



## **A University Culture of Technology: Fluency in Information Technology and Digital Literacy**

The University of New Brunswick highly values digital literacy skills in its students, faculty, and staff. Dr. Jane Fritz, Associate Vice President Learning Environment, strongly supports fostering a culture of digital literacy throughout the university's teaching and learning environment. In 2005 pre-service teacher education courses, Dr. Donald Soucy, Professor of Art Education, integrates digital literacy skills into art education courses, guiding his students to develop an electronic e-portfolio. The e-portfolio highlights demonstrations of how teachers may use presentation and spreadsheet software in their professional practices and how their future art students could benefit from digital literacy. Dr. Soucy's university students have the opportunity to prove their skills level not only through their e-portfolios, but through attaining IC3 Certification.

The emphasis on digital literacy began in 1999 when the University of New Brunswick (UNB) felt the responsibility to ensure its graduates had the digital literacy skills they would need to be competitive in the workforce upon graduation from UNB. The university responded by investing financially into the development of a Fluency in Information Technology Program (FITness). Through the Program, the entire community of students, faculty, and staff had the opportunity to become immersed in a culture of technology, learning and applying skills and knowledge in their daily activities.

In its original design, FITness consisted of online modules in a series of IT topics, online testing, and recording of progress. The Program was delivered through WebCT, UNB's learning management system and was available 24 hours a day. The Program was based on sound educational principles, designed for independent self-directed learning, and fully integrate with UNB's information systems (DataTel, PH database). Some of the UNB community chose to write the FITness tests and attain a FITness Certificate, while others chose to require specific digital literacy skills be applied in regular class assignments. In this way, FITness assisted faculty in integrating technology and core competencies into their classroom without taking time away from their own teaching.

In 2003, UNB recognized the need for a universal standard that recognized digital literacy skills. IC3 was the solution. Working with CCI Learning Solutions, a Certiport Approved Vendor and Courseware Provider, UNB invested again and upgraded and re-aligned its FITness Program to map to IC3 standards. UNB's new FITness IC3 WebCT-based Program is now Approved IC3 Courseware. The Program contains Content

Modules, Glossaries, Communications Tool, PowerPoint Presentations for instructors, Practice Exams and Self-Tests, Print Notes, and a Topics Checklist.

The University of New Brunswick continues to value digital literacy skills. The current pilot in Faculty of Education hopes to create a movement that acknowledges how critical it is that all future teachers possess the digital literacy skills they need to work effectively with our children in their classrooms. Ultimately, this movement supports what we have learned from the Celtic Tiger....that a thriving economy can be a direct result of a digitally literate workforce.

### **About the University of New Brunswick**

The University of New Brunswick (UNB) is located in the Province of New Brunswick in Canada, and is the provincial university. New Brunswick has a bilingual (English/French) population of 750,000. UNB has approximately 12,000 graduate and undergraduate students and is located in Fredericton, a city of 55,000. UNB is a comprehensive university, with a Law School and various professional Faculties including Engineering, Nursing, Forestry, and Education.