Researching AlphaPlus Resources

September 2005

College Sector Committee
for Adult Upgrading

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traditionally, college academic upgrading programs have not been strong users of the AlphaPlus Centre services. In an effort to discover what AlphaPlus resources might be useful to college programs, especially at the more advanced levels, the College Sector Committee (CSC) recruited faculty from colleges across the province to research the suitability of resources available through AlphaPlus. Objectives of the project included helping colleges become aware of AlphaPlus services and resources, identifying gaps or barriers to their use, and increasing the Centre's awareness of the College Sector's resource needs and delivery environment.

The CSC research initiative was successful in meeting its objectives, particularly in increasing colleges' awareness of the kinds of resources and supports AlphaPlus provides. Eleven volunteers from seven colleges conducted an extensive search of three AlphaPlus services:

- AlphaRoute
- Demonstrations Ontario, and
- Library Services

The researchers discovered many creative, engaging, level-appropriate resources and detailed how these resources could be used in programming. They provided useful suggestions for improving resources. They also identified many gaps in resources, mostly in AlphaRoute and mainly in the area of Science.

The researchers examined the services more broadly to identify issues related to accessibility, navigability, potential for use with college upgrading students, and support for teachers. While they were generally pleased with the accessibility and navigability features of Demonstrations Ontario and Library Services, they found these features in AlphaRoute wanting. They provided excellent suggestions for improving accessibility and navigability in all three services. The researchers saw value in these services for their students and felt that college educators would be inclined to use them, if the concerns they identified were addressed.

The assistance provided by AlphaPlus staff was instrumental to the success of this initiative. They provided clear direction up front and strong support throughout. AlphaPlus is recognized for its "culture of support," and this support was evident in responses from researchers.

AlphaPlus had an opportunity to respond to the preliminary research report. It welcomed the report and agreed that the exercise was beneficial to Centre staff,

particularly in increasing their awareness of colleges' resource needs. AlphaPlus acknowledged there were gaps in services, but also pointed out that traditionally colleges have not sought support from AlphaPlus. It further pointed out that more recent AlphaPlus activities, such as the Skills at Work series, had not been examined by the researchers. Overall, though, the findings of the researchers were found to be positive, and AlphaPlus identified areas where they could implement researchers' recommendations for expanding or improving resources and services. AlphaPlus called on colleges to work together to avoid replicating resources already available in college libraries.

The CSC is in full agreement with this response and strongly recommends that the CSC and AlphaPlus continue to work together in a spirit of collaboration to ensure that AlphaPlus has the information it requires to address the resource needs of colleges, especially at the higher level.

Much of the value of the CSC research initiative lies in the rich, detailed commentary provided by the researchers. The summaries provided at the end of each section do not do justice to their experiences, insights, and numerous recommendations; the scope of the initiative is far too broad for that. The CSC therefore encourages all college educators and AlphaPlus staff to read the whole report, or at least the parts that are pertinent.

OVERVIEW

Interest by all educational organizations in developing the potential for on-line delivery of programming has been growing as continuing advancements in e-delivery technologies are made. There has been significant movement from traditional classroom instruction to "blended learning" and total on-line delivery. Blended learning blends print with e-based resources in an effort to find the best ways to provide educators with easy access to useful resources. For LBS/OBS funded programs in Ontario, AlphaPlus is currently the primary provider of on-line delivery, resources, and support. It is worth noting that the official provider of distance learning for colleges is Ontario Learn.

Historically, colleges have not been strong users of AlphaPlus services. In an effort to discover what AlphaPlus resources might be useful to college academic upgrading programs, faculty from colleges across the province were recruited to research and report on the suitability of resources available through AlphaPlus. The following subject areas were explored:

- Communications
- Mathematics
- Self-Management/Self-Direction
- Science
- Computers

The research focused on the following AlphaPlus services:

- AlphaRoute
- Demonstrations Ontario
- Library Services

AlphaRoute is an on-line learning environment for adults who want to improve their Reading, Writing, Math and Computers skills to achieve their goals. Demonstrations Ontario is designed to assist LBS Program delivery agencies in Ontario develop and apply learning outcomes Demonstrations. Demonstrations measure the ability of adults to successfully integrate and apply various elements of their literacy learning to everyday life. The Library Services offer resources for borrowing or purchasing. Among other things, it features an index to web resources and an on-line catalogue.

INTRODUCTION

The CSC acknowledges that there are many other relevant Alpha services which may be of interest to colleges such as Adult Literacy Research in Ontario. In order to keep the scope of this initiative manageable, however, the activities were limited to these three.

OBJECTIVES

1. To help colleges become aware of suitable AlphaPlus resources and to provide some guidance on which ones are most useful in college programming

2. To identify, for the CSC and AlphaPlus, gaps in resource availability

3. To help colleges become more aware of AlphaPlus services

4. To identify how these services and resources might be used

5. To identify, for colleges and AlphaPlus, barriers to their use

6. To increase AlphaPlus' awareness of College Sector needs and delivery environments

TIMELINES and PROCESS

The research began in April with the goal of having the preliminary results available for the June 2 and 3 CSC Conference.

Volunteers were identified, and working groups, established. AlphaPlus was informed of the initiative and a key contact person at AlphaPlus for each of the three services was identified.

The CSC facilitated a start-up conference call for each working group to secure suggestions and answer questions. Working groups decided how they wanted to proceed, especially with the division of work and timelines. Researchers were provided with a copy of the LBS learning outcomes and the ACE curriculum for the conference call.

RESEARCH FOCUS

For each of the Demonstrations Ontario, AlphaRoute and AlphaPlus materials collection, the research would try to identify:
1. What materials were available
2. What LBS/ACE level they were suitable for
3. How well they addressed college student goals, especially further training and employment

4. Ease of access
5. How much time and additional support for students they required
6. Usability/suitability in the college delivery environment
7. Gaps and recommendations for materials development and use
8. Recommendations for further research on AlphaPlus services

The CSC provided a guide indicating what information was required and two short, user-friendly forms were developed for reporting results. The forms were similar, but one was designed for documenting successful searches, while the other, for documenting unsuccessful searches. See **Appendix A** for the forms used to report research results.

GETTING STARTED

A conference call was held in April. Nine members of the AlphaPlus research teams were able to take part in the conference calls. For many, it was their first time participating in such an activity and all were pleased with its effectiveness. The objectives of the research were reviewed, stressing the aim to keep the research as simple as possible. The intent was for the volunteers to carry out the research, do the analysis, and share the results among all colleges.

AlphaPlus demonstrated its support for and interest in this initiative in several ways. Two contact persons were provided, by service area, to assist research team members. Information and materials were given to team members to facilitate their research. It should be noted that this same level of support was provided for the duration of the project.

Most of the conference centred on how to divide the tasks. For all the subject research teams except Science, it was decided to assign team members to research specific AlphaPlus Services. For Science, it was decided to take each of the three subject areas and research all the AlphaPlus Services for that subject. The following charts identify the areas that volunteers have researched to date.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM		
NAME	COLLEGE	TASK
Colleen Pickering	Fanshawe	Alpha Route
Janet Nisbet	Durham	Library Services
Peter Rideout	Northern	Demonstrations Ontario
Linda McKay	Northern	Demonstrations Ontario
Lorrie Irvine	Northern	Alpha Route

SELF-MANAGEMENT/SELF- DIRECTION TEAM		
NAME	COLLEGE	TASK
Fran Painter	Conestoga	Alpha, Demonstrations, Library
Ann Ashberry	Conestoga	Alpha, Demonstrations, Library

COMPUTER SKILLS TEAM		
NAME	COLLEGE	TASK
Colleen Pickering	Fanshawe	Alpha Route
Lorrie Irvine	Northern	Alpha Route
Linda Bruni	Niagara	Alpha Route

MATHEMATICS TEAM		
NAME	COLLEGE	TASK
Lynne Hickey	Northern	Demonstrations Ontario – Core Math
Mark Irwin	Centennial	Demonstrations Ontario and AlphaRoute
Linda Bruni	Niagara	AlphaRoute

SCIENCE TEAM		
NAME	COLLEGE	TASK
Barbara Glass	Canadore	Physics
Barb Charbonneau	Northern	Biology
Fran Painter	Conestoga	Chemistry

The Science Team indicated that they were especially interested in finding virtual lab materials available though AlphaPlus or ones that AlphaPlus might be aware of.

As mentioned, the AlphaPlus Staff provided the research teams with information, handouts and advice to make their research tasks easier. See **Appendix B** for an example of a handout forwarded to the team. Suggestions for the team included:

- find 1300 on-line resources in AlphaPlus' *Index to Web Resources*
- have a look at the *Library Catalogue*
- get lists of subject terms that match the categories the team wants to review
- use a section called Purchase that presents a choice of excellent resources and a short description for each of them
- use a set of mapped AlphaRoute activities
- use the *Eight Easy Steps* to register a learner in AlphaRoute
- try *AlphaRoute on Your Own – College Edition*
- follow instructions to use the on-line catalogue to search the terms on the Canadian Literacy Thesaurus Subject Browse
- use the assessment resources newsletter which gives an overview of the revised Demonstrations Ontario website
- review information on accessing print, electronic, and software resources

The ACE curriculum documents were also forwarded to AlphaPlus and used by staff to find matches with the resource collection. The staff noted that the AlphaPlus resource collections were quite strong in areas such as Math, Self-Management/Self-Direction, and Communications, but that a great deal of work still needed to be done in the area of Science.

THE FINDINGS

Eleven team members completed forty-four searches. This does not mean forty-four resources were researched. In one case, one researcher alone reviewed nearly two hundred resources. Most researchers worked independently, but in two instances, members paired up to conduct their search.

Total number of searches by AlphaPlus Service:

- AlphaRoute: 13
- Demonstrations Ontario: 22
- Library Services: 9

Total number of searches by <u>Subject Area</u>:

- Communications: 14
- Numeracy: 8
- Self-Management/Self-Direction: 7
- Science: 9
- Computer: 6

Of the 44 searches, 35 were considered successful and nine, unsuccessful. See the table below to see the how the numbers of successful and unsuccessful searches compare by service.

