





# **Evaluation in e-learning: the European Academic Software Award**

*edited by*

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THE editors would like to thank the current members of the EKMA Board for their support and encouragement in the creation of this book. They would also like to thank past and present members of EKMA, and all the participants in EASA competitions, for making EASA something worth writing a book about.

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Gilles Pérez-Lambert deserves our special thanks for suggesting we do the desktop publishing of this book in  $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}/\text{L}_{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ . Gilles spent a lot of out-of-office hours answering Rachel's nagging questions, debugging technical problems, and designing the stylesheet for this edition. We also wish to thank Maya Little for her design of the book cover.

The editing of this book would have been more complicated without the office space, Internet and printer access, provided by Professor Shirley Alexander and the staff at the Institute of Interactive Media and Learning (IML) at the University of Technology, Sydney. Rachel appreciated IML as a stimulating place to work on the book during her sabbatical leave in 2004.

As editors, we communicated and exchanged many versions of the book between the United Kingdom, France, Australia and New Zealand. We would like to thank each other for a very cooperative effort.

Rachel Panckhurst  
Sophie David  
Lisa Whistlecroft



*For our parents, who saw the birth of the computer,  
and for the children of the e-world.*





## Welcoming address

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Maruja Gutierrez-Diaz

*Head of the Multimedia Unit*

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It is with great pleasure that I accept the invitation to write a welcoming address for this book. In the short but intense life of the *eLearning initiative*, since its inception in 2000<sup>1</sup> as one of the first EU answers to the ambitious objectives of the Lisbon Council<sup>2</sup>, we have seen a fast and deep evolution.

Technological aspects, be they as important as robust software or broadband capacity, have a decreasing relevance as they are often taken for granted. In many professional sectors, Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become more a commodity than an innovation. The same is happening with e-learning. From a worrying debate about how and when could schools possibly be connected to the Internet, we are now proposing a European-wide project of schools-twinning via the Internet. From an endless discussion about quantity we are now totally focussed on quality. The technology is there, it is now a matter of how to use it well.

This is why we welcome with gratitude and respect the experience of people who have been there since the beginning. Ten years in this field is a long time. Establishing quality criteria ten years ago was probably not an easy task. Keeping them in tune with the extremely fast pace of technological progress and evolution is a remarkable achievement. It is stimulating to read that, as the quality has improved, so the definition of quality has followed it.

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1. *e-Learning — Designing tomorrow's education*. Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 2000. Available online at : <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/elearning/comen.pdf>

2. The Lisbon Strategy is available online at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon\\_strategy/intro\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/intro_en.html)

And that the expectations for quality are now much higher is a most encouraging conclusion.

This is now one of the most challenging needs for Europe: to build a strong demand for e-learning quality in the education and training environment. We know now that e-learning is not a fad, nor something reserved for the more technologically minded. It is, in its own right, an important education vector, to be used both in distance learning and in presential learning contexts. A quality-driven development of e-learning is essential for the high quality education and training systems that European citizens need. Quality-driven development of e-learning is a key contribution for placing European education institutions in the place they deserve in the global arena.

The pathways for future development of EKMA and EASA explored in this book are promising. It is not easy to explain, guarantee and disseminate a quality credo. Transfer of experience is also a difficult and demanding task. But EKMA is well placed to face it, as the excellent track record that this book shows. As you rightly observe, the means for communication and dissemination are improving, and so also is the interest and the receptiveness of education stakeholders. The time is right, and the venture is important.

I think the interest and generosity with which EKMA wishes to share its experience, and the enthusiasm with which it faces the next ten years, deserves our applause and gratitude, and I wish EKMA and EASA a fruitful and successful development in the years to come.

## Preface

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Jonathan Darby

*UK EASA/EKMA Representative 1993 to 1998, EKMA Board Chair 1998 to 2002*

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WHEN Professor Adolf Schreiner of the University of Karlsruhe first put to me the idea of a European Academic Software Award (EASA) I was intrigued. The year was 1991 and, as the UK Association for Learning Technology (ALT) was no more than a faint idea in the back of a few people's minds, I regretfully declined his initiation to join. However when ALT was launched two years later, one of the first actions I took as President of the new association was to get in touch with Professor Schreiner to enquire if the offer to join EASA still stood. It did and so began a 10 year personal association for me with EASA and its parent body the European Knowledge Media Association (EKMA).

A striking feature of EASA/EKMA has been the way the member organisations representing each European country have come together entirely of their own accord and have each found the resources to enable EASA to happen. No external agency was required to create EASA and the six EASA competitions have only been possible through a very substantial amount of voluntary effort.

