

CMS embraces the learner-centred approach

Students become more involved, engaged in own learning experiences

“A student commented that while my course was his most difficult ever, it was the one where he learned the most,” says Jean-Claude Provost, Faculty Lecturer, and Coordinator of Human Resources programs in Career and Management Studies (CMS). “He thanked me for my dedication, and for my ‘Big Brother’

approach.”

“Big Brother?” Was that an Orwellian reference about Provost’s online monitoring of their group discussions? Or was it a compliment about his strong desire to optimize the learning experience?

Chances are it was a bit of both.

Provost’s blended teaching approach,

Jean-Claude Provost

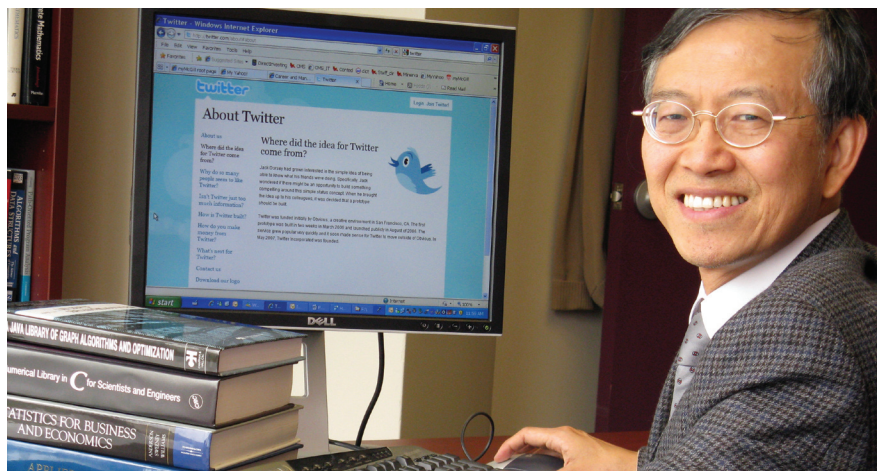


known as “learner-centred” (or “constructivist” in educational circles) includes online group assignments using WebCT, in-class current-events discussions, and case studies. “Students are more motivated when the course relates to their personal experience or offers opportunities for practical application,” he says. “Discussing current topics such as equity and downsizing in class or online is demanding for both the learners and the instructors. The extra self-discipline and time required pays off in terms of greater impact lasting beyond the final exam. It’s gratifying for me to see engaged learners.”

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Analyzing traffic, building brands and creating buzz:

New IT programs meet specialized needs of today’s market



Dr. Hang Lau

In the days of the dot.com boom, anyone with a general knowledge of computer programming could expect to be snapped up by employers hungry for knowledge of computer programming. A lot has changed in 10 years. Now, appetites in the job market tend more towards

specialized knowledge such as web analytics, business intelligence and social media technology.

“You don’t need a computer science specialist for these applications,” explains Dr. Hang Lau, Director, Information Technology (IT) programs

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Dr. Judith Potter
Dean of Continuing Education

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Focus on learners' needs

With the experience of a full year at McGill as Dean of Continuing Education behind me, I enthusiastically embrace the upcoming learning year and the opportunities ahead. Last year saw the staff of the Centre for Continuing Education reflect deeply on our mission and our role within McGill and Montreal, as well as larger regional, national and international spheres. We have articulated our intentions for the next three to four years in our Strategic Directions document and have begun our progress towards those goals.

One direction that we are embarking upon is a closer connection with CCE/McGill alumni. We intend to provide increased opportunities for alumni to benefit from the spectacular intellectual resources at McGill and to maintain linkages with the thousands of individuals who have already taken CCE offerings. To that end, CCE is hosting our first Homecoming event this fall, and welcoming alumni at a special reception for graduates. We particularly appreciate input on the learning needs of CCE/McGill alumni as well as suggestions for the most effective ways of keeping in touch.

