THIRD EDITION

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ROUTLEDGE

GILLY SALMON

e moder@ting

THE KEY TO TEACHING AND LEARNING ONLINE
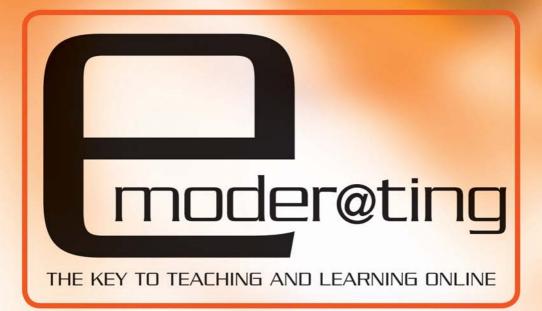
E-moderating

Professor Gilly Salmon has achieved continuity and illumination of the seminal five-stage model, together with new research-based developments, in her much-awaited third edition of *E-moderating* – the most quoted and successful guide for e-learning practitioners.

Never content to offer superficial revisions or simple 'solutions' against the pace of technological advances, the expanding interest and requirements for online learning, and the changes they have wrought, *E-moderating, 3rd edition* offers a richness of applied topics that will directly impact learners and teachers of all kinds. The book is carefully crafted and supported with evidence, examples and resources for practical guidelines, making it potentially transformational for all practitioners.

E-moderating, 3rd edition includes:

● Updates of literature, key terms, case studies and projects
● Fresh examples of the use of the five-stage model around the world, at different levels of education and across disciplines
● Guidelines for moderating for podcasting and virtual worlds
● Illustrations from the latest All Things in Moderation development programmes (www.atimod.com)
● New resources for practitioners

Gilly Salmon spent six years as head of the Beyond Distance Research Alliance and the Media Zoos at the University of Leicester (www.le.ac.uk/mediazoo).

She is now Professor of Learning Futures and Executive Director of the Australian Digital Futures Institute at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia (www.usq.edu.au/adfi).

E-moderating

The Key to Teaching and Learning Online

Third Edition

GILLY SALMON

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NEW YORK AND LONDON

For Glenn

Contents

Preface

E-moderators are the new generation of teachers and trainers who work with learners online. Earlier editions of this book have 'struck a spark' and helped make the online world a creative, happy, productive and relevant place for successful learning. In this expanded and revised third edition my aim is to bring readers up to date with recent exciting changes in that world, and our growing knowledge and excellent online practice.

Human use of computing is vast and growing. Networked technologies such as the internet and the World Wide Web have been called 'transformational' because of their wide-ranging impact. Electronic networking creates communications across terrestrial boundaries, across cultures and on a global scale. Concepts of space and time are changing, and of how and with whom people can collaborate, discover communities, explore resources and ideas and learn.

Computer Mediated Communication and its collaborative sister, Computer Mediated Conferencing (CMC), actually arrived before the internet and the World Wide Web became widely available. CMC encouraged teachers to challenge perceived and received wisdom and practice about learning online and to reflect on their experiences. Computer mediation has become so much part of our everyday lives now, that in this book I just call it a place 'Online'.

In this book, I call attention to the mediator, or e-moderator, in online learning processes. Successful online learning depends on teachers and trainers acquiring new competencies, on their becoming aware of its potential and on their inspiring the learners, rather than on mastering the technology.

Investigating the use of online has many facets and aspects. Web utopians once predicted virtual schools, colleges and universities with very low-cost learning and truly effective 'any time, any place' student interaction. They said

that the need for expensive campus buildings or large corporate training facilities will disappear along with the requirement for learners to physically congregate. The 'web-phobes' were very worried that the benefits of learning together might be lost and that it will be a bad day for knowledge, for feelings, for the joys of gatherings and groups.

Meanwhile, many people got on with creating the future – as each year has unfolded the potential for learning online has become greater along with the complexity of identifying the most viable and desirable ways forward. Small factions of teachers, researchers and trainers have led the way. Like all pioneers, they have a tough time. For them, and for the thousands of online teachers that will follow, I hope this book will be of interest and of use. It's time to start the wagon train again but this time with somewhat stronger pathways of understandings to follow.

There are many definitions of an online course. At one end of the spectrum of 'online-ness', these include classroom-based teaching supplemented by lecture notes posted on a website or by electronic communication such as e-mail. At the other end of the spectrum, materials may be made available and interactions occur exclusively through networked technologies. This book is concerned with more or less the full spectrum (and not-yet-created combinations), but the key issue is that the teacher, instructor, tutor or facilitator – the e-moderator – is operating in the electronic environment along with his or her students, the participants.

I have drawn on my own experience of online learning, as well as that of many other people. I have selected case studies and experiences where the storyteller is the academic, teacher or e-moderator involved, where implementation occurred within the regular learning and teaching situation, and where there was some evaluation or at least serious reflection on practice.

