The National Judicial Institute, based in Ottawa, Canada, is the world’s foremost provider of continuing education for judges. In addition to providing about 90% of continuing education to Canada’s 2000 judges, it operates an international division that consults on judicial education worldwide. The NJI began experimenting with e-learning in 2000 -- by way of supplementing its face-to-face offerings and addressing disparities of access to learning opportunities.

A presentation within the Best Practices session would permit us to discuss e-learning in a unique professional context -- one in which continuing education is entirely voluntary and where learners are notoriously suspicious about new technology. Without the benefit of accreditation requirements, course fees, grades, or a degree program, the NJI has had to develop its electronic offerings based on “carrots, not sticks.” The session will describe how we have approached the challenge, what we’ve tried (formats and delivery methods) and what we’ve learned.

In the course of our experimentation with e-learning, the NJI has increasingly questioned the boundary between courses and resources (in service of just-in-time learning), and has considered how to use both courses and resources to foster a community of practice among Canada’s diverse and disbursed judiciary.

Among the approaches to e-learning that the National Judicial Institute has developed are:

- A focused method for delivering online courses (duration, format, delivery method, cost of preparation and delivery)
- A web-based Judicial Library – by which means papers and presentations delivered at F2F courses are disseminated to the wider judiciary.
- A Bench Book application to accommodate longer documents requiring frequent updating. The web-based Bench Book application permits users to annotate and customize documents without downloading them. Both the Library and Bench Book are supported with a variety of search technologies that enable users to interact with documents in a variety of ways.

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