A Consortium for Educational Audio Teleconferencing

in British Columbia

by William Robertson, David Kaufman, June Landsburg, John Macleod, Arlene Zuckernick

ABSTRACT

Five post-secondary educational institutions and the educational television authority in British Columbia formed an informal consortium in 1982 for sharing educational audio teleconferencing resources and to reduce operating costs. This paper describes the organization of the consortium, the experiences of the members, and some thoughts on the future directions of audio teleconferencing in British Columbia.

The Open Learning Institute provides a broad range of correspondence courses through a satellite, the Knowledge Network of the West, which is expected to be available in 1978 or 1979. The proposals of the consortium, developing an awareness of the openness of access to courses by prospective students, were invited to join the consortium during the experimental period has been replaced by a formal consortian arrangement. Consent of the Commonwealth, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Canadian Department of Communications Technology, Satellite Returned Audio from five of the ten communities on the north end of Vancouver Island. Approximately sixty people met on a weekly basis for five weeks. Resident experts drawn, on a rotating basis from the nine communities led the seminars. The concept was effective and the audio levels were lower than expected, but the audio teleconferencing system than projected. The project grew from 14 hours of live, interactive television to over 30 hours in the 1982/83 academic year, BCIT suggested.

The use of the teleconference system grew rapidly in 1982 and 1983 as continuing education programmes were designed, implemented, and evaluated. Audio teleconferencing is growing very rapidly because of greater flexibility in scheduling and much higher fee revenue. The Consortium for Educational Audio Teleconferencing (CEAT) was formed to study of this informal consortium, the participating institutions used the system for educational purposes and to reduce time required to organize in-person meetings. The programme for sharing audio teleconferencing programmes to only those persons who are fully registered as fee paying students. While the openness of the system provides excellent public relations for institutions, fee revenue has generally dropped. Some programmers no longer use KNOW because of concerns of confidentiality or of royalty conditions on their purchased equipment.

Programme for improving the level of educational audio teleconferencing in British Columbia.

COUNCILOM STRUCTURE

The consortium is an informal association of educational institutions. The main use of audio teleconferencing is to deliver continuing education to off-campus students. Agreement to form the consortium was made at the operating staff level in September 1983. There are no formal inter-institutional agreements or legal ties other than an exchange of letters of intent. As soon as those institutions (BCIT, Simon Fraser University, and the University of British Columbia and KNOW) who had audio teleconferencing equipment or remote classroom sites were joined together to form other organizations (Open Learning Institute, University of British Columbia and KNOW) who had a special programme coordinating or coordinating interest in distance education, were invited to join the consortium discussions. The goal agreed to conduct a pilot project between September 1983 and May 1984. The goal of the project was to conduct a cost-effective, province-wide audio teleconferencing service through pooling and coordination of resources.

Objectives agreed to were:

1. To determine if audio teleconferencing is a cost-effective method for delivering post-secondary programs in British Columbia.
2. To determine the level of user acceptance of audio teleconferencing in British Columbia.
3. To explore new ways of using audio teleconferencing.
4. To generate increased revenue.

Individual users in the consortium had their own objectives, some of which were:

- To reduce operating costs.
- To reduce the number of easily accessible sites.
- To generate increased revenue.
- To reduce time required to organize in-person meetings.

The consortium is a twol ine-operator controlled bridges in Vancouver, one at

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 2, 1985

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION

9
CALS, ALBERTA JUNE 16 TO 19, 1985.
CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM
(For make copies if needed)

DELEGATE
(Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., etc.) (First name) (Last name)

POSITION

ORGANIZATION

MAILING ADDRESS
City
Postal Code

Telephone (Home) (Business)

COMPANION(S)
Name(s)
(Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., etc.) (First name)

Please check the appropriate boxes below

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS (Sunday June 16 1985)

Computer Evaluation Session

Videodisc (includes lunch) Session

CONFERENCE COMPREHENSIVE REGISTRATION (Sunday June 16 - Wednesday June 19)

Includes Sunday evening buffet, reception and entertainment, three luncheons, Monday evening banquet and dance (but not Tuesday evening activities), Full registration.