The reasons each country has for participating in EASA vary considerably. For one it is motivated by a desire to promote a particular segment of the software industry and combat domination by the USA; for another it is to promote student-centred learning; for a third it is to afford recognition to academic staff who devote time to educational software development and so help redress the bias toward rewarding research at the expense of teaching. Despite the varied reasons for participating in EASA there is complete agreement among all the partners in the value of the biennial event, and so it has continued for more than a decade despite the many setbacks that have been encountered and overcome.

Above all being involved in EKMA and EASA has been fun. This has been true for committee members, organisers, discipline coordinators, jurors and even competitors. The shared interest in e-learning and support for students has resulted in a real buzz at EASA finals, new insights for participants and lasting friendships. This book is a tribute to all those who have committed their time and energy so unstintingly to EASA/EKMA over the years and a mark of confidence that it will continue for many years to come.

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## Overview

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### The Editors

**T**HIS book discusses the whole issue of evaluation in the general area of e-learning, and specifically looks at the processes used within a European competition which was created over a decade ago, the *European Academic Software Award* (EASA). This competition was created in order to evaluate academic software, emanating therefore from Universities, Higher Education Institutes, Research organisations, etc. and developed by teachers, students, researchers, engineers, etc. with or without collaboration from commercial enterprises. The EASA competition is organised by an association, called the *European Knowledge Media Association* (EKMA).

All of the people involved in the EASA/EKMA process over the past years, whether they were organisers or jurors, felt they had gained important insight into the general area of software evaluation and were keen for this knowledge and experience to be shared with others.

The aim of this book is not only to summarise the competition itself but also to reflect upon future directions for software evaluation in e-learning for the next decade. A number of issues are addressed, including: portability within Europe, language issues, a publishing house, a gold standard quality mark, a register of accredited reviewers, and guidelines and protocols for developing and applying evaluation criteria.

The approach is more practical than theoretical; we thought it especially important to convey the experience of the past decade and to reflect upon the ways in which we could modify this approach in years to come.

Several academics give their 'visions' of how evaluation and e-learning may evolve in future years. We decided to include remarks from those working within a European perspective but also from other parts of the world (Australia, the USA), in the last chapter.

## **Chapter 1: ‘The making of EASA/EKMA’**

Wim B. G. Liebrand (Director of SURF Foundation, the Netherlands) was chair of EKMA from 1993 to 1998 and vice-chair from 1999 to 2001. His chapter reflects upon the general history and evolution of EASA and EKMA during the past decade.

## **Chapter 2: ‘EKMA: statutes and financial resources’**

It was important to gain inside knowledge regarding the financial and legal matters of the EKMA process. This chapter was written by one of the founding fathers, Martin Lehmann (BiP info SA, Switzerland), in collaboration with Randoald Corfu (University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland), one of the Swiss organisers for EASA 2004. The official statutes are included in the appendices in both English and French.

The next three chapters describe three EASA competitions: 1998 in Oxford, 2000 in Rotterdam and 2002 in Ronneby.

## **Chapter 3: ‘A review of the 1998 European Academic Software Award Competition’**

J. Michael Spector (Florida State University, USA) and Ling Shi, Vaidotas Sruogis, You Jiong (University of Bergen, Norway), initiated the process by publishing an article describing the 1998 EASA competition in *Research Dialogue in Learning and Instruction*. We have republished (by agreement with the editors) a shortened version of this article.

## **Chapter 4: ‘A review of the European Academic Software Award: year 2000’**

Rachel Panckhurst (Université Montpellier 3 & CNRS, France) and Bas Cordewener (SURF Foundation, the Netherlands) describe the EASA 2000 process, from stage 1 to stage 3 and discuss the evaluation at the finals. They also briefly interviewed those attending the finals and have included their remarks.



## **Chapter 5: 'Experiences from the European Academic Software Award: year 2002'**

Göran Petersson, (Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, Sweden Net University and EKMA chair since 2002) not only describes the EASA 2002 competition, but also makes recommendations for the future. These include reusing the database structure and documents therein, involving more countries, improving marketing and combining the event with an international conference.

## **Chapter 6: 'Evaluating academic software: can comparing chalk and cheese be valid, reliable or accountable?'**

Nick Hammond (University of York, United Kingdom) gives a thorough analysis of the evaluation process used during the initial rounds and at the EASA finals, including discussion on accountability, reliability and validity in relation to results from the past three EASA competitions.

## **Chapter 7: 'Finding finalists: from individual evaluations to collective decisions'**

Lisa Whistlecroft (Lancaster University, United Kingdom) gives valuable insight into the role of 'discipline coordinators' during the EASA process. This involves: finding and selecting jurors, providing jurors with appropriate guidelines in order to carry out the tasks at hand, making sure the submissions are correctly allocated to jurors having the corresponding expertise, collating evaluations and recommendations and finally deciding about the quota of recommended finalists and giving feedback to those competitors who do not succeed in reaching the final stage.

