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THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Bulletin Board on the Cloud
- Improved Programme Guide
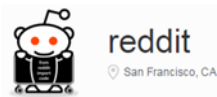- An inspiring innovator

Notable Quotable

"Creativity is contagious, pass it on ."

–Albert Einstein

reddit - A Bulletin Board on the Cloud

Reddit is an open source entertainment, social networking and news sharing platform. It is powered by Python, though initially it was written in Common Lisp [1]. Reddit is a place where community members are always active, finding ways for improving the community experiences. The users of reddit are called *redditors* [1]. The users need to create an account (Figure 1) to avail of the opportunities provided by the platform like posting, commenting and voting among others. However, the trending information/ links can be viewed on the front page of the website without logging in.
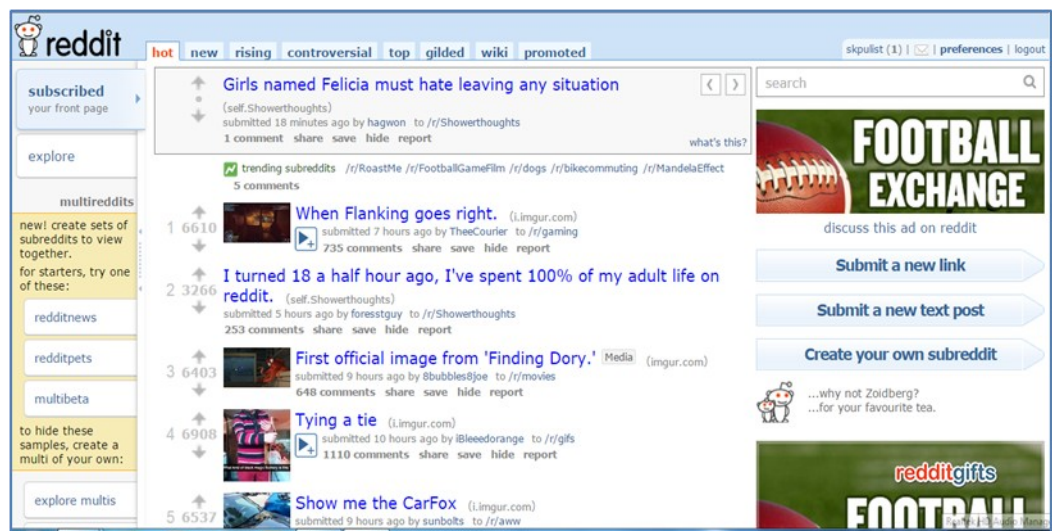

Figure 1: Snapshot of the Reddit Login Page

Reddit is a useful source to know as to what is trending now-a-days on the internet. The cloud application was launched on June 23, 2005 [1] from the University of Virginia by Alexis Ohanian and Steve Huffman (current CEO of Reddit). The word 'reddit' (all small letters) depicts the phrase 'read it'. The site Reddit runs a blog parallel to the front page which is posted with important content and events going on within the reddit community.

The platform provides for the communities to connect with its members, discuss, and

share with them their desired content in an open environment. The content may be related to anything funny or serious. However, any content which is 'illegal; is involuntary pornography; encourages or incites violence; threatens, harasses, bullies or encourages others to do so; is personal and confidential information; impersonates someone in a misleading or deceptive manner; and is spam' is prohibited. Therefore, Reddit has banned certain communities perceived to be offensive to its users at large. A new user policy has been framed by Reddit which has a provision of quarantining and barring the subreddit comments which are either offensive or infamous. The core values which guide the reddit volunteers and the community at large are: *Remember the human; give people voices; respect anonymity and privacy; make deliberate decisions; be doers; the spirit of Lambeosaurus embiggens us all above.[2]*