For some twenty years, I have been able to study and practise the art of e-moderating, particularly within the Open University (OU). I began learning online in 1988, when I was a student on the first OU course to use online conferencing on a large scale. The software and systems we had at that time were primitive, although they felt revolutionary to me! I was excited by the experience and by the potential. In 1988, we used a system called 'CoSy' (short for Conferencing System) that worked on commands from the keyboard. Offline readers, point and click mouse commands, graphics and ever-increasing sophistication of functions followed as software systems developed. Each new function seemed like a great step forward at the time. When I joined the OU Business School (OUBS) as a lecturer in 1989, I was able to experiment with online conferencing for teaching management courses at a distance. Later I was responsible for training hundreds of e-moderators for the school.

You will appreciate the irony of writing a book about something I strongly believe needs to be experienced in the electronic environment itself. So when

I first put the book together, I thought of you, the readers, as potential collaborators in an online experience. I still think of you as:

● academics, teachers, course managers, teaching assistants, tutors, instructors, moderators and trainers of any discipline at post-secondary level in any country or training department, who are planning to move from conventional teaching to teaching online or who are working in open and distance learning;
● staff developers and academic developers of all kinds;
● developers of corporate learning, training departments of large companies, brokers of and agents for online training.

I believe there may be some 'lurkers' or 'browsers', too. They are likely to be:

● software designers who are working on education and training projects;
● developers considering the use of learning technologies in educational programmes;
● teachers working in primary and secondary schools;
● staff in community programmes or local government departments dealing with health and social welfare who are planning to deploy online for building communities or for democratic purposes;
● managers and academics responsible for assessment of trainees' and teachers' performance.

In this third edition, I have added two new chapters, but the book is still in two parts. In Part 1, Chapter 1 explains what I see as e-moderating and explores it. Chapters 2 and 3 offer a research-based model for understanding training and development for online conferencing and interaction and apply it in discussion boards and other new technologies for collaborative learning. Chapter 4 explores the roles and competencies of e-moderators, with examples. Chapters 5 and 6 explore key issues in training e-moderators at, respectively, the OU and All Things In Moderation Ltd. Chapter 7 looks at the learners' experiences. No book of this kind can resist a peek at the future, which you'll find in Chapter 8.

Part 2 changes tack and offers an updated set of practical resources largely based on my own practice as an e-moderator. I also reflect research and acknowledge the research and development teams I have worked within over the past six years. I hope you will find them useful for meeting this exciting challenge.

This book will provide you with support in thinking through your online teaching, for your topic, your subject, your organization, your programme,

your teaching practice and your learners. This is the way to take part and *shape* the future of teaching and learning online – through the actions of the e-moderators.

Drivers in education are many and complex. Borders and boundaries between physical locations, disciplines and levels are reducing and sometimes disappearing. The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to support easy access to learning or flexibility of all kinds is often a central tenet of educational missions. Some countries, such as Australia, forged ahead using leaders and champions to show direction. In others, such as the UK, government initiatives have promoted new institutional forms or technological systems approaches. Until recently, the allure of the technology has received the lion's share of attention. Although the ideas of increasing access, participation, skills and competencies for new forms of societies of the twenty-first century are at the heart of many intentions, the investment in the role of human intervention and support to harness the technology into the service of teaching and learning has been meagre by comparison.

One notable development in the last few years is the increasing exploration around the nature of teaching and learning itself, which has been fed, stimulated and challenged by the increasing use of computing in most educational arenas. Many educationalists are excited that networked technologies provide a new kind of window on the world of information, but feel uncomfortable that they also may serve to reduce the social and collaborative aspects of learning. The debate about how to engage students online continues, and about what kinds of technologies, provided by whom, create the right kind of environments for what! My book *E-tivities* attempts to address some of these.

Since I wrote the first edition of *E-moderating*, there is less reason to convince the world that we need support for online teachers, trainers and facilitators (from a happy and successful band of e-moderators) to make e-learning work well. Thinking has moved on from believing that technology may do away with teachers and towards how they can be trained and supported to work online. Researchers have stopped making spurious comparisons between online and face-to-face, and explored instead when and what we need to do to make online really worthwhile. We still need to find ways of scaling up the e-moderating task force without consuming huge amounts of diminishing resources.

By the time you read these pages I will be working at the University of Southern Queensland as Professor of Learning Futures. I am certain that despite all these changes, e-moderating will remain the key to successful learning and teaching online.

Gilly Salmon
Leicester
October 2010

Acknowledgements for the third edition

The research for this, the third edition of *E-moderating*, has spanned six very happy and productive years for me as Professor of E-learning and Learning Technologies and Head of the Beyond Distance Research Alliance at the University of Leicester in the UK. It's been one of the most exciting times in my career, a time when I've had the privilege and joy to work in a forward-looking, knowledge-constructing team, within an innovative and student-centred university. No, I really mean it! I'm moving now to be Professor of Learning Futures at the University of Southern Queensland, so this book is my Leicester swansong.