## **Chapter 8: 'Questionnaire results: from the competitors' point of view'**

Sophie David (CNRS & Université Paris 10, France) and Rachel Panckhurst (Université Montpellier 3 & CNRS, France) analyse the results of a questionnaire which was issued during stage 2 of the EASA 2002 competition. The authors focus on: language, advertising, communication, disciplines, reasons to compete, and the European nature of the competition.

## **Chapter 9: 'From the first to the second decade of EKMA: reflections and recommendations'**

Göran Petersson (Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, Sweden Net University and EKMA chair since 2002), Bas Cordewener (SURF Foundation, the Netherlands), and Lisa Whistlecroft (Lancaster University, United Kingdom), draw together the knowledge gained in the ten years of EKMA's experience of organising the EASA competition, and propose various European-wide developments of EKMA that might be considered for the decade to come.

## **Chapter 10: 'The future of evaluation in e-learning'**

Shirley Alexander (Director, Institute for Interactive Media and Learning, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia), Debra Marsh (e-learning consultant, Montpellier, France), J. Michael Spector (Associate Director, Learning Systems Institute, Florida State University, USA) share their views on the way evaluation within the e-learning sector is evolving.

## **Appendices**

It may be useful for other interest groups who wish to set up similar structures to be aware of the legal implications in creating an association. The statutes of the EKMA organisation have been included here in both English and French.

A full list of EKMA board members and a list of authors are also provided here.

## Sommaire

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### Les éditeurs

Ce livre aborde la question de l'évaluation dans le domaine de la formation ouverte et à distance (FOAD) et plus spécifiquement celle des problématiques et des méthodologies mises en place dans le cadre d'un concours européen, créé il y a plus de 10 ans, le concours *European Academic Software Award* (EASA). Cette compétition s'est donné comme objectif d'évaluer des logiciels développés et mis au point, dans des établissements d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche, par des enseignants, des chercheurs, des ingénieurs, des étudiants, etc., et ce, avec ou sans la collaboration d'entreprises privées. Le concours EASA est organisé par l'association *European Knowledge Media Association* (EKMA).

Différentes personnes, organisateurs ou jurés, impliquées ces dernières années dans le concours EASA ou dans l'association EKMA, ont voulu faire partager leurs savoirs et leurs expériences dans ce domaine.

Le but de ce livre est non seulement de donner un aperçu des différentes compétitions passées, mais aussi d'approfondir la réflexion sur différentes questions qui importeront dans les années qui viennent, notamment : la portabilité européenne, la diversité des langues européennes, la création d'une maison d'édition, l'établissement de standards, la réalisation d'un répertoire d'experts évaluateurs, l'établissement de protocoles et de directives pour développer et appliquer les critères d'évaluation.

La démarche suivie est plus pratique que théorique ; nous avons pensé qu'il importait d'abord de transmettre l'expérience des années passées et de réfléchir sur les moyens à mettre en place pour améliorer dans les années qui viennent l'approche mise en œuvre.

Plusieurs chercheurs (européens, australiens et américains) nous ont fait part de leurs réflexions prospectives à propos de l'évaluation et de la formation ouverte et à distance. Nous avons décidé d'en rendre compte dans le dernier chapitre.

## **Chapitre 1 : *The making of EASA/EKMA***

Wim B. G. Liebrand (Directeur de la SURF Foundation, Pays-Bas) a été président de l'EKMA de 1993 à 1998, et vice-président de 1999 à 2001. Son chapitre retrace l'histoire et l'évolution du concours et de l'association durant ces dix dernières années.

## **Chapitre 2 : *EKMA : statutes and financial resources***

Il nous a paru important de préciser les aspects juridiques et financiers liés à l'EKMA. Ce chapitre a été écrit par Martin Lehmann (BiP info SA, Suisse), l'un des fondateurs du concours, et Randoald Corfu (Université de Neuchâtel, Suisse), l'un des organisateurs de la compétition 2004. Les statuts officiels de l'EKMA sont disponibles en annexe, en anglais et en français.

Les trois chapitres suivants relatent les compétitions qui se sont tenues à Oxford (en 1998), à Rotterdam (en 2000) et à Ronneby (en 2002).

## **Chapitre 3 : *A review of the 1998 European Academic Software Award Competition***

Michael Spector (Université de Floride, États-Unis) et Ling Shi, Vaidotas Sruogis, You Jiong (Université de Bergen, Norvège) avaient écrit un article décrivant la compétition de 1998, paru dans *Research Dialogue in Learning and Instruction*. En accord avec l'éditeur de la revue, nous le republions ici dans une version raccourcie.

## **Chapitre 4 : *A review of the European Academic Software Award : year 2000***

Rachel Panckhurst (Université de Montpellier 3 & CNRS, France) et Bas Cordewener (SURF Foundation, Pays-Bas) décrivent la compétition 2000, de l'étape 1 à l'étape 3, en détaillant l'évaluation menée lors de la finale. Ils terminent leur chapitre par un certain nombre de remarques de jurés et de participants qu'ils avaient interviewés lors de la finale.

