

May 5, 1989

VVI Day

A potpourri of choices

VVI day. For some it was a chance to take a workshop on the benefits of laughter. Others were inspired by keynote speakers Elaine Bernard of SFU and Bill Day of Douglas College. It was a chance to leave the classroom behind and chat with colleagues over coffee and a croissant. VVI's professional day, April 14th, was all that and more.

VCC President Paul Gallagher got things started by introducing Elaine Bernard, Director of Labour and Women's Programs for Continuing Studies at SFU. She's a dynamic speaker with wide interests, including the world of work, education, and women's issues.



Elaine Bernard

Bernard's opening remarks focused on change, a topic relevant to VVI where staff and instructors are constantly adapting to new conditions in the workplace.

Bernard spoke of two very different kinds of change: the positive and the negative. "We are at a crossroads right now," she said. "We're living in a time of great hope and a time of great despair. We have new technology, better jobs, a good education system. We also have high unemployment, piece work, and alienation."

Bernard says she understands why educators can feel powerless about changes taking place around them. She reminded the audience that education IS about change, about preparing people to become lifelong learners with a sense of self confidence and what she calls "empowerment".

Bernard urged VVI'ers to become "shock wave riders" ... using the crest of change to move ahead, instead of standing on the beach and getting pounded by the surf.

With those inspirational words, the 250 participants headed off to a variety of workshops. The day included;

"Critical Thinking".

"Word Perfect Skills" ▷



VVI's PD Day: Food for thought ... and the stomach

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• "Revitalization Through Laughter" (a quick peek revealed participants in various poses on the floor, doing their best to make each other laugh)

• "Dealing with Difficult People"

There were also sessions on pensions and retirement planning, active learning, massage therapy and others.

According to Dick Strachan, Assistant Dean of Administration, what really made the day was the chance for people to mingle and meet each other. "It's really a lot more than a professional development day," says Strachan. "It's that chance for personal interaction which is so important. I hope that will linger on."

Strachan has high praise for the planning committee which worked hard to pull it off. He hopes the event can become an annual affair.

It was Douglas College President Bill Day who closed things off by sharing his "Secrets of Life".

First, "The Power of Expectation". Day reminded the audience about the power we have to control events through positive expectations.

The second secret he calls "Suspended Judgement". He urged participants not to make snap decisions about people and ideas.

Then there's "Thomas' Law", which says every educational institution tends to become more and more exclusive. Day reminded people not to lose sight of VVI's original mandate, to offer educational opportunities to the broadest possible spectrum.

Day concluded with a word of warning: his "Law of Un-anticipated Outcomes." He predicts there may be LESS money in the future for vocational and career training in B.C. despite recent government promises of MORE funding.

But that cautionary note didn't dampen the upbeat mood at the end of the event, as participants shared a glass with colleagues in the main concourse. For VVI'ers it was an enjoyable, productive day, well spent. □



Bill Day

Legal Beagle to the rescue

Langara
PD Days

group of teenagers in Kelowna has been barred from the local Overwaitea store amid accusations that some of them have been shoplifting. Rather than grumbling about the injustice of it all, they head for their computer and send an electronic message over the phone lines to Legal Beagle.

Legal Beagle responds with his own electronic message — explaining the kids' rights, counselling them on their responsibilities and urging them to negotiate a resolution with the store manager.

Legal Beagle, a/k/a/ Williams Lake lawyer Rod Hawkins, is a participant in Simon Fraser University's TeleLearning system, which provides two-way electronic communications between experts and 3,500 children who have access to

school computers in B.C.

"Legal Beagle has been a real winner with the students," David Porter, TeleLearning co-ordinator, told a seminar on education and technology at the Langara Faculty Association's PD days April 25-26. "We're hoping to expand the service by involving experts in consumer and environmental law and including the ombudsman's office and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association."

While Hawkins' advice helped solve the shoplifting problem in Kelowna, other experts who are "on call" were answering questions from K-12 students about science, business education, Pacific Rim subjects, and serving as mentors to budding authors.

Computers, and modems for sending and receiving information over the phone lines, have become integral components

of the "computer mediated communications" activity in SFU's Department of Education. The equipment provides for electronic mail messages, electronic conferencing between groups of people and access to up-to-date data bases such as Grolier's Electronic Encyclopedia.