Reddit provides over 50 broad themes (Figure 2) focusing on different areas of interest to the user community. On an average, over 2,10,00,000 users cast their votes on the reddit and subreddits on a daily basis. Over 9,094 communities created by users are active on the platform. The number of unique visitors on the site during the month of July 2015 was 19,52,09,169. These visitors belonged to 215 different countries from across the globe.
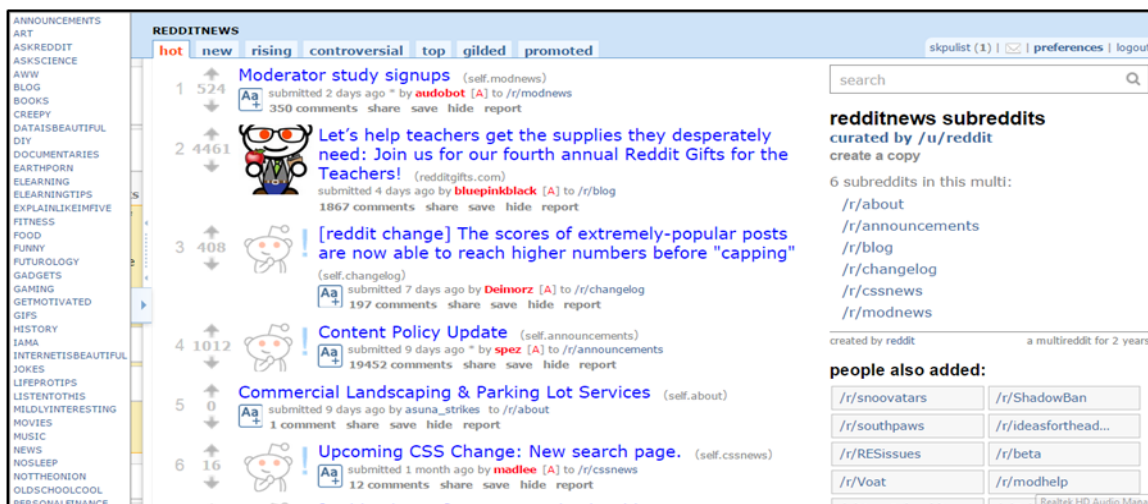

Figure 2: A comprehensive list of subreddit categories at the left panel

subreddit

The platform gives its readers an opportunity to create sub-communities within the broader framework called subreddits. As of now, over 1, 00,000 sub-communities in the form of subreddits are active on the platform. These subreddits are independent in posting of their content and sharing of links. The rules meant for the reddit are equally applicable to all the subreddits. However, the subreddits may have their own additional rules to bind the behaviour of their members in a certain framework. The subreddits are moderated by a team of volunteers to keep it relevant to the changing interest and issues flagged from time to time. The subreddits may focus on any topic ranging from audio, video, news, free *e*-books, recipes to photos to mention a few. The interested users can become part of more than one subreddits by subscribing to it on their front pages.

One of the most popular subreddits is the 'IAmA'[1] which enables the users to introduce themselves to the community e.g. 'I am a _____'. The 'AMA' (ask me anything) subreddits founded in the year 2009 prompts the users to ask questions on any topic. This subreddit is open to all the registered users.

The front page of each of the reddit or subreddits displays the newer posts which are submitted to that page and have been rated highly by the users. Each of the posts provides the users with the facility to comment, share, save, hide and report. The ranking of a post is determined by the period of submission, a resultant of positive versus negative votes and the total count of votes submitted on that page. The positive votes are shown as upvotes while the negative votes are counted as downvotes. Surprisingly, the first ever post submitted (by Alexis) to reddit was down voted (by Steve). Both the users who were involved in this post happened to be the co-founders of reddit.

Reddit provides its users the opportunity to vote for a particular link on the basis of which the priority of the content for display is decided. The stories and links voted most are displayed at the top and those having lesser votes sink. This process goes on continuously addressing the interest of the readers for content viewing based on their liking. The application provides for adding comments on every link, story, image, and object in addition to deciding priority through voting.

Concept of Karma

The site has introduced the Hindu Mythological concept of *karma* which reflects the contribution of the users to the site. Whenever a post uploaded by a user is upvoted, a score is added to the *karma* account on his/her profile. One can enrich his/her profile with *karma* gain by posting useful information, content and links which are liked by other users and upvoted. Giving good comments on topics, posting relevant, funny and interesting information or actively engaging with the content are some of the ways to earn good *karma*. The posts which do not provide an external link are kept in the category of *self posts* or *text submissions* and do not contribute to the *karma* account of a user.

