

e-Postcard 31

Corporate Immune Syndrome Rides High

Dear George – I wanted to give you a good chuckle with one of life’s more predictable behaviours, which you and I know as the Corporate Immune Syndrome. It concerns the work we have all been developing here with the Internet.

I would have to estimate that some 75% of Faculty here at Trad U are tolerant of, rather than with, us as we labour in the Internet vineyards. They always have time to come to meetings when we are discussing critical issues and resolve that the whole enterprise requires a great deal more preparation to ensure that standards of university scholarship are not undermined in the name of progress – whatever that means.

Their standards recently got put to an elegant test or two. New rules from the cartel’s wise ones suggest that to maintain standards we need to draw all external examiners from a pool of folk who have already done the job three times somewhere else. So much for fresh blood. However it got better soon after with the requirement that all externals must have current or recent experience of UK universities in order to be able to ensure the standards are met. So much for learning by comparison.

The neatest manifestation of the syndrome for the global school however comes with the assumption that all students are 18/25 or at least have the attitudes of that age bracket. So the normative rules are designed to govern the behaviours of such inexperienced individuals and that includes a paternalistic even arrogant stance, not customer orientation, towards the student. Even competence in the English language for mid career adults is destined to be tested at the British Council or in some language school as a basis for admission, as opposed to the cut and thrust of an interview and workshop format.

So what, you might ask, should an innovator do about the syndrome? Most enterprises if not most universities long since concluded that the innovator must be spun off to do their new thing without the baggage of the past, and be judged by results. We teach that in B-school here every day of the year. The conclusion surely has to be that unless the top management team sponsors and protects the innovator, the innovator has only one sensible course open ... go elsewhere where a sponsor is in place.

By air mail
Par avion

Dr George Advent

Professor of Marketing

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Next ➔

70

The Corporate Immune Syndrome is seldom manifest at the top where the strategic imperative to respond to changing environments makes the leaders desperate for such activities. It occurs amongst those in the centre, who do not comprehend the strategic direction that must be followed and mistakenly think that they are serving the enterprise well by snuffing out and frustrating innovators. They seek to maintain order where freedom is required.

I envy you over there in Internetica, George. These woes may make you chuckle there but they make me wince here. I think its time I came out of retirement and got on over there to join you. I cannot say I have surfed the net yet, but I am certainly becoming an avid user of it for our own dedicated purposes.

All the best to you, and of course to Margaret, Fredrick



Surprise from the Virtual Library

Dear Margaret – We just got into a very heated debate here at Trad U last week. Roseanne, our Librarian you know well, has finally bitten the bullet and decided to ‘balkanise’ her budget. Last year it came to over \$US6 million on consumables or \$US 600 per Faculty member and student. She simply proposes to allocate it wholly to Schools on the strict understanding that they in turn would allocate to their staff and students on a widely understood and publicised basis.

She did not suggest giving them \$ as such, but knowledge access credits (KACs). In one step she argued she wanted to turn the Library from an apparently free but severely limited (indeed capped) knowledge resource to a marketplace, where first come first served was replaced by myriad value for money judgements by staff and students, rather than librarians.

Predictably, most began by suggesting students were not competent or capable of knowing what was value for money, and that they would waste their KACs. However by agreeing that Faculty would still make recommendations of materials which they believed to be top value, and that students could expect to swap and share the knowledge very effectively to make their KACs stretch as far as possible, that line of argument was headed off.

There were also fears that the students (and indeed the staff as well) would spend all their KACs before the year was up and end with a knowledge drought in the last semester. They would not be willing to dig into their own pockets, scholarship would go on hold until the next academic budget came around. Some wags even suggested reducing the fees all students pay and telling them to buy all their library resources – after all we tell them to buy the standard texts already at the Uni. bookshop.

But if you think all this sounds revolutionary enough, you had better hold tight. Roseanne proceeded to suggest that she wanted to go into the knowledge business by selling the services of the Virtual Library to all and sundry. Rather than just a few locals coming to the physical library on a genuine good town and gown strategy free of charge, she wants to campaign across the town to: (a) sell access to the University’s Virtual Library to the

By air mail
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local government with them getting out of their own provision in the areas covered; (b) selling to 16-18 year old Colleges across the county; (c) selling to other Universities in the region on a co-operative basis where her databases were superior; and (d) selling into major corporates in the region in support of their R&D and marketing and planning activities as well as their extensive training activities in nascent Corporate Universities.

