

PLUGGED IN

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Students in Allen Hall watch as Mass Media and Society is broadcast from the IMC. Students from three other Oregon state colleges also participate in the class.

FROM A DISTANCE

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The days of overcrowded classrooms, limited enrollment and little to no exposure to technological equipment beyond those clunky overhead projectors may be numbered, thanks to the latest technology wave that's sweeping across campuses everywhere, including the University.

With the help of satellites, computers and a few inquisitive professors, Oregon students can take classes from other campuses through ED-NET, a telecommunications network that extends the benefits of live, interactive video, voice and computer data communications to the state as a whole. Through an Oregon State System of Higher Education grant, the University's School of Journalism is exploring ED-NET this term by offering

two required core classes, J201 Mass Media and Society and J202 Information Gathering, via this new network system.

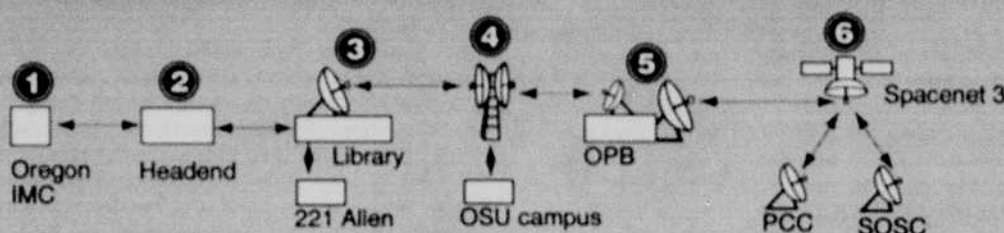
How it all works is that students taking the class at the University are on a cable hook-up with the IMC and Allen Hall. Professor Al Stavitsky, who is teaching J201, and Professor Tim Gleason, who is teaching Information Gathering, give their lectures in a studio in the IMC while students watch them on big-screen monitors in Allen. There are microphones set up in Allen for students who have questions. With the help of two-way audio transmission, the professors can respond to them directly.

As for the students taking these two classes at other colleges, the whole process gets a little more complicated.

Currently, there are about 12 students from Portland Community College, Eastern and Central Ore-

THE FUTURE CLASSROOM

Journalism 201 and 202 are participating in a new distance education program. The program is designed so students can attend classes that may not be currently offered at their schools.



1 The lecture that students at Portland Community College, Southern Oregon State and the students in Room 221 Allen see is taped at the University in Studio A. Besides the lecture, students will see video tape, other class discussions and information put on a video overhead.

2 The Headend controls all input and output during the class. Room 221 Allen is connected directly to the IMC. All audio links between the classrooms here and at PCC and SOSC are two-way. However, PCC and SOSC can't send video of their classrooms. They can only receive video from IMC.

3 The class is then broadcast to a receiver on Blanton Heights and wired to Oregon Public Broadcasting, which then relays it to Vinyard Hill. 4 Vinyard Hill then acts as a relay and passes the signal on to OPB in Portland. OPB in Portland is the central point for the ED-NET.

5 When the signal reaches OPB, it is then sent to a satellite 22 km above Earth. 6 The satellite Spacenet 3 then transmits the signal to PCC and SOSC where the students can watch the class and participate.

MATT GARTON/Emerald



Guest lecturer Tom Wheeler discusses photographic illustrations with the class.

gon State Colleges who are enrolled in these classes and "attend" them by going to special classrooms at their colleges where satellites bring them the lectures via television. Although these students can see and hear Stavitsky and Gleason, the two professors can't see them, but they can hear them and answer their questions with the two-way audio transmission capability.

To further aid communication between the students and professors, all students have E-mail accounts and on-line discussion groups that they are expected to take advantage of. Gleason said more students are interacting with him through these methods than ever before.

"I think this type of classroom setting puts more emphasis on outside communication," Gleason said. "So far, I've answered several hundred E-mail messages and there seems to be more response from students than ever."

Although University students who enrolled in the two classes this term didn't know the classes was being offered on-line when they enrolled, both Gleason and Stavitsky believe students have come around to the idea and are more comfortable with it than they were four weeks ago.

"Initially, there were a lot of people unhappy, but my sense is that people seem to be giving it a chance and are finding it satisfactory," Gleason said. "There's been a large number of students that haven't had any experience with using the Internet and other computer functions so they've had to overcome some pretty high hurdles. I expect it will become less of a problem though as we continue to work with it."

Despite fears over how all of this works, there are benefits to be gained from both campus perspectives.

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