This edition of *The Bridge* highlights many important aspects of the Centre and

our priorities. First and foremost, our focus is on our learners, as demonstrated by the learner-centred theme that permeates this fall 2009 edition. Whether teaching methodologies, innovative uses of educational technologies, or new programming directions, the thread that weaves these stories together is improving the experience of our learners. The pieces on Jeff Sidel and on the 20th anniversary of the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement (MILR) bring to life the impact of the McGill Centre for Continuing Education on individuals and communities.

A special congratulations to the MILR leadership team for the wonderful program that they have developed for the 20th anniversary celebration. These milestone events highlight the rich intellectual and artistic interests of MILR membership. I am particularly proud of the outreach initiatives that MILR has undertaken as part of the celebration, in which they share their resources and expertise with others throughout the region.

My warmest thanks to everyone who has participated in bringing to fruition this edition of *The Bridge*. We hope that you enjoy reading our stories and invite your feedback and suggestions.

CCE
Centre for Continuing Education

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Contributors to this issue:

Editor: Elizabeth Hirst
Writers: Elizabeth Hirst, Peter McCarthy, Brendan Walsh
Photography: Claudio Calligaris, Richard Fournier, Elizabeth Hirst, Ann Pearson, Mark Shainblum, Sally Spilhaus, Brendan Walsh
Design and layout: Graphic Design, Public Affairs, McGill University

Your input is always welcome!

To submit comments or story ideas, and for information on publication dates and deadlines, please contact:

Elizabeth Hirst, Editor
The Bridge
e-mail: elizabeth.hirst@mcgill.ca

THE BRIDGE

McGill Centre for Continuing Education
Office of the Dean
688 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, QC H3A 3R1
www.mcgill.ca/conted

Instructors learn to make good use of technology in – and outside – the classroom

Innovations provide new learning opportunities

“WebCT delivers a lot for the Languages program,” says Marie-Claude Beauchamp, Program Coordinator, Part-Time French Program & Special Projects, English & French Language Programs.



Marie-Claude Beauchamp, left, is seen here in Redpath Hall, at the annual Tech Fair, where instructors with experience in teaching technology provide demonstrations and guidance to others eager to learn. To Beauchamp's right is colleague Effie Dracopoulos.

Students in the intermediate French course use myCourses (WebCT) to work on virtual project scenarios where they create their own companies and pitch their products. For part-time faculty with no physical offices on campus at McGill, a myCourses virtual teachers' lounge is particularly useful. One professor has even been posting presentations on YouTube.

A number of instructors in other departments have also been integrating technology into their courses. Most depend on the expertise available from the staff of the CCE's Instructor Services and Educational Technologies.

Instructors learn at their own pace

“Our role is to introduce CCE instructors to technological innovations available for teaching,” says Jean-Paul Rémillieux, the

unit's Director. “We also provide support and guidance, especially to those who have full-time jobs elsewhere and have limited time to spend learning to use new tools.”

For example, WebCT is a powerful online virtual learning environment which includes discussion boards, mail systems, live chat capabilities, and space for web pages and text and audio-visual documents. Rémillieux says, “We encourage instructors to start with basic features like e-mail communication and information-storage capabilities. Once these basic functions are integrated, and with our support, they are more likely to explore and eventually use features such as the grade book, advanced-discussion platform, online testing, etc.”

Quest for simplicity

The CCE's high-tech toolbox also includes equipment such as digital video cameras and audio recorders. Rémillieux and instructional design consultant Oksana Maibroda help instructors and students to get the most out of these technologies. “We emphasize simplicity,” adds Rémillieux. “Our video cameras are simple, palm-sized, four-button models. Students and instructors use them for interviews in Languages and Human Resources.”



Jean-Paul Rémillieux and Oksana Maibroda test the new audio and video recorders. The devices are small enough for the instructor to hold in one hand, are equipped with USB connections so they can be inserted into a computer, and work well with either PCs or Macs.

For distance learning, McGill will be implementing a new Web conferencing platform. “We're not creating full-blown distance courses all at once,” says Rémillieux. “As a starter, we would like our instructors to try the new virtual class once as a replacement for an in-class session.”



Jean-Claude Provost works with Human Resources students in a newly outfitted active learning classroom in Burnside Hall.

