In the chats, students routinely type a chorus of the word, "Amen" a few seconds after my prayer appears in the window. The practice on all our parts is admittedly weird, but it seems to gather us who are separated by distance, and surely communicating with God by means of a chat window is not inherently more mechanistic than communicating with God by means of, say, a microphone.

Whether a student feels like a real person in a class is dependent not only on the professor's social presence but also on how accessible the students are to one another. On campus, students may interact with one another before and after class, in the cafeteria, the book store, and at other gathering places on campus. Of course, not all students have the opportunity or inclination to be on campus for more than just the hours they are in class, but many students do, and most of those develop friendships with their classmates and others at seminary. These friendships are one of the resources that sustain them in the midst of those "big, hard questions" about what we mean when we say the Bible is true. As a well-designed campus architecture and the right course schedule support social contact and community life, so a well-designed online course enhances student-to-student interaction so that students are real colleagues to one another.

Most of our online classes at Luther Seminary include discussion assignments that are part of course requirements. These small discussion groups function as small groups would in any class: students discuss one another's papers, develop group projects, and offer peer reviews of work for the course. In addition to forums for the course work, our online courses routinely include social discussion opportunities in which student participation is optional. Forums for optional discussions include (1) a help forum where students post and reply to general or technical questions about the course (I have learned to monitor this forum closely so I can see what is not clear about my online materials and, if necessary, correct mistaken understandings of course requirements), (2) a study break forum where the students and professor talk about recent movies, music, TV, fiction or other nonacademic pursuits, and (3) the prayer forum mentioned earlier, where we post requests for intercessions and offer prayers or words of support to one another. To people who have not been part of an online social network,¹⁹ it may seem that forums like these would be a pale imitation of face-to-face social interaction, yet students report real and meaningful connections with one another forged in these settings. By designing and contributing to social threaded discussions, teachers keep students coming back to the course Web site and promote the feeling among class participants that each student is participating in a community of inquiry, rather than completing the requirements of an independent study.²⁰

Conclusion: communicating value

I have had one surprise about an element of social presence that was more important for the success of my course than I would have expected. In one offering of my Synoptic Gospels course, I began by asking students not to contact me about technical problems. If they were having a problem with the course Web site, or could not access library e-reserves, or did not know how to find their group area in the learning management system, my rule was "three before me." They were to contact three other people before me. Their contacts could be to the teaching assistant for the course, the library, the computer help desk, another student, the help forum in the course, or other resources of their choice. If they struck out with three contacts, they could ask me their technical question.

The students followed my instructions. The intended result of my rule was that I received hardly any “housekeeping” questions in the first two weeks of the term (when these questions are usually most pressing for students). The unintended result was that students felt immediately distanced from me and seemed through the semester to be much more reticent to contact me at all by email or phone. I had tried to make clear that I was only directing their non-content-related questions to others. Yet I found that when I made myself unavailable for questions that were not so risky to ask, I was also making it harder for students to ask me the very questions or initiate the substantive conversations that I would have welcomed.

Various elements of social presence encourage students to stick with critical engagement of the Bible even when a transformative experience of second naïveté is not a sure bet. Most of these elements have to do with a professor’s verbal and nonverbal cues to students that they are deeply valued conversation partners and coreaders of Scripture. When professors do not believe this in general about students or about a particular student, it is difficult to fake regardless of the type of learning environment.

When we do believe it—and most of us do believe that students are valued coreaders because we have learned amazing things even about our own areas of specialization from students—it is not so hard to communicate their value to them. In person, we do so by encouraging students to say what they see in a text, to brainstorm answers to questions that remain unanswered for us after years of study, or to put our best lecture ideas together with their lived experience and comment on points of contact and difference. All of these practices are available to the online instructor as long as class size is small enough that the professor can interact with students in small groups.²¹

Establishing and maintaining an online social presence requires substantially more typing than doing the same in a face-to-face course. More importantly, it requires attention to how we establish social presence in any teaching setting and why we would want to. In this respect as in many others,²² teaching in the “second language” of a virtual culture makes us more reflective practitioners than we would be otherwise.

Mary Hinkle Shore is associate professor of New Testament and associate dean for learning systems and technology at Luther Seminary, where she has taught since 1997. Her writing projects include a Web site that uses problem-based learning to teach New Testament exegetical skills, viewable at <http://www.readnew.net>.

ENDNOTES

1. While an extended discussion using the phrases “first naïveté,” “critical moment,” and “second naïveté” is difficult to locate in Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 347–57, is a good place to start. For a lively, accessible summary of Ricoeur’s categories, see Ted Peters, “Hermeneutics and Homiletics,” *Dialog* 21 (Spring 1982): 121–29.
2. When I speak of the online environment, I am referring to courses that are conducted without any requirement that the students and teachers be in the same place at the same time. Not all distance education is online education, but increasingly, distance

courses are Web based. My own online teaching relies heavily on Web-based applications such as threaded discussions, synchronous text-based chats, and the exchange of text and audio files as email attachments and podcasts.

3. For example, Karen Swan, "Immediacy, Social Presence, and Asynchronous Discussion," *Elements of Quality Online Education* 3 (Needham, MA: Sloan Consortium, 2002), 157–72, concludes that "Social presence—the ability of learners to project themselves socially and emotionally in a community of inquiry—supports cognition by supporting critical thinking. Social presence makes group interactions appealing, engaging, and thus intrinsically rewarding" (157). See also, Charlotte N. Gunawardena and Frank J. Zittle, "Social Presence as a Predictor of Satisfaction within a Computer-mediated Conferencing Environment," *The American Journal of Distance Education* 11, no. 3 (1997): 8–26.

4. Since 1997 I have taught introductory courses in the synoptic Gospels and Paul's Letters at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Beginning in 1999, I have taught the synoptics course online at least once a year, and I have taught an online course on Paul's letters three times.

5. Gunawardena and Zittle, "Social Presence as a Predictor of Satisfaction," 9.

6. As Steven R. Aragon, "Creating Social Presence in Online Environments," in *Facilitating Learning in Online Environments* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 57–68, says, "Although the benefits of social presence can be seen more extensively in the area of student satisfaction, a body of literature is beginning to grow that suggests an influence on learning outcomes as well" (61).

7. John Short, Ederyn Williams, and Bruce Christie, *The Social Psychology of Telecommunications* (New York: Wiley, 1976).

8. The studies cited in note 3 above are examples.

9. Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara G. Wheeler, Daniel O. Aleshire, and Penny Long Marler, *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 278.

10. Ibid.

11. Leander Keck, "Limited Resources, Unlimited Possibilities," in Eugene L. Lowry, *How to Preach a Parable* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 81.

12. Ibid.

13. The transition from immediate experience of Scripture's symbols (a.k.a. "first naïveté") to critical reflection is valuable not only because it gives students some experience asking questions that people who receive their ministry may also be asking but also because it makes an idolatrous or docetic view of the text more difficult. On this point, see Frederick J. Gaiser, "The Heresy of Infallibility," *Word & World* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 355f.

14. "Wager" is Ricoeur's image for a hermeneutic of assent rather than suspicion that seeks to "promote the meaning [of symbols], to form it, by a creative interpretation" (*Symbolism of Evil*, 355). I want students to be "willing to bet" that something transformative will happen as they critically engage a biblical text.

15. Jeffrey K. Soleau, "Moments for Transformation: The Process of Teaching and Learning," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65, no. 4 (1997): 812.

16. Ibid.

17. For an excellent statement of the need for seminary professors to "nurture authenticity and integrity of faith" (100) in our students by being public Christians ourselves

as well as the many dangers that attend this part of our vocation (116), see Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino, "Pedagogies of Formation," in *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and the Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 100–126.

18. "Daily Chapel Online," <http://www.luthersem.edu/chapel/> (viewed: September 3, 2006).

19. While MySpace and Friendster are the best known online social networks, there are dozens of others, as evidenced by the list in Wikipedia, "Notable Social Networking Websites," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites (viewed: September 4, 2006).

20. Steven R. Aragon, "Creating Social Presence," has several practical suggestions for how to establish and maintain social presence, offering lists of strategies for designers, instructors, and students.

21. Class size is as controversial a topic among online educators as it is for those who teach only face to face. Some strategies involving high student-to-student interaction and a less instructor-centered experience seem to be able to accommodate larger numbers of students than traditional classrooms. See John Serner, "Online Class Size" (SLS Online Learning Blog, November 1, 2004), <http://senerlearning.com/weblogs/archives/000006.html> (viewed: September 4, 2006) and the sources cited there. Steven R. Aragon, "Creating Social Presence," comments that twenty-five students "appears to be the optimal number" for his classes (63). For the kind of teaching I do that includes coaching group and individual projects, twenty-five also appears to be the point beyond which the quality of my interaction with students begins to decline.

22. As Richard S. Ascough, "Designing for Online Distance Education: Putting Pedagogy Before Technology," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 5, no. 1 (February 2002): 17–29, observes, "For both the students and the faculty, online course delivery allows for creative pedagogy. Students learn to construct their own learning and instructors learn how to teach differently. No matter how well we teach in the classroom there is always more to learn, at least for reflective practitioners. . . . By committing to teach online, faculty will undoubtedly experience their own learning curve, not so much in terms of the technology but in terms of their teaching" (20).

Web Site Design as a Dynamic Companion in Developing Learning Resources

Barbara Anne Keely

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

ABSTRACT: This essay describes the development of a Web site designed to both support seminary course work as well as serve the larger educational needs of the church. Funded by a grant from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities as part of its Lilly Endowment-funded educational technology project and designed as a dynamic companion to a textbook addressing the spiritual life of the congregation, the Web site (www.congregationalspirituality.org) can be changed and updated by the author on a regular basis. The article details the development of the graphic design of the site as well as its emerging educational form.

Introduction

Christian spirituality reflects the ways by which a community or individual becomes more acutely aware of God's presence, desires it as a way of life, and intentionally develops patterns that encourage faithful living in the world as the body of Christ. My passion is the spiritual life of the congregation, an area for which many resources have been developed in the past decade. The common approach to spirituality found in most resources, both print and Web, isolates aspects of the congregation—for example, spirituality and youth, developing the spiritual life of the church leadership, or spiritual practices in Christian education programs. Although focusing on aspects of the larger issue is helpful in its own way, my concern is that an isolated, piecemeal approach fails to assist congregations and individuals in developing an integrated approach to the spiritual life.

As a teacher, I knew a Web site would be a dynamic resource for my students and others with whom I consult. The initial focus of the site was to provide resources for spiritual practices, but soon it expanded to be of use for my courses in Christian education. The use of the Internet allows me to revise the material in a timely fashion and to provide resources on approaches to the spiritual life that mimic my classroom presentations and that students can print for their own use.

As I began writing a text on the spiritual life of the congregation, I realized that the Web site is the dynamic companion to the book. I stopped developing the site until the text developed, and it is now being written alongside the book. Because of my current sabbatical, both the book and the Web site will be completed by December 2007, but the Web site will continue to change as I teach and as others respond to my work. I find it exciting to have part of my "published" work in congregational spirituality able to be changed as my perspectives change and to be readily accessible to others before a published text would have time to go through revisions.

The development of the site required an initial outline of the content and visual mapping to assist users. The content outline, which continues to expand, began with core areas from my courses. Developing the visual aspects of the Web site took more work. As I explain later in this essay, I use the image of a tree to illustrate an integrated approach to the spiritual life of the congregation. I gave an initial description of the Web site to a graphic artist. She developed the graphic mapping, using parts of the tree to lead users through the site. As she is an active lay leader in her church, her humor emerges in the *apple* as the map for *spiritual leadership* resources. Further description of the graphics are presented later in the essay.

Fostering integration

Research in adult education argues that integrated learning is much more effective than episodic events. An integrated approach to the spiritual life allows a congregation to build its vision into its ministry and mission in a clearer fashion. This takes on added significance in light of the fact that our understanding of ecclesiology has become more scattered in this postmodern time, and people are struggling to describe (much less define) what it means to be a church.

Integrated versus episodic learning is challenging much of what we do in the name of Christian education in the church. How does Sunday's adult forum on social justice issues integrate with the Tuesday morning prayer group? Does poverty connect with intercessory prayer? What do they have to do with the anthems being learned by the choir or the decisions being made by the church leadership? Do the participants in these church episodes have any idea what their spiritual lives might look like if the episodes were woven together? Might this approach help congregational members and leaders see the church as a spiritual tapestry that both shapes and colors their lives? Can all of the above examples be considered opportunities to learn what it is to be spiritual people, and are there opportunities to learn how to weave the learnings together into a sense of the whole?

While acknowledging that for many the spiritual life focuses on the practices that deepen one's relationship with God, I suggest that this understanding may be limited. If we use the image of "being rooted in God," then we assume those roots have a purpose. Or, to put it another way, if we are only rooted, we can stay below ground. The spiritual life has to do with being above ground as much as below, so I have found the image of the tree to be most helpful in explaining my approach to an integrated spiritual life:

- ♦ **Roots** are the spiritual practices that become regular patterns of one's life. They deepen our relationship with God, both individually and as a church. The picture expands this image in two ways. First, roots are not necessarily seen by others, but they need to go deep, to the Living Water (Jesus Christ). Second, the roots of many trees seem to be tangling as they grow, much as members of a community of faith tangle their lives together through worship.

- ♦ *Trunk* is that through which the strength of the spiritual life moves and is nurtured. It is the life of the congregation and the congregation's faith tradition, which is its visible strength. For the individual, it is being part of the church and the Christian tradition (as complex as that is). Through the life of the congregation, the trunk both holds up the tree in the world and provides the channels of grace, love, and vocation that move us from being rooted to going out into the world for the sake of God's ministry.
- ♦ *Branches* reach out into God's world, bearing leaves and fruit. They are the ways in which we share God's grace and love to others.

Missing any of these three parts, the tree will die. I believe the same is true of the spiritual life for both individuals and communities of faith. I ground my work in two biblical passages:

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7–8 (NRSV)

[See also Psalm 1.]

And for the ministry of the congregation and its leaders:

For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Romans 1:11–12 (NRSV)

To facilitate navigating my Web site, a graphic designer took the parts of a tree and used them to develop a visual path through the site. In addition to the *roots* (spiritual practices) and *trunk* (congregational life), the design includes *bark*, to lead us to additional resources, both inside and outside of the congregation. The *branches* are expanded to include *foliage* to lead us into ministry and mission that can bring life to others and *fruit* that feeds the spiritual leaders of the congregation. The image of the tree, then, helps the Web site user “see” why I would state that “the spiritual life is rooted in our relationship with the One who created us, strengthened and grows as we are active in the body of Christ, so that we might go into God's world to share the Fruits of the Spirit.”¹

Spiritual practices

Spiritual practices are intentional patterns that deepen one's relationship with God. These patterns are designed to be practiced by individuals and/or small groups. The Web site organizes them into three broad categories: alone with God, in a group, and in the world. A fourth page provides suggestions for spiritual practices with youth and children.