	AlphaRoute	**Demonstrations Ontario**	**Library Services**
Successful Search	7	20	8
Unsuccessful Search	6	2	1

This next table below shows where the research gaps are:

	Comm.	**Math**	**SM/SD**	**Science**	**Computer**
AlphaRoute	2	3	1	1	6
Demonstrations Ontario	11	5	5	1	0
Library Services	1	0	1	7	0

Overall, the research teams provided very insightful feedback about the three AlphaPlus services, as well as detailed information about the usefulness of particular resources. They also made a number of recommendations.

The resources are presented in the three sections that follow using the structure of the chart above. AlphaRoute Communications resources, for example, will be discussed first. Because of the amount of detail provided, point form will be used as appropriate. Where detailed comments are considered critical for understanding navigational and other procedural issues, they have been included. An overall summary of each AlphaPlus service is provided at the end of each section to highlight strengths and weaknesses of the service, identify concerns, and make key recommendations.

SECTION # 1: ALPHAROUTE

<u>COMMUNICATIONS</u>

Two feedback forms were returned by the same researcher. One search was considered successful; the other, unsuccessful.

Level(s): LBS Levels 3, 4 and 5 focusing on grammar, reading, speaking, vocabulary, and writing. In total, 199 Communications activities were reviewed.

What worked:

- Several activities seem appropriate for individuals in Level 3.

- Researcher is impressed with the writing activities – most could be used for Levels 3 to 5 with some adaptation. There is a lot of marking for instructors, but many of the assignments are detailed and may be a good supplement for current writing activities. In some cases the order of the activities is erroneous, e.g., "Types of Paragraphs," "Two Paragraph Composition," and "The Summary" should come before "The Five-Paragraph Essay."

- In general, the instructions for each activity were fairly good and were available in spoken and written English.

- The researcher definitely plans to assign some of these activities to my students.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better:

- Not many activities were available for Level 4 and 5 students.

- The number of activities in the grammar section is limited. The activities in level one are too remedial. They provide limited practice. As a result, the activities may be used for review, but they could rarely be used to deliver a concept. As well, students would often have to wait for feedback.

- Some of these activities relate to grammar and should be moved to that section, e.g., "Recognizing Subjects" and "Recognizing Verbs" would be more appropriate in the grammar section.

- The speaking activities are minimal.

- The vocabulary activities could be expanded – the word list activities need work.

- Students may not respond well to activities that ask them to use their "Word List." These activities may also be difficult to mark.

- The Communication activities in AlphaRoute are highly dependant on mentors – many students would need assistance to navigate the site and the activities. Students with a limited knowledge of computers and a fairly low literacy level would need significant assistance.

- Most activities ask students to save their work in their "Portfolio" so that a mentor can assess their work. As a result, the mentor (instructor) would require access to a computer and go into each person's profile in order to mark assignments. Next, the mentor would have to print each assignment in order to give appropriate feedback to the students or type up countless responses for students.

- Another option could be that the students print their assignments and hand them in to an instructor. Perhaps instructions that ask a student to print and submit their assignments to the instructor or save their assignments in their portfolio would be helpful. Overall, given the number of activities that an instructor may already have to mark, extra activities via AlphaRoute would add significantly to marking time/commitments.

- The overall design of the homepage for the AlphaRoute environment appears unsophisticated. At first glance, the students often comment that the site looks like it is for children. As a result some students don't take the AlphaRoute activities seriously. A more professional looking, user-friendly home page would contribute to better feedback from students and staff.

- The resource could be used in a college setting as long as students have access to and assistance in a computer lab.

Recommendations:

1. Add more activities to each section (grammar, reading, speaking, vocabulary and writing) of the Communications domain.

2. Provide more practice in each activity, especially for activities related to grammar and punctuation.

3. Provide more activities that can be self-assessed (by the learner).

4. Make sure that activities are presented in chronological order with respect to level of difficulty or concepts that build upon each other.

5. Provide better ways to assign activities to students and track activities completed by students.

6. Add instructions that give the option of handing assignments in to instructors.

7. Ensure user-friendly navigation for students.

8. Continue to ask educators for feedback.

Comments on AlphaRoute:

Overall, there is a lot of potential for AlphaRoute. In the Communications section, I found several activities that could be used or adapted for use in college LBS programming. My main concern relates to the setup and assignment of activities for students. I tried several ways to assign activities. I discovered that if I wanted to assign all of the communication activities to a student, I had to complete an unreasonable number of steps for each student.

First, I had to go in to register the student, which wasn't too difficult. However, next I had to check off "Goal Requirements and Skill Gaps" (Learning Outcomes). From there, I had to check off "Skill Sets." Then I had to check off "Success Markers." I could not indicate whole levels or sections. In the end, I believe that I had to check off approximately 450 boxes in order to generate a personal list of activities, including the 199 activities that were available for a student in the Communications section of the site. I can't imagine how time consuming this would be to complete for our 65 students. It would actually be easier and more reasonable to have all of the actual activities listed and available to be checked off by level. This way, an instructor could pick and choose appropriate activities for their students.

It would also be nice if activities could be assigned by group, so that an instructor could establish a group profile and assign that profile to groups of students, for example, certain activities could be assigned to level three students. It would also be nice if these profiles could be amended at the individual student level as well. In addition, I was disappointed that when I clicked on the numbers on the AlphaRoute home page (Resource Centre) in order to complete activities by level, I just kept getting sent back to the first activity in each level. Consequently, these level indicators are ineffective.

I can see great value for educators and students with regard to the AlphaRoute resource if the setup, navigation and quantity of activities are improved. Our students have had some exposure to AlphaRoute, and I plan to utilize this resource more in the future. Hopefully, some of the challenges will be addressed in the near future so that college educators will be more inclined to use this resource.

MATH

Three feedback forms were returned by two researchers working separately; only one was considered successful.

Level(s) researched LBS Levels 1 to 5. One researcher found some good resources in Levels 1 to 3 in Newspapers (e.g., The Learning Edge), the Resources Centre, and The Learning Connection.

What worked:

- Resource Centre – The limited Math activities are well-organized; AlphaRoute describes the activities' learning outcomes, skills sets, and success markers in the "Activity Identification Builder."

- The Learning Connection – Most of the worksheets contain answer keys, so the learner can get immediate feedback on progress

- As it currently stands, the AlphaRoute Math activities can be used as a remedial resource or as a supplemental learning activity.

- Numeracy materials (Levels 1 and 2) would work for those learners who have a high level of English, but low Math.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better:

- There were no Level 4 or 5 Math Activities

- AlphaRoute's Resource Centre contains mostly Level 1 Math Activities and a limited number of Level 2 and 3 Activities

- Map activity, "A Map of Northwestern Ontario: Determine the Co-ordinates," asks the learner to determine the co-ordinates of different places on a supplied Northwestern Ontario map. Some of the city names are difficult to locate on the small map. A larger map is supplied, but the cities lying on the "border" may have different co-ordinates than in the smaller map. Therefore, the answers of these cities will be marked incorrect if a learner records the co-ordinates using the larger map.

- Resource Centre: The learners need to consistently check their AlphaRoute portfolios to ensure that their completed activities are marked and saved appropriately (there is no message to inform the learners that their answers are placed into their portfolios when they click either the "check answers" or the "save to portfolio" button).

Recommendations:

- LBS Level 4 and 5 Math activities are needed. Also needed are Level 3 Data & Probability and Measurement Math Activities as well as additional Geometry and Basic Operations activities.

- Currently AlphaRoute is focusing its activities on lower LBS levels (with the exception of Communications – this domain contains many higher level activities). Development of higher level Math activities is needed as many college upgrading students are pursuing further education and training.

- LBS Level 4 and 5 Math Activities are needed in Resource Centre. Level 3 Data & Probability and Measurement Math Activities are also needed as well as additional Geometry and Basic Operations Activities.

- More resources are needed to make AlphaRoute more user-friendly.

Comments on AlphaRoute:
> Accessibility and navigability are two real issues for us. I feel that if we find it difficult to move around it and access it – then I think learners are going to be in worse shape. This has been my experience to date.

SELF-MANAGEMENT/SELF-DIRECTION

One unsuccessful feedback form was returned.

Level(s) researched: LBS Levels ACE

No resources were reported at this level.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better:

- The resources were of superficial depth
- AlphaRoute does not add significantly to materials already available

Recommendations:

I can see more value in the students being directed to one website – with questions/answers/discussion to assist the student to learn everything they can from the site. Once they are comfortable/knowledgeable navigating the career website, they will be able to transfer these skills to gather information from other sources.

Comments on AlphaRoute:

Adults I work with are results oriented. They use the computer for one specific task at a time, such as searching www.jobbank.ca**.**

SCIENCE (BIOLOGY and CHEMISTRY)

Two unsuccessful feedback forms were returned.

Level(s) researched: LBS Levels ACE

Recommendations:

There are some excellent Science (Biology) websites in the Library Services Section. Some of these websites have interactive activities and quizzes that could be incorporated into Demonstrations Ontario.

For Chemistry, the researcher felt that there might be some value in developing stand alone topics to assist the student with learning difficult topics, for example, chemical calculations. If there were a resource for "Chemistry in the Environment," this might make textbook selection easier.

Comments on AlphaRoute:

AlphaRoute is easily accessible for learners and teachers. Once a password has been established, learners can access useful Reading, Writing and Numeracy materials, especially at the lower LBS levels. (Biology)

Students do not have the patience or time to work through an "all in one site" type of program. Adults like to have the resource more focused directly to the topic they're interested in. (Chemistry)

COMPUTERS

Six feedback forms were returned by three researchers working separately; five were considered successful. It should be noted that one of the "successful" searches was at LBS Level 2. Others may not consider this a successful search.