## **Chapitre 5 : *Experiences from the European Academic Software Award : year 2002***

Göran Petersson (Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, Université Net Suède et président de l'EKMA depuis 2002) décrit la compétition 2002

et fait un certain nombre de recommandations, qui portent sur la réutilisabilité de la base de données et des documents qu'elle comporte, l'élargissement de la compétition à d'autres pays, les aspects financiers, le lien entre le concours et une conférence internationale.

### **Chapitre 6 : *Evaluating academic software : can comparing chalk and cheese be valid, reliable or accountable ?***

Nick Hammond (Université de York, Grande-Bretagne) analyse de manière précise et détaillée le processus d'évaluation mis en place à chaque étape mais aussi lors de la finale. Il discute notamment des questions de fiabilité, de validité et d'explicitabilité, en s'appuyant sur les compétitions 1998, 2000 et 2002.

### **Chapitre 7 : *Finding finalists : from individual evaluations to collective decisions***

Lisa Whistlecroft (Université de Lancaster, Grande-Bretagne) s'attache au rôle de « coordinateur de discipline » et à ses différentes tâches : trouver et sélectionner des jurés, fournir aux jurés les informations sur le protocole, distribuer les logiciels en fonction de l'expertise des jurés, rassembler les évaluations, choisir les finalistes, restituer les éléments essentiels pour les participants non finalistes.

### **Chapter 8 : *Questionnaire results : from the competitors' point of view***

Sophie David (CNRS & Université Paris 10, France) et Rachel Panckhurst (Université Montpellier 3 & CNRS, France) analysent les résultats d'un questionnaire adressé lors de l'étape 2 aux différents participants de la compétition 2002. Les auteurs s'attachent à l'analyse des points suivants : la langue, la publicité, la communication, les disciplines, les raisons de participer et le caractère européen de la compétition.

### **Chapitre 9 : *From the first to the second decade of EKMA : reflections and recommendations***

Göran Petersson (Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, Université Sweden Net et président de l'EKMA depuis 2002), Bas Cordewener

(SURF Foundation, Pays-Bas), and Lisa Whistlecroft (Université de Lancaster, Grande-Bretagne) font la synthèse de l'ensemble des expériences acquises par l'association EKMA concernant l'organisation des concours EASA depuis une décennie. Les auteurs proposent ensuite différentes missions de dimension européenne auxquelles l'EKMA pourrait s'attacher.

## **Chapitre 10 : *The future of evaluation in e-learning***

Shirley Alexander (Directrice, Institute for Interactive Media and Learning, University of Technology, Sydney, Australie), Debra Marsh (consultante en formation ouverte et à distance, Montpellier, France), J. Michael Spector (Directeur associé, Learning Systems Institute, Florida State University, États-Unis) réfléchissent sur l'évolution de l'évaluation dans le domaine de la formation ouverte et à distance.

## **Annexes**

Il nous a paru utile de fournir à d'autres personnes désirant travailler sur ces domaines des informations précises concernant les enjeux légaux d'un fonctionnement associatif. Les statuts de l'EKMA ont donc été inclus à la fin du livre, en anglais et en français.

La liste complète des membres de l'EKMA, ainsi que la liste des auteurs, sont également fournies en annexe.

## Zusammenfassung

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Die Herausgeber

übersetzt aus dem Englischen von Irene Hyna<sup>a</sup> und Rhonda Riachi<sup>b</sup>

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Dieses Buch behandelt die Frage der Evaluation von e-learning Systemen im Allgemeinen und geht dann auf das Evaluationsverfahren im Rahmen des *European Academic Software Award* (EASA) ein, einem europäischen Wettbewerb, der vor mehr als 10 Jahren ins Leben gerufen wurde. Dieser Wettbewerb wurde geschaffen, um die Entwicklung und den Einsatz von Software aus dem Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsbereich zu fördern, die von Lehrenden, Studenten oder Forschern, in oder auch ohne Zusammenarbeit mit kommerziellen Unternehmen, entwickelt wird. Der Wettbewerb EASA wird von der Vereinigung *European Knowledge Media Association* (EKMA) ausgerichtet.

Alle, die in den vergangenen Jahren in EASA oder EKMA Aktivitäten eingebunden waren, — sei es als Organisatoren oder Juroren — haben einen wertvollen Einblick in den Themenkreis Software-Evaluation gewinnen können und möchten diese Erfahrung gerne an andere weitergeben.

Ziel dieses Buches ist nicht nur, einen Überblick über den Wettbewerb zu geben, sondern es möchte auch die Diskussion über Themen anregen, die in den kommenden Jahren (bei Evaluation von e-learning Systemen) eine Rolle spielen werden: Berücksichtigung der europäischen Sprachenvielfalt, Einführung eines Qualitätssiegels und einer Präsentations-plattform, Erstellung eines Verzeichnisses mit anerkannten Fachexperten, Richtlinien und Anleitungen für Evaluationskriterien.