This section of the Web site is widely used by me and others because it provides specific, concrete, and useable information on spiritual practices that are designed as easy-to-use handouts. I encourage users to print the pages to have as they learn these practices or share them with others. A component of the Web site currently being developed is MP3 files (podcasts) that will provide introductions to the disciplines and suggestions for engaging in the patterns. The use of audio is an enhancement of the site and may encourage some users to practice what is suggested.

Congregational life

The core of the Christian church is the Holy Spirit's presence and the patterns of life that draw the church and its members into deeper relationships with God. It is out of that core that the church learns and practices community, hospitality, and mission to the world. That core, which strengthens the body of Christ, is the spiritual life of the congregation. The areas addressed on the Web site to support the core include:

- ♦ **Worship** is the heart of the spiritual life of the church. It is where people come for sanctuary, to experience the intentional presence of God, and to become refreshed and renewed. People learn how to be in God's presence, pray, offer themselves to God, and go into ministry through a spiritually centered worship service.

There are at least two challenges with this approach to worship. The first is that our society teaches people to be consumers, so they approach worship with an attitude of "how will it benefit me?" It is a challenge to let go of their lives, so that for one hour a week it is about God, not about oneself. We are challenged to realize that how we invite people to worship sadly may be encouraging them to become narcissistic consumers of the spiritual life.

The other challenge is to recognize the diverse ways in which people approach worship and the spiritual life. Corinne Ware's work in *Discover Your Spiritual Life* is a very helpful place to start.² Her use of Urban Holmes's research helps people understand that part of our diversity and uniqueness is in how we develop our relationships with God.³ And, as in any community, some diversity in approaches makes the community a richer place to be. Worship helps us learn to approach the various ways in which we can be different yet be of one spirit as we come before God.

- ♦ Opportunities for **Christian education** permeate the life of the congregation. As we attend to faith formation, we can also be intentional in nurturing the spiritual lives of all ages. What is the educational ministry of the church if not spiritual formation? I find it helpful to separate the terms belief, faith, and spirituality, and then show how they integrate into a whole. *Beliefs* are the cognitive structures that allow us to express in words and ideas what we know intellectually and hold to be true. *Faith* is making choices based on previous experiences, although sometimes it seems more like a leap than a step (Hebrews 11:1). In his classic text, *Will Our Children*

Have Faith? John Westerhoff describes faith as “deeply personal, dynamic, ultimate.”⁴ Out of what we know and what we experience, we build a life structure, a spirituality that grounds and shapes all of our life.

- **Spirituality:** being aware of God’s presence in all of life
- **Spiritual formation:** engaging in the mystery
- **Spiritual life:** relationship with God, one another, and the world—and living the everyday grounded in that relationship
- ♦ *Small groups* permeate the life of the congregation. They can be intentional opportunities for nurturing the spiritual life of persons and helping them to learn and grow in the grace of growing toward God together. They can be the manifestations of how people just naturally meet and greet one another.
- ♦ The ways church leaders work together (*leadership*), including meetings and governance, deeply impact the spiritual life of both those persons and the community as a whole. Does the church board/vestry/session understand itself as the spiritual leadership of the church?
- ♦ What do leaders need to know and remember about *youth* to help them grow spiritually?
- ♦ Both within the life of the church and in the daily life of a family, there are many ways to intentionally nurture the *family* growing toward God together, as well as attending directly to the *children’s* spiritual life.
- ♦ As church leaders plan ways to attend to the spiritual life of members, they often forget to recognize the challenges for *persons with disabilities*.

Spiritual leadership

A challenge one has in being an effective spiritual leader is to continue to attend to one’s own spiritual life. This section of the site addresses both one’s own spiritual life and ways to encourage the spiritual growth of others. One of the ways the site is currently being used is as a resource for an online pastors’ group I facilitate through United Seminary’s Continuing Education Program. This allows me to point members of the group to resources and ideas without having to duplicate my work. Although I have a Discussion link in this section, I am currently using Moodle⁵ (and previously used Blackboard) as the base for the online group. So, this Web site serves more as a resource than the base for the group’s work together. Content available through the Research link will eventually develop into a password protected area to allow me to post work under development. It will allow colleagues to read and provide feedback without the drafts of the work being available to the casual site user.

Mission in the world

This location has not yet been developed but will provide resources to integrate a congregation’s mission work with the explicit and implicit foci of the spiritual life. My plan is not to address what and how to do ministry and mission but how to integrate these experiences into the intentional spiritual growth of a church and its members.

Resources

This section of the Web site will always be under development, as my foci are to present resources, suggest how to use them, and to offer other helpful sites. There are some excellent online resources in the area of the spiritual life, so this section will be both a place of referral and provide some additional resources as they emerge. For example, I could post an annotated bibliography, but the Alban Institute has an excellent bibliography on its site.

Web site as part of an integrated package

The hope of the teacher is to engage the learner in as many ways as possible. Both learning style research and Gardner's defining of multiple intelligences emphasize that one approach does not fit all.⁶ Also, in this Internet age, there is more information available than one can use. The purpose of the Web site is to identify and provide resources for those interested in the spiritual life, both as individuals and as the focus of the life of the congregation.

While this essay refers to aspects of the Web site still in development, the process reflects my understanding of the value of the Internet. When we write and publish something in a book or a journal, it is "finished." When we develop and post materials online, they can be altered, edited, expanded—and so become part of the learning process themselves.

The Web site has been slowly developing over time in parallel with a companion textbook. The final package will consist of the Web site, a companion textbook, and two versions of an online course on the spiritual life of the congregation. One version will be offered through United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities as a for-credit course. It will be designed as a blended course, mixing some face-to-face interaction and the online context for learning. The other version will be designed for pastors and church leaders to participate in together, with online support from me, if requested.

Lessons being learned

I made the decision to post the Web site as an ongoing project. This gives me and others the advantage of being able to use it even as I am developing it. On the other hand, the challenge is presenting a project before it is polished and completed. For example, I teach a section on educational ministry with those who are disabled. Even as I was impressing upon my class why we have to make sure all that we do allows for the inclusion of all, I realized I had not addressed the topic of the spiritual life of those with various disabilities on my Web site. I have since added the category and soon will develop the material. As I grow and learn, the site will change.

Another example of "change in progress" is the development of MP3 files for spiritual patterns. As I present materials in classes and other forums, other topics are emerging that should also be addressed with podcasts. These will be developed for both classroom use and for congregational leaders.

I have developed a password protected location for Web site development on Moodle because it is the discussion board software in use at United Theological Seminary. This site allows colleagues who are working with me to give me feedback, even as we work together in groups. I find this part of the process very challenging and rewarding.

Finally, I recently learned a difficult lesson about Web site servers. Because I own the Web site for my project, I made the decision to have it hosted by an independent company that provides such service instead of locating it on the seminary's server. The company with my Web site, however, was recently sold, and its servers crashed for several days. Although grateful I had a back-up copy of my work, I still was unable to use it in a course I was teaching. As the days went by, I had no idea if it would come back up or if I would have to rename the site and begin over. Once the site became available again, I moved it to the server at the seminary where future problems can more readily be addressed in a timely fashion.

The dynamic potential of the Web site to help create knowledge even as it hosts a variety of resources seems to me to expand the capacity of the Web.

Barbara Anne Keely is associate professor of Christian education and congregational spirituality at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. She is currently writing The Spiritual Life of the Congregation.

ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.congregationalspirituality.org/>
2. Corinne Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1995)
3. Urban T. Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 3–7.
4. John H. Westerhoff III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 21–22.
5. See www.Moodle.com.
6. For example, see David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984) and Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

A Dozen Qualities of the Good Dean

Mark G. Toulouse

Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University

Editor's Note: The following essay was delivered as a speech at the June 2006 Chief Academic Officers Seminar in Chicago.

ABSTRACT: The job of a dean in theological education is never easy. But it is especially difficult in cases where neither the candidate for the deanship nor the institution really understands the nature of the job. Drawing from personal experience, the author provides a summary of the kinds of qualities a good dean finds especially useful. The dozen points addressed here will also help search committees and theological schools think more carefully about the nature of the dean's work.

I know readers will recognize it is all too easy to pontificate about a dozen qualities of the good dean when you do not even have to pretend to be held accountable to them in your own job. Further, it is much easier to think about such things after eleven years of experience, and a few years after returning to faculty, than it is "in the heat of the moment," when the responsibilities of the dean's office are pressing down on you. So I begin these reflections with a disclaimer: I know I did not embody all these qualities; both experience and hindsight play a role here. Yet, my hope is that present and future deans, and theological schools in need of a good dean, may find a delineation of these dozen characteristics helpful as they contemplate both the promise and the peril associated with academic leadership.

1. A good dean is a person of vision and imagination, and a "leader" not just a "manager."

Vision and imagination

The sentence above has two parts. And in talking about both aspects, vision and imagination, and being a leader, not just a manager, I depend upon an address delivered by Robert W. Lynn in the late 1980s. Lynn turned to the words of David Riesman, from a book published more than thirty years ago, to describe the meaning of *vision* as the need "to live simultaneously on two levels."

Like other institutions, [Riesman writes] higher education would seem to be stumbling backward into an uncertain and opaque future. I still believe, as I argued in *The Lonely Crowd*, that we need to live simultaneously on two levels: one being the pragmatic day-to-day enterprise of tolerable survival, and the other some vision of what our common enterprise might be like in a quite conceivable but rather different future—a vision by which we can marginally guide and judge our day-to-day procedures.¹

A dean needs to enable the faculty to live on these two levels—to define and live into a vision of a “quite conceivable but rather different future” that serves to guide and judge the day-to-day academic work of the seminary. A dean should have an institutional vision for academic affairs and possess the ability to relate this vision meaningfully to the president’s vision for the institution. A good dean also exhibits the flexibility and imagination to reshape this academic vision in relation to the strengths and weaknesses and commitments of a particular seminary. Vision and imagination are important qualities for theological education, and good deans enable them to flourish, both in themselves and their faculties. Faculty members benefit from deans who can clearly articulate, on the one hand, their imagination when alternatives seem slim to none in the minds of faculty who have given careful thought to the issues, and, on the other hand, their vision of the broader interests of theological education and the “quite conceivable but rather different future” of theological education in their own particular location.

Leader and/or manager

The second part of our sentence emphasizes the role of the dean as a “leader” not just a “manager.” Here, Lynn quoted the words of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus: “Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing. The difference may be summarized as activities of vision and judgment—*effectiveness*—versus activities of mastering routines—*efficiency*.”² Managers take care of the “day-to-day enterprise”—they are efficient—but have little to offer in the way of vision for the future. The manager is concerned with the first priority of getting things done that will address the immediate situation. The manager lets the “day-to-day” and the short range (yesterday-today-tomorrow) fill every minute of every working day. A good dean cannot be merely a faculty member who is currently, for the good of the school, engaged in administrative chores no one else wants to do. The good dean is a leader. A leader lives “simultaneously on two levels.” She or he has a different mindset that, while getting the day-to-day work done (on the first level), also focuses considerable attention on the long range (the second level—the uncertain future).

I have not completed any scientific surveys, but I believe a large number of deans in theological education understand themselves to be academic managers instead of academic leaders. This largely results from job pressures associated with keeping multiple balls in the air. When managers do strategic planning, they get caught up in the day-to-day techniques of managing it. To use the well-worn cliché, managers have difficulty seeing the forest for the trees. Individual trees occupy all their attention, and health issues related to the entire forest often escape their notice.

As dean, if you don’t mind my changing the metaphor from forests to streams, one can quickly drown in what I have always referred to colloquially as “administrivia.” (Where are we going to move the soft drink machine once we turn the break room into a faculty office? How are we going to solve the wasp problem in the classroom upstairs? Somebody’s been abusing the bulletin boards again.) In order to avoid this trap, I always practiced a strategy that

seemed to work well for me. The first part of this strategy was to tackle first thing in the morning, any administrative tasks I enjoyed the least. If I really dreaded doing something, I did it as soon as I arrived at the office. That way, I did not waste energy dreading the doing of it, and I had the morning's energy to get these tasks done sharply and quickly. But I also set a limit on the amount of administrivia I would personally do in a day. The second part of the strategy was to set aside two days a month when I worked at home rather than at the office. These were writing days for me, and, once they were set, I scheduled all appointments around them. The writing often had to do with the business of the office and occasionally with my own scholarship, and I always had more writing than I could complete in a single day. But those days always kept me ahead in the paper trail that plagues most deanships and brought a measure of sanity to my administrative life. Some deans schedule a day a week. Whatever the schedule might be, it is healthy and ultimately very productive for a good dean to block some portion of time away from the office.

By working in this way, I managed to spend some significant time exercising the much more difficult task of envisioning and moving toward a "different future," one that is built on a solid understanding of the past and present but helps the faculty engage a willingness to change, to move forward in new and perhaps threateningly unfamiliar ways. As most of you can probably testify, faculty members, even those who unabashedly identify with liberal ideas in matters religious and political, are among the most conservative creatures in the world when it comes to embracing change within their own institutions. A dean's ability to articulate a vision in imaginative ways can enable faculty to break through their own natural resistance to change.

Finally, deans, as leaders, are adept at moving quickly from one task to another while keeping other short-term goals and long-term goals in mind (juggling skill is essential). Leaders also enjoy problem solving, are able to deal constructively with conflict, and work hard to maintain integrity in all dealings with faculty, staff, president, and board (duplicity and inconsistency immediately kills the ability to lead).

Though there is much else that could be said here, I will only make brief comment about the relationship between the president and the dean. For those who work closely with a president, it is very important to be clear with one another about the level of the president's involvement in the academic life of the school. Most presidents understand the major portion of their work to deal with outside constituencies and issues, but they also play roles inside the institution. Deans and presidents need to be absolutely clear with one another and with their faculties about the extent of the president's internal academic involvement.

2. A good dean creates a bridge between the seminary and various external constituencies.

While we are on the topic of the relationship between dean and president, one of the best ways a dean can help the president is to give some attention to this particular aspect of the job. Presidents, of course, relate especially to ex-

ternal constituencies. But deans also possess some responsibilities in this area. Good deans communicate regularly with their colleagues in other seminaries. Deans need to remain informed about, and conversant with, developments in both the worlds of theological education and religious studies. These communications will carry over into the discussions a dean has with the faculty, helping to keep faculty members abreast of trends in theological education. A good dean will occasionally contribute critically to this world through research and publication that bears on themes important to theological education.