The wags went one step further and suggested that if the British Library Lending Division had been able in the 1960s to 1980s to offer a paper based document delivery service across the world, why could she not do the same across the world? Why be modest and target the region only?

She pointed out that she was not keen to go into global markets in competition with the British Library or similar mega-providers. But she was very keen indeed to get into what she calls 'applications engineering services' face to face around the region and with corporates, where showing how the knowledge resource can be fully utilised would create very real value added.

Frankly, Margaret, I am convinced she is on to a grand idea, very significant indeed. We approved (to our collegial amazement) her plan and agreed that she could withhold \$US1 million to develop her regional and local links and applications engineering services - she argued that the services provided would in any event be greater and the service levels infinitely improved even at the lower budget available of \$US 5 million. She has advertised this week for 4, yes 4, Regional Knowledge Management salespersons on starting salaries of \$ 100 000 pa and a car ...

Are you interested in applying for one of them? Roseanne specifically mentioned you, Margaret, as a role model for what can be done. And no. It's not April 1st although nearly so.

All the best and looking forward to your reactions ... Fredrick

e-Postcard 33

Knowledge Salesperson: I Got the Job

Dear Fredrick – Well, I got the job! thanks for your support. George is not too sure what to make of it, but he'll come round. It's the thought of being inside Trad U working 100% on making the e-world run with Roseanne that is so unbelievable. What second thoughts are shaping up back there? Has the collegial amazement at its own audacity worn off? Have most of the others misunderstood what is happening? Do they think it's all about distributing the Library Budget to departments instead of it being a central resource?

As you can see, more questions than answers. And nervous!

Anyway, the patch I have got to drive my car around is Corporate in Cognate Fields (CCF for short). And Roseanne has required that for any relationship they too must buy into the KAC's structure – Knowledge Access Credits for all staffs in their enterprise.

Roseanne's initiative it transpires was not so far off the wall as you all seemed to think at the time. She has been approached by a consortium of hi tech companies in the region who wanted her to establish a great on-line intelligence system for them, and one thing led to another. The excellent news is that they are volunteering to do all, yes all, the software and the launch workshops on campus as a barter deal for getting access via Trad U databases to the knowledge databases they want. She is redeploying six librarians in the hi tech fields concerned to do the daily/weekly intelligence reporting. And for specialist searches a project by project cash fee will be paid. Initially I will not be on the road selling. The job is to get the service to the consortium running as an analogy so that we can interest other groupings. They have volunteered to do the PR locally as well with launches and the like.

The exciting thing is that the consortium members are all in the same field, competitors some of the time, but they do not see access to anything other than the project specific work as proprietary to any one of them. They are happy that the Trad U staffs in the same fields both have access and can if they are willing, work with the Subject Area librarians on the project specials.



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TU1 1900

Next ➔

74

As you'd expect, I am already getting geared up to tackle the Quality fraternity on the same basis.

Clearly, it's nothing more nor anything less than the sort of services librarians are professionally trained to do, but seem to have lost sight of – except Roseanne – in the depths of despair to which so many have sunk these days. Far from any redundancies, the mood is that the library will be adding intelligence value rather than simply acting as technicians to the e-knowledge systems.

So, we are both coming back home at the end of the year. Can't say Donna is delighted to be losing George, but ...she thinks it to be the sort of breakthrough we have been hoping for for so long we'd be mad not to be there when the Fat Lady finally Sings for Trad U. Got that the wrong way round, but you know what I mean.

Who would have thought the big breakthrough would come ex libris? God Bless Them.

See you for the dawn of the Next Millennium, January 2000. In the meantime, keep writing and we'll keep the excitement going here too. Maybe get Donna and Co. into similar idiom too in Internetica.

As ever ... Margaret.

e-Postcard 34

Have we some e-Disadvantaged Folk?