Preparing for work environment

Writing instructor Sharron Wall sees technology's importance in continuing education. “We need to look beyond its advantages in the classroom and draw parallels to the students' work environments. My students think of WebCT as a company intranet.”

Carlos del Burgo, Lecturer, Translation Studies, uses Computer Assisted Translation technology in his Documentation and Terminology and Computer Tools for Translators courses. “It's important to expose students to technology that they're expected to use in the working world,” he says.

Jean-Claude Provost, Faculty Lecturer, Career and Management Studies, Human Resources, is a practitioner of the hybrid-course method. Thanks to WebCT, he offers his students a combination of in-class and online lectures. “For students, it requires a little more autonomy, flexibility, and self-discipline,” adds Provost. “Plus it's a bit more work for the lecturer – but it's all well worth it in terms of preparation for the working world.”

Analyzing traffic, building brands and creating buzz:

New IT programs meet specialized needs of today's market

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in Career and Management Studies (CMS). "Moreover, Computer Science generally doesn't teach these areas of knowledge."

New jobs, new skills

Lau has just spent a full year developing new graduate programs to meet new needs -- meeting recruiters for IT consulting firms, researching other programs, consulting with instructors, and then designing courses that would match learning needs. As a result, CMS is offering three new graduate programs this fall, focusing on the knowledge and skills needed in specialized positions like business systems analyst, affiliated manager, online marketing specialist, web data analyst, business solutions architect, and business development specialist/manager.

The three new programs serve different learner needs, but they all share

three main focuses: **web analytics**, used to analyze web traffic to see how websites are contributing to the business' bottom line; **business intelligence**, to find how a company's website compares to others and relates to the image and values of the business; and **social media technology**, no longer exclusively the playground of individuals but used by companies as business tools for advertising and viral marketing.

"IT jobs are still abundant," adds Lau, "but employers are much more specific in their hiring needs. For instance, everybody has a website. You have to, in order to do business. And these sites have a wide range of functions: some handle on-line retail business, others provide consumer information. In addition, the variety of free tools on the Internet means that web design work is shrinking compared to 10 years ago. IT is not restricted to IT companies anymore."

Instructors are stand-outs in the field

Instructors in the new and revised programs are highly successful entrepreneurs in their fields. As Lau says, "To successfully teach Internet business, you have to know what makes Internet business successful."

One of these new teachers is Herman Tumorcuoglu, creator of the search engine Mamma.com. By the time Tumorcuoglu sold it 10 years ago, it had become the most accessed website in Canada, and many people used it instead of Google.

(see <http://www.aboutus.org/Mamma.com>)



Another Internet business dynamo joining the McGill team is Pinny Griwisch, one of founders of Ice.com, the international on-line jewellery business. (See www.ice.com) Says Lau, "Herman and Pinny offer our students the benefit of their real, practical experience and insight."



Which program to take?

1. The **Diploma in Internet Business**

Technology: For people interested in the more technical aspects of IT, who need programming skills or database knowledge. It provides courses on programming, database access and development, computer network security, and computer graphics. (It's an all-new program that replaces the retired Diploma in Information Technology.)

2. The **Diploma in Management**

(Internet Business Concentration), a revised version of the former E-Business Concentration, puts greater emphasis on management. It includes five IT courses and five other management courses.

3. The **Graduate Certificate in**

Internet Business, revised from the older Graduate Certificate in E-Business, is a five-course program focusing solely on IT skills. It is for students who already have a Bachelor of Commerce/Computer Science, Software Engineering or Computer Engineering.

Students with a bachelor's degree in computer science, software engineering or computer engineering, who already have the technical training, may choose to focus more on either the management or the Internet business aspects by taking program number 2 or 3, above.

In addition, some individual courses are available as electives in other CMS programs.