Level(s) researched: LBS Levels 2 to 5.

Useful Resources (with suggestions for improvement):

*1. Café – Cyber Search***:** Consists of a description about the internet; demonstrates how to use a search engine to locate information; contains two Treasure Hunt activities for the enhancement of learners' internet searching skills. It can be used to introduce internet searching.

*2. Newspapers (**The Learning Edge – Issues 3 & 5, The Northern Edge – Issue 3**)***:** These newspaper issues contain some basic computer exercises/quizzes (e.g., "Learn to Use a Search Engine" and "Treasure Hunt." Both of these exercises are also located in the Café building in the Cyber Search section, "Computer Quiz. It is more like a questionnaire about the learner's ability to apply basic word-processing skills, "Using the Internet to Find Work" and "Learning about Chat Rooms" – this exercise informs and quizzes learners about chat etiquette. By our college policy, students are not allowed to use "Chat-Lines.")

*3. Employment Building***:** Demonstrates different technological tools available in the workforce (includes "E-learning By Computer").

*4. Mailbox***:** Learners have their own AlphaRoute e-mail account. This is strictly limited to sending messages to other learners registered in AlphaRoute (i.e., cannot e-mail anyone who does not have an AlphaRoute e-mail account; also cannot send any attachments with the e-mail).

5. Mouse Games: This section has many games to enhance learners' mouse skills (i.e. clicking, double-clicking, dragging, etc.). "Mouse Games" can be used to improve mouse handling (i.e. co-ordination) in a fun way

6. Resource Centre: Many higher level Communications activities involve the search of information on the Internet to complete the specified tasks. The higher level Communications activities (Levels 4 and 5) currently use a basic word processor with no formatting features (i.e., no bold, tabs, text alignment, etc.); therefore, the development of advanced word-processing skills is limited. There are some Communications activities that have minor "glitches" (the print button doesn't work with some exercises or the check answers button fails to display the answers).

7. Research: *the Internet*: This is a good Level 5 resource for most new students and provides the kind of information any computer user might benefit from. It's a lengthy intro to searching for information on the Internet, starting with a brief explanation of the web, complete with three hotlinks: shopping, libraries and newspapers. It explains browsers and URLs, and gives a pretty thorough set of learning activities about keywords and search engines. The resource gives enough background without being technical. It is very practical – a student would immediately be able to put the skills to work. The hotlinks connect students to excellent information resources directly. The learning activities are relevant and clearly laid out.

8. Research: *Evaluating Information on the Internet*: This activity asks students to identify and compare the sources and purposes of information provided on several sites. It also provides information about "clues" in URLs and asks students to consider the accuracy and quality of the information on a site. It is *a*n excellent approach to evaluation of information, alerting students to differences in caliber of info. I predict that students will enjoy the exercises and use the information. All students would benefit from this activity. I could see it as a standard part of the orientation process in my program. I don't like the portfolio, I would like to see references to it removed, but maybe others really like this. Perhaps more exercises of this type. A series of scavenger hunts would be good.

9. A few activities (no titles provided) in the activity section with regard to computers with opportunities for students to be exposed to computer related activities in various subject areas. There are also opportunities for students to learn how to navigate the site through the Information Desk, which is very informative. Also, students are exposed to chat rooms, discussion rooms, e-mail, games and other activities that require the acquisition of computer related skills.

Recommendations on AlphaRoute:

1. Currently AlphaRoute is focusing their activities on lower LBS levels and internet searching activities. Development of other data-processing software exercises is needed as many college upgrading students are pursuing further education/training.

2. Computer activities to introduce/enhance other data-processing skills (e.g., spreadsheet, database management, presentation software) are needed. Currently

AlphaRoute activities focus mostly on internet searching, basic e-mailing, and basic word-processing.

3. IMHO, the curriculum area most lacking in resources for computer learners is activities on file management: naming conventions, storage strategies, directory structures, file extensions, and "drive differentiators."

4. Incorporate a specific section for computer related skills. In this section include basic instructions for the following: clicking, dragging, cutting, pasting, typing in answer boxes, saving, printing, MS Word, MS Excel, Internet research, chat rooms, discussion rooms, research tools, etc. An advanced section could also be developed.

5. Include more instruction with regard to computer skills on AlphaRoute. The overall environment for AlphaRoute is simplistic and unprofessional. With the resources available on the internet today, there could be an updated, more user-friendly, professional presentation of materials.

6. Use a professional looking, user-friendly home page that would contribute to better feedback from students and staff. Perhaps the cartoon like characters and links could be changed to photos.

Comments on AlphaRoute:

Comment # 1 on <u>successful</u> search: I like the AlphaRoute facility, mostly because my students like the opportunity to work in this medium. I need to work more with all of its elements to know how far I can depend on it for planning, tracking progress, etc., but I like the idea of many of the activities. The trouble is, the pool of available curriculum needs to be a lot bigger.

The List of Activities does not readily turn up computer-based activities. Under "Theme", it shows two "Computers-general" activities, and does not include this one.

It's ironic that a computer-based medium provides so little in basic computer supports, e.g., mouse exercises, keyboarding, etc. This seems to me to be the area AlphaRoute could develop, even if it is simply a group of hotlinks to other sites where these activities are available.

To me, the portfolio feature creates problems because it holds students up until I can find a moment to sign in, go to the site, find their work, go through it, and feed back to them. I find this does not work well in my classroom. I just tell them to print it and hand it in instead, and to keep on going unless they have a question or concern.

Comment # 2 on <u>successful</u> search: There are a lot of good aspects to the AlphaRoute site, and I was able to find college appropriate materials within this resource. In fact, I have

begun to promote several of the AlphaRoute activities to my students and have received positive and negative feedback from students and staff. I believe I can successfully use AlphaRoute as a supplemental resource for some activities for my students. Nevertheless, the problems and impracticality of the AlphaRoute have lead to reluctance by students and staff to utilize and benefit from this service. Hopefully, these challenges can be resolved so that more people can take advantage of the positive aspects of this resource.

Comment on <u>unsuccessful</u> search: Overall, there are a lot of computer-related activities in AlphaRoute, but the presentation of these resources is not organized or practical. When students log in to the Alpha Route site they see many pictures. They don't know where to start or how to progress from one activity to another. As a result, an instructor or facilitator is constantly needed to inform and assess student activity. In order to use the resources efficiently and effectively, instructors would have to spend a lot of time sifting through the activities to find appropriate activities, and then they would have to come up with some type of outline to help students to navigate through the various areas that are available. This would take considerable time on the part of the instructor. After that, students would have to be closely monitored to make sure that they understood and completed various activities. This would be an ongoing process. On the other hand, these types of features could be incorporated into the program, making it more useful and practical for instructors and students.

THE ALPHAROUTE ENVIRONMENT: SUMMARY COMMENTS

Overall, few AlphaRoute resources were found at the higher levels (LBS 4, 5 and ACE) in the area of Communications, Math, Self-Management and Science. Computers fared somewhat better. Several useful resources were found, although AlphaRoute was found lacking in areas like data processing, spreadsheets, database management, and presentation software. It should also be pointed out that some appropriate writing activities were found in Communications and Math that could be adapted as remedial and supplemental materials.

Researchers made three key recommendations to improve the AlphaRoute environment. The first was to increase the "pool of curriculum" by developing/adding in-depth, level appropriate activities for academic upgrading students. The potential for use is there, but not the critical mass of materials and activities to attract and sustain faculty and student interest.

The second recommendation was to make AlphaRoute more user-friendly and navigable. The researchers, themselves, had difficulty moving around in the

environment. Several problems with portfolios were cited as were problems with assigning and tracking student activities. One goal would be to reduce student dependency on mentors.

The third key recommendation was to give AlphaRoute a more professional, sophisticated look. This is especially true of the home page which features cartoon-like graphics. Some of the upgrading students thought the site was geared to children. As a result, the teacher thought the students might not take the activities seriously.

Despite of the lack of level-appropriate resources, researchers saw value in AlphaRoute for their students and felt that college educators would be inclined to use it if concerns, like those discussed above, were satisfactorily addressed.

SECTION # 2: DEMONSTRATIONS ONTARIO

COMMUNICATIONS

Eleven feedback forms were returned by two research team members working together. All searches were considered successful. Each is described in detail on the following page.

Overview for Demonstrations Ontario – Level 5 Writing Skills:
Demonstrations Ontario Level 5 Writing Skills includes 11 Demonstrations. The researchers liked Demonstrations Ontario because it was easy to use.

The Demonstrations could be assigned in Level 5 and ACE and serve as ongoing or exit learning activities in both levels.

General Suggestions for Improving the Demonstrations:
The teacher support for each demonstration must be enhanced. The teacher files to be downloaded for each activity were very repetitive to the demonstration activity and in many cases not much more helpful. The website would be much improved if students received detailed information to complete each task. In every case, a sample of the final product would be very helpful for the student to use as a model. Students learn from example and if each demonstration provided concrete illustrations, this would vastly improve and clarify the tasks to be completed.

As with most of these resources, the more generic, and less single-text specific that can be made, the better to facilitate their timely use by many LBS programs. When a specific text is indicated, but no useful detail given as to the content of that text, the value of the demonstration is lost; in fact, such a "demonstration" would amount to little more than an idea which would then have to be developed by an instructor who works in a program that likely uses different texts from the one(s) specified for use in the demonstration.

The more information provided, (for instance, generic instructions, copies of relevant text sections, or recommended alternate textual resources, etc.) the easier it will be to use the demonstration.

Another gap which should be addressed is the need for teacher support for marking scheme purposes. A final evaluation rubric for each demonstration would be

valuable. This rubric should be shown on a separate page that could be photocopied.

Time should be taken to more carefully proofread the content of each demonstration for spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Activities contained duplication of text and errors in subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, and apostrophe use.