Donna – We had a magnificent faculty debate in the SCR last week. Not strictly academic either. One of our psychologists set us going at lunchtime and twenty three of us were still there at 4.30.

She has just started analysing some sustained research on students since 1994, comparing their performance with their Internet usage patterns. Her interest had been triggered by earlier reports in the USA that those who used it most outperformed all others by 20% in straight grades. They had nothing to explain why, just the facts of the matter.

Her work started by looking at the blockages to Internet use. Age did not seem to be the anticipated issue, nor the cost of gaining or sustaining access. The determined student, she found, could always gain access by hook or by crook. The overall pattern of use seemed to be explained by the perception of likely and received benefits in relation to the task.

At one end, an introverted student can have almost risk free interaction with inanimate data sets or in chat rooms and Forums. In another context, the speed of the Internet can occasionally provide answers that could not be achieved in any other way. And .. at the far end of the spectrum, the extrovert can act as unashamed self publicist. If the benefits perceived as available were sufficiently great, no amount of technical difficulty would prevent usage.

Such a conclusion does not sound especially profound, of course, but if it can be accepted as valid in the context of the Internet, it puts a great deal of argument we have into perspective. Perhaps its greatest value is to challenge the 'go slow merchants'. The great majority of us seem to be concerned that going slow achieves nothing in a field where change is so very rapid. Wait and see perhaps, but see precisely what you might ask? It is already abundantly clear that the Internet provides benefits we could never entertain at all before. A visiting South African quite simply remarked that back home millions of poorly or badly educated students could self direct their own education without the need to save up to buy textbooks .. they could learn to read better using multimedia. They could explore the world in their own way without needing to travel.

Next ➡

By air mail
Par avion

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76

So, to cut this e-postcard short, we ultimately resolved to go after the ‘go slower’s, not to give them disproportionate air time for their own psychotherapy in the face of new ideas and disturbing changes. We concluded that such individuals, when in positions of authority concerning educational design or delivery, are themselves creating a new disadvantaged group. They are preaching caution when caution should be thrown to the winds.

Our strategy shall henceforth be ‘user benefit driven’ not ‘technology difficulty slowed’. We shall be expounding the challenges and opportunities the Internet addresses and pulling the technology along with us. If it cannot keep up then we shall still go on and ask fellow sufferers to be patient and understanding and tolerant ..., whilst we get it fixed....

Take care and apologies for coaxing Margaret and George back by 2000 to Trad U, but this is where a lot of action now is!

Yours as usual ... Fredrick.



e-Postcard 35

Base Camps for Everest and all That

Dear Fredrick – Your last e-postcard on e-disadvantaged folk got us all thinking here. And it's triggered an intriguing new dimension to our e-marketing strategies at the B-School. I am reliably informed there is nothing new about the notion, but here goes.

Since the Internet is a medium that can readily capture and sustain intense attention over modest time scales, why not seek student involvement over such periods, and divide the learning into what are termed munchable chunks? To register for and accomplish a full MBA or even a Doctorate may well be the goal. But let us certificate one course at a time. So we got to wondering why so many institutions sell by the whole rather than retail so to speak. Must be the relocation problems of the terrestrial institution and the need for the young to tank up on knowledge as they launch themselves into a working life ... Anyway, neither of those assumptions prevail in today's world.

So we decided on the Internet to establish a minimalist entry point for all interested in working with us professionally. In our cyberhouse henceforth there will be many rooms. The front door shall always stand open and there will be activities and learning opportunities to suit all tastes and needs.

We have decided to call the entry point Correspondent Membership. It will give access to the virtual library of course but also to a wide range of reactive and proactive opportunities. As soon as we started to think this way, we found the construct was giving coherence to a range of disparate activities we already had scattered hither and thither around the Web site - Virtual Conferences, Global Forums for industry sectors and regions, hot links across to an accredited range of other sites, etc.

The Everest climb out of Base Camp begins for Correspondent Members if they want to undertake what we are calling a CARD. That stands for Career Assessment Review Document. If Correspondent members wish to undertake this, and we are giving courseware guidance so to speak on the site on how to do it well, then we shall give feedback and if they want it, career counselling. We have even contemplated a strictly personal placement

Next ➔



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TU 1900

78

agency link. The feedback is being managed by our Dean of Action Research and Continuing Management Development, and is being kept at the very economic end of the fees spectrum, say \$US twenty five.