Regular

Early Bird (up to April 30)

$50.00

$30.00

$22.50

$140.00

$325.00

$160.00

$140.00

$25.00

$25.00

$75.00

$100.00

$75.00

$100.00

TOTAL REGISTRATION FEE

$35.00 each

$35.00 each

$35.00 each

Please complete the Registration form, and mail together with a cheque, bank draft or money order in CANADIAN FUNDS, made payable to THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY, to

Mrs. Lois Kokoski
Conference Office,
The University of Calgary,
CALGARY, ALBERTA, CANADA T2N 1N4
(403) 284 5051

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 2, 1985

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION

CONSORTIUM

Continued from page 8

BCIT and one at Western Communication under testing at the University of Victoria. Twelve nodestations are stored in larger communities, usually at regional colleges, and 11 speaker-phones are stored in an additional 11 secondary centers. Permanent operation of equipment and schedules is handled at BCIT. In the consortium, members are free to use any equipment within the system not already scheduled. A record of users is maintained and bridge requests are cross charged monthly. The use of all other equipment is balanced and accounted for quarterly.

Each institution in the consortium operates independently, confirming only that equipment and facilities are available. The choice of programs and how the teleconferencing is used by an instructor varies among institutions. A summary of each institution's current activities follows.

INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Simon Fraser University

At Simon Fraser University, teleconferencing is presently being offered by the Faculty of Education in its extensive program for students and teachers throughout the interior of British Columbia. Teleconferencing is still in the exploratory stage, and the three activities described are quite different. The first is a series of sessions on microcomputers for teachers, the second examines a credit course being offered by correspondence and the third concerns program administration. All took place during 1983.

"Microcomputers in B.C. Schools" was a four-part series of ninety-minute sessions chaired from SFU with six other sites participating. About 40 participated each time and there was a mix of secondary and primary school teachers, administrators and librarians. The chairman was an expert in the topic of the day. Microcomputers was a "hot" item in the schools and teleconferencing offered a way to exchange experiences with this new technology right across the province without extensive and expensive travel. Each site had a coordinator, pre-conference materials were distributed and technical problems were minimal. Most participants rated the teleconference process itself highly so that it was the level of satisfaction with content which dictated overall reactions to each session.

Satisfaction with the instructional seminar associated with the correspondence course "Classroom Management and Discipline" was also high. This sixty-minute session gave 42 students access to 13 sites in B.C. and two sites in Alberta an otherwise unavailable opportunity to meet each other and the instructor. Only three sites had more than one person in attendance. The two bridges from BCIT and Western were interconnected for this teleconference and a mix of hand sets, speaker-phones and couplers (from a variety of manufacturers) was used without technical problems.

In another teleconference, as an alternative to flying the University's five off-campus secretaries to Vancouver, a sixty-minute teleconference allowed group discussions of site administration. This meeting provided for both problem sharing and solutions and coordination with the University. All participants agreed the teleconference was highly cost effective.

In the future, the Faculty of Education plans the continuing use of audio teleconferencing, particularly in light of on-going budget reductions as an alternative to flying instructors and administrators to and from Vancouver. Experience has shown that pre-meeting materials, a detailed agenda, well-chaired sessions, and specific protocols are important, as is a technical test prior to each session.

British Columbia Institute of Technology

The British Columbia Institute of Technology is a two-year institution offering diploma programs in business, engineering and health to the three activities described are quite different. The first is a series of sessions on microcomputers for teachers, the second examines a credit course being offered by correspondence and the third concerns program administration. All took place during 1983.

"Microcomputers in B.C. Schools" was a four-part series of ninety-minute sessions chaired from SFU with six other sites participating. About 40 participated each time and there was a mix of secondary and primary school teachers, administrators and librarians. The chairman was an expert in the topic of the day. Microcomputers was a "hot" item in the schools and teleconferencing offered a way to exchange experiences with this new technology right across the province without extensive and expensive travel. Each site had a coordinator, pre-conference materials were distributed and technical problems were minimal. Most participants rated the teleconference process itself highly so that it was the level of satisfaction with content which dictated overall reactions to each session.