"Electronic highways are world wide and it's very easy to be connected by a phone line," said Porter. "We have a number of projects that connect students in B.C. with students around the world. Northern Lights College has also found it useful in handling correspondence courses to remote areas in B.C."

PD Days also provided faculty with an opportunity to attend numerous workshops - from Computers in Science Instruction to Computer-based Instruction in the Humanities. Day two dealt with Faculty Evaluation in B.C. □

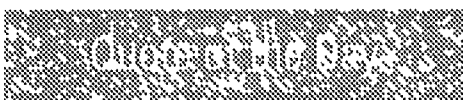


Auctioneer Bob Wadsworth takes a bid from Dave Mitton during the PD Day auction of goods and services supplied by Langara faculty members. Almost \$1200 went to the VCC Foundation for scholarships.

Colleges 'computer poor'

B.C. colleges are computer poor compared with universities — and the school system, technology consultant Lionel Kearns told a Langara professional development day seminar. And a show of hands at the seminar indicated that most of the computers being used by the Langara faculty are in their homes rather than the workplace.

"In most colleges that we surveyed in the Interior, there is a desperate shortage of (computer) resources and a bit of despair as to whether funds will ever be made available," said Kearns. "If there is a useful system in place for electronic mail or electronic conferencing and people have a terminal on their desk, they'll use it. But if you have to walk down the hall to a terminal, you'll probably never get into electronic communications. The prerequisite is the availability of terminals."



"At Langara, viewing the marvels of computer technology is like shopping for a Mercedes-Benz with \$2 in your pocket." - Anonymous

About half of the approximately 100 faculty members in the audience signified that they had a personal computer at home, but only a scattering have one on campus.

By contrast, another seminar speaker detailed a lavish array of computer equipment in SFU's Faculty of Education.

Peter Norman, SFU's Inservice Coordinator, said all of the 35 faculty members and 35 support staff have a Macintosh computer on their desks.

"We got there at great expense in terms of sacrificing other things along the way, but it was a conscious decision that the way to move into experimenting with the technology was to get it into the hands of the people on an every day basis," said Norman. "You need a close one-to-one

relationship between the people and the technology, otherwise it's like having five people sharing one pencil.

"The technology as we know it now is just the beginning of the vast effect it will have on educational institutions," said Norman, "It allows people to explore the world in more personal and empowering ways."

However, he also urged the audience to conserve valuable traditions.

"I watched the music department's ukulele storeroom literally being cleaned out to make way for the synthesizers, keyboards and all of the other musical digital interface equipment.

"We must be careful not to become enthralled with the technology because it's nifty and new and it glows in the dark. We have to ask ourselves what's worth preserving and how the hell we do that in the face of this massive onslaught of technology." □

Lionel his own toughest critic

Lionel Kearns knows how to give an instructor a rough time, even if he's the one doing the instructing.

Kearns told the Langara PD day audience that he once set up a computer based conference among students of a class he was instructing at SFU.

"I then assumed a student's (computer) identity and attacked the lecturer," said Kearns. "It was amazing how it opened things up. There were even a few students who defended the lecturer." □

Many thanks to the Arbutus and South Vancouver chapters of the Vancouver Rotary Club for a donation of \$4,500 for scholarships. The funds include:

✱ A \$4,000 endowment scholarship in memory of prominent Vancouver photographer Herb Addington.

✱ \$500 for a scholarship presentation to be made in August □

Trouble in River City?

Your kids are growing moss on their

heads because they're spending mega

hours in front of the Nintendo that's

hooked up in the basement. You worry

that they're going blind. Will they ever be

able to read? Even comic books?

Lighten up, folks, the kids are wired on

the initial forms of "hyper media" — the

education technology of their future.

Full hyper media involves electronic graphics, sound, live video and language in a way that permits interaction and control by the user; a play of choice and response with the computer terminal.

"The biggest thing in the commercial entertainment industry today is the use of optical disk storage," technology consultant Lionel Kearns told Langara's PD day seminar. "In terms of education, you won't be able to get away from it.

"Co-operative learning will be an increasing possibility as students have more access to technology and are guided by us in ways that are educationally productive, rather than the violence you see in games like Nintendo and many of the others."

Kearns said recent surveys indicate that technophobia is on the retreat in colleges.

"A few years ago there was much more negativity about technology replacing the teacher. Computer mediated communication is coming to all of the colleges. It will mean that you'll be able to experiment with all sorts of ways of delivering courses and involving students." □