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[1]: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reddit

[2]: https://www.reddit.com/help/contentpolicy

[3]: https://www.reddit.com/about/

Improved Design of Programme Guide for Certificate in Diabetes Care for Community Worker (CDCW) Programme

Introduction

Distance education provides an opportunity to the learners to continue their studies whether they are working or staying at home. The learners are usually adults busy with their family or work at home or office. They may even be staying at remote places. The distance learners are interested in and motivated to study at their own pace, place and time. Therefore, student support services are very important for them. Also guidance at various levels i.e. before admission, during the initial stage and during the theory and practical components is very essential. There are various methods of providing students support like pre-admission counselling, counselling during admission, induction training, providing programme guide, counselling during the programme, etc. Dirr (1999) noted that the student support services refer to a variety of non-academic interactions that the student has with a college or university (as cited in Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004). These may include pre-enrolment services, admission and registration, academic, finance, career counselling, etc. Several organizations print or provide online guidelines and handbooks or online links. Tait (1995 & 2003) said that student support means a range of activities which complement the mass produced material (as cited in Sen & Kamat, 2012). IGNOU also provides student support services to the learners at various points of time like pre-admission, during admission, during the process of course study and after completion of the programme.

Programme Coordinators design Programme Guides for specific programmes providing details about the university, school of studies, rules and regulations of the university, details of programme, theory or practical courses, syllabi, evaluation, and various forms and other related guidelines. The programme guide gives details about the programme and is a guide to the learner for reference at any point of time. This is in the form of a booklet which is a handy support to the learner.

There is evidence to support that pictures, graphics and/or visual images do play an important role in learning (Hiebert, 2009). It is a known fact that a picture is worth a thousand words. A single image can be used to help the learner's visualization, leading to a better understanding of the

material (Glore, 2010; Hauske, 2007; Mupringa, Nora & Yaw, 2006) and in combination with text can convey ideas more easily than textual description alone (Mupringa et al., 2006; Alicia David, 2010). Many studies on both visual and video-based imagery have demonstrated that student engagement and grasp of conceptual information is improved when they are exposed to the visual content (Glore, 2010; Vaughn et al., 2009; Scribner, 2007; Margueratt, 2007, Huett, 2006; Anglin, Towers & Levine, 2001; Alicia David, 2010).

The aim of this study was to find out the usefulness of existing programme guide of *Certificate in Diabetes Care for Community Worker (CDCW)* Programme of School of Health Sciences (SOHS) and to modify it to make it more student friendly.
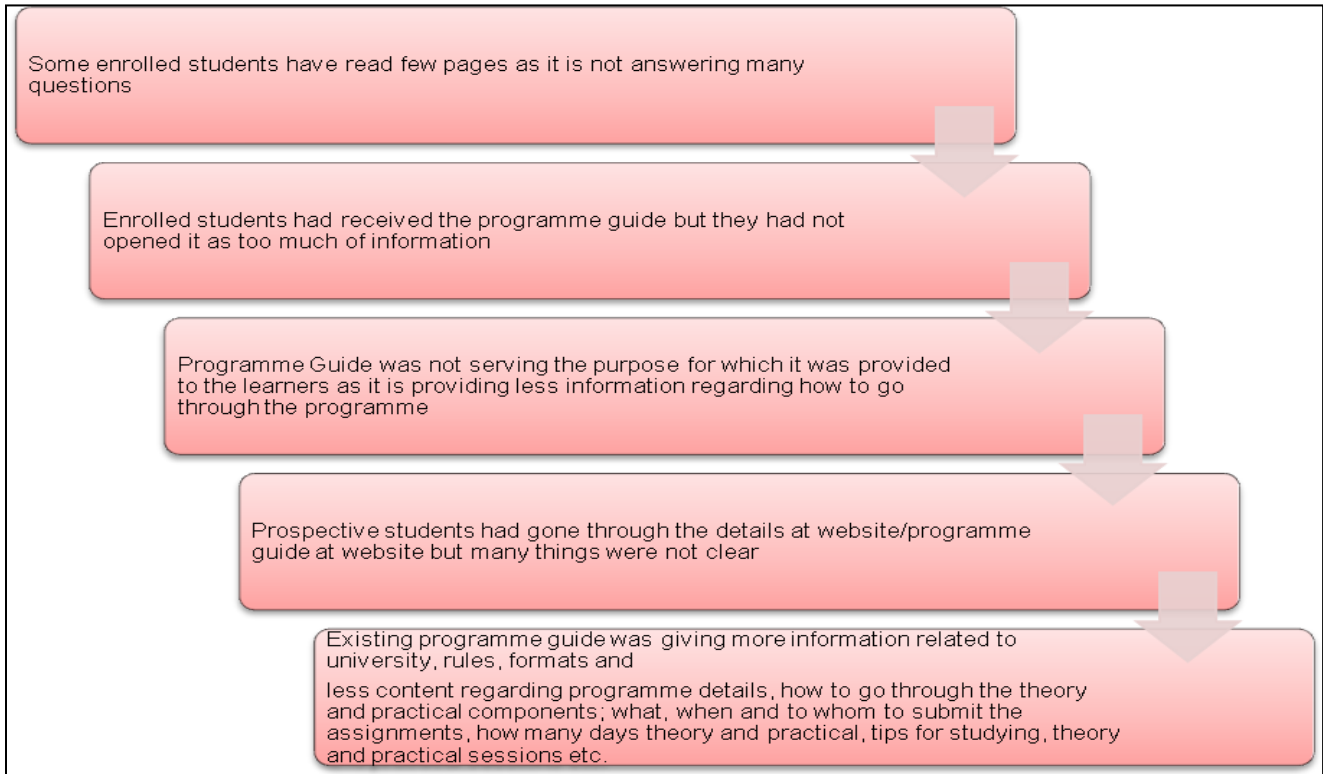
Objectives

