The Faculty Connection

(Website review)

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Site URL:
http://www.facultyconnection.org

Site title:
The Faculty Connection

Objectives of Site:
The site aims to assist faculty of post-secondary institutions to become more familiar with issues, examples and discussion topics associated with using emerging technologies in teaching and learning. The site can help to find courses offered over the Internet and to answer some questions about the usefulness of the technology in the classroom and future issues connected with this issue.

Contents:
- Courses Over the Internet
  This section offers links to 49 samples of courses on internet. The subjects covered include accounting, management, language learning, geography and many more.

- Technology in the Classroom
  This part contains 5 sections:
    - Classroom resources contains many reference links such as British Library, as well as forums where education professionals could share their expertise and experience, various development initiatives (e.g. web-based multimedia objects for different courses), business publishing in cyberspace.
    - Education software and tools informs about available freeware, shareware, links to educational software products, free tools for the electronic classroom, tutorials and many other packages and programmes useful in the educational process.
    - Examples from educators contains 29 records presenting ready courseware like analytic programmes and templates on which students could practice their theoretical knowledge as well as various examples of how world wide web can be used as a medium in learning.
    - Video in the classroom offers 17 links providing ideas about using the video technology in different teaching fields. It also offers the possibility to participate in educational videoconferences.
    - Technology by discipline provides links to many databases and courses relevant to students and teachers within 8 distinct disciplines (e.g. business and economics, mathematics etc.).

- Useful Sites to Visit
  - College & University Home Pages links to 39 colleges and universities providing distance education.
  - Educational Agencies & Organisations offers 55 links relevant to students and educators including associations, grants providers, information about the changes in the field of education.
- *Academic Journals* provides 29 links to online titles with short description of the content.

- *Western Governor’s University link*

There are also two special areas: "Upcoming Events" and "Provocative Articles". The first one informs about current conferences and workshops related to teaching and learning. The Provocative Articles section provides titles and short summaries of books. The subjects range from online developments in universities, distance education, educational use of networks. There is also an area with links very specific to the state of Indiana.

**Technical Aspects:**
The site has two versions – frame version and non-frame version for older browsers. It is relatively quick to load with some of the items being displayed at the early stage of loading process. It does not require any special package to get full use of its resources.

**Overall Issues:**
The site is maintained by a private firm specialising in data gathering and analysis. There is no advertising on this site. It is possible to send feedback to the authors of the site. There is also a discussion forum available on the site, but it does not seem to have any traffic so far (the forum had to be reset in January). Visitors are invited to join the mailing list which is aimed for the exchange of ideas and information as well as providing updates and changes of the site itself.

Besides having a dark background colour (difficult to read) the site uses mostly text with some buttons. Surprisingly, the designers use frames not only for the expert tour but also for the novice view.

**Personal Comments:**
The thing I like best is the special area showing upcoming events, linking to all the major (and minor) conferences related to the topic. In the provocative articles subsection one can find only 20 articles. It isn't clear to me, what is the criteria for selecting these articles and the provocation factor is rather low.

The other link lists are quite good for getting a quick start into the topics. Although the site shows different links for novices, I don't think that the site will help them. The links are just taken out of a database, not all of them have comments, and the lists lack the structure. What I am missing here, especially for novices, is more of introductory text. In my opinion the most efficient way to use the site for intermediate to expert users is to go directly to the quick search facility at:

http://www.facultyconnection.org:591/faculty_connection/FMPro?-db=facultyconnection.FP3&-lay=Layout%20%231&-format=search.htm&-view

**Remarks:**
The site received several awards for excellence in education granted by different organisations and specialised websites.

**Conclusion:**
The site would be most helpful as a good resource of external resources related to education and the usefulness of current technology to this topic.