Since what we truly believe we understand is how to help individuals develop their careers further by action learning on the Internet, it is a simple step for us to lay out, on the basis of the CARDS, what seem to be the sensible routes for further development we can provide. As such, the CARD has the double benefit of relationship building with its own intrinsic value per se and relationship selling as we match the Correspondent Member to our own offerings. Base Camp II is reached when the CARD is successfully evaluated, and the individual concerned becomes an Affiliate Member of the Business School. And that Affiliate Membership accords of itself a 'Career' Credit towards a formal qualification.

The outcomes already indicate that a goodly number of casual visitors to our site are ready for Correspondent Membership whereas the previous offer of a whole programme for MBA was far too high a mountain to climb. So we are building a database of course of visitors who we can subsequently cluster in terms of interests as well. Several are arriving qualified to do their Doctorate on the top of a good Masters already. And there we have been challenged to devise an incremental process for getting to the Big D!. We have settled here for a model long used on our Master of Philosophy programmes, called Interim Research Papers. Indeed, we are going further along the line we discovered is widespread in Sweden where the Big D is awarded for actual published papers rather than a thesis on a library shelf and papers maybe later, but probably not.

Finally and paradoxically, the site we have created for those thus joining us on the lower slopes of Everest has been attracting the Graduate alumni and the Faculty too. What we have created is seen by them not as the lower slopes at all, but the view from the top. Amazing eh? So George argued we should give it a new, smart name and we have gone for Action Learning Institute or ALI.

Trust all this sets the brain a-buzz at not-so-Trad U ... Donna.

e-Postcard 36

Long Service Awards

Dear Donna – It was great to learn of the CARD innovation you have made. That sounds like something our own CPD staff should be tackling here at TradU too. I liked the *Everest Ascent* notion too.

Sometimes however I feel more like an ig-noble Duke of York rather than Sherpa Tenzing or Sir Edmund Hillary. We have spent a great deal of time marching folk up hills of late, but when we get there most of our fellow climbers evaporate. And there is no possibility of coming down a mountain! Let me explain ...

It's about staffing. We have built our capability on the Internet now with youngsters, I mean an average age of twenty two/twenty four. They have performed miracles and we've paid them very well by almost any standards, even given them stock options in one of the venture companies. But this month we lose the last but one of the original climbers. Off to other pastures because they are young and the Internet is getting old. As we seek to pinpoint viable business models, and start to get into nice effective routines, life for the innovators, not unnaturally, gets less exciting. The new thrills are also really just more of the same with perhaps a new HomePage or two. But it's déjà vu truth to tell.

And worse than that, big players are in the field with big funds, offering turnkey systems of working. The thrill of making it up and learning iteratively (by making mistakes I mean!) is receding in favour of safe suppliers with known systems with inbuilt Netbank services and virtual library supplements – all at a discount provided they can have a percentage of all future sales' revenues.

I was crying about this in my coffee earlier this week in the Senior Common Room and a fifty five year old female colleague said to me: 'You won't believe this but when I was in advertising I got my first Long Service Award when I was twenty one – for five years before the mast'.

By air mail
Par avion

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Next ➔

80

In advertising in the 1950s and 1960s five years was a lifetime. And like many of today's Internet Wonders, advertisers then won their Awards before they thought of going to Uni. Her reward by the way was a silver ash tray, and the symbolism of that at the end of the millennium will not escape you.

Every job has its life cycle surely. And unless the incumbent is mature enough to move on into supervisory or managerial roles, staying in the same place is unlikely to be rewarding intellectually. Money certainly does not give stability. So we got to wondering, this ageing advertiser and I, about what sort of life time career the young standard bearers of the Internet revolution will have. We did not dwell on Bill Gates' dilemma as the world's richest man ever at a still youthful age, but on the multitude of talented techies. We concluded, as we would I suppose, that they would eventually come to terms with a world that sees the Internet in perspective rather than as a game or the only true meaning of life. So far as we could see the revolution is actually over. The potential for the medium is now perceived, not completely but sufficiently, for the role of zealot with baseball hat on back to front to be obsolete.

