

PLP appoints new director

Jean Casey has been appointed PLP director as successor to founding director Tom Conlon, who died in December 2008. Jean, Tom's wife, is a principal teacher of modern languages. She brings to PLP her extensive experience of Scottish education and is an enthusiastic advocate of Conception, which she uses in her language teaching.

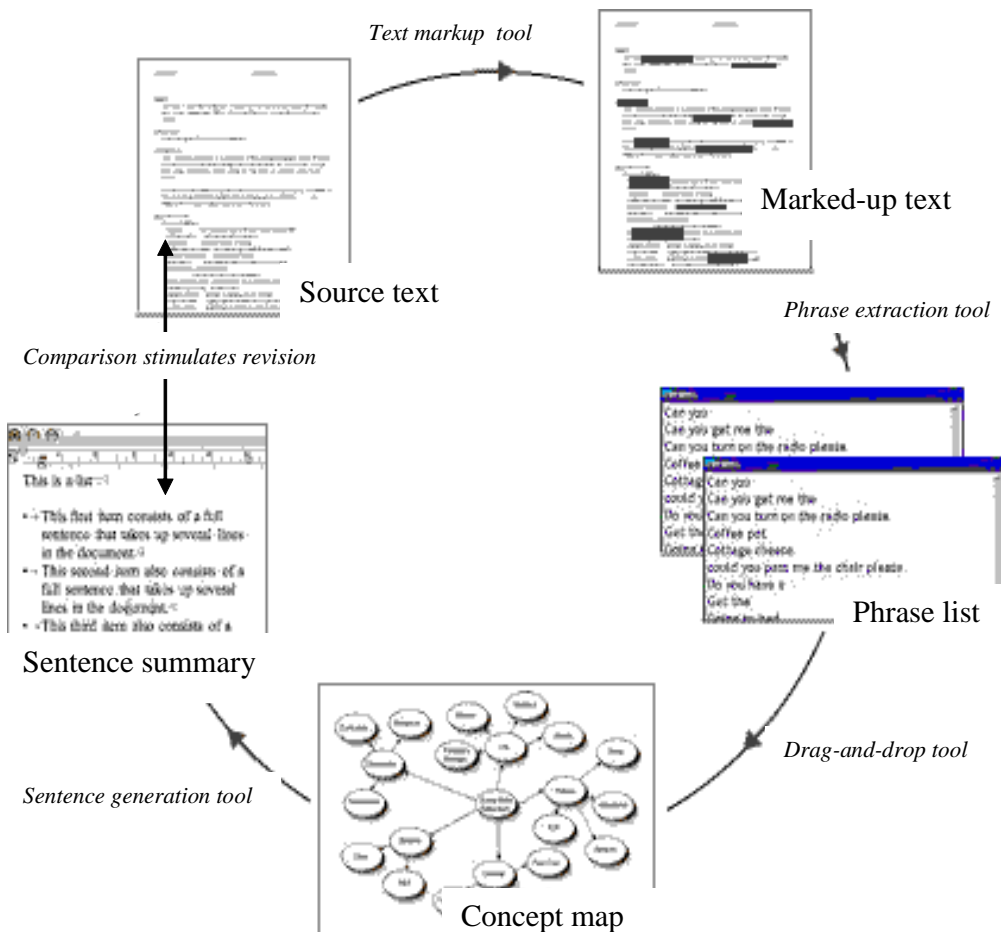
Commenting on her appointment, Jean said, "Conception and InterModeller have huge potential to take us forward in our teaching and learning. As a keen user of Conception, I have found that it supports students' critical thinking by enabling them to see how the things that matter are connected to one another. It also increases their motivation to learn and make sense of dense and difficult texts. I am very excited by the challenge that being a director of PLP offers."

Conception v3.1

PLP's Conception software is unique in supporting a wide range of information map types, including argument maps, concept maps, SWOT maps, thematic maps, and writing plans. These are widely useful in many kinds of teaching and learning. Since it offers all of these and more in one package, Conception is a vastly more powerful resource than the numerous 'mind-mapping' programs that are heavily promoted in education.

Recent research has demonstrated a novel use for Conception. By integrating a set of tools that enable texts of any kind to be marked-up, mapped, and summarised as sentences, Conception can develop learners' reading skills (see diagram below). The necessary tools are bundled with the Conception v3.1 upgrade.

This research, which has been trialled in Scotland with S5 Computing and S1 and S2 English classes, was presented at the *3rd International Concept Mapping Conference* in September 2008. Tom's latest paper, *Towards sustainable text concept mapping*, has just been published in the April 2009 issue of the *Literacy journal*.



Conception to move forward

PLP has set up an initiative to continue the development of Conception in the absence of its designer, Tom Conlon. Although Conception is already a popular product, it was always being extended as a result of Tom's research, the latest results of which were published only weeks before Tom's death. PLP aims to carry on Tom's work by keeping Conception at the forefront of concept mapping research and to encourage its widespread use in schools in preference to inferior products often used in the past.

A group of Conception enthusiasts are planning to hold their first meeting in Edinburgh in May. If you would like to be involved, please contact PLP.

InterModeller and Conception licenses free for individual use

Last year PLP changed its licensing scheme to provide *free* individual licences for its top-selling InterModeller and Conception programs. This special offer is still available: to obtain a free personal licence, download an evaluation version of the software from www.parlog.com and enter your personal licence code, which is available from PLP on application.

New forums go live

PLP has set up new online forums for users to discuss Conception and InterModeller:

<http://www.parlog.com/forum>

If you want to be informed by email of any new postings on a forum, register as a member and click on "subscribe forum" at the bottom of the forum's page.

InterModeller v4.5

PLP's expert system shell software continues to set the standard for knowledge-based computing in education. With draw-and-run editors based on visual trees and tables as well as traditional text-based IF-THEN rules, InterModeller makes it easy for learners to specify knowledge bases with attractive graphical interfaces (see InterModeller v4.5 screenshot below).

This is creative, challenging software that enables learners to explore in accessible and realistic ways some of the biggest ideas in computing — such as the nature of intelligence and the difficulties involved in assisting humans and computers to work together to model, reason about, and provide access to human knowledge.

The screenshot displays the InterModeller v4.5 software interface. It features several windows:

- Untitled Forward rules.ino**: A text editor window showing a rule set:

```
IF Altitude = low
AND Rain = low
AND Soil = sand
AND Grazing = low
THEN Erosion = false
IF Altitude = high
```
- Erosion_table.ino**: A table window displaying the following data:

Altitude	Rain	Soil	Grazing	Erosion
low	low	sand	low	false
high	low	sand	low	false
low	med	sand	low	true
high	med	sand	low	true
low	high	sand	low	true
- Untitled Decision tree.ino**: A decision tree editor showing a tree structure starting with 'Altitude' (low, high) leading to 'Rain' (low, med, high), which further branches into 'Soil' and 'Grazing' nodes.
- InterModeller Consultation**: A dialog box titled "The Coastal Erosion Advisor" with the text: "This expert system predicts whether land is at risk." It includes a photo of a house on stilts, the copyright notice "- (c) GarvaldSoft 2005 -", and the prompt "Thinking of buying a house on the beach? Check out the risk factors!". Buttons for "Begin consultation..." and "Cancel" are visible.