Beyond Distance (www.le.ac.uk/beyonddistance) is an alliance of teachers and researchers willing to create a productive future for learning online, rather than simply watch it unfold. Hundreds and hundreds of people, in the university and elsewhere, have touched this future. Whether named here or not, they have had an impact on this book, and I thank them for their inspiration, encouragement, comments, sources, help, experiences and challenges. The alliance team has worked with almost every academic department at Leicester, with fantastic people who tell us how it really, really IS!

The idea of a research and development unit in a higher education institution is still unusual and my thanks go to the senior management team at Leicester for the faith they've put into Beyond Distance – Vice Chancellor Professor Sir Bob Burgess, PVCs John Fothergill and Christine Fyfe, and Registrar

Dave Hall. And to Professor Annette Cashmore for her unending encouragement. I thank them for their strong acknowledgement and for opening so many doors.

Outside the university, my thanks go to the Association of Learning Technology (http://www.alt.ac.uk/), a wonderful community, constantly impacting on learning. And to all the people who asked me to talk at their conferences, seminars and meetings and who came to see us at Leicester. I'm sure we learnt more from them than they did from us. My special thanks go to those who contributed case studies and examples to this book – and to their online participants – truly a cast of thousands. Hundreds more participants in the All Things in Moderation Ltd. (www.atimod.com) courses have advanced our understanding of how to prepare people to e-moderate – there's more about them in Chapter 6, with the latest 2010 example. Thanks to David Shepherd and Ken Giles as always for their keenness and contributions.

I hope you'll spot all these contributions throughout this edition but I can't resist thanking by name the people I worked most closely with; it's really the very least I can do in return for the hundreds of questions I asked and the challenges I posed, for their huge toleration, support and commitment, and for explaining their research and development findings to me. Long live the daily 10 am 'Creative Meetings' at Beyond Distance! So thanks, and here's to the future of learning, to: Ola Aiyegbayo, Alejandro Armellini, Kelly Barklamb, Terese Bird, Rob Cane, Sheetal Chudasama, Emma Davies, Roger Dence, Palitha Edirisingha, Sylvia Jones, Simon Kear, Suzanne Lavelle, Louise Lubkowski, Matt Mobbs, Richard Mobbs, Jaideep Mukherjee, Ming Nie, Samuel Nikoi, Rakesh Patel, Madelaine Peene, Sandra Romenska-Aggarwal, Tania Rowlett, Paul Rudman, Lee Taylor, Matthew Wheeler, Helen Whitehead and Gabi Witthaus. Our visiting professor since 2005 has been David Hawkridge: I thank him for his advice and editing, which have been invaluable yet again for this edition, as for the previous two.

Thank you to Phil Candy, Michael Sankey and Shirley Reushle for enabling me to get fast into the swing of things at the University of Southern Queensland, and for their suggestions and contributions to this book.

And of course my thanks to Rod, Glenn, Emily and Paula, and many other friends and family for always saying 'Yes . . . and we will help you!'

Part 1:

CONCEPTS AND CASES

Throughout this book, I use real online messages from courses that I design or run as illustrations. I indicate a screen message by shading, like this paragraph. Messages have had to be pruned to reduce the amount of space they take up in the book, but I have not attempted to correct their grammar or informal language. By the way, looking at selected messages in print after the interactive event makes them seem more organized than they really were. Live e-moderating is likely to be messier!

Chapter 1

E-moderating – the journey

This book is set in the context of the rapid development of technologies of all kinds, addressing communication, business, life processes and entertainment. A few have been developed specifically for learning and or knowledge dissemination purposes (these are usually called 'learning technologies') but many others have been 'harnessed' by educators and adapted and exploited for learning use – often called 'technology enhanced learning'. This book's key focus and emphasis are on the advantages to learning made possible by technology and the best ways of achieving this aim, but I look at these changes through the eyes of online teachers, for whom I have used the term 'electronic moderators' – 'e-moderators'.

This chapter introduces e-moderating to you and starts to explore the contexts and environments in which it thrives.

The term 'online' came from the days of the telegraph, when messages could be tapped directly onto the line rather than prepared 'offline' on perforated tape, for sending when the machine was later connected to the telephone line. Today, 'online networking' covers a range of technologies. In education and training, technologies that concentrate on computer-mediated communication are commonest. They fall into three broad categories as originally defined by Santoro (1995):

1. Informatics, particularly involving electronic access via telecommunications to catalogues, library resources, interactive remote databases and archives, including those on the World Wide Web.

2. Computer-assisted instruction, also known as computer-assisted learning and computer-based training, which may or may not require tele-communications.
3. Computer-mediated conferencing is based on computers and tele-communications.