The objectives were to:

- Assess the usefulness of the existing programme guide.

- Find out the reasons for the learners not using the existing programme guide.

- Design learner friendly programme guide based on the feedback from the learners.

Methodology

Feedback was obtained from students, Programme In-charges, Academic Counsellors and prospective students. The feedback helped to answer the questions like have you read the programme guide; reasons for reading the programme guide; was it useful, if yes, how; if no, why not;. was the information useful; what was missing; what needs to be added to answer your questions; etc. During visit to many hospitals the author met a number of prospective and enrolled students. It was found that most of the students have questions regarding duration of theory and practical sessions, where and how to complete the requirements, how many days leave was required during programme. They wanted to know how many assignments needed to be completed and where to submit the assignments. They were apprehensive about practical requirements and practical examination. They were worried about other issues such as how to fill up the examination form, from where to get it, from where to get the marks sheet, etc.

The learners provided the following feedback:

Some enrolled students have read few pages as it is not answering many questions

Enrolled students had received the programme guide but they had not opened it as too much of information

Programme Guide was not serving the purpose for which it was provided to the learners as it is providing less information regarding how to go through the programme

Prospective students had gone through the details at website/programme guide at website but many things were not clear

Existing programme guide was giving more information related to university, rules, formats and

less content regarding programme details, how to go through the theory and practical components; what, when and to whom to submit the assignments, how many days theory and practical, tips for studying, theory and practical sessions etc.

The learners provided the following suggestions:

The programme guide needs to be more comprehensive and brief

Student and course related information to be in detail

Frequently Asked Questions to be added

It should be more attractive by highlighting the information and giving information in boxes etc
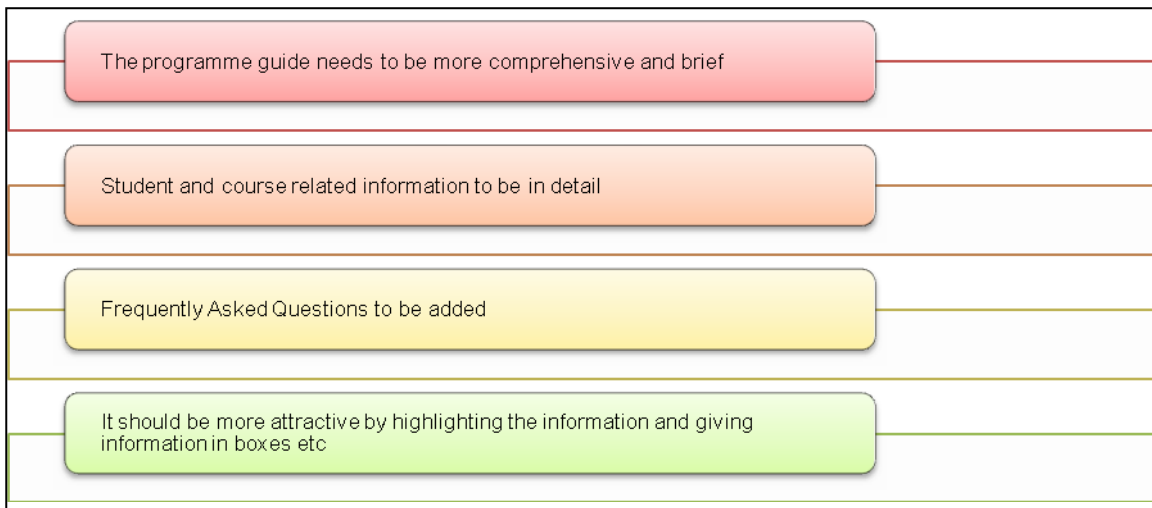
The existing Programme Guide was re-designed and given to 10 learners and 20 others and further feedback was obtained on the modified Programme Guide. This feedback was used to prepare the programme guide suitably.