Satisfaction with the instructional seminar associated with the correspondence course "Classroom Management and Discipline" was also high. This sixty-minute session gave 42 students access to 13 sites in B.C. and two sites in Alberta an otherwise unavailable opportunity to meet each other and the instructor. Only three sites had more than one person in attendance. The two bridges from BCIT and Western were interconnected for this teleconference and a mix of hand sets, speaker-phones and couplers (from a variety of manufacturers) was used without technical problems.

In another teleconference, as an alternative to flying the University's five off-campus secretaries to Vancouver, a sixty-minute teleconference allowed group discussions of site administration. This meeting provided for both problem sharing and solutions and coordination with the University. All participants agreed the teleconference was highly cost effective.

In the future, the Faculty of Education plans the continuing use of audio teleconferencing, particularly in light of on-going budget reductions as an alternative to flying instructors and administrators to and from Vancouver. Experience has shown that pre-meeting materials, a detailed agenda, well-chaired sessions, and specific protocols are important, as is a technical test prior to each session.

British Columbia Institute of Technology

The British Columbia Institute of Technology is a two-year institution offering diploma programs in business, engineering and health to the three activities described are quite different. The first is a series of sessions on microcomputers for teachers, the second examines a credit course being offered by correspondence and the third concerns program administration. All took place during 1983.

"Microcomputers in B.C. Schools" was a four-part series of ninety-minute sessions chaired from SFU with six other sites participating. About 40 participated each time and there was a mix of secondary and primary school teachers, administrators and librarians. The chairman was an expert in the topic of the day. Microcomputers was a "hot" item in the schools and teleconferencing offered a way to exchange experiences with this new technology right across the province without extensive and expensive travel. Each site had a coordinator, pre-conference materials were distributed and technical problems were minimal. Most participants rated the teleconference process itself highly so that it was the level of satisfaction with content which dictated overall reactions to each session.

Satisfaction with the instructional seminar associated with the correspondence course "Classroom Management and Discipline" was also high. This sixty-minute session gave 42 students access to 13 sites in B.C. and two sites in Alberta an otherwise unavailable opportunity to meet each other and the instructor. Only three sites had more than one person in attendance. The two bridges from BCIT and Western were interconnected for this teleconference and a mix of hand sets, speaker-phones and couplers (from a variety of manufacturers) was used without technical problems.

In another teleconference, as an alternative to flying the University's five off-campus secretaries to Vancouver, a sixty-minute teleconference allowed group discussions of site administration. This meeting provided for both problem sharing and solutions and coordination with the University. All participants agreed the teleconference was highly cost effective.

In the future, the Faculty of Education plans the continuing use of audio teleconferencing, particularly in light of on-going budget reductions as an alternative to flying instructors and administrators to and from Vancouver. Experience has shown that pre-meeting materials, a detailed agenda, well-chaired sessions, and specific protocols are important, as is a technical test prior to each session.

British Columbia Institute of Technology

The British Columbia Institute of Technology is a two-year institution offering diploma programs in business, engineering and health to the three activities described are quite different. The first is a series of sessions on microcomputers for teachers, the second examines a credit course being offered by correspondence and the third concerns program administration. All took place during 1983.

"Microcomputers in B.C. Schools" was a four-part series of ninety-minute sessions chaired from SFU with six other sites participating. About 40 participated each time and there was a mix of secondary and primary school teachers, administrators and librarians. The chairman was an expert in the topic of the day. Microcomputers was a "hot" item in the schools and teleconferencing offered a way to exchange experiences with this new technology right across the province without extensive and expensive travel. Each site had a coordinator, pre-conference materials were distributed and technical problems were minimal. Most participants rated the teleconference process itself highly so that it was the level of satisfaction with content which dictated overall reactions to each session.