From 2002, there was a new view of the generations of online learning environments (Dirckinck-Holmfeld, 2002). These are:

1. First generation: computer conferencing, asynchronous and text based.
2. Second generation: web based, still asynchronous but now including more linked (hyper) texts and multimedia resources.
3. Third generation: includes more synchronous communication.
4. Fourth generation: virtual reality and mobility. And more as yet un-imagined.

E-moderators undertake most of their work at present with first and second generation technologies. However, I now include a much wider range of learning technologies and those that have been produced for business, social networking, entertainment and harnessed in the service of knowledge sharing and construction. The Horizon reports, which started in 2002 and continue annually, are a great way of viewing the rapid changes and deployment of technologies in the service of learning, teaching and creative expression (Horizon, 2010). Many defy highly structured categorizing, at least at this early stage in their development.

   Another way of considering ideal 'types' is the level of interactivity between the learner, the learning resources and the learning group. The research and stories in this book could be considered as Ellis and Goodyear's (2010) Type 2 – that is, using largely web-based resources and software but with significant human intervention. In practice, the cry that is heard so frequently 'it's not really about the technology' has been proven through research, through practice, through the learners' and teachers' voices – whilst learning design creates the pedagogy, the human intervention by an empathetic teacher enables the learning. I make no apologies for stating and restating this absolute truism for me. I am indebted to the fresh and valuable experience of my fantastic colleagues at the University of Leicester, where we have had the opportunity to research many ways of creating humanness in technology through the Media Zoo (www.le.ac.uk/mediazoo). I am also learning from my new colleagues at the University of Southern Queensland, from their wisdom and experience (see for example Reushle and Mitchell, 2009; Candy, 2010).

   A moderator is a person who presides over a meeting. An e-moderator presides over an electronic online meeting or conference, though not in quite

the same ways as a moderator does. Computer-mediated conferencing, often shortened to (CMC) actually requires e-moderators to have a rather wider range of expertise, as I shall explain and demonstrate.

There are many different definitions and applications of e- or online learning. One main difference is between those who see online as based on instruction and transmission, and those who see the learner's experience as central to knowledge construction. In this book I focus mainly on the second definition. This is the world where the role and skills of the e-moderator are critically important.

I hope you will come to see the word 'e-moderating' as an active verb – like learning and teaching. The essential role of the e-moderator is promoting human interaction and communication through the modelling, conveying and building of knowledge and skills.

An e-moderator undertakes this feat through using the mediation of online environments designed for interaction and collaboration. To learn to undertake an e-moderating role, whether coming to it fresh or as a change to previous teaching, coaching or facilitating practice, takes a mixture of new insights and some technical skill, but mostly understanding the management of online learning and group working.

In our highly complex world, of course I acknowledge that the place of human intervention is highly complex. The tutor, teacher, trainer – whatever you wish to call, him, her or them (I call them e-moderators when they work online) – operate in the boundary between the educational establishment (represented by the curriculum and the provided learning technologies) and the learning experience – they adopt a wide variety of roles.

Jane's diary

Here are a few pages from Jane's diary. She's an e-moderator, and it will give you the flavour of what this job can be like. Jane is a university teacher, like me, and she's an enthusiast too.

Day 1, Thursday, 10 pm

Just back from swimming. I check my course list: 16 students this time, from four continents. I hope they've all received the first mailing in the post, including their log-on instructions and my first requests. I try not to plead too hard for them to get started really early on the conferencing!

How many will have logged in by Day 1? I click on the Cross-cultural Management Conference icon. Then into the 'Arrivals' thread. And there it is on my screen! The 'new message' flag. The conferencing begins! It's great getting to know new students. Abraham is confident:

> Hi there.
>
> ABRAHAM HAS LIFT OFF! OR IS IT LANDING?
> I'VE ARRIVED IN THIS INTERESTING NEW PLACE AND I'M
> READY TO BEGIN.
> Who can tell me what's what around here?

This one's perhaps timid:

> I hope I'm posting this message in the right place. Can someone tell me?
> Marianne from Manchester

Out of my 16, eight have got there so far and have announced their arrival, as I asked them to. Another two have e-mailed me. Paula in Moscow says she's having connection problems. Ben can't find the Cross-cultural Management Conference discussion board on his screen. I e-mailed both back with ways of contacting technical support and diaried myself to follow up in a few days.

So, I e-mail the arrivals to thank and encourage them for their first conference messages. I mention to Abraham that capital letters are equivalent to shouting online. I check the message history for the arrivals conference – two more have been reading the messages but haven't contributed yet. I'm sure they will soon. I make that 12 on the runway.

I check the conference for their second task: to use the 'resume' facility to tell the group a little about themselves. Time online: 45 minutes.