Not everyone has to, or could become a supervisor or a manager. A grand future awaits those who can see changes through into grounded operations and routines, even if they do not want to deliver the routines. They will in all events be robotised before long if they are truly routine. The Internet stock market bubble is not a South Sea Bubble, but it cannot burn cash for ever building marketshare and brand name identity that is vulnerable ... as so many of the stocks really are. The grounded routines will be institutional and embracing like you discussed in Everest last month. That type of global professional association will win and hold members and customers for the duration.

So the acceptance of five years as long service meriting an award contains only a grain of truth for the Internet revolutionaries. For their life time they need to wise up. From the top of that hill up which the neo-noble Duke of York has marched them, they need to make sure they know which way to go.

Until next time ... Fredrick.

e-Postcard 37

Is Infomediation Truly Something Different?

Dear Fredrick: I have every sympathy with your frustration at losing key staffs and also the sense of responsibility you feel in not being able to move their careers along with the Trad U structures. Our experience here is precisely the same.

The debate here this past month has been about John Hagel III and Marc Singer's new book *Net Worth*. As you will know, their main thesis is that the real race on the Net is not to be a retailer but to be a property developer, so to speak. The owner of a portal with a well segmented, indeed a life style supplemented, database is positioned as the future King.

It is clearly an attractive hypothesis and they develop it extensively. The infomediaries, as they describe this role, will be the great broker in an age of junk email activity. But I do wonder whether this is anything better than a well respected mailing list or aggregation the like of which is well established in catalogue marketing. The challenge we truly face as consumers on the Net is to find the time to surf or browse as opposed to using it 110% for work in hand. The notion that the Net truly becomes over the next decade a relaxing mode of communications for most of the population is still unproven.

This is not to gainsay the continuing popularity of the Net as a discretionary, interactive communications device for youngsters – and a major element in their future education. But its intensive commercial participation in our lives will be very much a matter for careful public and personal control.

There is another proposition they argue which truly got us all excited, however. It is that the future of the Net does not necessarily belong to myriad small enterprises marketing directly to their customers. The rise of infomediaries can be expected to ensure consolidation of the multitude of small entrepreneurial start ups the Net has and will continue to see. It may well be that they appear as a range of discrete brands within the portfolio of an infomediary but the consolidation and manipulation of the quality of information they will have access to, and stewardship of, will have its own commercial determinism.

Next ➔



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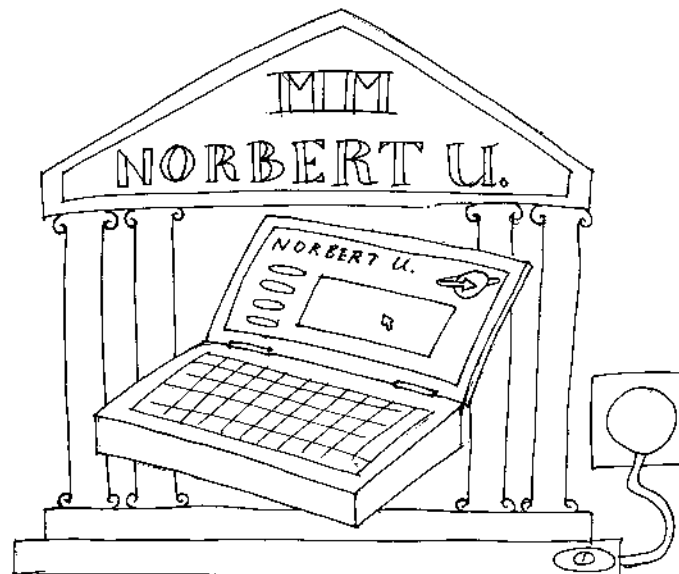
TU 1900

82

By and large, we concluded that it was not necessary for us to agree or to disagree with either of these two propositions at this juncture! It will not frankly affect our strategy. We see the important issues as ensuring as good an information database match with our products and services as we can – and to exploiting that to maximise sales propensities.

