



***“Our long-term aim is that any learner, anywhere in the Commonwealth, shall be able to study any distance-teaching programme.”***

from “Towards A Commonwealth of Learning, 1987”

## THE COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

### WHAT IS THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING?

Founded in 1987 by the leaders of the Commonwealth countries at their meetings in Vancouver, British Columbia, The Commonwealth of Learning has a mandate to ***encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education materials, expertise and technologies, and other resources*** for students throughout the Commonwealth and other countries.

Headquartered in Vancouver, The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is the only international organisation solely concerned with the promotion and development of distance education and open learning. COL is helping to increase the capacities of developing nations to meet the demands for improved access to quality education and training.

Distance education is now a part of the mainstream of education and training. It enables students to learn at the location, time and pace of their choice, for far less money and with far greater results. COL’s goals include maximising the transfer of information, ideas, innovations and resources to support this rapid evolution of distance educational training.

Since 1990, COL has introduced, or enhanced, teaching/training programmes in more than 40 countries; conducted seminars and studies on specific educational needs and established a network of education and technology specialists around the world. They are now contributing to many varied educational programmes, often using low-cost and innovative technologies, throughout the Commonwealth and also to other non-Commonwealth countries. Some of these programmes are described on page three.

COL is governed by an international Board of Governors, whose Chairman is Dr. Ian Macdonald of Toronto, and directed by its President, Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan.

**COL’s Web site:** <http://www.col.org>



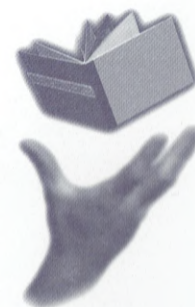
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## THREE YEAR PLAN AND BUDGET, 1997 – 2000

In July 1997, Commonwealth Ministers of Education adopted a three-year plan and budget for COL, which calls for a significant level of additional “project” funding. Commonwealth governments have made commitments to provide the necessary “core” funding.

The following is a summary of the areas of activity and three-year costs separated as “core” and “project” funding.



<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>THREE YEAR COSTS (\$CDN.)</u>	
	<u>Core</u>	<u>Project</u>
Organisational management and operations	\$2,750,000	\$ 0
Capital fund	195,000	0
International consultancy network	250,000	2,400,000
Materials acquisition and development	600,000	1,100,000
Communication and information technology	1,620,000	300,000
Academic and professional services	2,000,000	1,600,000
Programmes and sectoral services	3,840,000	1,600,000
Regional services (information services/co-ordination, professional associations, and teaching networks)	4,815,000	5,000,000
Reserve (project development)	<u>880,000</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b><u>\$16,950,000</u></b>	<b><u>\$12,000,000</u></b>

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Chairman: Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C. Canada  
President: Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan  
Members: His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku. Commonwealth Secretary-General  
Professor C.D. Blake. Australia  
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Ms. Shona Butterfield. New Zealand  
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Advisers: Mrs. Fay Chung. UNESCO  
Y.B. Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Johari Bin Mat. Malaysia  
Mr. John Samuel. W.K. Kellogg Foundation

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**http:**  
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## HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME CURRENT COL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

## THE COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

- Organising an international workshop on the potential for increasing access to basic education for women and girls, in collaboration with Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan and UNICEF, South Asia and co-ordinating the follow-up.
- Developing a technical-vocational teacher training core curriculum for use in the Caribbean and testing its feasibility for transfer to other regions.
- Installing cost-effective video production technology in Maldives and Africa.
- Delivering a two-year Master's of Distance Education degree programme for educators in 15 Commonwealth countries, offered through the Indira Gandhi National Open University, India.
- Developing an extensive training package in legislative drafting now being pilot tested in 14 countries.
- Collaborating with, and co-ordinating the efforts of, eight southern African countries to address a crucial need in training teachers of lower/junior secondary science, mathematics and technology subjects using distance education.
- Acquiring Commonwealth-wide rights for the use and adaptation of learning materials, such as:
  - Workbooks and disks developed by BC Tel in Canada to teach computer applications. At Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan, 30 courses have been implemented using these materials, and over 2,000 students have benefited.
  - Training materials for laboratory technicians developed by SciTech DIOL in the United Kingdom and now being adapted for distance education in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and the South Pacific.
- Establishment of a computer training programme in Zambia, modelled after one originally developed by the Open University in Sri Lanka.
- Undertaking a regional assistance project on behalf of the Asian Development Bank. The \$500,000 contract focused on capacity building in distance education for primary teacher training in the five high population countries in Asia, namely: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and the People's Republic of China.
- Producing "Training toolkits", designed to provide comprehensive manuals for training distance educators.
- Carrying out studies on the potential for distance education and open learning within the national education systems of several countries, most recently in Cameroon, Mozambique and Seychelles.
- Preparing for the first *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning*, to be held in March 1999 in Brunei Darussalam, in celebration of COL's tenth anniversary.
- Receiving a substantial UK Department for International Development grant to initiate new Commonwealth programmes directed at literacy/reading training for both youth and adults.
- Receiving a substantial Canadian (DFAIT) grant to carry out an innovative five-year pilot programme which provides undergraduate scholarships for Caribbean students to study "at a distance" through Canadian post-secondary institutions.

## WHAT IS THE COMMONWEALTH?

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent sovereign states, which provide support to each other, and work together toward international goals. The Commonwealth is described as a “family” of nations, originally linked together in the British Empire, and now building on their common heritage in language, culture and education, which enables them to work together in an atmosphere of greater trust and understanding than generally prevails among nations.

With more than 50 member countries, the Commonwealth represents 25% of the world’s population and a great diversity of races, cultures, creeds and political beliefs.

The strength of the Commonwealth is in continuing behind-the-scenes activities of mutual co-operation, consulting and co-ordination. In addition to the gathering of all Commonwealth leaders every two years, there are regular governmental meetings of Commonwealth ministers of finance, education, agriculture etc. Some of the examples of mutual co-operation include: -

- Establishment of regional investment funds.
- Assistance in helping many countries set up stock exchanges.
- Professional help in macro-economic policy, taxation and information and statistics management.
- Creation and distribution of CS-DRMS, now one of the world’s leading computerised systems for debt management, used by 40 Commonwealth and seven non-Commonwealth governments or central banks.
- Exchanges of highly skilled professionals and technicians.
- The Commonwealth Games
- Establishment of The Commonwealth of Learning.

At a non-governmental level there are over 120 Commonwealth associations providing professional and technical consultation, co-operation and co-ordination of programmes and services.

**The Commonwealth’s Web site:** <http://www.thecommonwealth.org>

### COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

Antigua & Barbuda \* Australia \* The Bahamas \* Bangladesh \* Barbados  
Belize \* Botswana \* Britain \* Brunei Darussalam \* Cameroon \* Canada  
Cyprus \* Dominica \* Fiji \* The Gambia \* Ghana \* Grenada \* Guyana \* India  
Jamaica \* Kenya \* Kiribati \* Lesotho \* Malawi \* Malaysia \* Maldives \* Malta  
Mauritius \* Mozambique \* Namibia \* Nauru \* New Zealand \* Nigeria  
Papua New Guinea \* Pakistan \* St. Kitts & Nevis \* St. Lucia \* St. Vincent &  
the Grenadines \* Samoa \* Seychelles \* Sierra Leone \* Singapore  
Solomon Islands \* South Africa \* Sri Lanka \* Swaziland \* Tanzania \* Tonga  
Trinidad & Tobago \* Tuvalu \* Uganda \* Vanuatu \* Zambia \* Zimbabwe