Day 3, Saturday, 10.45 am

Super! Two more in arrivals, one from Beijing, one from London. Fourteen on the runway now. Some interchanges occurring in 'arrivals' between those already there. I need to archive to avoid too many unread messages (especially as six were from Abraham). For the final arrival I post a message asking people to move across to the café conference and I put a couple of chatty messages in there myself. Time online: 15 minutes.

Day 5, Monday, 10 pm

Out for sushi then log on. Fifteen chatty messages in café conference and one more new arrival – Sylvia from Vienna. Set first conference for carrying out course activities. As a 'warm-up' activity, I post this message:

Task 1 Over the next few days, visit a local store that sells soft drinks. Try and find the cheapest of the kind on offer of:

Coca-Cola,

Local cola brand.

Check out how each type of cola is priced, the place where you found it and the type of promotion it was being given. Please give price per can or bottle.

Then convert your currency into sterling through a currency converter website. Post your results in this conference by next Sunday 7 pm GMT. Abraham and Marianne have agreed to collate and post comparative results.

As an example, I went to my local supermarket in Loughton in North East London in the United Kingdom. Here are my results:

Price for Coca-Cola: £0.38, ie 38p (but sold only in packs of 6 for £2.25)

Price for local cola: Safeways 'Select' Cola £0.28 (but sold only in packs of 6 cans for £1.69)

Promotion for Coca-Cola: displayed at eye level on soft drinks shelf (Pepsi Cola was below eye level)

Promotion for local cola: displayed at eye level along with options, e.g. caffeine-free. The packaging and colour very similar to Coca-Cola.

Time online: 10 minutes.

Day 10, Saturday, 6.45 am

Going out for the day so I log on early.

The facilitators for the cola activity, Abraham and Marianne, report by e-mail that they have 13 results in. They are chasing the other two.

Check message histories throughout the conference. I'm still one participant completely missing online. Check participants' list, this is a Philip Brown from Dublin. Time online: 10 minutes.

Phone technical helpline. They've had no requests for help from P. Brown. Fax him to ask what problems?

Day 13, Tuesday, 7.15 am

Log on before leaving for work.

Marianne has posted a spreadsheet giving 15 results (14 from students plus mine) for the 'cola' exercise. I set up a sub-conference with starter questions:

> What do the results tell you about the way soft drinks are marketed in your home location, compared to the others? What do they tell you about:
>
> 1.   The economy of your location?
> 2.   The habits of cola drinking throughout the world? Are there any indications of cultural differences?
> 3.   Your views on the nature of global brands?

Time online: 5 minutes.

Day 18, Sunday, 7.30 pm

Log on quickly while the family are clearing up the garden after a barbecue.

E-mail from the course administrator that P. Brown from Dublin has dropped out of the course due to connection problems. Very annoying, wonder if it's recoverable? I will compose a snail-mail letter to him.

The cola exchange sub-conference has really taken off. There are 36 messages in it. I do a quick analysis:

Four people had posted one message each;
Three people had posted five messages;
Four people had posted two messages;
Three people had posted three messages;
One reading everything but not contributing.

I summarize the relevant contributions into one 'key points' message and archive the originals so participants can access them if they like. Two people – Anton and Jeremy – had started a conversation in the cola conference about alcohol and their local driving laws. I archive these messages with the rest but e-mail A. and J. to suggest they continue this conversation by e-mail. Time online: 35 minutes.

Day 20, Tuesday, 12.30 pm

Log on from the office in my lunch break to set up the first assignment.

I divide the 'class' into two groups for this exercise – one group of eight and one of seven. I mix up activists and reflectors in the groups, based on my

experience of them so far. Post URL with notes on forming virtual teams and online collaboration. Appoint facilitators for each team, and e-mail them basic e-moderating points to help them.

Make as clear as I can the requirements for assessment and deadlines for submission. Time online: 35 minutes.

Day 30, Friday, 4 pm

Log on from office and look in on Assignment 1 discussions.

Team A have built themselves a clear objectives and a triple conference structure for their team. They've spent the first few days in dividing up tasks and responsibilities. In Conference 1 'Data', the student facilitator has asked each participant to post a set of data about themselves. In Conference 2 'Concepts', Peter's summarized the data in Conference 1, and put his views on how this relates to Hofstede and there is the start of a discussion. Conference 3 'Meanings?' is currently empty except for its introduction message, saying this is the place for developing the written assignment!

Team B has started with just one conference, where they introduced themselves, explained their backgrounds, education, families, interests and the places they had lived in the world. People seem to be enjoying explaining about themselves and only two messages have gone over the suggested 'one screenful' in length. There are several interesting threads, where participants are finding their similarities and differences. No leader has emerged yet but two participants appear to be taking responsibility for progressing the discussions, while another is complaining about the two who are reading but not posting messages – saying this is not 'fair'. I'll wait for a few more days to see if they start putting some structure into this before intervening.

I post a message in our 'information' conference to say I'll be away for three days and offline. Time online: 20 minutes.