Satisfaction with the instructional seminar associated with the correspondence course "Classroom Management and Discipline" was also high. This sixty-minute session gave 42 students access to 13 sites in B.C. and two sites in Alberta an otherwise unavailable opportunity to meet each other and the instructor. Only three sites had more than one person in attendance. The two bridges from BCIT and Western were interconnected for this teleconference and a mix of hand sets, speaker-phones and couplers (from a variety of manufacturers) was used without technical problems.

In another teleconference, as an alternative to flying the University's five off-campus secretaries to Vancouver, a sixty-minute teleconference allowed group discussions of site administration. This meeting provided for both problem sharing and solutions and coordination with the University. All participants agreed the teleconference was highly cost effective.

In the future, the Faculty of Education plans the continuing use of audio teleconferencing, particularly in light of on-going budget reductions as an alternative to flying instructors and administrators to and from Vancouver. Experience has shown that pre-meeting materials, a detailed agenda, well-chaired sessions, and specific protocols are important, as is a technical test prior to each session.
During March 1983, an interprofessional audio teleconference was held that was jointly sponsored by Continuum and Continuing Education in Nutrition and Dietetics. Due to the three sites that were involved in the program, Continuum was able to offer to two separate programs in the spring of 1986. Continuum presented a series of lectures that involved 18 different communities in British Columbia through a consortium using the Knowledge Network. It also does not take into account teleconferencing in schools or institutions such as the Certified General Accountants of B.C., the Continuing Legal Education and the Association of B.C. Land Surveyors. These groups were able to reach many more of their constituents in the province at a dramatically reduced cost than was possible with traditional methods of instruction such as sending instructors to remote locations.

The results of teleconferencing activities will continue to be monitored by the consortium and will be analyzed periodically to detect trends in usage and application.

Case Studies

Administrative Professional: A professional association with its headquarters in the provincial capital, whose members living and working in widely separate communities holds monthly meetings. The meetings at Vancouver that normally require overnight travel for five members. The group has arranged to hold the meetings in a city 1.5 hours away at a minimum of $1,200 per meeting. Members meet for 8 to 12 hours each month. Teleconferencing has been used for some recent meetings and has reduced the cost of travel by $750 per meeting. A live site meeting including one member from Ottawa.

In-Service Training: A Vancouver educational institution offered a lunch time course for 'Secretaries Who Super-View'. Eighty one hour classes involving five sites and ten people were held for a registration fee of $30. Without teleconferencing, the course would only have been held at one site for an estimated cost of $10,225 for travel and accommodations for all present. The course was attended by 150 people. The class could only have been held by renting a hotel which would have cost approximately $3,000 to $4,000. The class could only have been held by renting a hotel which would have cost approximately $3,000 to $4,000. The class could only have been held by renting a hotel which would have cost approximately $3,000 to $4,000. The class could only have been held by renting a hotel which would have cost approximately $3,000 to $4,000.

The perspective for holding a 'private' conversation off the campus is that all members can contact other members and the costs are expected to be far lower than the costs associated with setting up a conference call.

The real benefit of teleconferencing in the future will be to reduce costs. The present, informal consortium structure will continue to exist as long as possible. In the future, the use of teleconferencing will be more widely accepted. It is expected that many more groups can be served through teleconferencing than is possible through traditional methods of instruction such as sending instructors to remote locations.

The results of teleconferencing activities will continue to be monitored by the consortium and will be analyzed periodically to detect trends in usage and application.

Notes and Non-Refereed Articles

1. Contributions for this category are welcomed from all members. Write your contribution to the Editor. Articles will be reviewed by the Editorial Board and may be published either directly or in conjunction with a local college or another member of the consortium. The contributions should be relevant to the issues of the day and the topics that are relevant to the consortium. They should be submitted to the Editor. The Editor will review the contribution and make suggestions for publication.

The Editor is always pleased to receive for consideration articles on topics of general interest or particular local interest. Articles should not exceed 500 words in length.

2. The Editor welcomes articles from all members. Write your contribution to the Editor. Articles will be reviewed by the Editorial Board and may be published either directly or in conjunction with a local college or another member of the consortium. The contributions should be relevant to the issues of the day and the topics that are relevant to the consortium. They should be submitted to the Editor. The Editor will review the contribution and make suggestions for publication.