Der Ansatz in diesem Buch ist mehr pragmatisch als theoretisch. Wir halten es für besonders wichtig, die Erfahrungen der letzten 10 Jahre zu vermitteln und Wege aufzuzeigen, wie Software Evaluation in den kommenden Jah-

ren modifiziert werden könnte.

Verschiedene Wissenschaftler (aus Europa, Australien und den Vereinigten Staaten) teilen uns ihre Vorstellungen mit, wie sich Evaluation und e-learning in den nächsten Jahren weiterentwickeln könnten. Sie kommen im letzten Kapitel zu Wort.

### **Kapitel 1: *The making of EASA/EKMA***

Wim B. G. Liebrand (Direktor der SURF Foundation, Niederlande) war von 1993 bis 1998 EKMA-Vorsitzender and stellvertretender Vorsitzender von 1999 bis 2001. Sein Kapitel beschreibt die Entstehungsgeschichte von EASA und EKMA während des letzten Jahrzehnts.

### **Kapitel 2: *EKMA: Statutes and Financial Resources***

Während des Entstehungsprozesses von EKMA konnten wichtige Erfahrungen über finanzielle und rechtliche Belange gewonnen werden. Darüber schreibt in diesem Kapitel Martin Lehmann (BiP info SA, Schweiz), ein EKMA-Gründungsmitglied, zusammen mit Randoald Corfu (Neuchâtel University, Schweiz), einem der Schweizer Organisatoren von EASA 2004. Die offiziellen Statuten sind im Anhang zu finden (in Englisch und Französisch).

Die nächsten drei Kapitel beschreiben drei Wettbewerbe: 1998 in Oxford, Großbritannien, 2000 in Rotterdam, Niederlande und 2002 in Ronneby, Schweden.

### **Kapitel 3: *A review of the 1998 European Academic Software Award Competition***

J. Michael Spector, Ling Shi, Vaidotas Sruogis, You Jiong (Florida State University, Vereinigte Staaten und University of Bergen, Norwegen) begannen damit, einen Artikel mit der Beschreibung des EASA 1998 zu verfassen, der in der Zeitschrift *Research Dialogue in Learning and Instruction* veröffentlicht wurde. Dieser Artikel ist hier in einer mit den Herausgebern abgestimmten gekürzten Fassung abgedruckt.

### **Kapitel 4: *A review of the European Academic Software Award: year 2000***

Rachel Panckhurst (Université Montpellier 3 und CNRS, Frankreich) und Bas Cordewener (SURF Foundation, Niederlande) beschreiben den Ablauf des



Wettbewerbs EASA 2000 von Phase 1 bis Phase 3 und gehen auf die Evaluation während der Endausscheidung ein. Sie schließen ihr Kapitel mit einigen Antworten und Bemerkungen von Juroren und Teilnehmern, die sie während der Endausscheidung befragten.

### **Kapitel 5: *Experiences from the European Academic Software Award: year 2002***

Göran Petersson, (Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, Sweden Net University; EKMA-Vorsitzender seit 2002) beschreibt nicht nur den EASA 2002 Wettbewerb, sondern äußert auch Ideen für die weitere Vorgangsweise. Er empfiehlt unter anderem die Weiterverwendung der im Rahmen von EASA 2002 entstandenen Datenbank und der bisher verwendeten Dokumente, die Einbindung von weiteren Ländern, die Verbesserung des Marketing, sowie das Kombinieren des Wettbewerbes mit einer internationalen Konferenz.

### **Kapitel 6: *Evaluating academic software: can comparing chalk and cheese be valid, reliable or accountable?***

Nick Hammond (University of York, Großbritannien) analysiert detailliert den Evaluationsprozess in allen Phasen, besonders aber während der Endausscheidung. Dabei untersucht er die Ergebnisse der vergangenen drei Wettbewerbe auf Transparenz, Gültigkeit und Zuverlässigkeit.

### **Kapitel 7: *Finding finalists: from individual evaluations to collective decisions***

Lisa Whistlecroft (Lancaster University, Großbritannien) gibt wertvolle Einblicke in die Rolle einer Fachbereichs-Koordinatorin während des Bewertungsprozesses: Auswahl von Gutachtern, Richtlinien für die Gutachter, korrekte Verteilung der Einreichungen an die Gutachter entsprechend deren Expertise, das Sammeln der Evaluationsergebnisse und der Empfehlungen der Gutachter und schließlich die Entscheidung über Anzahl der Finalisten und die Rückmeldungen an diejenigen Teilnehmer, die die Endrunde nicht erreicht haben.