E-moderating, a new way of orchestrating learning

E-moderating along the lines of Jane's conference has become an accepted way of teaching, particularly in higher and professional education.

The early adopters of teaching with computers were considered mavericks. They found it necessary substantially to change their teaching practice, to welcome computers with open arms; they took online courses for themselves, incessantly asked questions of experts, acquired the earliest computers for teaching or for home use. Some worked out how to use computers to enhance their usual ways of facilitating, others saw computers as a way of transforming their agenda for student-centred learning. Since then there has been a

worldwide increase in the adoption of networked computers for teaching and learning, and whereas the staff involved used to be considered innovators or early adopters, now learners and teachers of all kinds expect to be online.

Many colleges, universities and training organizations have moved online, with the associated issues of student satisfaction and quality. In higher education the move to online in a wide variety of forms continues unabated. There is less uncertainty about the value of e-learning. But, time and time again, studies have shown that the role of the online teacher or tutor – in whatever disciplinary context, level or type of technology in use – has a major influence on learners' flexibility and achievements (Ruey, 2010; Dawson, 2010; Loureiro-Koechlin and Allan, 2010).

What we now know for sure is that concepts of time, motivation and teacher development are the key factors in e-learning success. We need to improve our online teaching in terms of both quality and quantity, whether in a blended, online-only or technology-enhanced mode. We cannot succeed in scaling up without enabling the role and training of the e-moderator. E-moderators need new attitudes, knowledge and skills, and ways of operating successfully and happily in the online environment.

The availability, speed and usability of networked computers in homes for education and at work have rapidly increased, while costs to online participants have fallen, making online learning and interaction accessible to large numbers of participants. Online learning raises extremely challenging issues for education, however, including complex partnerships, funding and intellectual property. Most of all, online learning calls for the training and development of new kinds of online teachers – the e-moderators of this book.

As the internet and the World Wide Web have expanded, opportunities to use them for teaching and learning have expanded too and we now have a very wide range of opportunities to engage with learning, creativity and knowledge construction. Educationists all over the world are experimenting with various forms of distance, open, blended, mobile and flexible learning. Networked computing offers the chance to build a learning community: this can be in a university or college, in an industrial or commercial setting, or based on common interests or objectives rather than geographical location. I have met many academics and trainers who are very keen indeed to adopt these new ways to enliven teaching and learning in their subjects. Their institutions and organizations have invested heavily in technological systems, thus creating conditions in which networked learning can be widely available.

Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, was one of the first universities in the world to explore and exploit networked computing for learning, and to train academic staff and e-moderators. It continues to be committed to the philosophy that effective e-moderation underpins in the delivery of quality education in the online environment. Sandra Luxton, senior lecturer and

director of the online Master of Marketing, reports on the role that e-moderation has played in the development and delivery of online marketing education at Monash.

E-moderating at Monash

The Marketing Department at Monash University has been involved in distance education since the late 1980s and in multimedia education from the mid-1990s, with the initial development of an online version of the undergraduate foundation subject, 'Marketing Theory and Practice'. From this experience in electronic course delivery, a second development phase was undertaken: that of an entire graduate program – the 12-subject eMaster of Marketing. In 2010 the topics continue to expand and now include environmental (green) marketing. The eMasters is based on a hybrid educational model comprising a text-based study guide, CD with multimedia enhancements and networked learning through Blackboard.

We now have significantly more students enrolled in our online programs than we have studying on campus, which reflects the increasing demands on postgraduate students' time and their desire to have flexibility and mobility in their study options.

Expansion from one online undergraduate subject to an entire post-graduate degree program was a major feat, and not without problems! The scaling up included servicing a much larger cohort of students than earlier and ensuring a consistent, high-quality experience for them as they completed each subject throughout the degree program. Furthermore, the target market shifted from young, computer savvy, full-time undergraduate students to groups of middle and senior managers, studying part-time, returning to study after many years, travelling often, time poor and with varying computer literacy. So an effective approach to maximizing time spent in the online environment became paramount.

We needed to increase the numbers of staff involved quickly, so our first leap was to take the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to the on-campus faculty. The reaction from staff was varied. Some staff were excited and have since become great advocates, but initially were somewhat the 'cowboys' with their own ideas about how they would manage this new environment. At the other extreme, some staff became involved reluctantly. In both instances, the need for careful management became evident. This realization encouraged us to explore online teaching models, and subsequently adopt Gilly's five-stage model for e-moderation to support staff in systematically building the confidence and competencies of the students. By the way, several units have now very successfully incorporated regular audio podcasts into their courses, with dialogue from their e-moderator. This dialogue includes an additional welcome to help set up expectations, provide advice on assessment tasks and additional information on the subject content. The students have responded very positively to the podcasts as they feel it gives them a closer connection to the program.