Improved features of the modified Programme Guide

1. Briefed down the content related to the IGNOU and SOHS introduction.

2. Added Frequently Asked Questions and their answers.

3. Programme Structure, syllabi, programme package, and evaluation were elaborated and important components were highlighted.

4. Tips for theory contact sessions, assignments and practical activities were given and highlighted.

5. Re-organized the content, reduced the number of formats as some of the formats were already given in prospectus or IGNOU website. Therefore links were provided.

6. Important information was given in boxes and highlighted.

Outcome

Revised Programme Guide could not be printed due to administrative reasons and was printed in the already existing format of SOHS.

New Components Added

Three new components were added to the Programme guide:

1. Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (FAQs).

2. Tips for theory counselling, assignment, practical activities, TEE and practical examination.

3. Links were provided.

Samples of new components are depicted in Figure 1, 2 & 3.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Before you start reading the details regarding programme lets go through the FAQ

1. *How many courses are there in this programme?*
   Theory – One for 4 credits; Practical – One for 10 credits.
2. *How many days for contact sessions?*
   2 days theory (12 hours) and 6 days practical (48 hours); Total 8 days.
3. *When the contact session held?*
   As per the schedule made by the Programme In-charge and Academic Counsellor of the Programme Study Centre, contact sessions will be held during week or weekend.
4. *Where is the contact sessions held?*
   At Programme Study Centre contact sessions will be held.
5. *Is it compulsory to attend contact sessions?*
   75% Attendance for theory and 75% for practical contact sessions is compulsory to be eligible to pass the courses and eligible for examination.

Contact Sessions – Compulsory with 75% attendance in theory and practical counselling.