Recommendations:
Specific texts were often suggested (Foundations Communications 3, Guidelines for Report Writers) but the sources were not properly documented to allow for these books to be purchased as a resource. Could College Sector Committee and AlphaPlus supply each college with copies of the relevant sources?

Comments on Demonstrations Ontario:
Demonstrations Ontario is user-friendly and easy to navigate. The website has great potential for use with LBS students. Our research encompassed Level 5 Writing Skills only, but a quick look at Level 4 Writing Skills indicates many more useful Demonstrations would be readily available; however, the teacher support for each level must be improved.

Communications Demonstrations

1. Bed and Breakfast – design a brochure: This resource should appeal to more creative students and to those with internet experience. We believe that this activity would be better suited to the ACE learner, perhaps as an exit demonstration.

This is a high-level demonstration that requires success in writing a five-paragraph essay as a prerequisite to its completion. As such, this demonstration would be better suited to the ACE student as essay writing is one of the final, most important components that are taught before college entry. (If a student has mastered essay writing, he or she is ready to tackle college-level writing tasks.)

There is duplication of text in the description of the demonstration – this must be eliminated. There are minor typos/spelling errors that also must be corrected. A required resource (Foundations Communications 3, Unit 4) is not currently available at Northern College, but the task which using that resource entails (a five-paragraph essay) could be easily assigned/taught without that specific resource, or with other texts. We suggest making the specified resource a "recommended" resource and /or naming other compatible resources/approaches. Actual bed and breakfast brochures would also serve as good resources for examples of the brochure to be produced.

2. *Research on internet, writes report about resorts*: Student researches and compares three resorts according to facilities, price, and size. Student prepares a paragraph recommending the most appealing resort.

This demonstration requires the student to use the Internet and to support a final recommendation. This should appeal to creative students and those with internet experience. This activity would be useful as an ongoing demonstration for Level 5. The task requires the student to research and organize information and then present the findings in paragraph form.

This demonstration refers to Foundations Communications 3, Unit 4 for summarizing and writing paragraphs. A review of these concepts would be helpful for the student. Another resource (Green Skills Practice Book) is referred to but not available at Northern College. Basic guidelines should be designed for this material. We suggest making the specified resource a "recommended" resource, and/or naming other compatible resources/approaches.

The description contains errors in apostrophes, subject verb agreement, and pronoun agreement. These errors should be corrected. An evaluation form would be helpful with this resource.

3. *Research work field, do research paper*: Student is required to research and report on non-traditional jobs available to women in the field of trades, Science and technology, or the computer industry, and employment trends along gender lines in these fields.

This could easily be used at an ACE level. This would best be assigned to the female learner who is pursuing employment or education in a non-traditional (for example, male-dominated) field.

The instructions are quite vague as to what the student is to actually produce, as well as regarding the scope of that work. This should be clarified. Is the student to examine the history of employment opportunities for women in this field, the present reality, or the future prospects for females in the field, or even all three? How long a paper? What form of presentation?

The text resources specified may not be in general circulation.

4. *Research, prepare manual for hotel cleaners*: The student researches the cleaning of hotel rooms via the internet, and then prepares a room-cleaning "manual" for the cleaning staff at an imaginary hotel. This resource is well-organized and clear in its directions/expectations. The specified resource (a website) is easily accessible at any college. This is a particularly appropriate resource for "workforce-oriented" students, and a good reading and writing task in general. Assuming the specified website is easy to use, and presents the required information in a clear manner, this resource is basically fine as is.

An expectation as to the required length of the finished manual (2 – 3 pages?) would be helpful, otherwise. The individual instructor can specify this, after looking at the volume of pertinent material presented on the indicated website. Perhaps a generic rubric for the evaluation of writing tasks could be developed.

5 Student creates 3 newspaper ads, writes to customer: The student takes on the role of a copywriter in a newspaper advertising department. The student uses information provided by the instructor (who takes on the role of a potential advertiser), and produces three newspaper ads and a "proposal" (letter) for the customer. The student then informs him/her as to the three potential ads.

This is a good resource, but two of the three resources needed (Guidelines for Report Writers, Foundations Communications 3) are not supplied.

Student must be a competent computer user of Word. This activity could also be used at the ACE Level.

6. Student does resume, cover letter on work story: The student adopts the role of an experienced production line worker who is applying for promotion to a Shift Process Supervisor's position via a resume and cover letter. This is a very relevant exercise, particularly for students who are headed toward the workplace. It is especially well-suited to the learner who is close to seeking employment. It could be used at the LBS 5 or ACE level.

As with other Demonstrations at this level, the text Foundations Communications 3 is specified as a required resource. This text will not be readily available in all LBS programs. It is not used at Northern, so the Demonstrations (and this one in particular) should be designed and worded in such a manner as to readily adapt themselves to a variety of textual resources. Any current text/computer program that teaches resume and cover letter writing could be used in this case, and this should be acknowledged in the demonstration.

7. Student is taxi driver – writes a robbery report: Student pretends to be a taxi driver who has a robbery occur. Student is to write a short report for the company to have on file as well as be interviewed by the instructor (who takes on the role of a police officer.) This demonstration should appeal to the creative student. It combines reading, writing, and speaking in an effective way and is well-suited to the learner who is workplace-oriented. It could be used as an exit Level 5 or an ongoing ACE demonstration.

This demonstration refers to Foundations Communications 3, Report Writing and Guidelines for Report Writers. A review of report writing guidelines would be helpful for the student. Instructions should also be given for writing an incident or occurrence report.

A specific evaluation guide for both the written report and oral report would be helpful.

8. Student writes report as quality control inspector: In the role of a manufacturing plant Quality Control Inspector, the student first reads a handout entitled "A Day in the Life of a Quality Control Inspector," then studies the writing of inspection reports in a specified textbook, and finally writes an inspection report based upon the reading.

This demonstration is workforce-oriented and quite appropriate for the LBS Level 5 learner. As with most of the Demonstrations presented here, the use of a particular text is specified: Foundations Communications 3. This text – with permission to photocopy – should be distributed to the colleges wishing to utilize the demonstration.

9. Using the internet to read instructions, write a summary: Student adopts the role of a machine operator, and then writes and presents a summary of a set of instructions from the internet. This is a good resource because the instructions for both student and teacher are quite clear, and it is always good to use computers and the internet as teaching tools. It is also helpful to have an "evaluation guide."

This is a good Level 5 workforce-oriented demonstration. It also provides valuable practice in public speaking.

As with so many of the Level 5 resources available on Demonstrations Ontario, this demonstration specifies the use of a preparatory text that is not provided with the demonstration. The necessary material should be reworked/reworded in such a way as to facilitate the use of alternate texts in different LBS programs. Preparatory exercises are specified, but information as to <u>what</u> is covered in those exercises is <u>not</u> provided. This should be rectified to permit ready adaptation of the demonstration to different texts.

10. Write report and letter as customer service representative: In the role of a department store customer service representative, the learner is to write a "report" to his or her "manager" and/or a "letter of recommendation."

The concept behind this resource is good, but the instructions, organization and materials provided are inadequate to permit its ready use.

This resource would be good for the Level 5 workforce-oriented learner, but it is all but unusable (at least at Northern College) in its present form. The initial page of this demonstration (where the "demonstration title" appears) is the wrong one. The description that is provided is the same one as for the prior demonstration for the "Quality Control Inspector." (The tasks required are not interchangeable.) This must be rectified.

Several specific texts (not provided) seem to be needed to use this resource. As the substance of those texts is not given, this unit will not, in its current form, be readily adaptable to the use of alternate texts. Another of the specified resources ("Department Store Customer Service Representative – Reports and Letters") also does not seem to be provided, unless the title given is erroneous. This is a poorly organized resource, overall.

11. *Write report for insurance claim*: The student takes on the role of an insurance broker, reads a set of rough notes (taken from a "conversation" with a client) detailing a car accident, and then summarizes the notes in the form of an incident report for claim purposes.

This resource provides valuable practice in converting rough, disorganized point-form notes into an organized, coherent whole. The skills called upon there will be useful for later essay writing at the college level.

As noted above, this resource is especially good for the college-bound student, particularly those headed toward careers that require report writing (though any future post-secondary learner will benefit).

If photocopying rights could be acquired, it would be quite valuable to include a copy of the relevant section of the recommended text, in order to facilitate easy, immediate use of this resource.

A valuable addition would be including more detailed instructions, steps, material, and/or examples for each demonstration that the student must complete.

MATH

Five feedback forms were returned by two research team members working separately; four searches were considered successful. The researcher who identified the lack of appropriate Math materials at higher levels provided no commentary, so a brief description of the successful Demonstrations is provided below.

General Suggestions for Improving the Demonstrations:

- Question values should be written
- List topics rather than chapter numbers
- State what skills are needed to complete this activity at beginning of demo
- Indicate that answers be given in sentence form

Math Demonstrations

***1. Create table, graph of donations to United Way*:** For this LBS Level 5 activity, the student must call and track the donations made to the United Way. It uses Math and computers (could use EXCEL) together. It provides clear instructions that are not too detailed. This demonstration is a good real-life example that could be used as fundraising activity the student might participate in such as hockey or ringette.

Suggestions for improving this demonstration:
- Include a brief explanation of the role of the United Way in communities – how are funds raised, where does money go , how is it allotted

- Provide an explanation and examples of public, private or non-profit

- Include a supplemental learning activity, e.g., have learner create circle graph as well. State which type of graph he/she likes better and why.

***2. Student uses ratios to solve a variety of business*:** In this LBS Level 4 demonstration, the student uses ratio and proportion to solve business problems such as comparing stock investments, and automobile insurance. The demonstration included good ratio and proportion questions for business students. It uses company names that student will recognize. It also provides an evaluation guide with a marking scheme that clearly tells student what he/she needs to pass/redo or review. One suggestion for improvement involves chapter 6 (Essential Mathematics). It is not clear what the topic is. The topics should be listed rather than the chapter.