In order to represent the divinity school or theological seminary effectively with external constituencies, the good dean has extensive familiarity with the school itself, its heritage, its way of operating, its own quirky manner of understanding itself, and its strengths and weaknesses. If a dean is called to the position from the outside, one of the first tasks should be to learn the language of the school, to get inside of the school's peculiar modes of communication. Is it an oral and informal and familiar culture or a formal culture dependent on memos and written communications? How does email function within the school? What style of faculty meetings exists and what function have they played within the academic life of the school? Are they freewheeling discussions, or are they moderated by *Robert's Rules of Order*? It is generally not a good idea for a new dean to change all these things immediately. Nor should a dean refer to the way it was done at the former school. Faculty members grow weary of such expressions rather quickly. New deans and new presidents use up a good bit of solid capital and goodwill when they do not respect the traditions and culture within which a school has historically functioned. Once a dean masters the ethos of the school and learns to negotiate and work within it successfully, the dean is better prepared to represent it externally—and, perhaps more important, the dean will have gained a greater measure of respect among faculty for efforts to communicate effectively and clearly.³

Good deans work to build a well-traversed bridge between the seminary and the church, especially important in denominationally related contexts. And, for some deans, there is the added task of relating to the university with which their schools are affiliated. My own location, Brite Divinity School, represents all these contexts. Brite's faculty is active in all the scholarly guilds representing both the worlds of theological education and religious studies. The faculty expects the dean to be conversant with issues facing both theological education and religious studies more generally conceived. Brite is university-related but also possesses and maintains denominational connections to the Disciples of Christ. As an ecumenical seminary, Brite hosts students representing nearly thirty denominations. Therefore, a good dean at Brite not only tends to the relationship between Brite and the Disciples but also to the relationships between Brite and other church constituencies. In personality, character, and professional capacities (teaching, writing, and speaking), the good dean in denominationally related locations should demonstrate a sincere and fully evidenced commitment to the meaning associated with academic leadership in a professional school concerned primarily with the task of preparing persons for the Christian ministry. In all aspects of the dean's work, there should be evidence of extensive and thoughtful connection between practice and theol-

ogy, between church and academy, between ministry and scholarship. One aspect of a dean's job occasionally involves the need to interpret the work of the faculty for those in the church and the concerns of the church for those on the faculty.⁴

Those deans who work in university contexts will tend carefully as well to the relationship between the university and the divinity school.⁵ A dean in some university-related schools actually carries out presidential functions. In such cases, the chief academic officer often carries the title of associate dean. In university-related schools, the dean or the associate dean is likely not the only administrator who gives attention to the university relationship but is often the person who carries primary responsibility for nurturing it. The vision and imagination of deans who work for change in these kinds of settings will always take seriously the larger heritage and context represented within the university relationship. But the good dean will also work hard to represent the nature of theological education within the university context. University administrators and faculty can tend to understand theological education in categories too narrowly defined by purely academic and technical criteria. The dean is the one person who can broaden these notions in the university community, and, for the health of both the university and theological education, it is important for the dean to do so.

3. The good dean demonstrates familiarity with key literature in theological education.

This is important in every area of a dean's job. At Brite, for example, we are in the midst of the dreaded curriculum review. Given our context, it is important, therefore, to examine theological literature that relates to our faculty's desire to redesign the MDiv curriculum. Last year, Dean Nancy Ramsay recently asked faculty to read the book written by Charles Foster, et.al., titled *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*. The book analyzes how theological faculties nurture in their students the kind of "pastoral, priestly, or rabbinic imagination that integrates knowledge and skill, moral integrity, and religious commitment in the roles, relationships, and responsibilities they will be assuming in clergy practice."⁶ Faculty members discussed the book's relevance to our work when we gathered for our initial faculty retreat at the beginning of the school year.

Key literature in theological education can assist a faculty considerably in its work. For example, the latest research yields at least four insights worth considering when undertaking curriculum review. First, it discredits a long-held belief that curriculum moves in one direction from the classical disciplines to the practices of ministry. Second, it emphasizes the power of a school's "hidden curriculum" in forming the educational experience of students—the assumptions and values present in the culture and activities of the seminary's life. Third, it stresses the importance of integration in curriculum (overcoming the unhealthy commitment among faculty members to a particular faculty discipline, whether church history, ethics, Bible, etc.—at the expense of the broader goals of the curriculum). And, finally, it reveals the weaknesses of

an education built around the activities associated with ministry or an emphasis on the ability to explain the theology of the church tradition—rather curriculum should somehow work at spiritual and theological formation in prospective ministers, the essence behind activities rather than proper ability to perform the activities themselves.⁷

A good dean will work to remain aware of emerging research that affects our understanding of theological education and its work.

4. A good dean creates contexts where faculty can benefit from the insights associated with secular literature relevant to a seminary's work.

For example, under the dean's leadership, faculty members at Claremont School of Theology used a task force approach to study relevant materials before revising their curriculum. Together they learned from materials concentrating on adult learning theory, transformative education theory, learning style theory and the integration of learning styles, multiple intelligences, and multi-culturalism—all of these proved helpful to faculty members as they considered both the meaning of good teaching and a reform of the theological curriculum.⁸

I'll offer another example here of secular literature that I have found particularly relevant for the work of seminaries. In their book, *Reframing Organizations*, Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal describe the nature of "artistry, choice, and leadership." While dealing with the artistry of leadership, an emphasis that tries to avoid a solely rational and technical approach to administration, the authors stress that every situation in every organization can be viewed in at least four ways. Therefore, they emphasize what they describe as "multiframe" thinking, the ability to understand how every organization contains at least four frames that contain different understandings of the same reality. The *structural* frame represents the "architecture of organization—the design of units and subunits, rules and roles, goals and policies—that shape and channel decisions and activities." The *human resource* frame is that dimension of institutional life that must take into consideration "an understanding of people, with their strengths and foibles, reason and emotion, desires and fears." The *political* frame recognizes that within all organizations there are elements of competition "characterized by scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage." And finally, the *symbolic* frame emphasizes those areas where "meaning and faith" exist, where "ritual, ceremony, story, play, and culture" are placed "at the heart of organizational life."⁹

I have emphasized the difference between deans who serve as managers and those who serve as leaders. In this particular organizational understanding, managers tend to emphasize a "rational-technical approach" to problems "emphasizing certainty and control." Leaders, on the other hand, examine problems through a multiframe lens that encourages "flexibility, creativity, and interpretation." Leaders are aware, for example, that merely taking a *structural* approach to diversity, by designing goals and policies that protect or implement diversity, will not create true diversity within a seminary. Rather,

one must also take into consideration, understand, and address meaningfully the desires and fears of all the people associated with the school (the *human resource* frame). The leader must recognize the nature of power, the way certain struggles for advantage affect the school's life (the *political* frame), and how these affect the meaningful implementation of diversity. Finally, one has to implement strategies that will genuinely incorporate diversity within those areas where "meaning and faith" are most obviously evident within the school. How will diversity play a role within the "ritual, story, play, and culture" that operate near the "heart of organizational life" within the school (the *symbolic* frame)?¹⁰

Reframing Organizations is a book that can teach deans about thinking holistically, about taking seriously all the dynamics associated with structures, people, power, and symbols. The good dean discovers ways to translate good secular literature for the benefit of theological education.

5. The good dean leads faculty in integrating into mission and curriculum the important themes that face theological education today.

Though I am sure there are more, for this point, and for the sake of economy, I will mention four particular challenges that face theological education during our time.

Globalization (or, perhaps more accurately, cross-cultural accountability and responsibility)

This theme includes how a school's curriculum and culture provide educational experiences that help faculty and students address theologically basic issues of justice, economy, ecumenism, interfaith dialogue and the conscientious formulation of a pluralistic and Christian theology of religions, cross-cultural dialogue, and liberation in terms of gender, race, and class.¹¹ Complementing this concern for cross-cultural accountability and responsibility, the religious pluralism that has developed in America during the past three to four decades poses both a great challenge and a great opportunity for American theological education in the twenty-first century.

Racial and ethnic diversity

Increasing racial and ethnic diversity within theological education is a priority for ATS related schools.¹² Generally, this means all theological schools will need to welcome greater theological diversity; be willing to think in fresh ways about how curriculum is structured; and think together about how to create policies, practices, and rituals that invite and support meaningful diversity, especially those that enable the voices of younger faculty (those who make up the emerging diversity) to be expressed and heeded without regard to traditional distinctions between senior and junior faculty.

Public character of theological education

One of the cultural developments facing theological education in the last decade is the increasing interest of the public in religious and spiritual issues. Seminaries traditionally, as shown by an Auburn Theological Seminary study, have neglected the public voice and, as a result, are largely unrecognized and easily ignored within the communities in which they exist. Seminary education has left the education of the public in theological matters to the likes of Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and more recently, Franklin Graham. Brite Divinity School has given some attention to this area over the years through its series of public lectures in Judaism and Catholicism, by encouraging faculty to contribute op-ed commentaries to local newspapers, and by working to connect reporters who are seeking comment about religious issues to appropriate faculty members. Seminaries do this work by developing programs that make connections between faculty and students and the community that surrounds them.¹³ For university-related seminaries, attention to the public also means reflection about the ways the school might assume a greater presence in discussions related to the social, public, and moral forces that shape a modern university.¹⁴

The impact of technology

A dean should be able to lead faculty in critical reflection about the changing nature of theological education in relation to technology. Deans themselves need to be informed about and experienced in the use of computer technology. Whether we like it or not, theological education is changing rapidly and dramatically. How will seminaries adapt to the new phenomenon of educational technology? How will they situate themselves in the accompanying complexities associated with the multidimensional understandings of distance education? How might technology aid attention to the public character of theological education? Most importantly, a dean should lead seminary faculty in thinking theologically about how theological education might remain faithful to its mission as it faces the challenges posed by a technological age (challenges that threaten the very existence of schools like ours).¹⁵

6. A good dean models in person, and supports institutionally, what it means to be a good faculty member: excellence in teaching, in scholarship, and in shared governance.

This means the dean should be an active teacher and continuing productive scholar in a theological field, one who models the importance of both teaching and scholarship to faculty, board of trustees, and church constituencies. Teaching can be difficult on a dean's schedule, but a dean's commitment to the classroom communicates an important message to both students and faculty alike. It enables a dean to know students from the perspective of a teacher rather than merely as an administrator and for students to know the dean as a faculty member who embraces the classroom setting. It also helps the dean to keep in touch with developments in her or his own scholarly field

and can foster the dean's continuing scholarship. Through active research and writing, the dean models the importance of the seminary's identity as the intellectual center of the church's work.

The dean should also help faculty find opportunities for teaching and theological scholarship that serves public (neither private nor merely "academic") endeavors to enhance the interests of both the church and the larger community. Further, a good dean is informed about the teaching and research done by all faculty members so that interpretation can be provided for the trustees and other constituencies associated with the school. A good dean provides institutional support to create time for the faculty, in the midst of teaching and committee responsibilities, to do research and writing. At times, this requires special creativity and flexibility—so, naturally, deans need to be both creative and flexible (through occasional reduction or adjustment of course loads and committee loads, etc.).

In other words, the good dean is never satisfied with merely sustaining a sabbatical program but rather looks for ways to support faculty research and development on those special occasions when it does not quite fit the schedule by which an institution lives. Deans help faculty members become aware of the possibilities of external funding and provide support when faculty members seek grants. Finally, a good dean recognizes and finds ways to celebrate completed faculty scholarship. As Joe Hough has put it, the dean who understands, encourages, and facilitates faculty research will "promote a more adequate understanding of institutional vocation, enhance the quality of our teaching and learning, and encourage more critical awareness of both our possibilities and our limitations."¹⁶

A good dean will model the meaning of shared governance by encouraging and enabling the work of faculty committees, and by fostering, through personal interactions, appropriate ways to relate to one another in a theological community, ways that demonstrate respect and support for all members of the community. Shared governance means a good dean will trust the committee process and lean on the knowledge and good judgment represented in the experience of the faculty. And she or he will be accessible to faculty and work toward consensus wherever possible. Nevertheless, consensus should never be understood as an ultimate value. Difficult decisions sometimes require tough choices and close faculty votes. Shared governance should enable a school to move ahead in these cases while, at the same time, it carefully protects the expression of those who hold contrary opinions. It can be an imperfect process. It can be cumbersome. But when it works, it allows all those affiliated with the school to have a voice in decisions that affect them. It also enables the school to take advantage of the strengths and expertise that reside in faculty, trustees, staff, students, and community leaders. A commitment to shared governance means a dean is willing to live with a measure of frustration, without wallowing in it, or revealing it. Things will not always move as quickly as one might want them to move. When frustration sets in, a good dean will know how to compartmentalize effectively. What happens in a meeting at 9 a.m. should not be allowed to bleed into the meeting with others at 10 a.m.

Perhaps the most important thing to be said on this point, however, is that deans exist to enable and support the work of the faculty. Good deans genuinely like the faculty and care about them as persons. It is only natural that some faculty members are more likable than others. But good deans communicate a genuine interest in knowing all faculty members. They take an interest in understanding something about their joys and their concerns. There will be times when you will want to dispose of one or two of them because of something done or some particular effort to manipulate or control, but it is important to see past these instances and to value their contributions as members of the faculty in other areas.

Good deans treat individual faculty members equally. Creating double standards will destroy a dean's ability to lead. Faculty are at their best when they believe they are valued by their dean and their school and when they are spending their time teaching, writing, and engaging the work of preparing the church's next generation of leadership. As deans model faculty excellence in their own work, they need also to do what they can to provide faculty with the kind of work environment and workload that enables them to do their best work. Good deans make for better faculties—better teachers and scholars, happier, more self-assured, and more productive colleagues.

7. A good dean is skilled in creating a community with its center in theological reflection: this involves *creating a unity of purpose and mission* in the midst of the expanding diversity of both theological disciplines within, and approaches to, theological education.

Further, the dean's office is largely responsible for leading in the development of criteria of excellence and principles of coherence that will serve everyone associated with the school equally well.

A great challenge to all theological faculties is that diversity (in all meanings of the word) might prevent the development of a genuine community of discourse within the school. When diversity becomes fragmentation, as Ronald Thiemann has put it,—“the creation of separate communities of discourse,” each living in its own world and each using “its own standards of judgment”—the coherent educational task of the school is greatly jeopardized and the possibility of engaging in “serious conversation” with the community outside the school is nearly impossible. Therefore, a dean has to be able to create the kind “of intellectual atmosphere in which there is a completely open and candid exchange of ideas.” This kind of community necessarily involves conflict and tension. Good deans do not seek a community where everyone agrees and smiles contentedly at one another. Rather, they seek a community where passionate convictions can be expressed and debated. Sometimes, serious faculty exchanges can be “sharp and contentious,” even “painful,” but it is only through them that the mosaic of a truly global theological education will emerge.¹⁷

Further, a good dean is skilled in creating agreement concerning criteria of excellence and principles of coherence between the traditional theoretical and practical disciplines within theological education. A good dean helps the faculty consistently struggle with (a) what the school means by “theology,”

(b) how it understands seminary education as “genuinely theological,” (c) how theology should be understood, in a seminary context, as a “critical discipline,” (d) how a shared understanding of theology as a critical discipline enables both theoretical and practical fields to become better conversation partners “with those outside the theological world,” and (e) how this common understanding enables better integration between theoretical and practical in the “critical theological education” offered within the seminary.¹⁸

It is important for a dean to be attuned to this issue because the history of theological education in general has created a gap between “theoretical” and “practical” aspects of the curriculum. Keeping the theological task at the center enables a seminary to integrate scholarly and pastoral aspects of theological education, both for faculty and for students.

8. A good dean has experience with, and provides leadership for, institutional research for the school.

The dean’s role in creating and interpreting institutional research, and meaningful access to it, serves the institution’s responsibilities for assessment and evaluation of all phases of its work. A good dean places this particular institutional research in the context of the broader institutional research being conducted within theological education in general in ways that will make the results accessible and practical for the board of trustees, the president, faculty, and students.