## **Kapitel 8: *Questionnaire results: from the competitors' point of view***

Sophie David (CNRS & Université Paris 10, Frankreich) und Rachel Panckhurst (Université Montpellier 3 & CNRS, Frankreich) analysierten die Ergebnisse einer Befragung der Teilnehmer am EASA 2002 nach der zweiten Einreichungsrunde. Die Autorinnen legen ihr Augenmerk auf: die folgenden Aspekte: Sprache des Einreichungsmaterials, Publizität, Kommunikation, Fachbereiche, Gründe für die Teilnahme an dem Wettbewerb und den europäischen Aspekt des Wettbewerbes.

## **Kapitel 9: *Conclusion and recommendations for the future***

Göran Petersson (Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, Sweden Net University; EKMA-Vorsitzender seit 2002), Bas Cordewener (SURF Foundation, Niederlande), und Lisa Whistlecroft (Lancaster University, Großbritannien) fassen die Erfahrungen zusammen, die durch die Organisation von EASA Wettbewerben über 10 Jahre hinweg gesammelt werden konnten und schlagen für die kommenden Jahre eine Ausdehnung von EKMA auf weitere europäische Länder vor.

## **Kapitel 10: *The future of evaluation in e-learning***

Shirley Alexander (Direktorin am Institute for Interactive Media and Learning [IML], University of Technology of Sydney, Australia), Debra Marsh (Konsulentin für e-learning, Montpellier, Frankreich), und J. Michael Spector (Vizedirektor, Learning Systems Institute, Florida State University, Vereinigte Staaten) teilen ihre Ansichten über die Weiterentwicklung von Evaluation im Bereich von e-learning mit.

## **Anhänge**

Da die gesetzlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Gründung von Vereinigungen mit ähnlichen Strukturen können nützlich sein können, sind im Anhang die offiziellen Statuten (in englischer und französischer Sprache) enthalten.

Weiters wird auch eine vollständige Liste aller bisherigen Mitglieder des EKMA-Vorstandes und ein Autorenverzeichnis zur Verfügung gestellt.

## The making of EASA/EKMA

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Wim B. G. Liebrand

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THE European Academic Software Initiative started at a time when we realised that information and communication technologies were about to dramatically transform many aspects of our life. Policy makers in Europe recognised that a rapid and efficient integration of the European role in the global information society constituted a vital prerequisite for a strong Europe. More specifically, the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment<sup>1</sup> designated the domain of education and training as a critical factor in realising those European ambitions. At the same time we also were aware of the fact that, especially in the domain of Higher Education (HE), there existed hardly any ICT that were developed within Europe, let alone from a European perspective.

On the other side of the Atlantic the innovative provision of educational services had been very effectively stimulated for many years, especially by the so-called EDUCOM/NCRIPTAL awards. ‘EDUCOM ’94 featured a new vision: it highlighted virtual campuses transcending geographical boundaries through the marvels of distance education . . . helping American academe collectively articulate a vision of digital libraries and networked learning environments.’<sup>2</sup>

Germany and Austria were the first to follow the EDUCOM/NCRIPTAL approach by instigating the *Deutsch-Österreichischen Hochschul-Software-Preis*, back in 1990. It soon became clear that the idea of using a competition to stimulate innovative software applications for HE also worked in Europe. Given the fact that Europe recognised education and training as a critical

1. *White Paper on growth, competitiveness, and employment: The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century*. The European Commission. 1993. Available online at: <http://europa.eu.int/en/record/white/c93700/contents.html>

2. Nigel Gardner, ‘EDUCOM ’94: transforming education’, in: *Active Learning*, 1, p. 59, CTISS Publications, 1994.

domain to improve its position in the global information society, one would expect that the broadening of the German/Austrian initiative to a truly European initiative would have been an easy thing to accomplish. In the event it took more than two years and several discussions before the initiative could be extended to six countries. The cultural diversity in Europe is eminent, it is a jewel to cherish, but it does considerably slow down common initiatives, even when there is no disagreement on the mission to accomplish.

Between 1990 and 1993, a small group of representatives of national associations for HE prepared the road for the European Academic Software Award initiative (EASA). Of course the founding fathers of the *Deutsch-Österreichischen Hochschul-Software-Preis*, Adolf Schreiner [Germany] and Hans-Peter Axmann [Austria] were involved. Martin Lehman [Switzerland] and Wim Liebrand [Netherlands] joined in early. Then Jonathan Darby [UK] and Hans Jalling [Sweden] completed the core group of countries that actually founded EASA in 1993.

At that time our goal was to promote and recognise the development of outstanding academic software in Europe. And in operationalising this broadly defined mission the cultural differences appeared. What exactly is outstanding? Should it be innovative software? Is it possible to define and measure that criterion independent of discipline or country? What is academic software? Can a student or a software company produce academic software? What exactly does it mean that the software should have been developed in Europe? Is it not more important that the software can be used across Europe? Does the dominant use of the English language in the EASA competition mask or fade out the cultural differences that EASA wants to honour and promote? Who qualifies as a judge of the software that is submitted?