***3. Measure windows and doors, calculate cost*:** In this LBS Level 4 demonstration the student calculates the trim around the window and doors of his/her house. This demonstration engages the student who can use a room at his/her home to complete the activity. It covers many numeracy units. The instructions to students identify what topics are covered, e.g., metric and decimals.

Suggestions for improving this demonstration:
- For all numeracy demos the topics should be listed rather than list chapter numbers

- Question values should written

***4. Calculate hourly rates, weekly gross, monthly wage*:** This LBS Level 3 activity features word problems that include commission, wages and OT for apprentice electricians and clothing store clerks. It's a good resource because the questions are clear and easy for students to read and understand what is being asked. It also provides a variety of OT and commission problems.

Suggestions for improving this demonstration:

- Important to review percentage before doing demo
- May need to explain commission to some students
- Important to see if student has ever worked (paid work) before

SELF-MANAGEMENT/SELF-DIRECTION

Five successful feedback forms were returned by two research team members working together. All searches were considered successful. Generally, the researchers agreed that the Demonstrations were excellent. They well organized, creative, user friendly and engaging. They took learning styles into account. The only recommendation was that educators should submit samples of best practice.

Each of the five LBS Level 5 Demonstrations is briefly summarized below.

Self-Management/Self-Direction Demonstrations

1. Restaurant manager hiring staff, conducting an interview: The learner puts herself in the position of a Restaurant Manager and has to decide what qualities she wants in a restaurant employee. She then has to write a 100 – 500 word advertisement for each position available. At the conclusion, the learner has to set up a meeting with the teacher to arrange a mock interview. The learner is the interviewer and the teacher is the interviewee. The demonstration would be more useful after resumes, skills assessments and interviewing techniques have been completed.

2. The learner researches a variety of topics, read summarize and prepare presentation to a targeted audience on selected topics (life skills): Evaluation of the presentation only is made. This demonstration crosses several domains and is very useful. It is particularly useful when students are in the final stages of their program. More emphasis could be placed on the research procedures.

3. Research mental illness (specific topics provided): Presents information to a group. This demonstration crosses several domains and is very useful. It is particularly useful when students are in the final stages of their program. More emphasis could be placed on the research procedures.

4. Research work field, do research paper and prepare an oral presentation: This demonstration was considered easy to do. It was suggested that the demonstration could also include a good summary topic building on previous work and tie into student's self-assessment.

5. Create a resume: Students create a resume to reflect experience gained while working on a production line in hopes of competing for a job that has more responsibility. The student also creates a cover letter. This is a very realistic topic which could be used near the end of the program. One suggestion is that it provide more information on handling interviews and stress.

SCIENCE (BIOLOGY and CHEMISTRY)

Two unsuccessful feedback forms were returned. No resources were found at the ACE level for either Biology or Chemistry, although it was pointed out that there are excellent Science websites for Biology on AlphaPlus in the Library Services Section. Some of these websites have interactive activities and quizzes that could be incorporated into Demonstrations Ontario.

DEMONSTRATIONS ONTARIO: SUMMARY COMMENTS

The Biology researcher was very supportive of the Demonstrations Ontario compared to AlphaRoute, and liked this site because it was easy to navigate. Most researchers found Demonstrations at an appropriate level. They described the Demonstrations as relevant, and noted their appeal to "creative" or "workforce-oriented" students. They further described them as well organized, user-friendly and engaging. They commented on different contexts and uses for the Demonstrations. Instructions to carry out the Demonstrations were described as "clear" and "not too detailed."

Key recommendations centred on the need for additional teacher support, including the provision of learning materials (e.g., texts, handouts) and evaluation tools for the Demonstrations. Samples of best practice should be provided. Finally, it was felt that the website would be more effective if students received the kind of detailed information they needed to complete a particular task.

A final recommendation made was that on-line Demonstrations and a Science site become part of AlphaRoute.

For Chemistry, the researcher felt there might be some value in developing stand alone topics to assist the student with learning difficult topics, for example, chemical calculations. A resource for "Chemistry in the Environment" might make textbook selection easier. Furthermore, students do not have the patience or time to work through an "all in one site" type of program. Adults like to have the resource more focused directly to the topic they're interested in.

SECTION # 3: LIBRARY SERVICES

COMMUNICATIONS

One successful feedback form was returned by one research team member. The following areas were researched:

1. Library Services
2. Mini-Collection
3. Index to Web Resources

This researcher had not borrowed materials from AlphaPlus for some time and began her research by using the instructions in the "On-line Access for success: Library Catalogue-AlphaCat" booklet from the series received from AlphaPlus. She received additional instructions by e-mail from staff at AlphaPlus. Others may find these instructions helpful. They are therefore included as appendices.

See **Appendix C** for general instructions and additional support from AlphaPlus.

Comments on Library Services: Use the library. If you can't find what you want, let the librarians know. They are keen on building ACE resources. They are also very helpful.

1A. Library Services: AlphaCat Website (Library on-line catalogue)

What worked:

- Opening page lists updates to library services

- Several search options; function of each is clearly explained.

- Instructions for borrowing

- Book information: standard library information includes contents, etc., but there is an excellent summary, with notes, cross references, etc., in recognition that the borrowers are all located at a distance from the library and cannot just hop next door to check out the stacks.

- Resources can be borrowed for up to four months

- Can request up to 50 items

- Postal charges to and from library are paid by the library

- Great on-line support from librarians and webmaster either by phone or e-mail

- Access to Patron Information: lists materials borrowed or requested; you can change your requests, renew (if no one else has requested the materials), etc.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better:

- Navigating for ordering materials – more adept computer researchers may not have the same difficulties the researcher had

- Moving from bookbag to request screen can't be done (See Appendix B)

- Requests must be placed one at a time: multiple requests are not possible at one go. You need to use the back key to return to the list to place another request.

- There are tips to follow to make it easier. Software for the catalogue is expected to be in place later this year.

1B. Library Materials to support project style activities for ACE: Communications and Math are well-supported, but Sciences are not. For example, the topics of renewable energy, sustainable resources, alternative fuel sources, etc., did not have any library support. These were some topics we have been considering for writing and research activities for our ACE Communications students.

The librarians recognize this gap and are developing their resources. Suggestions from the colleges would be most welcome as they move to boost this area.

2. Mini-Collection: This is a collection of resources assembled with the help of the librarian to suit your particular needs. The librarian will give you a tour of the library, discuss your resource needs, and help you create a mini-collection based on those needs.

Comments: The library doesn't carry multiple copies of student texts, but their materials are generally reproducible. Postal charges to and from the library are paid by AlphaPlus.

3. AlphaPlus Index to Web Resources: This is a list of about 800 websites for administrators, practitioners, and learners. Some of the websites have activities, practice materials, etc., readily available for learners. This list is growing and the library is looking forward to adding websites to support the ACE Curriculum.

Comments: A topic such as "On-line Learning and Distance Education" showed 14 pages of websites on the topic. One page provides information on about three websites.

The Index is set up alphabetically and is easy to navigate.

4. Just for Interest: Workplace Literacy Materials for Levels 4 and 5: As part of an assignment for the Eastern Region curriculum development project, I investigated resources for an Upgrading workforce literacy course.

Comments: There is a large amount of material available ranging in level and content. Very helpful.

SELF-MANAGEMENT/SELF-DIRECTION

One unsuccessful feedback form was returned by one research team member.

Comments on Library Services: There are so many resources listed, that it is not helpful. If I need new print resources, I would check book stores first or local libraries, or colleagues. They are not readily accessible, do not add significantly to the materials already available, and require too much time to research.

Recommendations: Try to establish what level the material is useful for (target audience) and if it is background material, text book or user manual.

SCIENCE (BIOLOGY and CHEMISTRY)

Seven feedback forms were returned by two research team members each working separately. Six successful searches were in the area of Biology and one, somewhat successful, in the area of Chemistry.

Biology A brief description of each successful Biology resource, all at the ACE level, is provided below:

Comments on Library Services: The Alpha Library Research Index has many web resources that are excellent sites for use in ACE level Biology. The problem lies in the number of tedious steps required to finally access them. The Library suggests there are eleven Science related websites, however only four of these are relevant to Senior Level Biology. Two of the websites http://www.ericse.org/ and http://www.enc.org/are excellent virtual lab sites. Students would require detailed instructions and confidence in navigating the internet. Shockwave Download is also required to play some labs.

The following websites can be accessed by going to the AlphaPlus website, clicking on Library Services ⇨ Index to Web resources ⇨ Sciences.

1. Website http://www.ericse.org/

This website has links to many interesting Biology sites and virtual labs. For example, by clicking on the following links the learner can follow lab procedures to actually dissect a frog.

Go to AlphaPlus website ⇨ Library Services ⇨ Index to Web resources ⇨Sciences ⇨ website: http://www.ercise.org ⇨ http://www.stemworks.org ⇨ links (left hand corner of screen) ⇨ Science Teaching and Learning ⇨ Interactive Frog Dissection ⇨ New & Improved Net.frog and then begin dissection.

What worked: This Interactive lab is excellent for visual learners and relatively easy to follow once learners finally access the site. It has real-life graphics and detailed descriptions for each step in the procedure. It is hands-on and mimics an actual on-site Biology Lab Dissection without the real frog! The site consists of 5 main sections: Set-Up, Incisions, Organs, Clean Up, and Quiz.

The lab is excellent for use as an ACE Biology Lab activity or for a hands-on demonstration. Ideal for Health or Animal related post secondary goals. This virtual lab could be used components of ACE such as Human Anatomy and Physiology. Students could assess their knowledge with the user-friendly quiz available upon completion of the dissection.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better: There are many steps involved in accessing this resource through AlphaPlus. The site can be slow in responding and learner must be quite accurate with mouse maneuvers when working through the lab steps. The Net.frog classroom integration site had no data listed when accessed. The site requires Quicktime plug in and image map capability. Learners require ability to search, and navigate the Internet as well as basic computer mouse skills.