Here I have in mind not only the importance of developing a knowledge of the school’s history but also the ability to deal systematically with issues related to institutional data (i.e., building models based on enrollment data that enable enrollment projections; conducting regular studies pertaining to grading, retention of students, student debt, financial aid, course enrollments, student FTEs, credit hours per semester, student probation trends, demographics of student population, etc.—all of which are necessary to making proper projections and designing meaningful budgets).

9. A good dean possesses expertise in the literature related to the assessment of educational effectiveness and strategic planning.

This is especially important for accreditation by the regional associations, but it has also developed into a strong emphasis within ATS in the past decade. Given the growth in diversity in seminaries, it is important that a dean help lead a faculty toward the development of appropriate models of self-assessment, program assessment, and the assessment of student learning that take into account the enormity of changes in theological education (diversification in programs, curriculum, student body, and faculty). A good dean enables faculty participation in assessment at precisely the points that match their skills (critical reflection, academic analysis, and the like). Faculty members should never be engaged to deal with the tedium that is sometimes necessarily associated with assessment endeavors. Deans and staff members should always perform those tasks.

Comprehensive strategic planning is essential to effective leadership in an educational institution. It is greatly aided by a strong program of evaluation and assessment. When we formalized strategic planning at Brite and created a faculty committee to review all new initiatives in light of both the current strategic plan and the school's mission each year, I urged the community to make sure our planning process left room for what I called those "serendipitous" opportunities that might coordinate well with our mission. Occasionally, schools experience a fortuitous turn of events that emerges without formal planning. I believe the good dean recognizes that solid strategic planning should never preclude the possibility of embracing serendipitous developments when they might provide immeasurable benefit for the seminary.¹⁹

With respect to assessment and evaluation of faculty members, a good dean will help faculty members conduct annual reviews that are both constructive and candid. Faculty reviews should always adhere, in principle and practice, to the process defined in the school's faculty handbook. Deadlines cannot be missed. All deans feel swamped at some time or another. But evaluation of faculty and staff, to be fair, should always follow precisely the calendar and procedures defined by the school. Nothing can ever interfere with that. Conducting an appropriate review of faculty members, one that carefully follows all established procedures, should be near the top of any good dean's priority list.

A good dean should also be willing to serve ATS in its accreditation process as a member on visiting committees who works to share knowledge with peer schools and to maintain integrity within the ATS accreditation process.

10. A good dean knows how to create and manage a significant budget.

This point is fairly self-evident. It involves at least some comprehension of general accounting practices and economic trends. It also helps significantly if the dean is able to interpret the importance of budgetary needs in the academic area of the institution effectively for different constituencies, including the board, the president, the faculty, and in some cases, even the church.

11. A good dean possesses gifts enabling strong work in faculty development and faculty recruitment.

In the process of faculty development, the dean works to enable faculty both personally and professionally to develop into well-rounded faculty members. This includes development of the skills to think institutionally and not just personally. Most faculty members naturally evaluate a school's quality and life by how it affects them personally; therefore, the challenge for a good dean is to find ways to help individual faculty members develop an institutional sense. I know of no simple formula that assures this kind of development. However, I believe it is preceded by providing faculty with a role in defining, and then nurturing, the mission of the institution. When the dean helps faculty develop this kind of relationship with the school's mission, the next step is to help faculty connect their own work to that mission by nurtur-

ing a meaningful participation in shared governance. However, there is a fine line here that should be respected. I believe the role of a good dean is to protect faculty members' time so the important work of teaching and research can occupy the lion's share of their work. Therefore, the balancing act here is represented in the dean's challenge to protect faculty time while, at the same time, nurturing faculty participation in meaningful, but not all-consuming, tasks in shared governance.

A good dean also will help faculty learn how to mentor one another, which is increasingly important for the retention of promising younger faculty members, and for recruiting increasing numbers of racial and ethnic faculty members.²⁰ In the process of faculty recruitment, the dean's role is crucial to success. This is because the dean generally does the research requested by a search committee and often educates the search committee about what additional research should be done to find the absolute best faculty member for the position. Further, the dean is the institution's representative in both the initial and concluding conversations with prospective faculty members. A good dean describes the institution with integrity while, simultaneously, "selling" the fit between the institution and the coveted colleague to be (as chosen by search committee and faculty through institutional processes). Deans are also responsible for integrating new faculty members when they arrive and for making sure that the salary and benefits offered to new faculty members are equitable when considered in light of existing faculty conditions.

12. A good dean knows what the job entails, has some appetite for it, has a strong sense of self, a thick skin, and is in possession of a good sense of humor—in other words, the good dean will ultimately view the job as an important ministry (a form of ministry through which one is challenged and fulfilled).

In the beginning, few deans would describe themselves as feeling a calling to the position, but good deans understand their acceptance of a deanship as a form of ministry. Few sitting deans ever had a long-range plan as a faculty member to be a dean. Yet those who are offered a deanship should know what it means and believe themselves to be suited to it. The dean's office offers rewarding opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the future of theological education in a particular location. It is a good job for those who recognize its potential and understand it as a ministry, a way to serve both the church and the academy. When deans are good, the machinery of theological education runs smoothly for everybody. When deans are not so good, everything falls apart. This is itself a testimony to the importance of the job. In my eleven years, there never was a time when I did not feel honored to have the opportunity to contribute critically to the formation of a style of theological education that would lead to good ministry within the church.

But it is also a difficult job, often a thankless job, and generally a lonely job. I know some might disagree with me on this point, but I believe the job precludes a dean's ability to maintain close friendships with anyone on the faculty. Deans should cultivate their closest friendships outside their own

seminary environment. Close friendships between a dean and particular faculty members can lead to all kinds of misperceptions. I know we would all like to think that theological faculties are above such petty jealousies, but, in truth, they are not. Faculty members as well need to be able to challenge a dean on matters important to them and to the institution—which is more easily done as colleagues rather than as close friends. It is also easier for deans to respond as colleague rather than as close friend. I know we would like to think that the objectivity of deans supersedes the temptations toward favoritism that accompanies close friendships, but, in truth, it does not.

“Deaning” is often a politically-charged endeavor. Deans are rarely judged by their virtuous intentions but rather by where they stand on the issues as faculty members define them at any given time. Deans are also occasionally faced with making hard decisions in order to tend to the health of the institution in the long run. These are decisions that cannot effectively be made by the faculty as a whole and, sometimes, cannot even be fully explained to the faculty. Such decisions sometimes appear to be arbitrary and cause some to feel disillusioned, thwarted, or even angry. In these instances, deans, as much as possible, need to model respect and decency even when under attack by faculty colleagues. This requires both a strong sense of self and a thick skin. In general, a dean stands between two cultures (faculty and administrative) and it is often a tenuous place to stand. If deans move into the job without full awareness of what it involves and without a ministerial appetite for it, they will burn out quickly. Perhaps most importantly, deans need a good sense of humor.²¹ When a dean begins to lose a sense of humor, the good dean knows it is time to become a happy-go-lucky faculty member again.

Mark G. Toulouse is professor of American religious history at Brite Divinity School, where he served as a dean from 1991–2002.

ENDNOTES

1. The ideas associated with these two items are discussed in further detail in Robert Wood Lynn, "Living on Two Levels: The Work of the Academic Dean in North American Theological Education," *Theological Education* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 75–85. Lynn quotes Riesman in this essay on 75. For the original reference, see *Academic Transformation: Seventeen Institutions Under Pressure*, David Riesman and Verne A. Stadtman, eds. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), 468–469.
2. Lynn quotes Bennis and Nanus on 76. For the original reference, see Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 21.
3. See Russell Richey's discussion of this point in "To a Candidate for Academic Leadership: A Letter," *Theological Education* 33, Supplement (Autumn 1996): 36–37.
4. The importance of this obvious point does not need much support, but it is especially important for the dean's work at denominationally related schools. The point is made well in Jane Smith, "Academic Leadership: Roles, Issues, and Challenges," *Theological Education* 33, Supplement (Autumn 1996): 4.
5. On the history of university-related theological education, see Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1995).
6. Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino, eds., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 13.
7. These items are addressed in varying ways in the following literature: *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education* edited by Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); Charles Monroe Wood, *An Invitation to Theological Study* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994); Charles Monroe Wood, *Vision and Discernment: An Orientation in Theological Study* (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1985); Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Edward Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Jackson W. Carroll, et. al., *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); W. Jackson Carroll and Carol E. Lytch, *What is Good Ministry? Resources to Launch a Good Discussion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Divinity School, 2003); David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).
8. (1) Adult learning theory includes a comparison of assumptions between pedagogy (dependent learning) and andragogy (movement toward increasing self-directedness in learning); (2) transformative education theory supports the process of uncovering disempowering and distorted assumptions, but doing so in a supportive context; (3) learning style theory and the integration of learning styles gives attention to how integrated knowing occurs; (4) the theory of multiple intelligences challenges the idea that intelligence can be measured by standard tests (IQ tests) and instead defines intelligence as present in multiple ways pertaining, for example, to usages of language, sound, abstract relations, space, the body (coordination), abilities to perceive moods and emotions in others, awareness of personal emotions and feelings, and ability to distinguish and classify features of the environment surrounding the learner; (5) Multiculturalism is an emphasis on the importance of exposure to difference. With the exception of Knowles, St. Clair, and Gardner, with which I have been familiar for some

time, I was introduced to most of the secular references below through my knowledge of the results of the Claremont study. I've added here some relevant theological sources I have read on these topics along the way. On adult learning theory, see Malcolm S. Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (Chicago: Follett Pub. Co., 1980) and Ralf St. Clair, *Andragogy Revisited: Theory for the 21st Century* (Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Center on Education and Training for Employment, College of Education, the Ohio State University, 2002); see also Christine E. Blair, "Understanding Adult Learners: Challenges for Theological Education," *Theological Education* 34, no. 1 (Autumn 1997): 11–24. On transformative education theory, see Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991); and "Learning to Think Like an Adult," in Mezirow, ed., *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002): 3–33; and Ann C. Baker, et. al., *Conversational Learning: An Experiential Approach to Knowledge Creation* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2002); and Steven Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987). For theological education's adaptation of transformative education theory, see James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989); Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), and F. LeRon Shults, "Pedagogy of the Repressed: What Keeps Seminararians from Transformational Learning?" *Theological Education* 36, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 157–169. On learning style theory and the integration of learning styles, see David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984). On multiple intelligences, see Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); and Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind: Beyond Facts and Standardized Tests* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000). On multiculturalism as a learning style, see Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

9. Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), see 17–19 for these quotations. Jack Fitzmier introduced me to this resource. I have found it extremely helpful in understanding how organizations function. Bolman and Deal first published these ideas under the title *Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organizations* in 1984. This particular edition (2003) represents the third revision under the title *Reframing Organizations*.

10. Ibid.

11. See Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans, and David A. Roozen, eds., *The Globalization of Theological Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); David Roozen, et. al., *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pilot Immersion Project: Globalization and Theological Education* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary Center for Religious Research, 1996); and the following issues of *Theological Education* dedicated to this theme: "Fundamental Issues in Globalization," *Theological Education* 26, Supplement I (Spring 1990); "Patterns of Globalization: Six Studies," *Theological Education* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1991); "Globalization and the Classical Theological Disciplines," *Theological Education* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1993); "Globalization: Tracing the Journey, Charting the Course," *Theological Education* 30, Supplement I (Autumn 1993); "Globalization and the Practical Theological Disciplines," *Theological Education* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 1993); "Ecumenical Formation: A Theology for a Pluralistic Age: The Case of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey," *Theological Education* 34, Supplement (Autumn 1997); "Incarnating Globalization in ATS Schools: Issues, Experiences, Understandings, Challenges," *Theological Education* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1999); see also Judith A. Berling, "A Failure of Leadership? Globalization

and the University Divinity School," in James L. Waits, ed., *Theology in the University: A Study of University-Related Divinity Schools* (Lilly Endowment, 1995); and Berling, "Our Words Are Beginning to Make It So: ATS Schools on Cross-Cultural Relationships and Globalization," *Theological Education* 36, no. 2 (2000): 63–80.

12. See, for example, "The Promise and Challenge of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 38, no. 2 (2002); Anthony B. Pinn and Benjamin Valentin, eds., *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 2001); Fumitaka Matsuoka, *The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2001); Eleazar S. Fernandez and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

13. Elizabeth Lynn and Barbara G. Wheeler, *Missing Connections: Public Perceptions of Theological Education and Religious Leadership* (New York: Auburn Theological Seminary, Center for the Study of Theological Education, 1999); see also "The Public Character of Theological Education," *Theological Education* 37, no. 1 (Autumn 2000); and "Public Character in Action: Patterns and Possibilities," *Theological Education* 38, no. 1 (Autumn 2001). Also related to this discussion is the character of theological education in an urban setting. See, for example, Warren Dennis, Katie Day, and Ron Peters, "Urban Theological Education: A Conversation about Curriculum," *Theological Education* 34, no. 1 (1997): 41–50.

14. See, for example, Bonnie J. McLemore, Robin W. Lovin, and Richard J. Wood, "The Public Character of the University-Related Divinity School," *Theological Education* 37, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 49–61. Books that explore the voice of religion in public life include Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997); Ronald F. Thiemann, *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996); Franklin I. Gamwell, *Politics as A Christian Vocation: Faith and Democracy Today* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Mark G. Toulouse, *God in Public: Four Ways American Christianity and Public Life Relate* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

15. See, for example, the issue of *Theological Education* dedicated to "Educational Technology and Distance Education: Issues and Implications for Theological Education" (vol. 36, no. 1, Autumn 1999).

16. Joseph C. Hough, "The Dean's Responsibility for Faculty Research," *Theological Education* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 103.

17. These points, associated with point 7 as presented here, are covered well in Ronald F. Thiemann, "The Scholarly Vocation: Its Future Challenges and Threats," *Theological Education* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 86–101.

18. *Ibid.*

19. See the new book by William R. Myers, *Closing the Assessment "Loop": Nurturing Healthy, On-going Self-evaluation in Theological Schools* (Chicago: Chicago Theological Seminary, dba Exploration Press, 2006). ATS has produced several entire issues of *Theological Education* devoted to planning and assessment issues: See "Models of Assessing Institutional and Educational Effectiveness: The Pilot School Project," *Theological Education* 35, no. 1 (Autumn 1998); "The Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation," *Theological Education* 39, no. 1 (2003); and "Institutional Assessment and Theological Education: 'Navigating Our Way,'" *Theological Education* 39, no. 2 (2003). Seminaries, however, need also to give attention to the secular literature that has been developed to deal with the changing nature of approaches to assessment. A dean should be familiar with the guidelines adopted by the American Academy of Higher

Education on assessment. Other secular materials related to assessment include, for example, T. Dary Erwin, *Assessing Student Learning and Development* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1991); Catherine A. Palomba and Trudy W. Banta, *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999); Catherine A. Palomba and Trudy W. Banta, eds., *Assessing Student Competence in Accredited Disciplines: Pioneering Approaches to Assessment in Higher Education* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Pub., 2001); Lorraine M. McDonnell, *Policymakers' Views of Student Assessment* (Los Angeles: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, 1994); Anne Chambers Lewis, *Educational Accountability in the 21st Century. 2000 CRESST Conference Proceedings* (Los Angeles: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, Center for the Study of Evaluation, 2001). Assessment, of course, also includes the work of faculty assessment. See, for example, Mary C. Boys, "Evaluating an Uncertain Craft: Faculty Assessment and Theological Education," *Theological Education* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 37–50.

