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OUT ON A LIM WITH **EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

2002 AVLN Conference: **Sharing Christ Through Technology**

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The 2002 Adventist Virtual Learning Network Conference focused on and developed three major collaborative relationships:

1. **AVLN collaborated with Computing And Missions.net conference.** Approximately 70 participants attended at Southern Adventist University

in Collegedale, Tennessee. Participants learned about “Sharing Christ Through Technology” by experiencing the seamless integration of tutorials, keynote speeches, and breakout sessions between the AVLN Conference and the Computing and Missions Conference.

2. **AVLN partnered with the General Conference Education Department** to bring Don C. Roy, Ph.D., from the Australian Union Conference to focus on developing modules and materials for teaching faith integration. Roy served as facilitator for three well-attended pre-sessions focusing on the integration of faith and learning. Participants

provided feedback to draft modules and generated discussion questions for use in the modules. Soon, AVLN will make available eight modules with video clips and resources to be used in online courses, face-to-face classes, and workshops. These materials will be translated into several languages and made available to the world church as models to be used in multiple ways.

3. On Sunday morning, before the official start of the conference, **members of the AVLN steering committee met with the North American Division**

Technology Committee. Discussion focused on understanding each group’s goals and dreams for Adventist education, as well as the needs of K-12 teachers and the opportunities AVLN can offer. Out of the discussion came two recommendations:

- Together, we recommended a study of the possibility of a joint M.A. in Instructional Technology to be offered by multiple Adventist university schools of education.

- The NAD tech committee recommended to AVLN that when planning conferences, AVLN should target the K-12 teachers in the union where the conference is held, in order to increase the enrollment in pre-conference training sessions.

AVLN conferences have had an increasingly international flavor, and diversity was definitely evident this year. Participants came from many countries including Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Libya, Mexico, Philippines, and the United States. In addition, the mix of educators, pastors, and computer experts made for interesting conversations between sessions and at mealtimes. It became evident that each of us, whether educator or not, was committed to **Sharing Christ Through Technology**, the theme of the joint conference.

This year, we had more Adventist institutions of higher education represented than ever before. Participants came from Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (Philippines), Canadian University College (Canada), Andrews University, Columbia Union College, La Sierra University, Loma Linda University, Oakwood College, Pacific Union College, Southern Adventist University,

Southwestern Adventist University, Union College, and Walla Walla College (all in the U.S.), Montemorelos University (Mexico), and Mount Klabat College (Indonesia).


Keynote addresses during the conference were inspiring! On Wednesday night, Gail Rice, a professor at Loma Linda University in California, served as facilitator for introductory activities that helped participants get acquainted and focused on joyful service. Thursday and Friday mornings, Gordon Bietz, president of Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, gave the devotional talk. Thursday morning, Randy Siebold, a teacher at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, presented his Infinity model for online experiences. He challenged everyone to keep mission central in online experiences. Thursday night, Tony Christopher of Mongoose Technologies¹ shared 12 principles of civilization to build Web communities, a topic of interest for educators, technologists, and missiologists alike. On Friday morning, Jonathan Brauer, from the General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, shared principles for establishing a ministry of technology, his work on the AdventistDirectory.org, and other initiatives from the Archives and Statistics Department.

Technically, we had a first in this conference. Two of the sessions were presented via video conference. On Friday morning, the K-12 participants heard from two secondary-level distance-education programs. Gary Russell, a teacher for the Mid-America Adventist Virtual School (MAAVS), shared how the school began its low-profile experiment with asynchronous courses for secondary students this past July. Since then, it has assisted 21 students. Participants learned how students get connected to courses from Home Study International and Class.com, and how MAAVS teachers were trained. Following Russell's presentation, Shelley Bacon, from Colville, Washington, talked about teaching for AE21.² AE21 is an exciting and innovative education program endorsed by the North American Division's Office of Education and hosted by the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. AE21 reaches students across the United

States by using a variety of communication technologies, including videoconferencing. Bacon explained her use of various technologies, including E-mail, Web-based instruction, videoconferencing, instant messaging, and the Web cam. She also taught a mini-lesson to the participants, which helped them understand how students participate in this type of distance education. Even the experts at the session were impressed with the varied use of technologies in Adventist education.

On Friday afternoon, AVLN participants connected with another 15 representatives in Nebraska. These educators from Class.com, Mid-America Adventist Online School, Mid-America Union Conference, Nebraska Wesleyan University, and Union College made contact with the AVLN conference from a distance. Carole Kilcher, of Nebraska Wesleyan University, facilitated the session from Lincoln, Nebraska. The presenters, Gwen Nugent and Jill Hochstein from Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, talked about blended learning, E-learning, Webcasting, and Internet2.³ The session offered demonstrations of learner-centered, interactive instruction and training using both the Web and CD-ROM. These technologies make it possible to create customized learning environments, adapting the instruction to the needs of the learner and enabling him or her to communicate with the instructor, other students, and external experts. Participants also learned about learning objects, modular development, and embedded assessment.

At the close of the day on Friday, K-12 and higher education participants met separately to brainstorm recommendations and action steps for the following year. The higher-education group developed recommendations for the General Conference Commission on Higher Education and the Adventist Distance Education Consortium. The K-12 group focused on recommendations for staff development for K-12 teachers. The recommendations from both groups can be viewed online.⁴

The conference concluded with Sabbath services. On Friday night, Daryl Gungadoo from Adventist World Radio shared an update of what AWR is doing around the world; and Ronald Vyhmeister, a teacher in the Business Department at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) in the Philippines, gave the vespers homily. John Banks, from the Communication Department of the General Conference, preached on Sabbath morning. Participants left refreshed and challenged to continue their work in **Sharing Christ Through Technology**. 

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REFERENCES

1. For this Web site, see: <http://www.mongooseotech.com/>.
2. For this Web site, see: <http://www.ae21.org/>.
3. For this Web site, see: <http://www.internet2.edu/>.
4. For this Web site, see: <http://www.avln.org/conference/index.html/>.