Suggest adding the specific link Net.frog to the AlphaRoute library/web resources site so that learners do not have to go through endless steps to access it.

2. Website http://www.enc.org/

This website has links to many interesting Biology sites and virtual labs. For example, by clicking on the following links the learner can follow steps to actually construct a heart circulation model, diagnose and treat heart problems, explore operating room procedures, and perform open heart surgery

Go to AlphaPlus website ⇨ Library Services ⇨ Index to Web resources ⇨ Sciences ⇨ website: http//www.enc.org/ ⇨ weblinks ⇨ Science topics ⇨ life Science ⇨ health ⇨open heart.

What worked: The activities are hands-on, creative and relatively easy to follow. Explanations are in depth and students enjoy the activities. The graphics are good and there are real-life scenarios.

There are excellent supplements covering many components of ACE Biology and links to other sites such as NOVA and National Geographic. Ideal for all Biology streams. The virtual labs could be used for lab components of ACE.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better: The resource is excellent; many steps are involved in accessing it from AlphaPlus, however.

3. Website http://literacynet.org/Science/

This website has links to Electronic field trips, On-line Museums, NOVA and NASA.

Go to AlphaPlus website ⇨ Library Services ⇨ Index to Web resources ⇨ Sciences ⇨ website: http://literacynet.org/Science/ There are endless links. For example, clicking on www.nationalgeographic.com nature and conservation index, learners and instructors can access hundreds of sites.

What worked: This resource could be used as a supplemental learning activity particularly for Biology units concerning population growth. The On-line Museums are creative and user-friendly. Learners can actually tour various world renowned museums and investigate a variety of Science related topics. The national geographic links have up to date information on topics such as, Environmental Sciences.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better: Initial website could be more creative with better graphics. Not visually appealing. The resource is excellent however many steps are involved in accessing it from AlphaPlus.

4. Website *http://literacynet.org/polar/pop/html/home.html*

This website follows a team of scientists as they study the effects of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in the Antarctic. The current temperature and time at the Palmer Station in the Antarctic are displayed. The project is described in detail.

Go to AlphaPlus website ⇨ Library Services ⇨ Index to Web resources ⇨ Sciences ⇨ website: http://literacynet.org/polar/pop/html/home.html

What worked: Interesting, engaging, up-to-date, and well organized. There are many suggested learning activities and user-friendly. It has an activity link for teachers and students with on-line quizzes. This resource could be incorporated into Biology units on Biogeochemical cycles or population growth. It could also be used for Chemistry. The site has links to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which has additional links to several other interesting Biology sites.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better: The resource is excellent although there are many steps involved in accessing it from AlphaPlus.

5. Website *http://worksheets.teach-nology.com/*

This website has links to many Biology sites. By clicking on the following links the learner can follow steps to complete interactive activities in the study of plant and animal cells.

Go to AlphaPlus website ⇨ Library Services ⇨ Index to Web resources ⇨ Sciences ⇨ website: http://worksheets.teach-nology.com/ ⇨ subject matter (under the heading teaching reviews) ⇨ Science ⇨ Biology ⇨ cells alive http://www.cellsalive.com

There are also links to other sites such as a unit on Microscopy, Infectious Diseases, and Viruses.

What worked: The site creative and will appeal to visual learners. It has a large number of topics and activities suitable for all aspects of Science. Site also has on-line quizzes.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better: The researcher experienced many pop-up ads while using this site. The site is not entirely user-friendly. A lot of information appears on the webpage and the instructor must search various areas to finally access suitable materials. The site is not entirely "free." At the top of the webpage is a list of various subscriber levels (is gold, platinum, etc.) Instructor must scroll below all of this to finally find the suitable links which are free. Could be confusing and frustrating for some learners. Eliminate pop ups and any services which are not free.

There are also too many steps involved in accessing it directly through AlphaPlus.

6. Website http://www.enc.org/

This website has links to many Biology sites and virtual labs. By clicking on the following links the learner can follow steps in an actual simulated Bio lab to determine if a patient has a specific disease.

Go to AlphaPlus website ⇨ Library Services ⇨ Index to Web resources ⇨ Sciences ⇨ website: ***http://www.enc.org/*** ⇨ Science Topics ⇨ Life Science, click on Biotechnology ⇨ BioInteractive virtual labs ⇨ http://www.hhmi.org/biointeractive/vlabs/

What worked: Students like the interactive labs and indicate they are relatively easy to follow once they access the site. The site has good graphics and real-life scenarios. There are excellent supplements covering many components of ACE Biology that are ideal for Health or Animal related postsecondary goals. The virtual labs could be used for lab components of ACE, in particular, areas such as Cellular Processes, Human Respiratory, Circulatory and Blood Systems, Human Digestive Systems, and Genetics.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better:

There are too many links required to access from AlphaPlus.

Please note: Additional sites on dissection forwarded by AlphaPlus include:
http://www.chem.ox.ac.uk/vrchemistry/openpage.html
http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/frog/
http://www.froguts.com/flash_content/index.html#loaderdone (this site provides flash-based interactive demos)

Chemistry The researcher was unable to find any virtual lab resources for Chemistry, but identified a good Chemistry website:

AlphaCat – Web Resources – Sciences – http://www.enc.org – weblinks –science topics – chemistry (Physical Sciences)

See http://www.chemheritage.org/EducationalServices/webquest/home.htm for a sample selection.

What worked: This resource is an interactive collection of 65 sources for online activities – all free and at an appropriate level for adult students. The activities are engaging, user friendly and creative. It is a good resource as a supplemental learning activity and it also meets the laboratory component for the ACE curriculum.

What was missing, didn't work or could work better:
Adults are results oriented. They use the computer for one specific task at a time, for example, searching for common uses of magnesium hydroxide. They do not need a general location for a smattering of information.

The researcher did not feel that this service overall has potential for use with college science upgrading students. These students represent a small fraction of the upgrading population. Considering cost, interest and numbers investing in this service would not be a good use of financial/people resources at this time.

LIBRARY SERVICES: SUMMARY COMMENTS

Besides borrowing AlphaPlus resources from the on-line catalogue or by phone, members can have a mini-collection of resources compiled with the help of a librarian. While there was general satisfaction with Library Services, one researcher identified an accessibility issue. S/he felt there were too many resources listed and would be more inclined to check out other options, such as a book store, for locating resources.

Another researcher identified difficulties associated with the borrowing materials using the AlphaCat website. At present, there is software being developed which will make it easier to borrow several books from the catalogue at the same time. It seems that Communications and Math (but not Science) were well supported by the library.

Library Services also includes the AlphaPlus Index to Web Resources, a list of about 800 websites, many of which are appropriate for ACE students. A third researcher found several good web resources in the area of Biology using the AlphaPlus Index to Web Resources. The resources were excellent for ACE Biology students. The problem is the number of steps required to access the resources. It took almost ten steps, for example, to get to one resource alone. Students would require accurate and detailed instructions (and confidence) to navigate the Net.

One recommendation was made in the way of a pitch to other college educators. That recommendation is: Use the library. If you can't find what you want, let the librarians know. They are keen on building ACE resources. They are also very helpful.

ALPHAPLUS RESPONSE

A preliminary report of the research initiative was sent to AlphaPlus where it was shared with Centre staff who had collaborated with the CSC. In general, AlphaPlus welcomed the recommendations and where possible would try to implement them. Staff commented on the three separate AlphaPlus services and offered support. These are presented in point form. See **Appendix D** for the complete response from AlphaPlus.

AlphaRoute:
- In the context of blended learning, AlphaRoute is not intended be everything to everyone.

- AlphaRoute is a collection of learning resources that can be used in any number of ways to meet the needs of the learners and faculty.

- AlphaRoute includes tools such as discussion boards, cyber search, note pads, word lists, dictionaries, and games that can be used by faculty to support areas such as Science, Math, Communications, and Self-Management/Self-Direction.

- As a learning environment, AlphaRoute can be used to find other resources that may include software, websites, and print-based materials.

- Most of the areas reviewed were the older activities developed by the field in the first five years of development which focused on lower level activities.

- The AlphaRoute team will look at ways to include resources or links to resources in the areas of basic computer skills and Science on AlphaRoute.

Demonstrations Ontario:
- The Demonstrations Ontario website is a repository for Demonstrations developed in the Ontario LBS field and as such has no control over the content.

- AlphaPlus will ensure that recommendations made by the researchers are forwarded to MTCU for consideration.

Information Resources (Library Services):
- There is a need to undertake user education to help faculty in the College sector (and other sectors) to optimize the use of the library catalogue and information/resource services.

- AlphaPlus has started to create user-education materials as part of the Pathways Project and will keep the CSC informed of progress in this area.

CONCLUSION

The CSC research initiative was successful in meeting its objectives. It was considered particularly successful in increasing colleges' awareness of the kinds of resources and supports AlphaPlus provides. Volunteers from seven college academic upgrading programs extensively searched three AlphaPlus services: AlphaRoute, Demonstrations Ontario, and Library Services. They discovered many useful, appropriate-level resources and discussed how these resources could be improved for use in programming. They also identified many gaps in resources.

The researchers examined the services for accessibility, navigability, potential for use with college upgrading students, and support for teachers. They were generally pleased with the features of Demonstrations Ontario and Library Services, but found them wanting in AlphaRoute.

Of the three AlphaPlus services researched, Demonstrations Ontario was clearly considered the most valuable in terms of providing useful student resources. Although there were some unsuccessful searches in the area of Math and Science, researchers generally liked the Demonstrations Ontario website because it was easy to navigate and because the Demonstrations they found were level-appropriate, well-organized, relevant, and engaging.

Researchers made three key recommendations for Demonstrations Ontario, all of which centred on the need for additional teacher support:

1. Include the provision of learning materials (e.g., texts, handouts).
2. Ensure that evaluation tools are included with the Demonstrations.
3. Provide samples of best practice for the Demonstrations.