20. See Shirley M. Clark, Mary Corcoran, and Darrell R. Lewis, "The Case for an Institutional Perspective on Faculty Development," *Journal of Higher Education* 57, no. 2 (March–April, 1986); and on mentoring, see James E. Blackwell, "Mentoring: An Action Strategy for Increasing Minority Faculty," *Academe* 75, no. 5 (September–October 1989); Shelly Cunningham, "Who's Mentoring the Mentors? The Discipling Dimension of Faculty Development in Christian Higher Education," *Theological Education* 34, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 31–49.

21. All these items are covered in one sense or another in the various essays written for the special edition of *Theological Education* dedicated to a study of chief academic officers in ATS schools. I found all of them to be true in my own experience during my eleven years in administration at Brite. See the essays in "The Study of Chief Academic Officers in Theological Schools: Reflections on Academic Leadership," *Theological Education* 33, Supplement (Autumn 1996). Russell Richey discusses well the nature of these "two cultures" in his essay, "To a Candidate for Academic Leadership: A Letter," *Theological Education* 33, Supplement (Autumn 1996): 38–41.

Using Participatory Action Research in Seminary Internships

Cameron Harder

Lutheran Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: This article follows from a study of contextual training for students in rural settings. The study was funded by the Wabash Center and included thirty-five institutions in four countries (India, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States). Examples of exceptional training patterns that were discovered are given and then set within a general typology of contextual education models. The latter includes an analysis of variables, such as, Who is in charge? Who benefits? Are students compensated? How much integration is there of theory/practice/person? and What type of field training is it? The author then considers several theological assumptions that help him to sort out which models offer training consistent with his theology, concluding that participatory action research is one of the most appropriate. The last half of the paper describes this model in detail and the author's positive experience with asset-based research methods in seminary internships.

Foreword

In its standards, The Association of Theological Schools has shown increasing interest in the ability of seminaries to identify and measure the desired outcomes of their education. In some theological programs, most key outcomes focus on the person of the student—his or her ability to “do theology” for example. For other programs, especially those that exist primarily to provide clerical leadership for particular church bodies, a key outcome must be the extent to which the ministry needs of those churches are being met by program graduates.

The latter may create some dissonance for field educators. In past years, we have been encouraged to regard students’ (often self-identified) learning goals as the guide to field learning. Appropriately, increasing responsibility for their own learning has been placed in the hands of our adult students. Care must be taken, however, not to isolate students from their community context in the process. Field sites don’t exist solely for the sake of students. They are not “mines” from which students extract the precious metals of knowledge. The leadership and development needs of ministry sites are just as important as students’ learning interests. In fact, in the case of church-body related leadership training, they may be paramount. At the edges particularly, where the church’s existence and mission are in jeopardy, very particular leadership skills are required, especially those that open up hopeful, contextually appropriate possibilities for new life and ministry. This article is an effort to look at the ways in which various forms of contextual education affect the needs of both students and the communities they serve. It focuses on a particular example from a struggling rural context.

Context

At our seminary in Saskatchewan, Canada, more than three-quarters of our graduates go into small rural parishes. Many of these congregations are dispirited, watching the exodus to the city, convinced that God is leaving too. They hunker down in survival mode, sharing a quiet grief and often a sense of shame—as though they are no longer worth the attention of God or the community. Seminary graduates struggle with the challenges. They often stay no more than a year or two in their first parish before moving on.

Generally, our contextual training processes have not been adequate. In hope of finding new strategies and tools for training rural leadership, I spent a sabbatical year (funded by a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion) traveling across the United States, Canada, India, and Great Britain. I visited thirty-five institutions and interviewed 380 students, faculty, administrators, and rural residents. In the process, I encountered some exceptional examples of effective contextual education. Let me briefly share a couple.

Two examples of effective contextual training

India

In Madurai, India, the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary (TTS) requires its second-year students to move into nearby slums under conditions similar to those of the permanent residents. Living in a hot, crowded, concrete room they line up at night for their water and walk to school each day for classes. Once a week in the evening they visit flower vendors, incense makers, basket weavers, truck loaders—ten different low-income occupational groups. Students learn about their living conditions, political backgrounds, sources of income, and faith perspectives. Within that year they also have a fifteen-day “industrial exposure.” They work with and interview workers in factories, export companies, and hardware industries. The assumption is that students cannot know what might be good news for the folks to whom they will minister until they know their struggles.

In their third year, TTS students spend six months living in rural Hindu villages seeking to understand the life and perspectives of the villagers. Professors come out for two or three weeks at a time to teach intensive courses. In the final year, students spend three months working for a nongovernmental agency (NGO) somewhere in India. They try to discern how the NGO brings about social change. Throughout, the students report and write theological reflections on their experiences. They emerge with strong skills in social analysis, theological integration, and the ability to initiate social change.

Canada

In Peterborough, Ontario, the Trent Community Based Education Centre and the U-Links Centre of Halliburton County work with Trent University to develop research projects for Peterborough and Halliburton County. Together they develop projects such as gathering history and materials for a museum,

designing a walking trail for tourists, or mapping a watershed. The projects are then posted at the university. Students in geography, history, and other disciplines undertake them as the backbone assignments of credit courses.

The program is remarkable because each research project is community-initiated and directed. It is supervised by a professor, and it requires academic reading and writing. Students' own interests are a key factor in their choice of projects. But in every case, the projects are driven by the questions that are of burning interest to the community, not just the student. Students report that it is highly motivating to know that their research is not just for their own growth but that it makes a visible difference to others. Many make career decisions as a result of the experience.

These are two examples of a variety of forms of contextual education that I encountered. In this essay, I will briefly identify several general categories of contextual education. The categories are not all-inclusive, but they have established histories and networks of adherents. Out of wrestling with these forms has come a model with which I am presently experimenting—that of using congregational participatory research projects at the core of our twelve-month, full-time seminary internships.

Some models of contextual education

Variables

There are several variables that distinguish the models I encountered:

Authority: Who takes the initiative? Who is in charge? Several of the rural development and leadership training institutes that I visited in England and the United States were attached to universities but their funding came primarily from providing research to community clients. Masters and doctoral students participated to earn money and gain research experience. But there was no guarantee that a project appropriate for their thesis/dissertation would develop. The *clients* had funding power and the final say in determining the research question.

At the other extreme were courses at American and Canadian universities in which students left class with a question in mind and conducted research or interviews. But those interviewed in the community had little say as to what questions they regarded as worth asking. They had no input as to what methods were used, who participated in the research, or what form the final conclusions took. Often students did not inform them of the final results.

Supervisory authority also varied. At one end were work co-op programs in which primary authority was given to on-site employers. At the other were academic courses with contextual components over which professors had full supervisory responsibility.

One of the tensions that arises around authority is the “rigor vs. relevance” debate regarding in-community research projects. Academics warned me that *community control* would introduce too many unmanageable variables and reduce the scientific rigor of (and ability to publish) the results. They worried about contamination of data, mixing of methods, and the unpredictability of research timelines if nonacademics were in charge. Community members

worried that too much *academic control* would result in the exploration of irrelevant questions or would generate impractical proposals (wasting time and money). Often compromises had to be made. Canada's Community-University Research Alliances are an attempt to create equal partnerships that have both rigor and relevance. How "balanced" the partnerships have actually turned out is yet to be determined.

Types of field experience. Models of contextual education tend to make use of three types of field experience: (1) *field research*—gathering information from and about the context (as, for example, at Trent University); (2) *work experience*—taking on tasks or roles in the community, as with the Resource Assistance for Rural Environments program at the University of Oregon; (3) *immersion*—living in a particular context to become conversant with its language and culture (like those I described at Tamilnadu Theological Seminary). Particular programs often combine more than one of these forms as indicated in the models presented later.

Compensation. I found that some of the contextual experience is salaried (as it is for students at the Countryside and Community Research Unit, University of Gloucestershire), some provide a basic stipend (like our Lutheran internships), while others are volunteer (as with many of the American service-learning projects). Very often, though not always, travel and other direct expenses are covered. When salary or stipend is involved, the contextual experiences are more likely to be full-time and at a substantial distance from the students' schools, allowing for more diverse and often cross-cultural experiences.

Beneficiaries. Some contextual programs help the school sell itself to funders or potential students. Some meet students' learning needs. Others supply inexpensive labour to a community institution or to a professor's research program.

Most institutions imagine that some benefit will accrue to the community. This is generally assumed to be the case with service-learning and internships. However, after studying the impacts of service-learning on community needs, Carol Maybach, comments that, "[T]he current service-learning paradigm seems more adept at empowering the student than at empowering the individual being served."¹ This can be particularly true of field research projects. They often serve to provide material for students or professors with little return to the people who supplied the data.

Among the institutions I studied, several things helped to ensure that communities benefited:

- ♦ *Active engagement of the community itself* in formulating research questions and gathering data. The New Rural Economy project that I visited in Springhill, Nova Scotia, involved community members from the outset in the design and undertaking of the research. I met several members who had developed sophisticated research skills that would benefit the community long after this particular project was over.
- ♦ Related to the prior point, it was essential to have someone *resident in the community* to assist community members in drafting appropriate research

proposals. The proposals must meet real community needs and also the timelines and academic requirements under which students have to work. At the Dhuala Kuan Hill Station I visited in northern India, agricultural researchers live among and work with farmers. Farmers suggest research needs and work side by side with the researchers in crop trials. In Haliburton county, as mentioned earlier, the U-Links Centre for Community-based Research helped shape research projects for Trent University students.

- ♦ *Communicating research in colloquial language.* At the University of Guelph (Ontario) School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, researchers work with a journalist to make their final reports accessible to the communities in which the data were gathered.
- ♦ *Beginning research with a clear plan for putting the knowledge gained into action.* CreNIEO, in India (described later) insists that its students have a clear mechanism identified for putting their findings into action—and they must be personally involved in the implementation.

Even when a program is intended to address a community's development needs, there is still the question of *who* in the community benefits—those who can pay for it or those with little visibility or voice? Does it equip *new* leadership or serve the purposes of present leaders?

Integration of theory, practice, and person. In most programs, theory and practice stand beside each other with few bridges built in. Integration is expected to take place inside the student. It is hoped that students will apply classroom theory to their field practice and re-evaluate theory on the basis of their experience. The third element—personal development (ethics, identity, character, emotion, etc.)—tends to be relatively unsupervised even when, as in clergy training, it is clearly a goal of the field experience. One reason for these disconnections is that academic supervisors tend to know the theory but not the site and the students' experience. Site supervisors are often not as familiar with current theory. Neither may have enough ongoing exposure to the student to monitor personal growth. And both field and academic supervisors find they are allowed little time by their college, institution, or business to connect with their counterparts. Integration is an area most schools are working hard to develop, but there are considerable financial and time restraints.

Around these (and other) significant variables a wide assortment of contextual education patterns has developed. For my purposes, five general categories or models can be noted:

Cooperative education

In this model, students alternate terms of course work with two or more terms of full-time paid employment closely related to their chosen field of study. Normally the student stays with the same employer through each work term. The early co-ops in Canada and the United States were usually lodged in engineering or business schools, though other technical fields, sciences, and social services have since made use of the format.

Co-op education has close ties to the ancient apprenticeship programs of trade guilds. In both, work and study alternate several times (though the study portion is more extensive in the modern co-ops). In both, the work is paid and often leads to a career with the same or a connected company after the study ends.² Cooperative education tends to be directed at creating student-industry connections that will improve students' on-the-job skills and lead to ready employment after they graduate. Supervision is carried out on-site by the employer/manager. Integration of theory and practice is the responsibility of the student but may not be structured into the program as intensively as in other contextual forms of learning.

Internships

In the professions (for example nursing, education, clergy training), a version of co-op education has developed in the form of internship programs. Like co-ops, students are placed in jobs related to their studies. However they tend to be connected to institutions (for example universities, hospitals, churches, government offices) rather than companies. Some students are paid for their work as in co-ops. However the pay is usually no more than a stipend or basic living allowance. The work may be only half-time and there is usually only a single work period (from six weeks to twelve months full-time equivalent) during the course of studies. Supervision usually takes place through the on-site manager (pastor, teacher, etc.) but is under the general oversight of an internship director in the school.

Extension education

These contextual forms of education have tended to be developed primarily to meet the research interests of professors and the continuing education needs of community practitioners. Students (masters or doctoral) are often involved, but their learning is not normally the object of the program. The agricultural university in Palampur, India, is an example. The university maintains a number of hill stations in northern India. Professors live at the stations for months at a time doing research and consulting with local farmers to test and pass on their findings.

Land-grant universities in the United States do something similar. They were formed initially through the Morrill Act of 1862 that deeded federal land to each state.³ The purpose was to establish universities that would provide agricultural, technical, and classical instruction to rural and industrial Americans. Field research stations were set up in connection with each of these schools. Over time, the universities developed substantial extension programs to disseminate the stations' research to the surrounding communities. I interviewed participants at several land-grant universities in New York, Iowa, Nebraska, and Oregon who had long histories of effective work with their surrounding communities.

Several of the institutions that I visited in the United Kingdom were also of this type: the Arkleton Institute for Rural Development Research at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland), the Countryside and Community Research Unit at the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham (England) and the

Centre for Rural Economy at the University of Newcastle (England). In some cases, university funding was drying up and the research agenda was increasingly determined by paying clients in the community. Clients bought the services of researchers (including graduate students) but usually did not participate in the gathering and processing of data.

Community-based participatory research

Sometimes called *action research*, this is research that begins in a community, identifies community strengths and resources, equips community leadership, and leads directly into community development activity. Some are not connected to schools and are outside the scope of what we are considering here. If they are connected, the community is a full partner in the research. It does not simply serve as a passive recipient of the research or a field site for student learning.

Since 1999, the Canadian government has invested considerable money in the development of dozens of formal community-university research alliances (CURAs) across Canada. These federally sponsored projects typically have budgets of a quarter of a million dollars or more. And the community partners may include several groups, or companies, while the academic partners may be drawn from several schools.

I encountered other versions of this model. The Trent Community Based Education Centre described earlier is one example. Another is CRENIEO (the Centre for Research on New International Economic Order) in Chennai, India. It grew out of the conviction of Gurukul seminary president, Kunchala Rajaratnam, that knowledge carries a responsibility for action. Students in degree programs help to facilitate research based on community needs. But they are also committed to following up on the results of the research with active involvement in community development projects with “fisherfolk,” Dalit and tribal peoples particularly.