GRAD STUDENT PROFILE

JEFF SIDEL:

Leveraging practical experience

*“I finally discovered what I wanted to do when I grew up.
I went back to school after 27 successful years in business.”*



I made two life-changing decisions in June 2006. After three decades of personal growth at Merck Frosst Canada, the Canadian subsidiary of Merck & Co., Inc., one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, I decided to retire. Then I decided to embark on an academic journey that would let me leverage the wealth of practical experience I had gained in sales, marketing, business development, strategic planning and health education.

My wife, Linda, was very supportive as I considered my options. While we were out walking one day, she gave me three things to think about. She made it clear that if I chose to retire, she did “not want me underfoot” because I would drive her and myself crazy in the process. She also said that whatever I decided to do should be meaningful to me and ensure that we maintain our financial security.

I considered Linda's advice carefully and, in September, I enrolled in graduate studies at McGill's Centre for Continuing Education (CCE).

Return on investment of time and effort

As any good businessman would, I insisted on a good ROI (return on investment) for my time and effort. I wanted my graduate diploma to be recognized and mean something. Equally important, I needed to feel that I was part of university life, enjoying all the privileges of full-time students. In some institutions, even access to the library for part-timers is restricted.

As it turned out, my faculty advisor,

Mary Rubiano, was very helpful and patient in addressing my needs and concerns. She told me that CCE had many students who, like me, wished to improve job skills or start a new career.

Course work represents real-life business environment

I soon saw what Mary meant with her encouraging words, and it became more evident to me the more I pursued my studies. Indeed, I can now honestly say that I have had the privilege of meeting and working with some very talented individuals (students and teachers) in many of my courses. Most importantly, the actual course work is remarkably representative of real-life business environments, a cornerstone of McGill CCE management programs.

For the most part, my teachers have been outstanding instructors and mentors. Not only are they on top of their subject matter, they also know how to engage their students and promote team participation. Rather than use “seen it all before” PowerPoint presentations, they are very comfortable explaining concepts on the blackboard while encouraging open dialogue.

Meeting the high standards of today's employers

Teachers demand excellence and they can be very tough markers. But this is the way it should be if CCE wishes to meet the high standards of employers today. However, I have found that if you meet teachers half way, they are there for you -- in and out of the classroom. I

saw this first hand one day when one of my professors, who has an unbelievable work schedule, skipped her lunch to help me on a difficult assignment.

Thirty years is a long time to be away from the classroom. However, as I began my academic journey, my family and friends encouraged me when they suggested that I was setting an excellent example for my three sons, David, Brian and Jonathan. Their words were really brought home to me in May 2009 when I was awarded the American Express Prize in Management-Treasury Finance, which is awarded for overall academic achievement to the top student. They were beaming with pride when I heard them exclaim, “That's my Dad!” as I was congratulated by the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor during Convocation.

I know that I made the right decision to become a CCE student three years ago. I discovered that my passion for learning is synonymous with what I really wanted to do when I “grew up”.

Editor's Note: Jeff Sidel completed his Diploma in Management-Treasury/Finance in an impressive two and one-half years and is just one semester away from completing his Graduate Certificate in International Business. He was recently accepted into the Taxation Program. His advice to other CEE students who will follow in his footsteps: “Get ready for an unbelievable experience, but be prepared to work hard for that piece of parchment you will receive at the end.”



Carmen Sicilia, Director
Career and Management Studies

CMS embraces the learner-centred approach

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Interactive approach

According to Carmen Sicilia, Director, Career and Management Studies, Provost is part of a growing movement in CMS toward the learner-centred approach. It's more interactive compared to the traditional instructor-as-speaker/student-as-listener scenario. "Instructors facilitate dialogue and interaction, helping students to collaborate and explore concepts and ideas themselves," says Sicilia.

The learner-centred philosophy encompasses many knowledge and learning theories and methods. These include: on-the-job training or apprenticeship, students working together toward common goals, and in-class experiential learning. Typical class sessions include open-ended questions and dialogue.

Faculty Lecturer, Sharron Wall has also embraced this approach since she began her teaching career about 20 years ago after working in theatre and film. "I discovered that my work experience had

already given me lots of educational tools. I learn by doing, and so do my students."

