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Technology and Cooperative Education
Challenges in the New Millennium

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From the Guest Editor

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Technology and Cooperative Education
Challenges in the New Millennium

"Technology and Cooperative Education — Challenges in the New Millennium" is the theme selected for the 1999 special issue of the *Journal*. This theme was selected because technology, more than ever before, will be key to our survival, both personally and professionally in the new millennium. Will we be prepared to handle technology's increasing demands?

Teleconferencing, virtual rooms, distance learning, telecommunications, PDA (personal digital assistant), *electronic communications, intranets* and *extranets* are some of the "buzz words" describing how business will be conducted in Y2K.

However, Y2K is not without its own challenges. The immediate problems are with the data and main circuitry systems and determining the impact the calendar change will have during the transition from 1999 to 2000. It is not clear whether this transition will be smooth or present additional problems. To counteract some of the problems, companies began purchasing computers with year 2000-ready software and advanced the internal year to 2000 for testing purposes. Testing the software allowed the user to verify effects the change would have on services and detect any interruptions (Woodworth, 1999).

Emerging technology provides opportunities for various groups to collaborate among themselves and with others globally in many different areas. Co-op practitioners now have desktop access to Internet data technology. They have the ability to link employers and students together for recruiting purposes; strengthen communications between students and faculty advisers via email; design homepages for a wider distribution of information; interact with faculty; and promote the co-op program as well as department-sponsored activities. Educators reach larger audiences via teleconferences and distance learning technology. Physicians consult with each other regarding patient care at remote locations via the Internet.

Some employers use Intranet websites to conduct business and share information; while others use Extranet web technology to link businesses with vendors, suppliers, customers (Mondschein, 1998) and other businesses sharing common goals (Anderson, 1996). Also popular with businesses are on-line virtual rooms equipped with everything needed to conduct meetings and give presentations. In virtual environments, individuals having access to a computer can log on and easily join meetings.

The goal of the Editorial Committee for this special issue was to identify individuals, who were creatively using technology to teach and guide students in the classroom as well as in the workplace, and invite them to submit articles. The six articles selected for the thematic issue cover a wide range of relevant topics that can effectively promote learning. Each of the articles expresses the views and opinions of the authors, and not necessarily the views of the Editorial Committee or of the Cooperative Education Association.

The first article, "Cooperative Education for the Future," gives an overview of how the old and new university will look in the new millennium and identifies transformational technology changes expected in the workplace and classroom.

The second article, which discusses the teaching strategies adapted for a distance learning introductory communication and counseling skills course, is titled "Using Interactive Instructional Television (IITV) to Enhance Human Service Student's Readiness for Work Placement."

The third article, "Internet-based Reflective Learning for Cooperative Education Students During Co-op Work Periods," presents the results of a pilot program for 86 electrical and computer engineering freshmen and sophomore students beginning their first co-op work term. Using the Internet as a vehicle to communicate, students are able to access and complete structured learning assignments prepared by their faculty co-op coordinators during various work intervals.

The fourth article, "Expanding the Search for Talent: Adapting Technology-Based Strategies for Campus Recruiting and Selection," examines a cross-section of technologies used in recruiting and evaluating potential candidates for employment. The article also evaluates the positives and negatives of using advanced technologies in the recruiting process.

The fifth article, "Technology Utilization to Enhance Personal Interactions for Co-op Students," describes a very sophisticated large-scale automated system used to match student preferences with employer requirements. This system has been enhanced to schedule approximately 2000 student interviews in about five minutes.

Finally, the sixth article, "Preparing for the Work Term On Line," describes how the development of a curriculum can be customized to meet specific needs of approximately 24 departments. Each module described in the curriculum is based on student self-directed learning and is not program resource dependent. (The URL for the curriculum site is: http://www.coop.uvic.ca/curriculum.)

In summary, a study conducted by the CEO Forum on Education and Technology (McQueen & Pina, 1999) concluded that the nation was wired, but not ready for technology-based learning. If this statement is true, will we have the interest, the training and skills to be successful in an increasingly demanding and challenging technical world? In the new millennium, cooperative education practitioners and other constituents will need to continue to keep current with new technology and develop new ways to promote learning.

Special thanks to the following members of the Editorial Board for their time and expertise in serving on the Editorial Review Committee for this issue:
Dr. Kathleen Finn, Dr. Christopher Pratt, Dr. James W. Varty, and Professor Leonard Watts.

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Guest Editor

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