

Review of services: Learning

The BBC's educational role sits at the heart of its public service remit. The primary challenge is to develop that learning dimension across all BBC output, harnessing new technologies as well as traditional ones, and creating popular and effective forms of learning for 21st century Britain.



Above and right: *How to Build a Human* told the extraordinary story of how we are made and the way genes and hormones shape us from the cradle to the grave.

Wising up

10,000 people have gained NVOs after completing the BBC's *Becoming Webwise* online course



Education is no longer regarded by the BBC as a discrete area of activity pursued by a single department. Instead, the new Factual & Learning division works with production divisions across the BBC to build learning possibilities into their activities from the earliest planning stages.

Interactive learning is at the core of this approach – using the power of television and radio to bring more people into learning. Over the past year viewers' and listeners' interest has been engaged by some of the BBC's best and most popular programmes, then extended through the web or interactive television. Users discover more about the subject, developing practical skills or even taking follow-up courses offered by academic institutions. This offers new ways of learning, at users' own pace, following whatever direction they themselves choose, that are impossible with conventional broadcasting.

Landmark factual programmes such as *The Blue Planet*, *A History of Britain*, *Walking with Beasts* and *How to Build a Human* have successfully adopted this approach, between them encouraging viewers to travel further into areas of natural history, science or history.

Similarly, *How to be a Gardener*, run in partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society, achieved 900,000 page impressions in a single week during its transmission – three times the usual traffic to the BBC's gardening website. *OneMusic*, developed with BBC Radio 1, offers aspiring young musicians a one-stop shop for comprehensive information on the business of music making in the UK today – from learning to record a demo to devising a business plan for touring a band.

Community-based learning projects such as *Nature on Snowdon*, the interactive local history initiative in Merseyside, and the BBC's major broadband project in Hull have demonstrated the potential to develop the local learning

dimension. So too have the BBC's first Open Centres, which offer both formal and informal learning opportunities through new technology, supported by local education authority tutors. The first centre, in Blackburn, attracted 2,000 registered learners in its first year, more than a quarter of them unemployed people.

Ten thousand people have gained an NVO accreditation in internet literacy after completing the BBC's *Becoming Webwise* online course, developed in partnership with further education colleges. The site also achieved up to 850,000 page impressions (PIs) a week. *Skillswise*, launched during the year, allowed people to improve their literacy and numeracy skills online, supporting the national drive to raise standards.

The BBC took eight out of 11 RTS Educational Awards. It also maintained its output for schools across all media. The *GCSE Bitesize* and *Standard Grade Bitesize* online revision sites continued to demonstrate their value, attracting a record number of hits, 4.3 million in a single week in the run up to the 2001 summer exam season.

In May 2002 the BBC applied to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport for approval to develop and launch a 'digital curriculum' service. This would be a new public service from the BBC, allowing it to play a significant role, along with others in the public and private sectors, in the development of the world's first comprehensive 'Curriculum Online', announced by the Government in December 2001. The service would be available via the internet, providing teachers, children and parents across the UK with a valuable new resource and encouraging the uptake of e-learning. The BBC regards the proposed digital curriculum as one of the most important elements of its education offering and, if the service is approved, will work with teachers and others in the industry to ensure its successful implementation.



Left and above: *The Blue Planet* – filmmakers travelled the world to capture the life of the oceans.



Alan Titchmarsh's *How to be a Gardener* attracted three times the usual traffic to BBC's gardening website.