Theory

2 days or 12 hours

Practicals

6 days or 48 hours

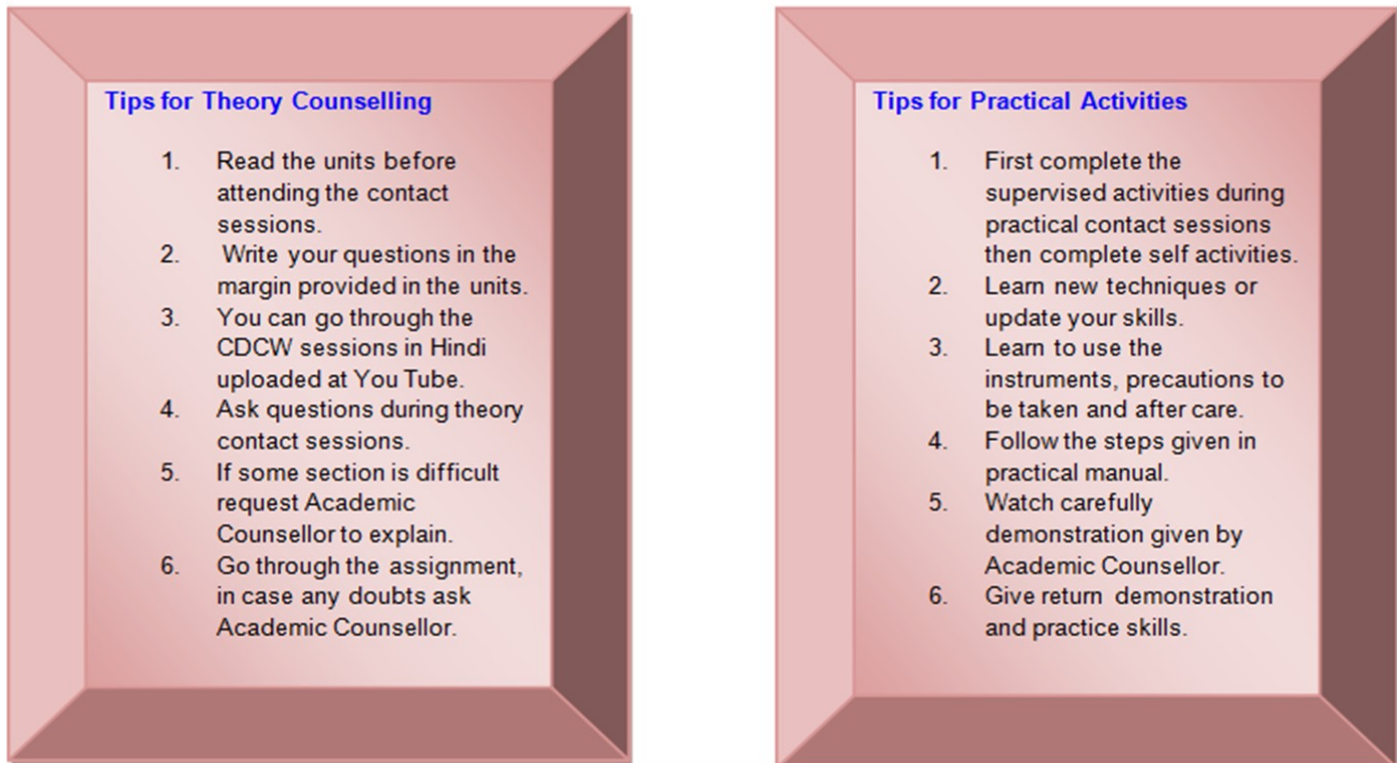Figure 1: Sample of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Tips for Theory Counselling

1.   Read the units before attending the contact sessions.
2.   Write your questions in the margin provided in the units.
3.   You can go through the CDCW sessions in Hindi uploaded at You Tube.
4.   Ask questions during theory contact sessions.
5.   If some section is difficult request Academic Counsellor to explain.
6.   Go through the assignment, in case any doubts ask Academic Counsellor.

Tips for Practical Activities

1.   First complete the supervised activities during practical contact sessions then complete self activities.
2.   Learn new techniques or update your skills.
3.   Learn to use the instruments, precautions to be taken and after care.
4.   Follow the steps given in practical manual.
5.   Watch carefully demonstration given by Academic Counsellor.
6.   Give return demonstration and practice skills.

Figure 2: Sample of Tips for Theory Counselling and Practical Activities

http://www.ignou.ac.in/ignou/aboutignou/division/sed/introduction
http://www.ignou.ac.in/ignou/aboutignou/division/sed/activities/detail/163
http://www.ignou.ac.in/ignou/aboutignou/division/sed/activities/detail/159
https://www.youtube.com/user/ignousohs

Figure 3: Sample of Links provided

References

1.   Floyd, D.L. & Casey-Powell, D. (2004). New Roles for Student Support Services in Distance Learning. *New Directions for Community Colleges,* 128, 55-64.

2.   Sen, Parimal and Kamat, Manoj Subhash (2012). Student Support Services (SSSs) in Open & Distance Learning (ODL) Institutions for Achieving Education for All (EFA), *Social Science Research Network*. Available at http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2018848

3. David, A. and Glore, P. (2010). The Impact of Design and Aesthetics on Usability, Credibility, and Learning in an Online Environment. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 13(4).

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Alexander Graham Bell: The Quintessential Innovator

Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, was a multifaceted personality. He was a scientist, an engineer, a naturalist and most importantly, an innovator. His most famous innovation is the telephone, which can be considered as the basis of today's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) revolution. However, his outstanding inventions also include devices as diverse as a metal detector, a hydrofoil (a kind of hydroplane) and an artificial lung. He also made exceptional contributions towards separating salt from sea water and finding alternative fuels. He was particularly excited over his discovery of the photophone, a kind of device that could allow transmission of sound on a beam of sunlight. He considered the photophone, and not the telephone, as his most important invention. The photophone is recognized today as the progenitor of the modern fiber optics.

