

## NEWS

# Clicker method introduced to student campuses

Sebastian Baglole  
Reporter

For years, it was all we could do to keep our hands off our pets when they got too excited, or didn't pay attention to the command of their masters, or could not understand what they were being taught. It strains the nerves and ruins the effect of your teaching, doesn't it?

However, with the startling revelation of the clicker training, a hand-held plastic object needing only the effort of a thumb, a simple muscle twitch is all that was needed to show our mutts they are on the right track. The type of clicker we use in dog training is a simple version of the new handheld keypad that is becoming recognized by colleges and universities across North America.

Now instructional technology may be taking a giant leap of faith, considering that these puppies are being introduced to regulate the teaching efforts of professors of major universities in Canada and the United States. So far, the feedback is piling in on a positive note; the University of Ohio had received a lot of support of the method from students and staff, and Wilfred Laurier University brought them in on a unanimous decision.

The instrument of this new method is a remote control handled by students designed to respond their level of understanding of current material by pressing a button on the remote that correlates to an option on a screen at the front of the class. The design is made to make the schoolmasters aware of the effects of their teaching - what is not "clicking" with class members - and what work needs to be reviewed, a topic which may also be voted on by students.

It's true, there is nothing inherently wrong with clicker training students; it is cost efficient for them, easy to use for both pupils and professors, and it is easily compatible with many programs affiliated with student comprehension, including WebCT and various software.

The biggest flaw with the instrument can be seen when

comparing a classroom using the clickers with another without them: they simply are not necessary. Students may, and often do, chime in when they aren't following the material, and deeper class discussions can ensue as a result.

The next issue that arises from the clickers is that, although they are usually provided "free" with certain textbooks, this reduces the chance of students buying used textbooks to ease the strain on their wallets. And after the monetary expenses, precious time is lost on installations of clickers and screens, frustrating hours spent trying to activate the things, and all the class time wasted. Inevitably, the semester progresses, and the debilitating effect of the clickers is realized.

"There will hopefully be some co-ordination if we choose a company to go with," says Professor Jason Doiron. He found that they were very simple to install, and believes that other faculties will come on board with the handheld devices.

"An hour and 15 minutes is a long time to listen to someone talk. You can do a lot more with the problems and have a really good discussion," Doiron said. And the amazing bit?

"People actually bring them to class."

None of this can equal the merit of patience and skill of a strong faculty, and an eager bunch of students not afraid to raise their paws if something is troubling them.

Professor Doiron admits, "If we use this all the time, it would certainly negatively impact teaching. We should use it only when it's appropriate."

This begs the question of how useful these devices would be if they were applied to a field like philosophy, or English, subjects that demand further explanation than a projection on a screen.

Take a look for yourself; the system can be found at [www.turningtechnologies.com](http://www.turningtechnologies.com).

# Psychological phenomenon no stranger to campus

Stacey Murray  
Advertising Manager

Imagine feeling so ill you can barely move while people pass by without giving a second thought to helping you. Candice McQuaid faced that situation at UPEI late last month after going to her car in search of Advil.

While she was only mildly under the weather, her state worsened in the parking lot - until she was vomiting on the ground beside her car.

"I had a hard time talking on the phone because I was just in so much pain at the time."

It was lunchtime. the parking lot was busy and people were pulling up next to her car.

At the time, she was just hoping for the intense pain to subside. When she recovered, however, McQuaid wondered why no one had helped.

After researching the subject and hearing about it in class, she labeled it the bystander effect.

Psychology professor Sandy Macdonald said the effect is a phenomenon that occurs in groups.

When more than one person witnesses a crisis, they wait for others to take action. They try to gauge the group's reaction so they can match it.

They also think that if no one's helping, it must not be that serious, MacDonald said.

"Many of us assume if there is a crisis, someone will intercede."

He cited a famous example of the bystander effect involving a New York woman, Kitty Genovese.

Genovese was murdered while people watched through their windows in neighbouring apartments. Her screams were enough to scare the killer away, but when he noticed no one helped her, he came back and finished the job.

While McQuaid wasn't facing death, she said someone may be in a similar situation some day.

Someone could have an allergic reaction or a heart attack in the same parking lot, McQuaid said.

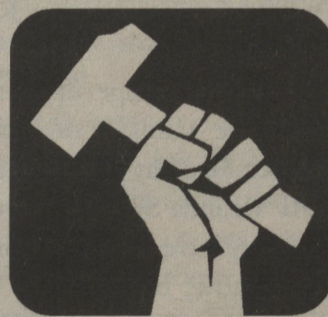
She's speaking out so others will think the next time a situation like this arises.

"I think we can consciously change if we question and think critically about things"

MacDonald said while it is a psychological phenomenon, a change in attitude can overcome the bystander effect. Overcoming it is a common theme in first-aid classes.

McQuaid said overcoming the effect is as simple as stepping forward to help.

"You're the one who's going to have to decide and take charge of the situation."



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