Service-learning

As the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse defines it “Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”⁴ Service-learning grew out of an American desire to educate citizens with a deep commitment to serving their country. According to the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, the “service” side can perhaps be most clearly traced to Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps. In the 1930s, it engaged more than three million unemployed young men in a massive effort to reclaim some of America’s broken land and forests. Kennedy did something similar in establishing the Peace Corps in 1961. The program involved both young men and women and extended the service beyond U.S. borders to the world.

Because this young “army of volunteers” was college-age, it was perhaps inevitable that it became linked to education. In the mid-60s colleges across the United States began to offer academic credit for service-related programs and to use the term service-learning to describe them. For the most part, the

service is unpaid. It may or may not be tightly linked to a particular area of study. The primary goal is to serve community needs and develop citizen leaders. Research is usually not a major part of the program. One of the outstanding examples of service-learning that I encountered was the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford University in California.

It should be noted that most seminaries engage in a form of contextual education that is a hybrid of co-op and service-learning taken concurrently with academic course work. Students offer ministry in a local site while they are taking courses. It shares the goals of service-learning in wanting to provide service to local parishes and develop leadership potential in students. But like internships and co-ops, they also want to develop students' skills for ministry. The placements are usually unpaid and very part-time. They are often only loosely connected to particular courses.

Theological convictions that govern my use of these models

I found that each of these models offers something potentially helpful in the training of clergy. But *how* they are used depends on the theological convictions that professors, students, and community members bring to the models. These are some of the convictions that I bring:

- ♦ Our seminary exists to serve the mission of God in the world—not primarily to serve particular paradigms of education, our own institutional survival, the curiosities and career aims of our students, or even the perpetuation of the church in its preferred traditional forms.
- ♦ That mission as I read it is to saturate the universe with the life of the Divine Community, to infuse us with the life that the Three-in-One share. It is to create true community in creation. That's what Paul suggests in 1 Cor. 15:28—that God's ultimate desire is to be "all in all." I assume then that we are training our students to be leaders in community-building, working off the blueprint of the relationships between Father, Son, and Spirit drawn for us in the Bible.
- ♦ The kind of community God is, and creates, is one that *distributes* power rather than concentrating it. The Spirit fills the Son for His ministry, the Father raises Him from the dead, the Son and Father breathe the Spirit into the church, the Spirit and the Son return all things to the Father at the eschaton. Father, Son, and Spirit distribute power and control in order to enable the others to play their full role in the Divine drama. Whatever form our seminary training takes, it must not concentrate skill in the hands of students but enable them to empower others. The role of clergy is to "equip the *saints* for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4).
- ♦ The mission of God is not suspended during the educational period. So seminary training itself should be a community-building experience not simply education that will ultimately make community-building possible. I assume that God's *means* ought to reflect God's *ends*. So seminary training ought to point to and incorporate the community in God's image, which the trained graduate strives to facilitate.

- ♦ If God is *community* one cannot “know God,” or do theology, alone. The early church came to know Jesus through the Father’s eyes when the Father spoke at the Jordan River saying, “This is My beloved Son.” In Jesus’ ministry of healing and teaching, they came to know the Father as One who heals and restores and accepts. Through the Father and Son they met the indwelling Spirit of life. To a great extent, each divine Person is revealed by the others in the divine Community. So our seminary training must be intentional about creating spaces and opportunities for communities to share *their* experiences of God with seminarians and one another. The learning and sharing must be reciprocal.

These convictions move me to look for models of contextual education that place students in relationships of mutual giving and receiving. On the one hand, models that treat an academic as the sole source of expertise, coming in to “save,” in some sense infantilize the community. They ignore the community’s own resources. On the other hand, models that treat the community as a mine from which one can extract information or experience for one’s own academic agenda ignore the students’ responsibility to give something back. In both cases the community is disempowered. I’m looking for forms of learning that build community between the participants and that are intentionally designed to allow a variety of voices to speak about their experience of God and each other.

So, for example, I prefer internships in which the student works with a lay committee as well as with a pastoral or diaconal supervisor. That relationship is best when the lay committee is not just there to serve the students’ growth, but the student is also there to help them meet their own goals. Interns help the lay committee to articulate its history, its watershed faith events, its core values for their own sake as well as the intern’s. Meetings are structured to meet the social, spiritual, and personal needs of the lay participants too.

While a supervisor may provide “expert” performance review (that is, how well the student performs to professional expectations), the lay committee offers its own expertise by giving feedback on the student’s *impact*. A student might deliver a solid “Lutheran” sermon for example. However the impact would be negligible or negative if the student didn’t connect properly with the deepest needs, energizing images, and significant history of the hearers.

I prefer the use of research practices in field education that fully involve the community in its design, delivery, and follow-up. As Paulo Friere suggests, the job of a teacher is to help communities learn how to research *themselves*, to see themselves through their own eyes, not just through the eyes of powerful outsiders.

Using participatory action research in seminary training

The last couple of years I have experimented with the use of a congregational participatory research project as a core requirement in our twelve-month seminary internship. Interns and their congregations decide together

what they want to know about themselves or their surrounding community. The intern and a group of congregants choose a research method. Usually it is one of the three to which I have introduced them—asset-mapping, appreciative inquiry, and intergenerational dialogue. I prefer these tools because they build community energy and require broad participation. But the actual methods chosen are rarely “pure” versions. They are modified to suit the relational and cultural dynamics of the site. Over the course of the year, the research is designed and carried out and new plans for ministry are developed. By the time the intern leaves, those plans must be firmly in the hands of congregational leaders and in the process of being implemented.

An example

The first such project developed serendipitously and became the learning ground for our program. It happened that a parish consisting of four small rural churches contacted me for help with a congregational survey. They wanted to know where their members had gone and if there was any chance of getting them back. I agreed to train a student to work with them and asked if they would take the student as an intern so that the student could live with them and really get to know them. The student could also help them learn how to gather that information for themselves. They agreed and we worked together to raise funding for the internship.

Of the interns who volunteered, we chose one who was an urbanite, with no experience in rural life or ministry. I gave the intern a reading course in research methods before we began. It mostly focused on conventional qualitative methods of interviewing and processing data from interviews. At that time, I wasn't familiar with more participatory approaches. As I'm doing this again with whole classes of interns, I focus, as mentioned, on training in community-building, group facilitation methods—asset-mapping, appreciative inquiry, and intergenerational dialogue. These build expertise into the *people*. The interns' role (and the basis for our assessment of the intern) is to give leaders tools for understanding their community and processes for moving that knowledge into active change.

In the pilot project, the intern worked with a group of parish leaders to set up interviews. People at the center and the margins of the congregations were interviewed, and their responses collated by the parish councils. These interviews were intended to help sharpen the focus of the study. I sensed an underlying anxiety among the congregational members. They worried that their leaders were undertaking this study so they could dredge up reasons to close down the churches. So we shaped the initial questions not in “problem” format (e.g., What's wrong with your church? Why do you think it's dying?) but as very open-ended (e.g., How do you feel about your church?)

Nonetheless, what came out of those interviews were many expressions of frustration. Young people were being excluded. Older people felt that worship was not connected to their economic realities. There was anger over the behaviour of a previous pastor. They were not sure what their purpose was. The self-perception that emerged was rather negative. It was obvious that

the congregations saw themselves as problem places—problems with youth, problems with attendance, problems with commitment.

So the intern organized a series of focus groups within each of the congregations. And instead of allowing them to talk about “what’s wrong” or even “what is” he asked, “what’s right?” The specific questions used came out of the work of David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva on appreciative inquiry.⁵ Their proposal is that organizations change in the direction of their most frequently asked questions. Positive questions create positive change. Negative questions generate blaming and discouragement.

So the intern asked the focus group questions like these: What has been the highlight of your experience with this congregation? What are some of the things we do well? What have we done in the past that has really worked with youth? What do people really turn out for and why? What are three wishes that we have for this congregation?

It was amazing to see the energy that developed in that parish. There was a dramatic rise in self-esteem as they listened to one another’s stories and discovered that they did some things very well. It helped remove shame and restore honour to the congregations.

The intern then worked with a group to collate responses. They grouped these into a series of vision models and called the people together again. This time *inter*-congregational focus groups were held. Participants were asked, What resources do you have personally that we could bring to these visions? The resources they were told to look for included personal experience, skills, personality traits, congregational groups, things people owned, community connections, and so on.

Out of those gatherings came a growing sense that this was not a poor, dying parish but one that was rich in history, people, and resources. The job was to pull them together in creative ways. Essentially, the intern was using asset-mapping. Luther Snow has written a good book for congregations about this subject called *The Power of Asset-Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts*.⁶

The internship ended while the parish was developing action plans. The people had the process well in hand and knew how to go back and repeat steps if they needed to. They have since moved forward in ministry with new vitality and much greater cooperation among the congregations.

Pedagogically, it was delightful to see the impact of the project on the intern’s maturity and perceptiveness. In class the next semester, he consistently asked questions that provoked us to think about things from a rural perspective, and his insight into congregational dynamics is now keener than most.

The benefits

I believe that using community participatory research projects as part of seminary field education has several advantages:

- ♦ First, it teaches students that the expert knowledge is to be found in the people they serve, not only in the seminary. They learn to come to their

context (as to the classroom or library) with a listening, inquisitive stance, not just a bunch of answers.

- ♦ Second, it gives students a set of tools with which they can enter a variety of contexts and discover the unique characteristics of each one. They don't have to depend on broad generalizations.
- ♦ Third, it teaches students how to be equippers rather than expert performers.
- ♦ Fourth, it helps congregations become learning communities. Instead of depending on the pastor to tell them who they are, the student gives them the same tools he or she was given so they can research themselves and their community. Instead of extracting information from a community, as research projects often do, the research project leaves the community richer, more aware of its own gifts, better equipped to understand itself.
- ♦ Finally, it helps to raise the hope, self-esteem, and faith of rural congregations. They discover that they have unexpected resources, that God is still at work in their midst, and that the future isn't a black hole.

The challenges

Three cautions should be exercised:

- ♦ First, projects have to be shaped to the intern's capabilities. The project we began with was probably too large, with too many congregations involved, and should have been trimmed to fit better within the one year internship. Encourage the action research group to choose a first project that is small enough to be successful. If it is too big it may not be firmly enough in lay people's hands by the time the student leaves. If it fails it may discourage further action research.
- ♦ Secondly, local supervisors need to be on board with the theory and process of community participatory research. If a supervisor simply wants the intern to imbibe the congregation's patterns and history, there may be some friction if the research starts to provoke change. The research may also generate feedback about the supervisor's ministry with which he or she is not too comfortable. The intern must be careful not to get involved in evaluations of the supervisor's ministry with congregational members. So it is critical to offer training in the research rationale and process to both supervisor and intern. We do this in a workshop just before internship begins.
- ♦ Thirdly, this is usually something new to congregations so interns must know the steps and philosophy behind the tools and explain them carefully to congregations more than once. It's probably best to try a small scale exercise with leaders so that they know how it works and can iron out bumps before they do it for real.

Conclusion

We have had only two full classes of interns carrying out participatory research projects as part of their internship so the data are incomplete. So far, however, it seems clear that this is a training tool that ought to be added to seminary field education curricula. Congregations appreciate the leadership it provides in opening new doors for renewed mission. Students enjoy the opportunities to catalyze something new and to have a chance of leaving their sites livelier and better equipped to engage their communities than they found them.

Cameron Harder is associate professor of systematic theology and director of contextual education at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He has spent the last twelve years doing research with rural people. Before that he was a parish pastor for twelve years in town and country ministry. Harder trains leaders for (primarily) rural ministry. He also offers community workshops and seminary courses aimed at helping rural parishes to engage their communities effectively and helping rural communities to regain some control of their future.

ENDNOTES

1. Carol Weichman Maybach, "Investigating Urban Community Needs: Service Learning from a Social Justice Perspective" *Education and Urban Society* 28 (1996): 224–36.
2. See the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education Web site (www.cafce.ca) for information on Canadian schools that offer this format, the National Commission for Cooperative Education (www.co-op.edu) for American schools, and the Cooperative Education and Internship Association (www.ceiainc.org) and World Association for Cooperative Education (www.waceinc.org) for international partners.
3. See <http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/about/land.htm#purpose>.
4. See http://www.servicelearning.org/welcome_to_service-learning/index.php.
5. The key original article is David L. Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life" in *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 1 (1987): 129–169.
6. Luther K. Snow, "The Power of Asset-Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts" (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004).

What's in an Instrument?

The Answer from the Profiles of Ministry Program

Francis A. Lonsway
Webster University

ABSTRACT: In this concluding report of the results of the thirtieth anniversary survey of the Profiles of Ministry program, the author turns to the assessment instruments themselves and the wisdom of the original research team in developing criterion-referenced instruments that remain highly effective thirty years later. The author describes the development and use of the instruments (Casebook, Interview, and Field Observation), measures of their strength, and their reliability in assessing the personal characteristics of those entering ministry in North America

The thirtieth anniversary study of the Profiles of Ministry (PoM) program focused on the 330-item survey sent to a stratified random stage sample of ATS member school graduates, seminary faculty, senior seminarians, denominational leaders, and laity served by the graduates.¹ It was *stratified* because it sought responses from different groups of individuals, *random* because the seminaries chosen to participate were drawn from the total list of ATS schools, and a *stage* sample because the laity were chosen after the alumni/ae were identified by local seminary coordinators of the overall project.

The research methodology was identical to the original Readiness for Ministry study of 1973–74 and the fifteen-year study in 1987–88. The only changes were the size of the samples in the latter two studies and the number of items contained in the survey. The original study, for example, analyzed responses from 5,169 individuals while the fifteen-year and thirty-year studies were approximately half that size (2,607 in 1987–88 and 2,433 in 2002–05).² The smaller samples were adequate for replicating the original study. Furthermore, in 1987–88 and 2002–05, the research teams decided to use only those items from the original survey tied to the assessment instruments (*Casebook*, *Interview*, and *Field Observation*) plus the addition of items designed to explore developing areas in ministry. Among these were an individual's personal spirituality, concern for social justice, and the role of women in the church.³

The findings of the current study have been reported in three articles, each focused on a different cluster of findings. The first explored the pattern of similarities and differences between clergy and lay responses; the second, a similar analysis of the responses by denominational family; and third, an analysis by level of education, age, and gender.⁴

With these articles, then, the reporting of the thirtieth anniversary survey has been completed. What remains is an equally important issue, however, and one that guided the original research, namely, once we know how important the characteristics measured by the survey were to all those sampled and to different subgroups, (e.g., clergy vs. laity and total sample by denominational family), how does one estimate the presence of the characteristics in

those completing theological studies? The answer: develop sound instruments to assess the relative importance of both personal characteristics as well as perceptions of ministry. That is precisely what the original research team did and that is what Daniel Aleshire tested and modified in 1987–88. Further analysis of the strength of the revised instruments was done in 1995–97 and again at the outset of the thirty-year study.

This article focuses on two large issues. The first is, what the process was in selecting instruments to develop, what the instruments looked like, and how they changed. Second, what has been the relative strength of the instruments over time and what impact this has on their use now and into the future.

