More educational institutions, from K-12 to universities, are embracing technology as a way to deliver information and knowledge. Internet growth, its use by consumers, and our student population's growing familiarity with it have helped encourage educational delivery via the "Net." Instructors are exploring creative ways to use the Internet to facilitate instruction. It is important to know the range of possibilities open to instructors and their institutions. This article provides an overview of those possibilities and offers practical tips to those interested in venturing into the arena of Internet course delivery.

Why the Net?
People are using the Internet in many different ways. Some use it primarily for entertainment. Businesses and consumers buy and sell products via the Net. Educators conduct research via the World Wide Web or use the Internet to enhance instruction. Much research has been conducted on the quality of educational technology. According to Russell (1999), this instruction is equivalent to conventional instruction. Russell examined over 250 research reports from 1928 to 1999, comparing traditional instruction with various forms of alternative instruction, including radio, film, open-circuit television, audiotape, closed-circuit television, audiovisual, satellite, teleconferencing, videotape, and computer-assisted instruction. In each case, the innovation was as effective as traditional instruction. Russell called this the "no significant difference phenomenon." This could be interpreted to mean that regardless of the actual quality of traditional instruction, distance education can be just as effective.

Athletic training or therapy education and the Internet are a perfect combination. The ability to deliver multimedia content asynchronously via the Internet opens many possibilities to the athletic training or therapy educator. For example, success in the profession of athletic training or therapy requires professional education. Students are required to accumulate many hours of clinical experience to acquire the competencies of a certified athletic trainer or therapist. It can be challenging, however, for the athletic training or therapy educator to recreate realistic injury scenarios for practice purposes. Without actual injuries, there is a limitation to the quality and realism of the experience. Well-designed multimedia via the Internet can assist in recreating realistic injury scenarios to facilitate learning.

Using the Internet to deliver instruction is considered distance education. Distance education typically refers to educational programs delivered to geographically separated groups and individuals via audio, video, and computer technologies. Asynchronous and synchronous delivery are terms associated with distance-
education delivery via the Internet. With synchronous delivery, the students and instructor are meeting in “real time.” This can include traditional classroom delivery, consisting of lectures and in-class experiences, but also includes delivery via satellite, cable, and direct broadcast of live television to students at remote sites. Videoconferencing through use of video cameras attached to computer systems and various chat applications that allow users to communicate at the same time while connected to the Internet can also be considered synchronous. There are several variations of asynchronous instruction, including mailing videotapes to students, compressed video, e-mail, and comprehensive Web-based on-line courses. Through asynchronous learning, access can occur at any time of day and at any location and does not involve real-time contact with the instructor (see Figure 1).

The typical elements of an on-line course include the lecture, which can include text and video clips, graphics, useful links, downloadable files, e-mail, and even areas for synchronous contact such as chat. Converting or designing a course for on-line delivery takes time and demands a team approach.

According to Boettcher (1998), as we consider on-line delivery, most of us are in some stage of “www.w.” Either we are waiting for a better time, watching to see what others are doing, wondering what fits for us, or wishing we knew what to do. A team approach can aid in converting course content for on-line delivery. A basic team might consist of content experts, instructional designers, technical support, administrative support, and evaluators. The content expert will most likely be the person teaching the class. The instructor should organize the content and realize that the traditional way it has been delivered in the past might not work for on-line delivery. That’s where an instructional designer can help organize and brainstorm ways to best deliver the content in a user-friendly way via a digital environment. A technical-support person is important to trouble-shoot problems and will also assist in purchasing and continued maintenance of hardware and software. Administrative support personnel can assist in communication with the students and can also help grade and post on-line tests. The evaluator might also be the instructor. Some questions the evaluator should ask regarding the on-line course delivery are, What worked best? What worked or didn’t work for the students? What needs to be changed before the class is offered again?

Questions and Considerations

Before considering developing on-line courses, determine whether the content is appropriate for on-line delivery. For example, if multiple videotaped clips are used in your class, you might want to carefully decide which clips to use in order to enhance file-download times for your students. Also, if a large amount of text is being used as on-line readings, enhance it with graphics when appropriate. Next, consider the element of communication. Determine what type of student–instructor interaction is needed. Student-to-content communication is when the student interacts with information resources such as Internet links and downloadable files. Student-to-student communication requires the students to share ideas and perspectives through on-line tools such as bulletin boards, e-mail, and chat. With student-to-student communication, there is a reduced emphasis on student–instructor interaction. Student-to-Instructor interactions include