Few AlphaRoute resources, on the other hand, were found at the higher levels (LBS Levels 4, 5 and ACE) in the area of Communications, Math, Self-Management/Self-Direction, and Science. Researchers did find some LBS Level 3 writing and Math activities they felt they could use as remedial and supplemental materials. Computers fared somewhat better. Several useful resources were found, although AlphaRoute was found lacking in areas like data processing, spreadsheets, database management, and presentation software.

CONCLUSION

Researchers made three key recommendations to improve the AlphaRoute environment:

1. Increase the "pool of curriculum" by developing and adding in-depth, level-appropriate activities for academic upgrading students. The potential for use is there, but not the critical mass of materials and activities to attract and sustain faculty and student interest.

2. Make AlphaRoute more user-friendly and navigable. The researchers, themselves, had difficulty moving around in the environment. Several problems with portfolios were cited, as were problems with assigning and tracking student activities.

3. Give AlphaRoute a more professional, sophisticated look appropriate to students in higher level academic upgrading programs. This is especially needed for the home page.

Despite the lack of level-appropriate resources, researchers saw value in AlphaRoute for their students and felt that college educators would be inclined to use it, if researchers' concerns were satisfactorily addressed. It was also suggested that on-line Demonstrations and a science site become part of AlphaRoute.

AlphaPlus Library Services provides a number of services, two of which were reviewed more extensively by the researchers. They are addressed separately.

Resource Collection: Generally, the Library provides level-appropriate resources for Communications and Math. Science is not covered. Two accessibility issues were identified. One was that there were so many resources listed that it was not helpful. The other issue involved borrowing resources using the AlphaCat website. At present this is not a completely smooth process. Development of new software will eventually make it easier to perform tasks like borrowing several books from the catalogue at one time.

AlphaPlus Index to Web Resources: The Index contains a list of about 800 websites, many of which are appropriate for ACE students. One researcher found several excellent web resources in the area of Biology using the Index. One accessibility issue was identified – the number of steps required to access the resources. It took almost ten steps, for example, to get to one website alone.

One researcher made a strong recommendation to other college educators to use the library and contact the librarians who are very helpful and keen on building ACE resources.

In fact, the role of the AlphaPlus staff was instrumental to the success of the entire initiative. The staff provided clear direction up front and strong support throughout. They also undertook an initiative of their own; staff reviewed the ACE learning outcomes and cross-referenced them with their own services.

In response to the various recommendations and observations made by the researchers, AlphaPlus has offered to:

- look at ways to include resources or links to resources in the areas of basic computer skills and Science on AlphaRoute
- forward recommendations about Demonstrations Ontario to MTCU which sets the guidelines for the Demonstrations
- work with college teaching faculty looking for ideas on using types of activities related to more recent work such as the Skills at Work series, and
- explore options to further develop its Science resources.

AlphaPlus has also started to create user-education materials for optimizing the use of the library catalogue and information/resource services. Above all, AlphaPlus emphasizes the importance of working collaboratively with colleges to maximize the use of resource acquisitions.

APPENDIX A: Feedback Forms

FEEDBACK ON SUCCESSFUL SEARCH
FOR
COLLEGE APPROPRIATE MATERIALS

Please complete one sheet for each resource which you found. In the case of a library resource you may want to group a number of resources under one heading.

RESEARCHER: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

SUBJECT: _____

TITLE OF RESOURCE:

LBS LEVEL(S):_____   **ACE:** _____

Resource is available on   □ AlphaRoute
                                             □ Demonstrations Ontario
                                             □ Alpha Library Services

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCE:
I like this resource because (e.g., well organized, creative approach, user-friendly, addresses particular learning style, engages students, easy to use, etc.):

I would make the following recommendations regarding the use of this resource (e.g. with particular type of student, as a supplemental learning activity, to introduce a concept, as a remedial resource, etc.):

What recommendations would you make for improving this resource or developing new materials to improve the usefulness of this resource, (e.g., more exercises, better explanations, easier access or navigability)?

RECOMMENDATIONS
What recommendations would you make to the CSC and AlphaPlus for the development and/or acquisition of additional materials or resources in the area you researched?

COMMENTS ON THE SERVICE YOU RESEARCHED
What is your opinion of the service (AlphaRoute, Demonstrations Ontario, Library Services) which you researched? What comments do you have about accessibility, navigability, potential for use with college upgrading students, and support for teachers, etc., of this resource?

SUMMARY OF UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH
FOR
COLLEGE APPROPRIATE MATERIALS

RESEARCHER:

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

SUBJECT:

TITLE OF RESOURCE:

LBS LEVEL(S):   **ACE:**

I was unable to find any resources which I believed would be of assistance to college faculty and/or students.

I examined the following: (check all that apply)
- □ AlphaRoute
- □ Demonstrations Ontario
- □ Alpha Library Services

COMMENTS: Indicate which of the following statements apply and contributed to your evaluation:

□ There were no resources.
□ Resources which I found were at a level too basic for college programming. (Indicate what LBS Level the resources you found would be appropriate for.)
□ The resource was not appropriate for adults.

COMMENTS: Indicate if there is potential for them to be adapted for use with adults.

□ The resource was not suitable for a college learning setting. (Why not?)
□ Other considerations which resulted in your decision. (E.g., too much time required to do, too much teacher assistance required, does not add significantly to materials already available, not readily accessible, etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS
What recommendations would you make to the CSC and AlphaPlus for the development and/or acquisition of materials or resources in the area you researched?

COMMENTS ON THE SERVICE YOU RESEARCHED
What is our opinion of the service (AlphaRoute, Demonstrations Ontario, Library), which you researched. Although you were unable to find appropriate resources, what comments do you have about accessibility, navigability, potential for use with college upgrading students, and support for teachers, etc., of this resource?
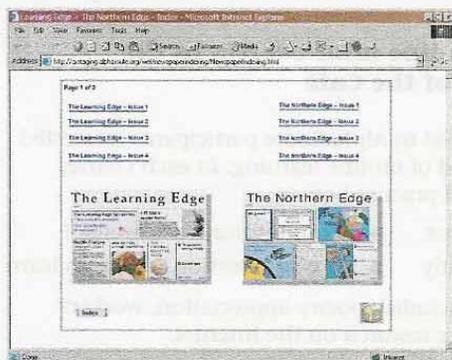
APPENDIX B: AlphaPlus Support, Example # 1

Try AlphaRoute on your own!

College Edition 2005
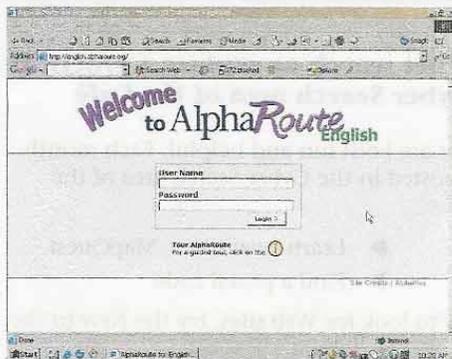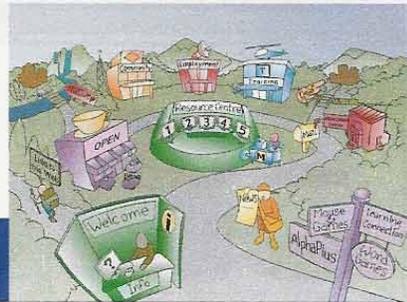
Go to AlphaRoute

▶ Ask your instructor for your user name and password.

▶ In your Internet browser, type in the address: english.alpharoute.org

▶ Type in your user name and password.

▶ Click on **Login >**.

Access the interactive newspapers, The Learning Edge and The Northern Edge, in News

Use the index to find articles by topic.

▶ **Health:** "Less meat more beans" discusses how to find less expensive high protein options to fit your budget and your diet.

▶ **Work:** "Top 10 Interview Questions" highlights questions that are often asked in interview settings. Print them for reference.
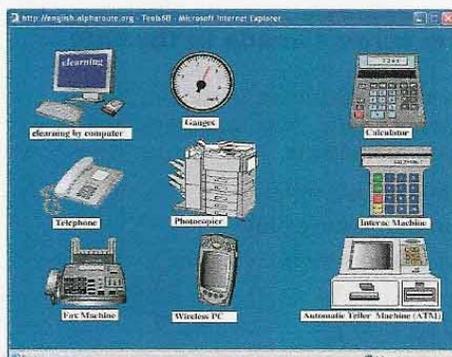
Learn how to use technology at work in Skills at Work

A tool kit displays machines with keypads used in work environments. Presentations on how each machine is used, practice activities, followed by demonstration activities and quizzes are here.

▶ **elearning area:** Learn about how employers use computers to train new hires at work.

▶ **Gauges:** Learn where gauges are used and how to read different types.
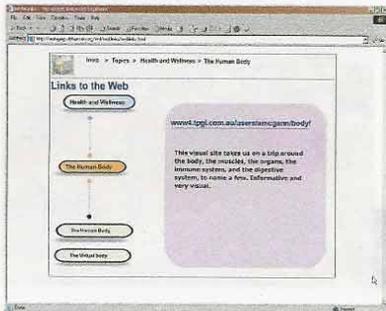
Explore live Web sites organized by topic in Links to the Web

Web sites listed by topic and sub-topic with descriptions and direct links to the sites can be found here. With an audio supported help function, and an easy-to-read graphic layout, you can explore Web sites such as:

▶ **Health and Wellness:** A look inside the human body
▶ **Work:** Steps to employment in Ontario
▶ **Math:** Practical money skills

Conduct an Internet search or explore a practical Web site in the Cyber Search area of the Café

Cyber Search activities are both fun and helpful. Each month, a new Web search is posted in the Cyber Search area of the Café. For example:

▶ Find a recipe
▶ Look for a job
▶ Learn how to use MapQuest
▶ Find a postal code

If you're not sure how to look for Web sites, try the New to the Internet activity first.