If that can be achieved with consumer consent, we shall have achieved more than the great majority of credit card/store card/ companies ever did. It was not that the data was not there in their database. They lacked the inclination or sophistication to go mining to gain the benefits of intelligent leverage. Net Worth argues that we must do such mining and that it will be much easier to do when we use the technology to tackle the task imaginatively for us all. But the Philistines at many points of intermediation still mouth phrases like “ease of use is the true value of the Net”.

Ugh! And Best wishes ... Donna



e-Postcard 38

Bimodal Leisure Surfers maybe, but Vendor Sites Looking Good for the Rest of Us

Dear Donna: We too have taken infomediation to heart here at Trad U (e-Postcard 37). As you would expect we have had lengthy debates and not too much action, but it has put a number of things into focus for us.

There is a bimodal interest in social and leisure activities amongst the young and the old and the rest of us are workaholics ... so to speak. If this is truly the case which I am assured plenty of data can support, the attitude towards portals and big hitting volume must be carefully arrived at.

There has tended to be a belief that Intranets are for the corporates and the Internet is really for the surfers. All manner of arguments have been advanced as to why Intranets are better which include saving wasted staff time and structure. The first truly seems to be akin to banning phones from staff desks on the grounds that they would be abused. The inconvenience to the 99% no abusers far outweighs the savings likely from the 1%.

Structure is clearly a major enduring benefit though with the implication that the intermediary is going to be the Guardian of the Intranet rather than the MegaPortals in Cyberspace. This in turn implies a great deal of relationship marketing to the Guardians of the Intranet.

Some very good friends of ours at Trad U, who provide Anbar and Emerald, announced last week that their 1999 hits on the EMERALD site alone will be 10 million. But they have not got those from casual surfers for their advanced knowledge database or even its rocket science search engines. They have them because the student and Faculty users like the instant gratification of full text and because via Library Buying Groups/Consortia they have gained massive increases of distribution via University and College intranet services. In today's parlance they have a Vendor Site with a lazy asset in millions of hits. The question has to be what else that is complementary to the individuals profiles which are of course assiduously collected can be offered.

**By air mail
Par avion**

Dr Donna Hope

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Next ➔

84

The site is not a vendor's e-commerce site. It's a free site in use because the vendor already realised the income stream when they sold to the Consortium. MCB University Press which owns Anbar and Emerald have done brilliantly in the transformation of their distribution strategy moving from a hi-priced/low volume activity no more than three years ago to more than 10 million users of their 100+ titles in 1999. Well done MCB and all who work there.

The moral of the story however is that it had little to do with the surf and all to do with the Intranet and selling into the Guardians thereof.

And that can hardly be cheap to accomplish as they wearily travel the globe for the face to face sell ins. It takes a strong investment strategy.

Now for the Second Wave of e-publishing. Can the products evolve, and will the pay as you go distribution systems leave the Consortia out, or will they continue to be the approach by which funding is accomplished for the academic knowledge database? There must be monumental waste in buying unwanted data in bulk like this. There is no reason why a pay as you go system could not have an upper cap, then the lower cap with infinite access which does not seem likely to get the best allocation of resources could be a thing of the past.

Our Trad U librarian Roseanne is out there blazing the trail on pay as you go and getting grand results (e-Postcard 32) and all is set for Margaret's triumphal return for Corporates in Cognate Fields. I look forward to seeing her of course soonest and the big drive for 2000 ...

As ever, Fredrick

e-Postcard 39

e-Landed or e-Gentry for the 21st Century?

Dear Fredrick – Your own comments on Vendor Sites (e-Postcard 38) last month echoed an experience we have just had that sounds truly archaic but apparently is not. Like the EMERALD story, its all about a database of materials that has found hitherto untapped markets via the Internet.