Looking back at the many attempts to provide answers to these fundamental questions, I am very proud that gradually more and more of a consensus was reached between the countries now participating in the EASA competition. That is not to say that these discussions were easy. The issues mentioned above immediately touch the backbone of the educational systems and cultures in these countries. Cultural differences are much bigger than one would expect, given the physical distance between these neighbouring countries. The differences in the position and role of full professors, teachers and students are fundamentally different in the participating countries. Organising a European competition that is designed to award outstanding applications in different educational systems is only feasible if all parties accept that an approximation of their ideal model is the best they can get, and that is what we have realised. The EASA competition has increased

the awareness of the significance of academic software development for the European information society.

The set-up of the first EASA competition, organised in Heidelberg in 1994, was more or less a copy of the *Deutsch-Österreichischen Hochschul-Software-Preis*. The huge differences, of course, were that the competition language was officially English and that all countries in Europe could participate. The very solid, extensive and thoroughly designed model for evaluating and selecting the final award winners was, however, used in that and all subsequent EASA competitions. The archetypal competition goes as follows.

The competition is conducted in three stages. The first stage consists of a broad call for submissions, encouraging as much participation as possible by inviting entries from all over Europe. At the end of the first stage, only those entries that do not meet the minimal requirements are eliminated, usually about 5%. Normally an EASA competition receives an average of 200 stage 1 entries distributed over 15 disciplines.

In the second stage, entries are categorised by discipline and sent to discipline coordinators who recruit qualified jurors in the relevant discipline. Jurors are teachers, students and practitioners in the various disciplines, and they evaluate entries on both academic and technical content. Each submission is reviewed by three jurors of different background and different countries. At the end of this stage, the best 30 submissions, distributed over disciplines, are selected for the final stage.

During the finals, usually organised back-to-back with an existing educational conference, the finalists present their application to the audience and to a team of 4 or 5 jurors who evaluate and score the submission on the same criteria as used in the second stage:

- Innovation
- Design and ease of use
- European portability
- Educational materials and approach
- Evaluation of use

A sophisticated algorithm is used to provide a first ranking of the 30 submissions. An extensive discussion between all the finals jurors (usually about 20) finally yields the best 10 submissions, which receive the prestigious EASA award.

The 1994 EASA competition was organised by ASK/University of Karlsruhe in Heidelberg, Germany. With over 200 participants from 21 European countries and 70 European jurors, the 1994 award program constituted a remark-

ably successful start. In the award ceremony itself 35 candidates from Germany, the UK, France, Russia, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands and Turkey presented their programs to an international and interdisciplinary jury of experts. The 1994 awards were handed out by Vincent Parajon-Collada, the EU Deputy Director General of DG XIII. He stated that:

the target of the European Academic Software Award is of particular relevance to the objectives of the Commission, and even more so to my specific responsibilities in the areas of information marketing research, in the areas of information and language engineering, including libraries and, in addition, the dissemination and exploitation of the results of Community sponsored research.

It is sad to observe that the perfect match between EASA's mission and the ambitions of the European Commission have led to nothing more than verbal support for the EASA competition from the Commission. As was stated earlier, the solid and extensive set-up of the EASA competition has several advantages in terms of the quality of the selection process, the feedback given to the authors and the recognition they gain from it. The big disadvantage is that it is also an expensive way to organise a competition; the more because, back at that time, several copies of all submissions had to be distributed on paper, tapes and floppy discs by traditional mail!

The second competition was organised in Austria by ASI/University of Klagenfurt. This time the whole competition, quite revolutionary back in 1995 and 1996, was organised by using the Internet. Electronic transfer of files, documents and software programs was not easy because of the heterogeneity in communication protocols and platforms. Despite this the server statistics showed an average number of 7,000 to 8,000 requests per month! Besides the electronic transformation of the competition, during the EASA 1996 competition we developed a sophisticated evaluation procedure. This 'Qualitative Weight and Sum Procedure' was developed to avoid the crude outcomes of the usual numerical weight and summing approach. This algorithm has been further refined and is still used in the EASA competition.

