INCORPORATING E-MAIL INTO BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS COURSES:

ORGANISING A CONFERENCE

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This paper evaluates an e-mail project involving undergraduate students of business and technical communications courses of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and students of Higher Diploma in Business and Professional Communication courses of the College of Higher Vocational Studies, Division of Humanities, City University of Hong Kong. The students were required to organise a mini-conference using e-mail as the sole medium of communication, thus carrying out a "real world task" in English. The aim was to provide a student-driven programme to increase students' exposure to e-mail for a business-related purpose and to communicate in English doing a realistic task that extended beyond the classroom. Despite initial hitches in establishing contact, e-mail was very favourably rated by students as faster and more accurate than traditional mail, with the facility of comunicating with many people at one time as a distinct advantage. The wider audience gained from including another tertiary institution provided opportunities for students to practise not only their presentation skills but also their social skills as the e-mail correspondence increased interaction and communication between the two universities.