Support for instructors

"Instructors have to admit that they don't need to know all the answers, and their students can learn from each other," says Jonghwi Park, Professional Associate, Teaching and Learning Services (TLS). "In continuing education, students bring considerable knowledge to the classroom. TLS can help instructors to generate good questions for their students to explore, and to facilitate those discussions."

For Continuing Education faculty working with a learner-centred approach, TLS provides workshops and other professional-development support. They can also provide technical support. For example, McGill's Student Response System (SRS) clicker instant-polling technology is a particularly useful way to engage hundreds of students attending the same entry-level class.

(Editor's note: For more on technical support, please see the article on teaching technology in this issue.)

Approach works for all

The learner-centred approach works for students of any age in any subject. Carmen Sicilia points out that many instructors and students are already learner-centred practitioners.

Take for example, the small-group discussions and case studies used in many Management classes. Jean-Claude Provost had been using this approach long before he ever found out that it is known as "constructivist" in educational circles.

"This is a world of rapid change, innovation and globalization," adds Sicilia. "The need for continuous lifelong learning has never been greater. The learner-centred approach is an important part of our effort to continue to provide the best quality education."



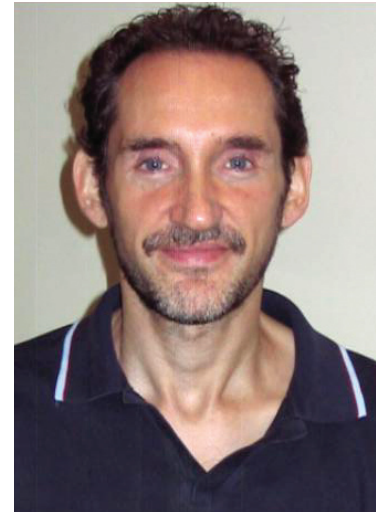
Sharron Wall leads a lively interactive discussion in her Communications in Public Relations course.

Transformative learning

McGill ESL students discover new perspectives on life

Bruce Manson teaches English Communication Practice 1 at the McGill Centre for Continuing Education (CCE). At last May's CCE Convocation, he was awarded a Distinguished Teaching Award.

Manson believes "Transformative Learning is a dynamic way to engage adult students from diverse backgrounds and interests." During a recent interview, The Bridge asked him how this model can help students become better communicators and why he is so passionate about it. We are pleased to share highlights of that interview with readers here.



The Bridge: What is Transformative Learning?

Manson: It is about creating any learning situation that attempts to challenge and transform the thinking of adult students. It is based on the premise that everyone possesses personal expectations and assumptions concerning how the world operates. These expectations and assumptions, which can be accurate or inaccurate, are shaped by the influences of primary caregivers in childhood, earlier life experiences, and our cultural backgrounds. Transformative Learning creates an interactive environment in which students are challenged to consider the different points of view of classmates as new ideas are presented. They may then experience a perspective transformation on a personal or societal level.

The Bridge: What is your role as a teacher in applying this model?

Manson: My main role, of course, is to help students at a low intermediate level improve their proficiency in English. The learning situations that I employ to achieve this goal are designed to promote reflection, and this reflection and the changes that may result constitute a secondary objective. I may assign short readings and engage them in collaborative group activities. Their research and a free exchange of ideas with their peers expose them to new ideas, which may not fit comfortably with their own.

The Bridge: Can you provide an example of techniques you employ?

Manson: I often attach a group activity to a vocabulary-building unit or grammatical point. For instance, I might present a social problem that challenges students and gives them the opportunity to practice comparative and superlative adjectives. An example would be:

A nuclear holocaust is imminent and only five people can escape by boat to a nuclear-free zone to establish a colony and continue the human species. Each student has to select the passengers for the voyage from among a diverse group. The candidates include an aboriginal chief, a soldier, a pregnant woman, a political figure, a farmer, a lawyer with an alcohol problem, a homosexual doctor, etc.

