

**Progress Report for the HEESP funded project:
"Production of a subtitled, on-line virtual tour".**

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Two virtual tours were made available in Semester two of 2007 via WebCT to the first year Plant Sciences (BIO1PS) students to support their visits to two field sites; the Melbourne wildlife sanctuary (at La Trobe University) and the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens. These resources proved to be very popular and were highly visited sites within the WebCT for this unit. We will be utilising these resources from now on in this unit.

The virtual tours provide an online map with links to photos and descriptions of the majority of plants on the tours. This provides an additional resource for students to review the excursion prior to writing the reports for these excursions. It is anticipated that the interactive virtual tour would have been of benefit to students with hearing impairment, mobility issues, and for students from non-English speaking backgrounds, especially as the tours involve many complex scientific terms and botanical names of plants. The online virtual tour are fully subtitled, to aid in the understanding of the descriptions of the plants presented, and enables students to revisit the site at their own pace.

The wildlife sanctuary tour was done in collaboration with staff (Andrew Stocker) from the sanctuary and was presented as a hyperlinked pdf file that enabled the students to visit any site within the sanctuary map. The Royal Botanic Gardens tour was initially presented in this way and was further developed to a more interactive tool with the assistance of the Online Teaching Support Unit (OTST). HEESP funding provided for two weeks (70 hours) casual demonstrator to assist with the interpretation, subtitling and production of the virtual tours. The interpretation of correct spelling of species names and description of plant adaptations was done by a postgraduate student (Chris Dunk) who is familiar with the two excursions and who provided accurate text for the two tours.

We originally planned to include a significant amount of video footage for the virtual tours. We used a digital video camera to record audio and visual of one of the lecturers (Dr Phil Keane) talking about the various aspects of plants on the sanctuary tour. Dr Tony Gleeson assisted with the editing of video. Unfortunately the sound quality of these videos was quite poor and we are looking at ways of improving this for the future. These two new resources have added significant value to the learning experience of the students in BIO1PS.