Monash e-moderator training took place with faculty staff who were accustomed to face-to-face classrooms in a traditional university setting. We introduced them to teaching and learning in the online medium. This involved a major change to their workplace culture and their comfort zone. We found a combination of online and offline training was most effective for them.

Approximately 60 per cent of the training was offline for local staff. We conducted this training in a computer lab so that they could participate in online activities. The online discussion forum provided staff with an opportunity to learn in a familiar environment. We found we could then assist their transition to working in the online environment whilst minimizing their anxiety. Our experience suggests that e-moderation training increases confidence and comfort with online teaching and dispels preconceived ideas about the 'unmanageable workload', as well as fears and myths of the unknown online world.

We also remotely trained lecturers working outside Australia as e-moderators. Their training took place 100 per cent online. These staff members were selected on the strength of their pre-existing familiarity with the online environment. The absence of face-to-face or offline training proved unproblematic for them.

On completion of training, each staff member was given an e-moderation CD and a mentor appointed from the pool of more experienced e-moderators. Now we have a trained and stable set of staff who are able to moderate effectively and support the learning across the programs.

Teaching and learning online

Millions of words have been written about technology and its potential, but much less about what the teachers and learners actually do online. Thousands of online discussion groups have started up among people with shared interests. Some prosper; others wither. Many change and grow with very little structure and no one person providing direction. The advent of a wide variety of enticing Web 2.0 applications have dramatically increased social networking (Hamid, Chang and Kurnia, 2009). Networked computers can provide vehicles for learning materials and interaction but students still need the 'champions' who make the learning come alive – the e-moderators.

Education and training are always undertaken for a purpose. Unlike social networking of all kinds, casual browsing or playing games on the web, a key distinction of online education and training is that they are highly purposeful and have planned goals, outcomes and directions. E-moderators, whether working remotely or in blended mode, have to think through the design of structured learning experiences for their students. To exploit online for teaching, they must understand its potential.

Systems and platforms

If you have already used online teaching and learning software, you may want to skip this section, in which I want to say just enough to introduce the software to those who are unfamiliar with it.

Nearly all educational institutions now deploy web-based Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs). VLEs include asynchronous ways of interacting in groups. We used to call these Computer-Mediated Conferencing (CMC), now they are usually called discussion groups, forums or occasionally online conferences. Participants may post messages for other participants to read anytime; participants do not need to be logged in simultaneously. 'Synchronous' – at the same time – sessions use similar technology, and are also often used as part of web-based virtual classrooms.

To take part, participants need access to a computer or mobile device, a network connection and fixed or mobile broadband. They will usually need a password to access the VLE.

Three types of technology are involved in computer-mediated conferencing:

1. *A server (special computer) and software system*: the server can be anywhere, though often it is maintained and housed by the institution or organization that sets up the service. It is a special computer, with its own software, that can store and organize well the messages, of which there may be tens, even hundreds, of thousands in a year. Fast, powerful hardware and reliable, sophisticated software enable many thousands of participants to access the platform through a single server.
2. *A 'terminal' for each user*: these can be fixed 'tethered' computers, or mobile laptops or devices with wireless access. Students can access conferences from a work or campus computer, a computer at a study centre or student residence. Access to the discussion forums are usually provided through standard web browsers and interfaces. Access to online networking through web browsers needs no special installation and free browsers are now factory-installed on computers. On mobile devices such as iPhones, an application programme is typically downloaded to the device to make them easier to use on a smaller screen.
3. *A communications system to connect the computers to the server*: connections can be connected by always-on broadband connections that can carry much more traffic at much higher speeds than were previously feasible. Networks are linked, so that a message may cross several networks before it arrives in the relevant conference in the server. Connection through wireless networks, with broadband, is now possible in most places, and on-the-move discussion boards only require low band width and can also be accessed through modems and dial-up telephone access.

There are two main types of VLEs owned and operated securely by educational institutions, which enable and support collaboration for learning. VLEs are also called MLE or LMS in some countries. Some educational providers choose a commercially available system because they want the benefits of support and development, year in, year out, Blackboard is the commonest in use in the UK but there are many others. Each has its own underlying software, with a slightly different 'look and feel' for the participants, and a variety of facilities and functions for learning. Most offer technical support facilities but not much specially for e-moderators. Others choose open source platforms of which the most popular is Moodle, which offers a community of developers and contributors. The code to run the platform is freely available. The university or other provider needs more people in-house to support the development and running of an open-source platform, so costs are shifted to different places and purposes, compared to commercially provided VLEs.

In addition, there are many Web 2.0 applications, usually called 'social networking' sites, which can be deployed. They are not provided specifically for teaching purposes but they can be deployed with suitable design and e-moderating. Examples include Facebook, Twitter and Second Life – there are hundreds of others and they come and go. These cannot currently be owned and hosted by the educational institution. Chapter 3 describes the application of the five-stage model and e-moderating principles to some of the newer technological applications

Students frequently set up web-based applications, which are freely available to them to share and work together outside the institutionally provided platforms.

