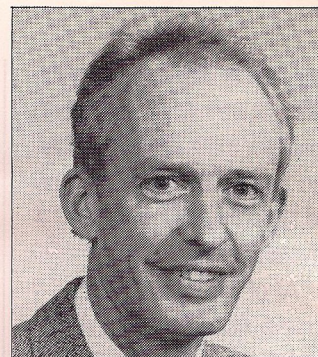


## A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF David Murphy



That pesky MacTCP is acting up again. Either there was an error in Oh no! Another user friendly message, telling me that I can't get onto the network and into my Email account. It's Monday morning and, like many others, I'm engaged in the morning ritual of checking what's come whizzing in over the ether waves. I can't stand the delay, so try again and again to beat the 'pesky' (other more suitable words naturally occur to me) machine. Perhaps I've put in the wrong password, so I very carefully repeat the word ... (Ha, if you think I'm silly enough to give that away, you're wrong, though a clue is that it's something dear to my heart.) Not wanting to be a pest, I resolve not to call Computer Services to find out when the network will be up and running again, at least until the afternoon anyway.

Here at Deakin University's Centre for Management Services, we're approaching the end of the period for preparation of new subjects (and revamping of old ones) for the second semester. It's an intense (and sometimes a little tense) time of the year. Despite the best laid plans, somehow inevitably there are elements of slippage, so that the last few weeks before the handover of materials to production are frantic for all of us. This, of course, is not peculiar to Deakin, in fact has been a feature within all the organisations I've worked.

My current instructional

design work is with a non-award diploma for a union, and one of the new subjects is industrial relations. Naturally this is one we're very keen to 'get right', and so far I've been very happy with the draft materials. The two authors are industrial relations specialists from another tertiary institution, and even though they aren't experienced distance educators, have readily caught on to what is required. The induction into distance teaching has been made easier by having already produced other subjects in the diploma, which have been useful in providing ideas and guidelines. As well, I've been sending drafts of the topics to the union for their industrial relations people to review—the process is working well, and the feedback has been useful.

I enjoy my work at the Centre, as much for the quality of the people here as for the pleasure of helping to produce what we believe are high quality learning materials (quality seems to be the watchword these days, doesn't it). For an economics project, I'm working with perhaps the best desk-top publisher I've come across (name withheld for fear of head hunters). I have sat with her at her terminal (lovely Mac Quadra with double page colour screen) discussing approaches to layout, the details of diagrams and so on, and the discussions have been very fruitful.

Our use of a second colour has been especially beneficial for this subject, with its proliferation of complex graphs and charts. Not only that, by experimenting with new software, we're getting excellent colour separation and are going straight to film, rather than handing laser produced hard copy to the printer.

That reminds me. I've promised to help set up some demonstration software in the syndicate rooms. That's another little job for this week, along with:

- getting feedback from the union on the draft industrial relations materials;
- sorting out the packaging of the cassette tapes in the new communications subject;
- completing the topic on the effects of technology on communications that I've promised to write;
- reminding the authors to send in their photos for inclusion in the learning materials;
- getting the outstanding permission requests in to the copyright officer (an amazingly efficient person);
- checking the airfares for the conference I'd like to attend;
- asking one of the industrial relations authors to 'beef up' the feedback section;
- modifying the latest draft of the book that David Kember and I are producing (*53 Interesting Activities for Open Learning*—watch out for it), and sending the disc back to him in Hong Kong before he goes on holidays;

- making an appointment to see my daughter's maths teacher; and
- picking up some milk on the way home.

In reflecting on my life at work, much of the pleasure comes from its sheer complexity and unpredictability (apart from the regular pickup of supplies on the way home, a legacy of being a one-car family). The delicate interplay between keeping to established timetables and allowing room for creativity and innovation in developing courses makes for a challenging environment in all sorts of ways.

It's also nice to be working in an academic environment (with all its benefits, including the wonderful world of electronic mail), while at the same time having responsibilities to outside client organisations, who effectively pay my salary (a considerable motivator).

But then, perhaps it won't seem so pleasurable next week, especially if my conference application gets knocked back ...



**David Murphy is an instructional designer at the Centre for Management Services Deakin University, Geelong Victoria Australia 3217. He can be contacted by fax on (052) 27 3180.**