The publication traded under the grand title of ‘*Burke’s Landed Gentry of Great Britain*’. It commenced in 1862 and reached its 18th edition in 1972 but has been out of print since. It is a genealogical record of the families of folk who today hold the equivalent assets of 2000 acres of land in the middle of the 19th Century. Today that can presumably include virtual lands as well as virtual gentry! It believes it lists the well off and/or the good. That clever definition means that anyone on their way up in society can potentially join its pages, and rub shoulders with the others. At one extreme you can acquire lands that carry with them the titles of feudal baron or lord in, for instance, Scotland where feudalism still exists and they are all recognised by HM The Queen. At the other you can be a successful cybernaut and/or businessperson cum politician and gain a new life title for your public services on the advice of the Prime Minister. Or you can simply acquire a major landholding.

The essence of the Internet appeal is not however for the wannabe upwardly mobiles! It’s for the millions of descendants all over the world of The Names which are Scottish, or Irish or English, who wish to know what connections they have with what families, and where they come from. If they are Scottish there can well be a tartan to go with it, and perhaps a recommended malt whiskey. Frequently there will a Coat of Arms associated with a family name as well.

The new edition is so incredibly different from the last! It is being made available on line with colour coding to help accessibility and searching. A search engine/criteria has been created to enable myriad searches which would have hitherto been almost inconceivable e.g. what female names merged with what male lines over the many generations? Access is being made available through third party Internet distributors all over the Web so that for just a few \$US,

Next ➡



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TRAD University

TU 1900

86

24 hours access can be had by individuals who would never have found the volume in a library, not only because most libraries would not invest in it but because most such individuals would not have been inclined to go and look.

And the promotional campaigns of e-marketing names that are in the database are a truly straightforward endeavour of matching and suggesting.

Lest any blue blooded librarians are to worry that they have customers who still want the shelf based access, that too is still there, even if like Encyclopaedia Britannica most pundits believe it's the last call for print ... Except maybe for what *Burke's* charmingly calls The Names, the individuals whose families are within the records. For them a leather bound version is readily available?

Bringing 1972 up to date is a major challenge; but making the historical database to 1972 available for searching swiftly and imaginatively is a vastly more significant development. And once up to date, provided the landed names do attach themselves to email, a proactive request for the latest entry is built into the systems development.

Burke's is deliberately going to be a Vendor Site, but they already have plans for a wide range of accessories, so whether it's the after shave of the landed names or their own brand shooting sticks ... Watch this space for e-shopping in the years ahead.

With all our best wishes to you and each and every e-Gentry ... Donna

e-Postcard 40

e-terruptions and Real Reality

Dear Donna – We have both arrived back safely at Trad U. Its all greatly changed, and although I cannot say I am into my stride with my new role as Knowledge Salesperson with Roseanne (e-Postcard 33) it all seems pretty familiar already. She insists on asserting that ‘The Fat Lady Has Started to Sing’.

The customers are ironically beating a path to our doors for access to the service and the more recent development of our learning platform. The corporates in the region are fabulously keen. The only real snag we have so far is lack of systems/platform compatability. A number have their own platforms already and really want us to sit our resources onto their platforms. That slows it all down for us, so although we readily agree (what else can we say?) it has to be an extra expense.

Normally such corporates are sophisticated IT users – more so than we are. As such they can usually fix it up to run themselves. But we have insisted that our IT staff go along for the learning experience so we know what is going on out there that is different and often of course smarter. We are just about to establish the ubiquitous online User Group to reinforce and share all this learning around anyway.

But the big story on our return was not from Roseanne’s area after all. It was the collapse of the virtual library service in George’s Faculty. Not sure what really happened even now but the outcome was a disaster. Having got the whole show committed to the virtual rather than the tactile reality of articles and journals at large, all of a sudden the system stopped for 14 days.

Students with assignment, even thesis, deadlines were in high panic and the Vice Chancellor even agreed to extend all completion dates by one month without penalty for any who made a reasoned case. All attempts to find an ‘instant’ alternative fell down on the connection delays and the issue of new passwords, not to mention getting the hang of the different protocols.

Fredrick reminisced about the olden times when supermarkets first began to minimise theoretical logistics costs with one or at most two consolidation warehouse points.

Next ➔

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88

All that did was give enormous power to the IT and warehouse staffs. Their salaries escalated ... one day off and the whole system was in a state of collapse. Actual costs were quite different.