The instruments then, now, and why

The full goal of the original survey was not to learn the relative importance of the items in the questionnaire but to use the findings as a basis to determine the presence of these traits, characteristics, and sensitivities in those preparing for called or ordained ministry within the churches of North America.

Measurement, then, leading to the development of instruments is a two-step process. The data from all three surveys reveal how important or essential to ministry respondents have considered a number of statements. They ranged from “Highly important,” understood as essential or required for effective ministry in the church, to “Meaningless/irritating” or even “Not applicable” to a particular denominational context. The scale was a seven-point modified Likert scale.

Once the relative importance of individual items (e.g., “Helps lay people relate Christian teachings to current issues and human needs” and “Presents the Gospel in terms understandable to the modern mind”) are linked to characteristics (as in this instance, to Relating Faith to Modern World), the task is to figure out a reasonable way to assess the characteristic. The only direct way to do this is to arrange the statements in an instrument and ask how important each is to a particular respondent. The problem with the direct approach is that nothing much is learned. The research had already indicated their relative importance to pastoral ministry across a broad range of denominational families. A more subtle approach would be to seek evidence of the importance of the traits, characteristics, and sensitivities indirectly. This was the ultimate goal of the original research team. In what fashion and to what extent do those who are in their final year of professional studies leading to ministry embrace or show evidence of these characteristics? Remember there were traits judged both positively and negatively by clergy and lay participants.

It is no easy task to answer this question. One must keep in mind that the measure of any characteristic in this way is an approximation. Consequently, instruments must be developed that are both strong enough to be perceived as “on target” for measuring a given characteristic (content validity) and stable over time (reliability) so there is no question of a shift in the meaning of the trait measured. Attention to both of these measurement icons, content validity and test-retest reliability, are hallmarks of the Profiles of Ministry program from its inception as Readiness for Ministry through its fifteen-year revision and to its thirty-year study concluded in 2005.

In the beginning

There are two seminal essays focused on the development of the original instruments. The first by Milo Brekke and the second by Daniel Aleshire are both contained in *Readiness for Ministry: Volume II Assessment*.⁵ Brekke's essay focuses on the decision of the research team to develop criterion-referenced instruments and presents details about the long and intricate issues involved in the development and testing of the *Casebook*, *Interview*, and *Field Observation*. Aleshire, on the other hand, presents samples of the actual instruments and explores the strengths of each instrument and the cautions involved in the use and interpretation of each.

The goal of the original research and hence its name, Readiness for Ministry, was to help seminaries identify the characteristics and traits that would serve the new seminary graduates well as they began pastoral ministry within their denominations. The first set of instruments then was designed for the seminary graduate, and the initial question was, how does one adequately measure the sixty-four *core criteria* found in the responses to the survey? The answer was to create criterion-referenced instruments, a task easier said than done.

The development and examples of criterion-referenced instruments was in its infancy at the outset of the Readiness for Ministry project in 1973–74. Norm-referenced instruments was the common method of interpreting test data then as it is now. The “norm” is usually a large group of individuals who have taken a particular test over the course of years. The average or mean scores of these individuals eventually become the norm, and subsequent test subjects are either at, above, or below the norm on the basis of the percent or range of their responses in relation to the norm. Achievement, aptitude, and personality tests commonly are norm referenced.

While the project team knew the average scores of respondents across denominations, a valuable point of reference, they were specifically interested in the extent to which seminarians who completed the assessment instruments reflected the range of responses given to the survey items. They were interested in responses to questions such as, “How likely is the senior seminarian to reflect Fidelity to Tasks and Persons?” or “How much of the criterion does the prospective seminary graduate demonstrate by his or her responses?” These and similar questions call for the development of criterion-referenced instruments. Among the key benefits of such an approach is that the seminarians' responses are not likely to be judged as prescriptive but as “likely” or “probably” to be reflected in their actual ministry. An additional benefit to this approach is the acknowledgment that denominational families with their distinctive histories had already been shown to rate the strength of evidence of different characteristics differently. Consequently, any set of instruments needed to be interpretable to the unique outlook of the specific denominations using them.

Three types of assessment instruments were eventually selected by the research team. The first was a paper and pencil test; the second, an oral interview; and the third, collected judgments from individuals served by a seminarian in a supervised setting.

Casebook

There are considerable strengths to paper and pencil tests, among them, a wealth of information gathered in a relatively short time, the opportunity to use items directly garnered from the original survey, and ease in applying standard statistical methods to evaluate the reliability of the responses. The *Casebook* was just such an instrument. With its inherent strength there is also an obvious drawback. Because the seminarian is presented with a list of choices to each case, a respondent would see and possibly select alternatives better than he or she might otherwise have considered.⁶ A strategy incorporated in the instrument designed to mitigate the “halo” effect was the requirement that each response possibility was to be weighed on a five-point scale of “Very Likely” to “Very Unlikely.” This structure provides a better indicator of the overall value given to each of the response possibilities. The most difficult part of the task facing the research team remained developing pastoral scenarios or cases that would appropriately set the stage for the selection of responses linked to the original survey. This task consumed considerable time for the research team and a panel of writers.

Interview

The second instrument, an interview, was developed as a *structured* interview meaning that the questions posed by the reader were to be read as written and not modified or interpreted.⁷ The questions and the responses were taped for subsequent interpretation. The unique problem associated with such an instrument is the reliability of the judges of the responses. One only needs to recall oral exams to understand the “risk” involved in responding to a question before a panel of judges. Each has his or her own criterion for passing or failing the question. The research team, after having judged and categorized the response possibilities for each question, set themselves to the task of training individuals to evaluate the responses in the same way as did the team. The daunting issue that faces the reliability of the interview consistently remains the one of inter-judge reliability. The strength of the *Interview* lies in its format. Seminarians have not seen the questions prior to the interview, the items appear to be random moving from one issue to another, and, because they are open-ended, invite personal responses. The *Interview* has always been rated as engaging by those who complete it.

Field Observation

The third instrument, *Field Observation*, is a particular form of paper and pencil test. It does not rely on the responses of the seminarian but on the observations of those central to his or her supervised ministry. While two rating forms were developed at the outset, the surviving method uses a modified five-point Likert scale with judgments ranging from “Very Likely” to “Unlikely.” The goal of the researchers was to have three of five individuals who experienced the seminarian’s style of ministry evaluate that ministry in light of statements from selected criteria. An advantage shared with the *Casebook* is that core responses came directly from the survey while a unique advantage is the pooling and averaging of the responses by more than one individual. The

format and choices for each “rater” is the same. As with all instruments, this one too has a weakness. It is difficult to encourage raters to be objective. Who would want to stand in the way of a seminarian achieving his or her goal of ordained service?

The decision to develop a set of criterion-referenced instruments was clear to the research team as were the strengths and potential weaknesses of each. Everything had been done to ensure their integrity and usefulness across a broad spectrum of Christian ministries within the United States and Canada. What remained then was their introduction to a sample of seminaries. Even that was not a simple task.

It was the spring of 1976 before the first group of forty schools was selected to participate in the Readiness for Ministry program.⁸ The small number was chosen to allow unforeseen problems with the administration and interpretation of the materials to be addressed and quickly resolved. Workshops were put in place to train school personnel in interpreting student and seminary group profiles. Coders for the structured, taped interviews had to be trained at each seminary.

It was clear within the first two years of use that the assessment instruments had significant power to accurately display patterns of characteristics helpful and harmful to beginning ministers and the congregations and parishes they were likely to serve. The presence of some patterns of responses in the early results raised questions about just how ready some of the young men and women were for ministry. In light of this, David Schuller, director of the project, his staff, and the research team developed a parallel *Casebook* and included a replication of the *Interview* for entering first-year seminarians in 1979. This date signaled the beginning of the use of the instruments for ministry formation. If potential positive or negative characteristics were evident in the early stages of a seminarian’s graduate studies (Profiles of Ministry: Stage I), how much more helpful the interpretive process would be. Likewise how much richer would be the use and interpretation of what became known as Profiles of Ministry: Stage II at the conclusion of graduate studies.

In the same year, a set of instruments identical to those designed for senior seminarians was christened “Ministry: A Professional and Personal Profile.” Prepared for ministers, priests, and sisters, its earliest use was focused on helping those considering their special gifts for ministry and a possible redirection or change in ministry.

The first major revision of the instruments occurred in the fifteen-year study led by Daniel Aleshire in 1987–88. The *Casebooks* were pared with the effect of shortening the time of completing the instrument from more than four hours to three hours or less. The statistical integrity of the instrument remained fundamentally unchanged. Interview questions with low reliability were eliminated and a set of questions designed to assess an individual’s stand on contemporary moral issues was added. The *Field Observation* instrument was modified to assess three issues that had been developing in the years after the introduction of the original set of instruments. The clusters of responses were named Christian Spirituality, Concern for Social Justice, and Support for Women in the Church.

The thirty-year study, completed in 2005, resulted in only minor changes in the instruments. As with a revision in 1999, there were textual changes to make the feel of the instruments more contemporary. There were also changes in the names of several characteristics, for example, MORL became Position on Conservative Moral Issues to more accurately describe the items that formed this criterion.

Since 1987–88, substantial work was done on the *Interview*, focusing on two areas. The first was to the “key” of the *Interview* itself. Contract coders, listening to taped interviews over the years, detected additional nuances in the responses of students.⁹ Their listening skills prompted enlarging the range of responses to some questions. The second was to the weight given each coded response. The weights were modified in light of ongoing research as well as the enlargement of the coding schema.

With the completion of the thirty-year study, the instruments are ready for their next decade of use. No one in 1973–74 could have anticipated their value for seminarians, ordained clergy, religious men and women, seminaries, and the churches. By any measure, thirty years is a long life for any set of instruments. The Profiles of Ministry instruments, however, monitored and changed throughout their history, remain fresh and ready for the challenge.

Measures of strength in assessment instruments

Two questions, whose meanings are often confused, quickly arise in any discussion of a test or questionnaire. Is it valid? Is it reliable? Many ask if an instrument is valid when they want to know if it measures what it is designed to measure. Others ask if the test or questionnaire is valid when they intend to ask about its power to predict outcomes. Herein is a maze of meanings. Let us look more closely at each, not with an exhaustive treatment but to focus on legitimate questions about the Profiles of Ministry assessment instruments.

Validity

There are various types of validity. Most discussions of validity focus on four types: content, concurrent, predictive, and construct validity.¹⁰ The two types central to the Profiles of Ministry program are content and predictive validity. Concurrent validity focuses on comparing two different tests to see if one has any relationship to the other; whereas, construct validity focuses on the relationship of an instrument constructed in light of a theory. Two studies of concurrent validity were done, one comparing the constructs of PoM with the Theological School Inventory and a second, part of a doctoral study comparing a single PoM scale with a personality test.¹¹ Measures of construct validity are not relevant to the design of the PoM assessment instruments.

Content validity, often called *face validity*, is a measure without a number or percent attached. It asks whether the instrument as designed does indeed measure what it intends. There are a number of ways to test this kind of validity. One can assemble panels of experts to review the material and judge the likelihood that it will do what it purports to do. Another way is to ask users how the instruments seem to be working. Both have been done for PoM. The

first was accomplished at its outset and again during the major revision of the instruments in 1987–88. The second is an ongoing question presented to individuals responsible for administering the program and to students who complete the instruments and review their individual profiles. The answers have been positive and the judgment of leaders and researchers of the program has been consistent, namely, that the Profiles of Ministry instruments are accomplishing the goal set for them at the outset: to assess characteristics, traits, sensitivities, and responses that can strengthen or weaken the pastoral ministry of seminary graduates.

The predictive validity of the PoM program is an unanswered question. Can a score or pattern of scores likely predict a seminary graduate's success (or lack thereof) in ministry? We simply do not know. We have hunches and anecdotal feedback on individuals in ministry that seem to support its predictive ability. However, there has been no systematic study to date. One potentially important study is in the conceptual stage involving the seminary leadership of Huron University College Faculty of Theology. This ATS member school has been in the Readiness for Ministry and Profiles of Ministry programs since their inception. The school maintains a close relationship with its graduates, most of whom work in the Anglican diocese that supports the seminary. A director of research, a team that determines what a successful or an impaired ministry would look like, selection of a reasonable sample, and funds are what are needed to accomplish the study.

Reliability

As with validity, there are different measures of an instrument's reliability. The most often used are test-retest, alternative form, and internal consistency reliability.¹²

Measures of internal consistency reliability have been the standard measure for the Profiles of Ministry program. At the outset of the research project in the mid-1970s, test-retest and alternative form assessments were also made. Responses to the *Interview* instrument were subjected to test-retest reliability to gauge the extent to which trained coders would assign identical values to student responses, and the earliest *Casebooks* had an alternative form designed to achieve the same goals in assessing different groups of senior seminarians.

Tests of internal consistency reliability result in a numeric coefficient. It is designed to assess the strength of the relationship among items comprising a scale. For example, the reliability coefficient for Fidelity to Tasks and Persons in 2003–04 was .75. With 1.00 the perfect score, correlations about .60 are considered high.

A closer look

Two tables portray the reliability coefficients for the Profiles of Ministry instruments. The first table matches the first printed page of an individual profile in Stage I and Stage II,¹³ while the second reflects the second page.

There are three important keys to understanding the tables. First, all *Interview* scores are shared in Stages I and II profiles; second, all *Field Observation* scores are specific to Stage II; and third, while most *Casebook* scores are shared

by both Stage I and Stage II, several assess the same characteristic but through different cases. For example, Personal Responsibility (RESP) is assessed in both Stages I and II, but the cases from which the responses are drawn differ from one another.

The closer the reliability coefficient is to 1.00, the more confidence there is that the instrument assesses the whole characteristic. One way to raise the coefficient is to increase the number of items that are part of what is being measured. However, there is a significant downside to this strategy: it would be exhausting to complete the *Casebook*, *Interview*, or *Field Observation*. Consequently, over the years the PoM research teams gauged how much time could reasonably be devoted to completing each instrument before test-takers raced, likely sloppily, to finish it.

Overall, *Field Observation* scores have the highest reliability coefficients (see Tables 1 and 2). Fourteen of the fifteen measures were stronger in 2003–04 than a decade earlier; the fifteenth matched its performance in 1994–95. These scores, more tightly behaviorally anchored than the responses to either the *Casebook* or *Interview* scores, likely contributed to this effect. The underlying fact remains, they are solid reliability coefficients.

More than 90 percent (92.8%) of the twenty-eight *Casebook* scores currently rest comfortably above .60; three-quarters of them, in fact, range between .70 and .87. These are solid measures, able to be strengthened, certainly, but “respectable.” Only Balanced Approach to World Missions (MSBL) and Personal Responsibility (RESP) as measured in the Stage II *Casebook* suggest the need for a closer look as the program goes forward. MSBL was calculated from scores in the 1987–88 research that indicated another facet to Encouragement of World Missions (MISN). There was a slight shift downward in the measure’s strength in 2003–04. RESP, measured in both Stage I and Stage II, maintains a reasonably solid score in Stage I but a significant drop in Stage II.