A postgraduate management student reports:

> We had our own say too, over and above what the institution provided. My study group of seven students on our course set up a carefully designed set of folders and files on an iDisk [a free web-based file store, accessible and editable from anywhere and by anyone], which we edited remotely and individually, adding our latest versions of our work to this shared drive for the benefit of all. This was very useful for revising for our exam. We could have achieved the same via GoogleDocs or another system, but the iDisk was simple and neat. AA

The examples throughout this book, originally published in 2000 and again in 2004, are drawn from e-moderating experiences using many different systems. Some of these platforms have merged, disappeared or become highly

marketed commercial systems. Others, especially those based on open source systems such as Moodle, continue to develop. In my view, if the e-moderators are keen and competent, the precise nature of the platform and its functionalities are less important.

Online networking for education and training

Working together, perhaps informally, in groups, for learning purposes is a tradition in many parts of the world. For example, a group of Scandinavian educators write about the concept of '*folkbildning*' (Axelsson, Bodin, Norberg and Person, 2001). They say the term is not really transferable to English (although their book about it has been translated). Nordic *folkbildning* traditions of over 100 years are based on meetings intended as learning and opportunity-generating groups, stimulating curiosity and critical thinking. The democratic nature of the meetings promotes tolerance towards differing opinions and respect for developed arguments. Courses are also structured in this way, and participants are involved in the shaping of their learning processes with others. When we move such concepts online, and restrictions of travel and location are no longer significant, then we open much new potential.

Online participant interaction is used in three main modes of learning. First, in distance learning – where e-moderators and participants never meet. Second to supplement campus-based learning – where students can easily meet face-to-face but also frequently benefit from the use of a VLE and e-tivities can be provided. Third is a different form of 'blend', where activities can take place in seminars, in classrooms or online, and often mixtures of all.

Compared with face-to-face group teaching, online is readily available, and does not require participants to travel to a certain place. Many participants find that the time lags involved between logging on and taking part encourage them to consider and think about the messages they are receiving before replying, rather more than they would in a class situation. Participants can ask questions without waiting in turn. Because of these characteristics, rather different relationships – usually based on shared interests or support – can develop compared to those between learners or teachers who meet face-to-face. Although many people find the lack of visual clues strange, messages are 'neutral' since you cannot see whether the sender is young or old, nor do you need to consider their appearance or race. This characteristic tends to favour minorities of every kind and encourages everyone to 'be themselves'. Online it's now easy to include pictures and videos of all kinds. However, it's often a good idea not to rush in too much with the visual images until after the learning community is established. Meanwhile with text-based conferencing

it is possible to 'rewind' a conversation, to pick out threads and make very direct links. Therefore online discussions have a more permanent feel and are subject to reworking in a way more transient verbal conversation cannot be. This means that the medium is good for giving praise and constructive critiques.

Working online should be viewed as a new context or environment for learning, not just as a tool. It enables individuals and groups of people to carry on conversations and discussion over the computer networks. Networking works like a series of notice boards, each with a title and purpose. For example, an individual may set up a conference and post a message on it to begin a conference. This message could be, 'This area is for our discussion on your next assignment'. Each participant then logs on through his or her personal computer, reads the message and can post one of his or her own. When the originator of the first message logs on to the conference a few days later, 20 others may have made their contribution to the discussion and perhaps responded to each other's questions. Participants continue to log on, read the contributions of others and the discussion proceeds. Online networking's ability to engage its users is remarkable.

The asynchronous nature of bulletin boards and forums relates to many of their special characteristics. The benefits include the convenience of choice over when to participate. Participants can have 24-hour access to the system and can log on when they wish, for as long or short a time as they want or need to. Many participants can be logged on at the same time although each message appears in a list. Online networking is less intrusive than face-to-face conversations or telephone tutorials because participants can choose when to read messages and when to contribute.

Online networking involves a hybrid of familiar forms of communication. It has some of the elements of writing and its associated thinking, and some of the permanence of publishing, but it also resembles fleeting verbal discussion. The typical participant's discursive style lies somewhere between the formality of the written word and the informality of the spoken. From the earliest days, experienced e-moderators explained to their students, 'Consider this medium as like talking with your fingers – a sort of half-way house between spoken conversation and written discourse' (Hawkridge, Morgan and Jelfs, 1997). Now, for many people, being online is a normal part of their everyday interactions.

Being able to reflect on messages and on the topic under discussion, in between log on times, has always seemed important to researchers into computer-mediated conferencing, and to some at least of the e-moderators I have known. It does seem that quite a few participants reflect on issues raised online and then mould their own ideas through composing replies. It's interesting to revisit some of the first feelings about asynchronous networking – long, long before anyone had ever heard of Facebook and the