HOW YOU CAN HELP

The success of the Committee depends upon our interaction with you and other chemical educators. Please send us your ideas and suggestions. Your articles submitted to this Newsletter are published in a timely manner.

Finishing up at Princeton

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First sincere thanks to Don Rosenthal for all his help, advice and many contributions over the years, and a hearty welcome to Harry Pence the new Chair. Our thanks also to Tom O'Haver for the many pleasant and fruitful interactions we've had over the years.

We've finished up the course Chemistry of the Environment at Princeton I outlined the details of how the course was using the World Wide Web to increase student discussions in lecture. We've had a symposium to show off the student web projects. You can view the projects at http://pmi.princeton.edu/pathways/chm333/students/
and the course setup at http://pmi.princeton.edu/pathways/chm333/welcome.html.

Student evaluations showed that the students liked the text. They thought the Web projects were good, but a lot of work, and the daily Web questions were ok, but added too much busywork. We did have some very good discussions, generally on broad policy issues rather than the chemistry involved.

The students were asked to be innovative for the web projects, not to create the typical research project that could just be printed out. They were asked specifically to present their material in interesting ways, to use graphics and animations to make points clearer and more interesting.

It had originally been scheduled to have students hand in a detailed project outline, this was changed to putting the outline up as a webpage. This had the advantage of getting the students, most of whom had never created anything on the web before, a chance to assimilate the needed technology. I also put up a webpage to show some of the animations etc. they could use to make points clearer. You can see this at http://www.eclipse.net/~pankuch/use_animation.html

Having student projects upon the web proved to be valuable since we could track progress of the webpages at a click of the mouse. This provided a way of supplying reminders to those not showing significant progress. I should note that at Princeton as other Universities much of the work appeared the last week and a good deal the night before. Many students preferred to work off-line and put material up when it was pretty much finished.

At the symposium each project was presented by the entire group. Their webpage was up live on the large screen and each member of the group presented their part of the project. We had a few technical glitches, but it was informative and interesting. Each student was given a written form to evaluate other projects.

I was discussing their projects with some students after the symposium and a faculty member from the engineering department came up and complemented the students on the symposium and their webpages. He also offered to hire them during the summer to put up web pages for his research group. The students just glowed, and I felt pretty good myself!

As mentioned last time the text we used is excellent, Chemistry of the Environment by Tom Spiro and William Stigliani (Prentice Hall, NJ ISBN 0-02-415261-7). One can spend some pleasant worthwhile time with this book.