The reliability coefficients from the structured interview present a different situation. While always low, measured by standard statistical measures, nine of the ten *Interview* scores have nonetheless risen in the fifteen-year period since the 1987–88 revision. It is likely that they will always be in the low to moderate range for two important reasons. First, there are considerably fewer response possibilities for an *Interview* question, generally three or four, compared with seven to ten on either the *Casebook* or the *Field Observation*. In such a situation, one does not have nearly enough data points to correct for extremely high or low scores. Second, the *Interview* does not reflect precise points on a continuum such as from “Very Likely” to “Very Unlikely” as in the *Casebook*. It estimates the amount of presence of each response in a continuum.

It is for these reasons that significant work has been done on a biennial basis over the past decade and a half with the individuals who are selected and work as contract coders. Every two years the coders meet in a coder certification conference. The conference is designed to assess the participants’ skills in the intervening years, to sharpen their skills, and to approve those who successfully complete the conference. The standard for their inter-judge reliability has always exceeded .90. At the most recent conference in March 2005, the inter-judge reliability was .96.

TABLE 1: Reliability Coefficients for Stage I and Stage II

Personal Characteristics							
		1987–88		1994–95		2003–04	
Scale*	Source	Stage I	Stage II	Stage I	Stage II	Stage I	Stage II
Responsible and Caring							
FIDL	<i>Casebook</i>	.67		.69		.75	
FIDL	<i>Field Obs</i>		.71		.76		.82
RESP	<i>Casebook</i>	.68		.68		.65	
RESP	<i>Casebook</i>		.79		.79		.59
LIMT	<i>Casebook</i>	.84	.84	.82	.82	.81	.81
FLEX	<i>Interview</i>	(.17)	(.17)	.11	.11	.15	.15
ICAR	<i>Casebook</i>	.83	.83	.86	.86	.84	.84
PRCO	<i>Casebook</i>	.80	.80	.81	.81	.77	.77
Family Perspective							
FAML	<i>Casebook</i>	.82	.82	.82	.82	.82	.82
MNFM	<i>Casebook</i>	.87	.87	.84	.84	.82	.82
Personal Faith							
PIET	<i>Interview</i>	.52	.52	.47	.47	.43	.43
PIET	<i>Field Obs</i>		.82		.79		.88
PROV	<i>Casebook</i>	.76	.76	.67	.67	.70	.70
SPRT	<i>Field Obs</i>		NA		.79		.82
Potential Negative							
SELF	<i>Casebook</i>	.79	.79	.72	.72	.74	.74
SELF	<i>Field Obs</i>		.75		.73		.86
PADV	<i>Casebook</i>	.59		.66		.65	
PRTC	<i>Interview</i>	(.33)	(.33)	.39	.39	.41	.41
PRTC	<i>Field Obs</i>		.61		.68		.82
DMNA	<i>Field Obs</i>		.76		.72		.86

*See Appendix B for identification of abbreviations.

One can have high confidence that the assigned coder thoroughly knows the range of potential codes, understands the student's response to the question, and will highly likely agree with a fellow coder in her or his judgment of a response. These are the direct outcomes of the biennial workshop. The number of *Interview* questions could reasonably be increased, but an eye would need to be kept on the length of the interview. The original interview had fifty-six questions. There is room between the current number and the original to build a stronger assessment of an individual characteristic.

TABLE 2: Reliability Coefficients for Stage I and Stage II

Perceptions of Ministry							
		1987–88		1994–95		2003–04	
Scale*	Source	Stage I	Stage II	Stage I	Stage II	Stage I	Stage II
Ecclesial Ministry							
DNOM	<i>Interview</i>	(.41)	(.41)	.22	.22	.40	.40
LITG	<i>Interview</i>	(.57)	(.57)	.30	.30	.47	.47
RELT	<i>Field Obs</i>		.69		.81		.81
TBIB	<i>Field Obs</i>		.60		.76		.83
PRCH	<i>Field Obs</i>		.70		.74		.80
WRSH	<i>Field Obs</i>		.70		.68		.78
CLAR	<i>Field Obs</i>		.71		.73		.76
Conversionist Ministry							
EVAN	<i>Casebook</i>	.73	.73	.68	.68	.63	.63
EVAN	<i>Interview</i>	(.52)	(.52)	.15	.15	.44	.44
GOAL	<i>Casebook</i>	.81	.81	.81	.81	.82	.82
CONG	<i>Casebook</i>	.73	.73	.81	.81	.80	.80
LAW	<i>Casebook</i>	.91		.85		.87	
LAW	<i>Casebook</i>		.83		.79		.82
THCO	<i>Casebook</i>	.88		.86		.79	
THCO	<i>Casebook</i>		.81		.69		.72
Social Justice Ministry							
PLIT	<i>Casebook</i>	.86	.86	.87	.87	.86	.86
PLIT	<i>Interview</i>	(.44)	(.44)	.38	.38	.45	.45
CAUS	<i>Interview</i>	(.40)	(.40)	.18	.18	.21	.21
OPEN	<i>Interview</i>	(.43)	(.43)	.29	.29	.33	.33
OPRS	<i>Casebook</i>	.70	.70	.69	.69	.69	.69
MORL	<i>Interview</i>	NA	NA	.13	.13	.26	.26
IDEA	<i>Casebook</i>		.74		.78		.80
JUST	<i>Field Obs</i>		NA		.82		.84
WOMN	<i>Field Obs</i>		NA		.80		.81
Community and Congregational Ministry							
SERV	<i>Casebook</i>	.70	.70	.74	.74	.73	.73
YUTH	<i>Casebook</i>	.82	.82	.82	.82	.79	.79
MISN	<i>Casebook</i>	.69	.69	.69	.69	.71	.71
MSBL	<i>Casebook</i>	NA	NA	.61	.61	.56	.56
BLDG	<i>Casebook</i>	.80	.80	.82	.82	.78	.78
CNFL	<i>Casebook</i>	.79	.79	.75	.75	.75	.75
LDRS	<i>Casebook</i>		.75		.77		.66
LDRS	<i>Field Obs</i>		.77		.81		.84
UNDR	<i>Field Obs</i>		.74		.76		.80

*See Appendix B for identification of abbreviations.

Summary

From the standpoint of the standard measures of assessment, the Profiles of Ministry instruments hold their own. Content validity has been attested to and the reliability coefficients are robust for the most part. Measured by the criterion of efficiency, a useful measure for all tests, PoM holds up well. It gathers a significant amount of information on characteristics judged important to ministry, in a timely fashion, and with reasonable statistical rigor. This affirmation does not mean that the instruments or the measures are perfect. They could be better. But, they are good.

Concluding observations

The original research team set two broad goals. The first was to learn what characteristics, traits, sensitivities, and behaviors were important for the beginning minister or priest in the churches of North America. This goal was achieved with considerable care and attention to the unique mix of denominational families, the interplay of clergy and lay responses, as well as to the input of seminary faculty and denominational leaders. The second goal was equally challenging, namely, to develop a set of instruments that would help seminarians assess their gifts for ministry, the traits that were likely to support effective ministry, as well as those behaviors that would impede or even derail ministry. All of this work was done with careful attention to empirical research and measurement issues. They succeeded in achieving both goals.

The fifteen-year study in 1987–88 addressed the issue of what changes and additions were necessary to strengthen the work while subsequent analysis of data and the thirty-year study revisited the original work and were able to pronounce it solid and useful for seminarians and the churches. The Profiles of Ministry program is healthy and ready for the next chapter of its development and use.

Francis A. Lonsway was a member of the ATS professional staff at the time of the original project, a consultant for the fifteen-year survey, and director of the ATS Profiles of Ministry program from 1992 to 2005. He directed the thirty-year study. He retired from ATS in the fall of 2005 and accepted an appointment to the graduate faculty in management and leadership of Webster University in Louisville, Kentucky.

Appendix A

Chronology of Readiness for Ministry Instruments and Resources

Instrument	Title or Form	Content	Year
<i>Case Assessment</i>	Book 1	28 cases	1975
<i>Case Assessment</i>	Book 2	27 cases	1975
<i>Case Assessment</i>	Form AB	43 cases	1976
<i>Casebook</i>	Ministry: A Professional and Personal Profile	43 cases	1979
<i>Casebook</i>	Casebook For Entering Students	30 cases	1979
<i>Interview</i>	Entering and Graduating Students	56 questions	1977
<i>Interview</i>	Entering and Graduating Students	48 questions	1982
<i>Field Observation</i>	Prototype	"Tree" rating plus 60 items	1976
<i>Field Observation</i>	Prototype	130 items	1977
<i>Field Observation</i>	Revised	130 items	1980
<i>Advisor's Interpretive Manual</i>			1979

Chronology of Profiles of Ministry Instruments and Resources

Instrument	Title or Form	Content	Year(s)
<i>Casebook</i>	Stage I	24 cases	1985, 1998, 2003, 2005
<i>Casebook</i>	Stage II	23 cases	1985, 1999, 2003, 2005
<i>Interview</i>	Stage I and Stage II	46 questions	1985, 1997, 2005
<i>Field Observation</i>	Stage II	116 items	1988, 1999, 2005
<i>Interpretive Manual</i>	Stage I		1985, 1999, 2005
<i>Interpretive Manual</i>	Stage II		1985, 1999, 2005
<i>Advisor's Manual</i>	Stage I and Stage II		1987, 1997, 2005

Appendix B

Identification of Abbreviations (Scale)

Responsible and Caring

FIDL	Fidelity to Tasks and Persons
RESP	Personal Responsibility
LIMT	Acknowledgment of Limitations
FLEX	Flexibility of Spirit
ICAR	Involvement in Caring
PRCO	Perceptive Counseling

Family Perspective

FAML	Mutual Family Commitment
MNFM	Ministry Precedence Over Family

Personal Faith

PIET	Commitment Reflecting Religious Piety
PROV	Belief in a Providential God
SPRT	Christian Spirituality

Potential Negative

SELF	Self-Serving Behavior
PADV	Pursuit of Personal Advantage
PRTC	Self-Protecting Behavior
DMNA	Intuitive Domination of Decision Making

Ecclesial Ministry

LITG	Sacramental-Liturgical Ministry
RELT	Relating Faith to the Modern World
TBIB	Theocentric-Biblical Ministry
PRCH	Competent Preaching
CLAR	Clarity of Thought and Communication
DNOM	Denominational Collegiality
WRSH	Competent Worship Leading

Conversionist Ministry

EVAN	Assertive Individual Evangelism
GOAL	Precedence of Evangelistic Goals
CONG	Total Concentration on Congregational Concerns
LAW	Law Orientation to Ethical Issues
THCO	Theologically Oriented Counseling

Social Justice Ministry

PLIT	Aggressive Political Leadership
CAUS	Support of Unpopular Causes
MORL	Position on Conservative Moral Issues
OPEN	Openness to Pluralism
OPRS	Active Concern for the Oppressed
IDEA	Interest in New Ideas
JUST	Concern for Social Justice
WOMN	Support for Women in the Church

Community/Congregation

SERV	Pastoral Service to All
YUTH	Relating Well to Children and Youth
MISN	Encouragement of World Mission
BLDG	Building Congregational Community
CNFL	Conflict Utilization
LDRS	Sharing Congregational Leadership
MSBL	Balanced Approach to World Missions
UNDR	Promotion of Understanding of Issues

ENDNOTES

1. The responses of seminary faculty, senior seminarians, alumni/ae, and denominational leaders were combined to form a "clergy" group.
2. Francis A. Lonsway, "Profiles of Ministry: History and Current Research," in *Theological Education* 41, no. 2 (2006): 112.
3. Ibid., 113.
4. Ibid.; Francis A. Lonsway, "The Churches and the Preparation of Candidates for Ministry," in *Theological Education* 42, no. 1 (2006); Francis A. Lonsway, "Level of Education, Age, and Gender in the Profiles of Ministry Survey," in *Interpretation*, no. 19 (Fall 2006).
5. Milo L. Brekke, "The Development of Criteria Referenced Instruments for Assessing Readiness for Ministry" and Daniel O. Aleshire, "The Assessment Instruments," in *Readiness for Ministry Volume II—Assessment*, David Schuller, Milo Brekke, Merton Strommen, and Daniel Aleshire, eds. (Vandalia, OH: The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, 1976).
6. Brekke, "The Development of Criteria Referenced Instruments," 75.
7. Aleshire, "The Assessment Instruments," 30.
8. Jesse H. Ziegler, "Foreword," in *Readiness for Ministry Volume II—Assessment*, David Schuller, Milo Brekke, Merton Strommen, and Daniel Aleshire, eds. (Vandalia, OH: The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, 1976), vii.
9. A major shift was made in the expectation that each participating seminary would supply its own coders. This did not work well for several reasons. First, the coders typically listened to tapes only once a year with the result that the accuracy of their judgments slipped in the second and ensuing years. Second, the turnover among coders was high, and retraining was expensive for the seminaries. In the late 1980s, more and more of the coding was being centralized at ATS with Arlene Galloway, Francis Lonsway, and Pauline Jacobi. In the early 1990s, the concept of "contract coders" arose. These individuals were tested, prepared, and equipped to listen to hundreds of tapes throughout the academic year. They likewise committed themselves to a biannual coder certification conference to test and further sharpen their coding skills.
10. Tom Kubiszyn and Gary Borich, *Educational Testing and Measurement*, 4th ed. (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993), 293–296.
11. Jeff Nave, *An Analysis of Socially Desirable Responding to Required Psychological Tests by Students Entering Seminary Graduate Programs* (doctoral dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).
12. Kubiszyn and Borich, *Educational Testing and Measurement*, 307–310.
13. Stage I is designed for seminarians beginning graduate studies, while Stage II explores an individual seminarian's growth at the end of his or her master's level program.

Theological Education Submission Guidelines

The Association of Theological Schools is a membership organization of schools in the United States and Canada that conducts post-baccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and advanced study of the theological disciplines. The Association's mission is to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public. The Commission on Accrediting of ATS accredits schools that are members of ATS and approves the degree programs they offer.

Theological Education, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, is devoted to the distinctive concerns of graduate theological education in North America. The journal supports the mission of the Association by providing those concerned with theological education—including administrators, faculty, and independent researchers—with scholarly discourse and reports on issues and trends, research findings and resources, and models of critical analysis and effective practices in graduate theological education.

Unsolicited submissions are reviewed by members of the journal's Editorial Board, who then make recommendations regarding their publication. The Editorial Board will not consider articles that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications.

Article Formatting Requirements

1. Recommended length of articles is 5,000 words (approximately 18 double-spaced pages).
2. Follow *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, using endnotes.
3. Convert footnotes to ENDNOTES, if necessary, using author's given name and then the surname with no intervening comma.
4. The *American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* are the references for preferred spellings.
5. Provide a paragraph ABSTRACT at the beginning of the article in approximately 80 words.
6. Add a short (2–3 sentence) paragraph at the end of the article identifying the author(s), institution or relationship to the project/topic, position held, and/or other information relevant to the experience of the writer(s).
7. Articles should be emailed to the managing editor (merrill@ats.edu) in Microsoft Word, followed by a hard copy sent by conventional mail to: Nancy Merrill, Managing Editor, *Theological Education*, The Association of Theological Schools, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1110.