Meanwhile, the initial group of six participating countries had been extended to eight. Both France, represented by Rachel Panckhurst, and Norway, represented by J. Michael Spector, then joined the EASA initiative. Given the broadening of the initiative, the never-ceasing need for improving the quality of the teaching and learning process with the help of ICT, and the continuing lack of financial support from the European Community, we decided to found EKMA. EKMA is the European Knowledge Media Association, a pan-European membership organisation dedicated to stimu-

lating and disseminating the understanding, development, and use of knowledge media within higher education. (Higher education is taken to include all aspects of post-compulsory education and training undertaken within a formal educational context. Thus, further and vocational education is explicitly included). To achieve this aim, EKMA organises activities, events and publications, including a major biennial event dedicated to the judging of academic software (EASA). EKMA is legally incorporated in Cortaillod, Switzerland, and its trademarks have been registered within the European Community and in Switzerland (see Chapter ??). The current board (2003–4) of EKMA consists of: Göran Petersson, (Sweden, chair), Irene Hyna (Austria), Rachel Panckhurst (France), Bernard Süselbeck, (Germany), Bas Cordewener (the Netherlands), Martin Lehmann (Switzerland) and Rhonda Riachi (UK). The set-up of the EASA competition has stabilised now. This volume describes that stabilisation process in more detail. In order to give a complete list of the EASA competitions I will briefly mention those since 1996. The third competition was organised in Oxford, UK, in 1998 by ALT, NCET and BECTa [see Michael Spector's contribution in Chapter ??].

In 2000 the competition was organised in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, by the SURF Foundation, [see the contribution by Rachel Panckhurst and Bas Cordewener in Chapter ??].

The Swedish Council for Undergraduate Education organised EASA 2002 in Ronneby, Sweden [see Chapter ??].

And finally the upcoming 2004 competition will be organised in Switzerland by one of the original founding fathers, Martin Lehmann.

## Conclusion

The EASA initiative was born at a time when we acknowledged that stimulating the development and use of outstanding academic software would both improve the quality of education and training, and allow Europe to achieve a stronger and more independent position in the global information society. The participating countries have invested a lot of energy and expertise to design and implement a mechanism that improves the quality and portability of effective ICT applications in higher education and research in Europe. The EASA initiative has been successful in its mission because many of the finalists of earlier EASA competitions have found commercial partners for the distribution and upgrading of their software. The criteria EASA uses for evaluating academic software give a good indication of the long-term usability of the software. One of the strongest achievements of this initiative has not yet been mentioned at all. Thus far we have focused on the realisation of the ambitions of national and European policy makers and managers in HE.

The EASA competition has, however, had an outstanding impact on those who develop these jewels of innovation. For the academics and students who have developed the applications, EASA is about Fun, Feedback, Recognition and Honour!

**Fun** It really is rewarding to enter a competition, to run the risk, to receive an award!

**Feedback** Typically, each submission has been evaluated by students, technicians and pedagogical experts. The result is communicated to the developers and this feedback is obviously highly important in shaping the next version of the application.

**Recognition** Career-wise it still is more rewarding to invest time in research and its subsequent publications than in teaching, or in the development of innovative educational materials. EASA gives long-overdue recognition to innovation in teaching.

**Honour** Being selected as one of the top 30 of several hundreds of submissions is an honour in itself.

These provide motivation to the people who will help to realise the ambitions we formulated more than a decade ago.



## Members of the EKMA board

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### National representatives from 1994 (italics indicate current representatives)

#### ***Austria***

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1994–2000

Hans-Peter Axmann

2000–

*Irene Hyna*

*Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture  
(BMBWK)*

*irene.hyna@bmbwk.gv.at*

#### **France (associate member from 2003)**

---

1994–

*Rachel Panckhurst*

*Université Montpellier 3*

*rachel.panckhurst@univ-montp3.fr*

#### **Germany (associate member from 2003)**

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1994–2000

Adolf Schreiner

University of Karlsruhe

2000–

Wilhelm Held (represented by *Benno Süselbeck* at meetings;

*suselbe@uni-muenster.de*)

*University of Münster*

## **Netherlands**

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1994–2000  
Wim Liebrand (chair 1994–1998)  
2000–  
*Bas Cordewener*  
*SURF Foundation*  
Cordewener@surf.nl

## **Norway**

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1999–2000  
J. Michael Spector  
University of Bergen

## **Sweden**

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1994–1998  
Hans Jalling  
1998–2000  
Johannes Hylander  
2001  
Sandor Gyulai  
2001–  
*Göran Petersson* (chair 2002–)  
*Council for the Renewal of Higher Education*  
goran.petersson@netuniversity.se

## **Switzerland**

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1994–  
*Martin Lehmann* (treasurer 1994–2000)  
Engineering consultant  
lehmann@bipinfo.ch  
*The Federal Office for Education and Science;*  
*University of Applied Sciences — LeLocle;*  
*University of Neuchâtel*

## **United Kingdom**

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1994–1998  
Nick Hammond  
Association for Learning Technology (ALT)  
1998–2002  
Jonathan Darby (chair) (ALT)  
2000–2002

John Brown (treasurer)  
British Educational Communications and Technology Agency  
(Becta)  
2002–2003  
Joyce Martin (treasurer) (Becta)  
2003–  
*Rhonda Riachi* (treasurer) (*ALT*)  
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*versity; British Educational Communications and Technology*  
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