

December  
2000

A busy year!

# coMentor News 4



2000 has been an exhausting year! Between February and December, I have run 17 dedicated coMentor demo/workshops at various universities

throughout the UK I have attended a number of meetings and workshops arranged by the new Learning and Teaching Support Network Centres during the year to promote the system. Further dissemination took place at *ALT-C2000* at UMIST with an interactive presentation, and a poster presentation at the West Yorkshire Education and Training Consortium *New Developments in Education and Training for the Healthcare Workforce* conference.

Full user and technical support has been provided by both Andrew Teal (coMentor programmer) and myself during the year to academics at institutions who have downloaded and installed coMentor. This support has also been extended to the numerous academic staff at universities who chose to use the server at Huddersfield to evaluate the use of coMentor to support their teaching.

There has also been on-going support to the academic staff within the School of Human and Health Sciences at the University of Huddersfield, who have enthusiastically used coMentor in their teaching. This has been particularly well demonstrated in the Department of Behavioural Sciences, where the system has supported the teaching of undergraduates in modules that require student collaboration: Methodology and Philosophy, Introduction to Sociology 1: Issues of Identity, and Introduction to Cultural Studies.

## The coMentor community

The transfer of the Mailbase service to JISCmail took effect from the 27<sup>th</sup> November. This means that the coMentor List which exists to keep users informed of the latest news of coMentor, and for you to share experiences of using coMentor is now hosted by JISCmail (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/>). JISCmail have attempted to make the transition as straightforward as possible, and full details can be read at <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/docs/transition.htm>. All members of the coMentor list were sent information regarding the transition. Regardless of which lists you are a member of, please ensure that you now:



- Start sending messages to **listname@jiscmail.ac.uk**, e.g. **comentor@jiscmail.ac.uk**
- Start sending commands to **jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk**
- Check on changes in user commands (see <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/docs/ref-cards.htm>)
- Review any filters you use on oncoming mail, i.e. these should be **jiscmail.ac.uk** rather than **mailbase.ac.uk**
- Reset any bookmarks in your web browsers that relate to Mailbase web pages to the appropriate page at JISCmail.

You can subscribe to the coMentor list at any time by sending the following email message to **jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk** – **join comentor firstname lastname** – substituting with your first name and your surname.

Don't forget, you can have a look around coMentor at any time by taking your web browser to **<http://comentor.hud.ac.uk:7000/>** and typing **Guest** as your user name and leaving the password box blank



## Get in touch

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## The Provision of Education and Training for Health Care Professionals through the Medium of the Internet

*Dr. Martin Beer, Department of Computer Science, University of Liverpool*

This initiative is to provide Internet-based courses to student and professional occupational therapists in the UK (University of Liverpool), Belgium (University of West Flanders), the Netherlands (University of Amsterdam) and Sweden (University of Linköpings). The project is known as the Occupational Therapy Internet School (OTIS), which is funded by the European Union through the Ten-Telecom programme. A major feature of the course organisation is the adoption of a problem-based approach in which students collaborate internationally to propose effective intervention in given case study scenarios. The initial trial was based on coMentor, which has been adopted by the project for further development.



Dr. Beer states: 'At present there is a limited number of students using the system in Amsterdam and Liverpool. The main pilot takes place in January. A restricted version of the full system can be viewed on the project web site at <http://www.csc.liv.ac.uk/~otis/>. This is a static mock up, so does not show the communications panes. As you will see we have moved much more to a full virtual rooms model, and evaluation by the students seems very positive.'

### More users ...

Cambridge University has become the latest institution to install coMentor. Academic staff in the Department of Sociology and Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, the School of Philosophy at the University of Leeds, and the Department of Computer Science at the University of Keele have chosen to evaluate the use of coMentor in their teaching, following workshops organised at their institutions. coMentor is to be used at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle on the Students in Placement project. Fourth year social research students will be using the system as a means whereby students can offer mutual support and share their learning from practice.

### ... and more dissemination

The final workshop of the current programme takes place at the University of Reading in mid-December. The Art, Design and Communication LTSN Centre have requested a coMentor workshop as part of their workshop day to be held at Staffordshire University on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2001.

### Want to 'have-a-go' at using coMentor? ...

We would still like to hear from you if you would like us to host a 'site' for you on our server. This enables you to evaluate coMentor in supporting the teaching in one of your modules or courses without having to download and install the software. The offer is open to all UK HEIs, and we do not charge you for this. If you are interested, please contact us at the address below.

### ... or have you been using coMentor already?

We would like to hear from you if you have been evaluating the use of coMentor with your students. We want to hear stories about how you used coMentor, its successes, its failures, what the students thought, did you feel you got enough support from us, etc. There is an evaluation form available to download from our web site ([http://comentor.hud.ac.uk/evaluation\\_form.doc](http://comentor.hud.ac.uk/evaluation_form.doc)) which you are welcome to use with your students. It is in Word format and you may amend it.

### CO3 developments

The CO3 project to make coMentor IMS compatible with the systems developed at Staffordshire (COSE) and Bangor (Colloquia) is well under way. Perminder Suman, a placement student working on the project, has written about what has been developed:

'We have created an applet for CO3 administrators which will retrieve student data from the MOO database. The applet, which is currently in the administrator's homepage, contains two buttons – 'Create' and 'Use'. The 'Create' button will create a new file of student details if such a file doesn't already exist. The 'Use' button obtains the data from the file if it exists. We have recently considered using just one button which creates a file if no file exists or uses the file if it does exist. There will be only one file.'

Merry  
Christmas



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If you would like to contribute to future editions of coMentor News with your experiences of coMentor, please contact us.

Our details can be found on the front page of this newsletter.

coMentor News is also available to read from our web site (requires Acrobat Reader).