Participate in on-line mini courses in the Discussions area of the Café

Mini courses are offered to AlphaRoute participants interested in exploring the world of on-line learning. In each course, participants learn and practise how to:

▶ Explore the Internet
▶ Work independently
▶ Communicate using email
▶ Use a discussion system to learn

Course topics have included: poetry appreciation, workers' rights, and conducting research on the Internet.

Meet learners from across Canada in the Café

Adult literacy learners in the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland are using AlphaRoute.

▶ Meet new friends in the Chat room.
▶ Post your writing in the Writing Club.
▶ Read the writing of other learners.

APPENDIX C: AlphaPlus Support, Example # 2

Letter to AlphaPlus Borrowers

Dear AlphaPlus Borrower,

Good news! AlphaPlus has improved your borrowing privileges:

We now pay outgoing and return postage for all resources borrowed by you. You can now receive a mini-collection for personal and/or organizational use. You can now borrow resources for four months, and renew them for another four months. At the end of the second four-month period, we ask that you return resources so they are available for other borrowers to use. You can now use your Borrower ID (located on the front of your AlphaPlus library card under the bar code) to:

- Make requests for up to 50 resources at a time from the on-line catalogue.
- Renew resources borrowed by you in the on-line catalogue at the end of the initial four-month borrowing period.

If other borrowers have requested these resources, we will notify you to return them.

These changes will take effect when you borrow new resources or renew resources already checked out. The due date and postage supplied for any resources borrowed before this mailing will remain unchanged.

We will continue our policy of not charging you overdue or late fines. If borrowed resources become lost or damaged, we will work with you to find an affordable solution.

To start borrowing resources or to check your borrower account, go to http://alphaplus.ca. Move your mouse pointer over Library services on the left-hand navigation menu, click on Library catalogue, and click on Click here to enter AlphaCat. You will then be able to search for and request resources, or renew resources by clicking on Patron Info. To access Patron Info, you will need to enter your Borrower ID number, which is located on the front of your AlphaPlus library card under the bar code.

If you have lost your library card, or do not have a personal library card and would like to get one, we will gladly issue you one! Please go to http://alphaplus.ca/alphacardapp.html and fill in the on-line application form.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at 1-800-788-1120, extension 116.

Thank you for borrowing resources from AlphaPlus!

Sincerely,

AlphaPlus Information Resources Team

On-Line Access to AlphaPlus Library

The path to use to enter the AlphaPlus on-line library Catalogue is:

alphaplus.ca ⇨ library services ⇨ library catalogue. The Quick Search page will automatically be displayed.

To search for the terms in the Canadian Literacy Thesaurus Subject Browse column, click on Browse Search at the top of the screen in the on-line catalogue, and on the dropdown menu on the Browse Search page, choose Subject Browse and enter the terms in the list, one by one.

To search for the phrases in the General Keyword Search Strategies column, use the Quick Search, and, on the dropdown menu, choose General Keyword. If the evaluators are using the Browse Search to search for Thesaurus Terms, and they want to do a keyword search, all they need to do is click on Quick Search at the top of the screen, and the Quick Search page will come up.

Book Bag and the Request Function

We're hoping to install a newer version of the catalogue by the end of the year and, hopefully, it will simplify things. For example, the bookbag list that you send yourself will let you automatically link back into the on-line catalogue record - which isn't the case now. It will not let you place bulk requests (alas).

There is no way of going from the book bag back to the Request screen to make multiple requests at one go. The way the on-line catalogue is set up, you can only place one request at a time, but the system does allow you to have up to 50 requests on file at any given time. If you copy your borrower ID the first time you key it in – without spaces, by the way – you can paste it for subsequent titles on the Request screen. If you're interested in more than one title on your search list, you can use the Back key to take you back to the list to place another request. We get a printout each day of the requests that have been made on-line - which means, ultimately, that you actually get the materials faster. Your Request will stay in the system for a year, and when an item you have asked for is returned to us by another borrower, your name will come up when the resource is checked in.

Another advantage of using the Request function is that you can use your Borrower ID to go into the Patron Info section of the catalogue and check out what Requests you currently have. If you no longer want the resource, you can delete the request. When you're in the Patron Info section, you can also see what you have out, and actually renew it for yourself, as long as the due date hasn't past, and as long as someone else hasn't requested it.

Both the Request function and the Book Bag list will let us know here what you're interested in having sent out to you. You may want to try out the Request function to see which of the two you prefer. We're happy to work from either at this end.

APPENDIX D: Response from AlphaPlus

Re: Researching AlphaPlus Resources…A Preliminary Report

Thank you for the opportunity to work collaboratively with the College Sector faculty in researching AlphaPlus Centre resources as they relate to the levels and subject areas in the ACE curriculum. It was a good experience for the staff at AlphaPlus Centre and the college faculty. The exercise heightened awareness of the College Sector needs and AlphaPlus Centre services. We appreciate having a draft copy of the preliminary report and an opportunity to respond to the findings.

I was pleased to see, that, for the most part the findings were positive. I am not surprised to see that there were some gaps identified with our resources. Traditionally, much of the College Sector has not looked to AlphaPlus Centre for support. Hopefully we can work together in the future to ensure that our services and resources address the needs of the colleges.

We welcome your recommendations and will look to incorporating these where possible.

The research concentrated on three AlphaPlus Centre services:
- AlphaRoute
- Demonstrations Ontario
- Library services

AlphaPlus Centre staff that worked collaboratively with the College Sector staff have the following comments to share on the findings in the report.

AlphaRoute

As mentioned in the Introduction of the report, the LBS field is moving toward a more blended approach to learning and practitioners are beginning to discover how to blend the best features of face to face learning with the flexibility of e-earning. From our perspective, blended learning is not a random mix and match of resources, it is a deliberate inclusion of both e-learning and face to face elements, and a mix of formats, media and experiences so that the most appropriate and effective approach can be used for each part of the learning experience and to help a learner achieve their learning goals.

The AlphaPlus Centre's approach to blended learning is outlined in the Guide to Blended Learning booklet that is part of the Skills at Work Series. Just as an aside, several of the faculty in a workshop that I was in on the Friday morning had not seen this series.

In this context, AlphaRoute is not intended be everything to everyone. It is a collection of learning resources that can be used in any number of ways to meet the needs of the learners and faculty. AlphaRoute not only includes learning activities, but it includes tools that can be used to enhance the learning experience, these tools include discussion boards, cyber search, note pads, word lists, dictionaries and games. These tools could be used by faculty to support topics and areas such as Science, Math, communication, and self-direction.

As a learning environment, AlphaRoute is not designed to be a full curriculum, but it is an area to find other resources that may include software, websites and print based materials. For example, there are many people/companies that provide great resources to support learners in keyboarding, and basic computer skills. Mavis Beacon is one example of a keyboarding software program that could not and should not be duplicated on AlphaRoute. As a learning support, it is recognized that these links in most cases need to be made and are not always known by faculty.

The AlphaRoute team will look at ways to include resources or links to resources in the areas of basic computer skills and Science on AlphaRoute.

It should be noted that AlphaRoute has been in development for almost 8 years. Unfortunately, it seems that most of the areas looked at were the older activities developed by the field in the first 5 years of development. These did focus on lower level activities. More recent content has been the Skills at Work series, the Newspapers and the online support tools such as found in the Café. Many of these activities are not leveled in the same way that the activities in the resources area are and in this way they can be used by different levels with different levels of support and in a way that is appropriate to the learner.

AlphaPlus would be happy to work with any faculty looking for ideas on using these types of activities with college learners.

In 2004 the Ontario Trillium Foundation funded a two year project to review the entire AlphaRoute environment and conduct user interviews (online and face to face) to determine what AlphaRoute should look like and do for learners and

faculty in the next 3-5 years. Currently interviews are happening across the province and areas that have been identified as high priority are very similar to the areas identified in the CSC report.

The CSC report is timely in that we are able to use these recommendations immediately, and upon continued funding over the next few years, implement as many of them as possible.

Demonstrations Ontario

The Demonstrations Ontario website is a repository for Demonstrations developed in the Ontario LBS field. AlphaPlus Centre developed and hosts the website but does not have any control over the content. MTCU set the guidelines for the development of Demonstrations. The website accepts any Demonstrations, as is, that follow these guidelines. We will ensure that your recommendations are forwarded to MTCU for consideration.

Information Resources (Library Services)

To date, the primary focus of our collection has been in the areas of general Literacy and Numeracy within the context of the LBS delivery system. Our collection development strategy incorporates the acquisition of resources across the range of LBS Learning Levels 1- 5 including materials that are appropriate for learners engaged in academic upgrading. We have not specifically addressed academic college curricula in developing our collections but rather have focused on the goal paths, employment, independence and academic upgrading as identified in the LBS system.

The primary gap identified with our library collection was in the area of Science.

To meet the needs to support particular Science curricula we would need to be able to acquire materials in specific subject areas, e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics, on an ongoing basis, and would need to be in a position to refresh these collections regularly to meet future refinements to the ACE curriculum. Print, AV and software resources available from our library shelves form a small part of the catalogued resources. We would also need to further enhance the Index to Web resources to include more web-based resources such as learning activities and PDF documents to support literacy research and practice in the Science areas.

We would be happy to look at exploring options to further develop our Science resources, but we would need to work collaboratively to ensure that we are not replicating resources available in college libraries. We have finite resources and want to maximize the use of acquisitions.

One thing that did become obvious in reading the draft report is the need to undertake user education to help faculty in the College sector to optimize the use of the library catalogue and information/resource services. This need is across all sectors. We have started to create user education materials as part of the Pathways Project. We will keep you apprised of our progress in this area.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to play a role in your professional development. Do come and visit us next time you are in the city. Staff would welcome the opportunity to further discuss the findings with you and explore ways to ensure that we build on this exercise, and continue to work together to ensure that LBS learners have access to the resources that they need to advance their learning.

Anne Parker
Executive Director