Bell lived an extraordinary life. He was born in March 3, 1847 in Edinburgh, Scotland in a family of elocutionists. His grandfather and father were associated with work on speech and both his mother and wife were deaf, which was a strong motivating factor for his experiments with sound and speech. He was the second of three brothers. As a child he was curious about the environment around him. He used to explore and collect botanical specimens and conduct scientific experiments. At school, he remained interested in sciences while being indifferent to other subjects. His father encouraged his interest in elocution. Once his father took him to see an automated speaking machine. Young Bell came back and devised a talking machine at home with help from his brother and monetary support from his father. In 1865, his family moved to London, where he found a good opportunity to conduct experiments on sound.

In 1870, when he was 23, Bell's family moved to Canada. Back in London, both his brothers had died tragically of tuberculosis. In Canada, at Brantfort, his home, he set up a workshop and conducted experi-

ments on electricity and sound. In addition, he started his own school 'School of Vocal Physiology and Mechanics of Speech' in Boston and taught his father's methods of elocution. One of his most famous students was Hellen Keller.

Bell continued to experiment on a device that could send human sounds across a telegraph wire in his workshop although he did not have the requisite wherewithal to devise a working model. However, this situation changed in 1874, when he met Thomas A. Watson, an electrical designer and mechanic. Bell had the ideas and Watson provided the necessary skills to convert those ideas into working products. Bell had mentioned his experiments to two wealthy patrons, Gardiner Hubbart and Thomas Sanders, who immediately recognized the potential of such a device, and began funding the project. Bell used to meticulously keep a record of his experiments in his notebook, which helped him in filing his patents. On March 10, 1876, at the age of 29, he succeeded in transmitting human voice through a wire when he said the famous words 'Mr. Watson, Come here, I want to see you'. He had invented the telephone!

Bell held several demonstrations and lectures to publicize his invention, the telephone. He even demonstrated the device to Queen Elizabeth, who termed it 'most extraordinary'. He also apprised the scientific community as well as the general public of his invention, which led to the clearing of several doubts in the mind of the people about the functioning of the telephone. In 1877, the year he married Mabel Hubbart, the deaf daughter of his friend and benefactor, Gardiner Hubbard, he created the Bell Telephone Company. Within ten years his Company installed over 1,50,000 telephones making it one of the most successful products in the world.

Bell continued to carry out his experiments in diverse fields and invented prolifically. This is evident from 30 patents that were granted in his name; out of which 18 were solely in his name and 12 were with his collaborators. Out of the 30 patents, 14 patents were granted to him for the telephone.

The world lost a quintessential innovator when Bell died in Baddeck, Nova Scotia, Canada, on August 2, 1922 at the age of 75. He was survived by his wife and his two daughters.

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The Innovation Club@IGNOU organized a half day seminar on "Sharing Creative Technological Interventions in ODL" on 22nd September, 2015 at 11.00 a.m. at Conference Room of VCO. The half day seminar had two presentations. The first presentation on 'SLM-LIVE-An Innovative Intervention in SLM" was given by Dr. Sanjiv Kumar, Associate Professor, SOS. The features of SLM-LIVE includes audio, video, web based text, youtube videos and website references in the SLM by using the QR Code technology, may help in engaging the learners in the teaching-learning process. NCIDE is providing technological support for the prototype development and standardization of SLM-LIVE.

The second presentation was on "V-Lrn" by Mr. Anil Aggarwal and his team from the PCTI, Pitampura a Study Centre of IGNOU. While presenting about the V-Lrn, presenter from the V-Lrn team told that this is a web based teaching-learning platform being used to supplement the face-to-face counseling of the IGNOU students of Regional Centre -Delhi 2. She informed that the V-Lrn has enabled the learners to access the study material online, watch the videos of online classes, and interact with the teachers in a live session.

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The National Centre for Innovation in Distance Education (NCIDE) was established in December 2005. It is a facility for promoting, supporting, re-engineering and disseminating innovations in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system. The NCIDE is a ground for nurturing bright and inquisitive minds whose ideas and explorations are expected to revolutionise the ODL system to suit the needs of Gennext. The Centre's goal is to develop a culture of continued search for new and innovative solutions to offer seamless education for all, achieve cost efficiency in its operations and provide borderless access to quality education and training.

We look forward to receiving your suggestions for this e-newsletter. We also welcome your contributions for the future issues. Please send us your emails addressed to the Director, NCIDE at: ncide@ignou.ac.in.