The students then form groups to discuss their choices for "the best" or "the most important" candidates and, most importantly, why. For example, why the farmer would be better than a lawyer or a soldier. A spokesperson is then appointed to present each group's findings to the entire class, promoting a further exchange of ideas. Following that, I also ask them to complete a discussion activity in groups with questions like, "Do people of prestige play a more important role in society?" and "Do you believe in a diverse and inclusive society?" There is, of course, no right or wrong answer to these questions. Finally, for homework, I ask students to write a reflective journal in which they look back and record their feelings, opinions, and any perspective changes.

The Bridge: Who are your students?

Manson: Two groups of adult students make up my English Communication Practice class and they come from different walks of life and cultures. The first includes students who are pursuing the Certificate of Proficiency in the "English for Professional Communication" program. The second is comprised of individuals who are taking courses to improve their language skills for personal growth or to enhance career prospects. Known as "special undergraduates," students in this latter group are not working towards the certificate.

The Bridge: What persuaded you to adopt the Transformative Learning model?

Manson: I believe that since we are often dealing here with personal growth and moral codes, educational theory overlaps with spirituality and ethics. While studying for my M.A. in Religion, I became more aware of who I was and where I was going in life, and I developed more of a social conscience. I wanted to share this with my students. I wanted to create an atmosphere where students could improve their competency as communicators by gaining new perspectives on life issues like self- and intercultural awareness, tolerance and acceptance.

Manson concluded the interview with a caveat: "While Transformative Learning can help promote better understanding of different cultural groups, it is not an overnight process; it is a catalyst for change."

MILR celebrates twenty years of peer learning



Their motto: "Grow bold along with me. The best is yet to be!"

"MILR was the greatest thing that happened to me since I retired! Since

I have an affection for musical theatre, I now moderate a study group on the history of musical theatre...focusing on Broadway music and songs."
- Gerald "Jerry" Silverberg

As part of McGill's Centre for Continuing Education, the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement (MILR) has been on the cutting edge of peer learning since 1989. And its fit and fiery

members range in age from 50 to 95!

To mark its 20th anniversary year, MILR decided to host a series of special events. They kicked off September 3-5 with a well-attended art exhibition and vernissage at the McClure Gallery to showcase the creative talents of MILR members in artwork, sculpture and photography. Future celebratory events include the premiere of Switzerland's 2008 Oscar-nominated film, "Late Bloomers", at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in October, an Art Festival at Tudor Hall, La Maison Ogilvy, next February, and for the grand finale, a Victorian Tea at Stewart Hall, Pointe Claire in June 2010.



"From the moment I took my first class, which was on "The Travels of Captain Cook", I was hooked. Later I made a presentation on scurvy, of all things, doing my research at the McGill Medical Library. Since then, my choice of study groups has ranged all over the map. Besides the fun of learning, you meet people you never would have met any other way." - Nancy Grayson

Gastronomes in their midst are planning a holiday season luncheon and a ploughman's breakfast.

This is truly a year to share the remarkable, heart-warming stories of so many Montreal retirees who, through their involvement as MILR members and/or moderators, are now leading more dynamic and enriched lives. Just ask them what they think about peer learning at their age and you'll soon see why they love "learning for the sheer joy of it." In fact, as *The Bridge* soon discovered when we interviewed Nancy Grayson and Jerry Silverberg for this article recently, their excitement is infectious.



Thea Pawlikowska and Victoria Leblanc prepare for visitors just before the vernissage.



Dean Judith Potter chats with MILR President George Latimer and artist Cecilia Marin.



Visitors view the artwork at the McClure Gallery.

For more information about MILR's 20th Anniversary, visit <http://milr20.mcgill.ca/>



"Canada, and indeed the world, is in the midst of an historic demographic shift as the senior population blooms.

It is known that intellectual stimulation and social ties are essential to maintaining the best of health. MILR is overflowing with people who have worked in careers as varied as film producers, scientists, entrepreneurs, doctors, and CEOs, just to

name a few! They take delight in sharing their stories about how much they have gained through peer-to-peer learning in study groups. Most importantly, they can teach us all much about aging gracefully, reinventing ourselves with renewed passion, and reaping a rewarding harvest in our latter years."

Astri Thorvik, Chairperson
MILR 20th Anniversary