The upshot has been that Trad U has made an immediate switch of supplier and got back in its stride after 14 days. But more than that. With it has come the realisation that online virtual library services are so absolutely integral to the learning process that no e-terruptions can be tolerated. Just as we offer a range of online bookstores so we are now offering a variety of routes to the knowledge base. It is not a solution that supermarkets were able to go for but of course we can with the distributed models now in place globally with digitised information.

It all seems a rather elegant message for our Exit e-Postcards from the Other Side really. There is clearly no other side left now; we've all crossed over here at Trad U. The Achilles Heel has not turned out to be that the Internet will never replace XY or Z. Its that its gone so far that we are all lost without it, and vulnerable. Whether its the ghastly phenomenon of swamping by malcontents or whiz kids, or the deliberate act of someone trying to leverage their own power position in the channel of dissemination, we have got to take sensible precautions and spread the risks.

No matter how we look at it, its virtually back to Real Reality.

Donna – I have kept copies of all the e-Postcards we have exchanged over the past three and a half years, and was sharing them with a Faculty member who rather grandly describes himself as a Contemporary Anthropologist. He thinks they are a cultural learning log, and tell for him a fascinating tale of the cultural change we have all been through. He says we would edit them up and publish them out as an e-book. Lets do that. Fredrick has volunteered to help ...

Our very best wishes and thanks again to all our teachers and mentors from Norbert U. ... Margaret

e-Postcards ... Postscript:

Bricks and Clicks

Donna, George and Fredrick met fifteen months later at the *Bricks & Clicks Congress* almost 5 years from the date that George and Margaret had originally been offered their opportunity to take sabbatical leave from Trad U at Norbert U in Internetica. All were keynote speakers and all (as predicted in e-Postcard 40), had the same things to say. In fact they were presenting a Joint Paper.

They summarised their personal and institutional tales – of normative technology pull and extrapolative push – as detailed in the preceding pages. And then they unveiled the classic *normex reconciliation* just reached.

- 1 Norbert and Trad U Business Schools had resolved to establish a New Millennium *Bricks & Clicks* enterprise, based from the USA. Their institutions had both agreed to vest the complete asset bases in the NewCo in return for a 50/50 equity split. Dividends arising had been agreed to go as 75% to University research and 25% as bonus to the Faculty involved, who had stock options against ROI targets.
- 2 Each retained its own qualification awarding powers but together they had gained global accreditation from Washington DC and the EU to go a long way to tame the terrestrial jungle of separate State and Provincial/Discipline accreditations. A Common Global Professional and Academic Board had been established, and Faculty teams and their development remained that Board's responsibility.
- 3 NewCo's equity had then been shared with incoming private financiers, linked to convertible loan, the proceeds to fund major global marketing and sales strategies on three vectors:
 - Bricks and Clicks facilities such as Trad U and Norbert already have are being replicated in an additional 30 locations, resourced from the Web;
 - NewCo's Learning platform, which contains the 'total' system for a Corporate Business School, named *Socrates*, is being introduced and installed in major corporates and professional institutions globally with field sales teams and full online operational services; and
 - NewCo's Online Professional Community, for those taking an initial interest in action learning studies as well as for the CPD of those who have earned professional qualifications, is conducting a wide range of Forum and diagnostic activities with rapid growth in associated services.

Their upcoming activities were received without antipathy, rather with a tinge of envy. They had clearly taken a 24/36 months lead in the market. Their's was the opportunity to gain major share not only in their two home markets but also widely around the globe. It was a case of pushing ahead with marketing and selling as fast as good staffs could be marshalled to escalate the scale of activities, and to provide continuous technological development.

The challenge was getting people in place fast enough rather than funding per se. Many voices counselled seeking additional support from organisations already well established in the market segments and regions where potential was greatest.

But perhaps the most profound thought of all came from a well respected former Higher Education Minister who reflected:

“Together Trad U and Norbert U seemed to have come up with a most significant answer to the runaway demands for the future funding of higher education in respect of both tutorial and research. The notion that a surplus could and should be generated from tutorial in applied disciplines to fund research seems to be wholly appropriate and politically acceptable.

It has the potential to ensure that the tutorial is focused and relevant, and that good research is undertaken and internalised to improve the tutorial.”

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