ABSTRACT
In 1998, the California State University Center for Distributed Learning (CDL) initiated CATS, an annual Conference for Academic Technology Staff throughout the system. Everything from program development to workshop presentations is planned and performed by staff, providing participants with the opportunity to network with their peers on other campuses and share their expertise and the technological tools they’d developed. These conferences have been hugely successful and have spurred the CDL to seek other ways to sustain the give-and-take between conferences.

As a result, a new CATS has emerged: the Community of Academic Technology Staff, which is now spreading beyond the California State University system to include counterparts at the 22 other institutions of higher education that currently comprise the Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT) project. Categorized by discipline, MERLOT is a virtual collection of online learning materials.

The CATS-MERLOT website is a rich repository of technical tools, training materials, and other resources (including hardware and software reviews) which CATS members create and/or find to help make their jobs easier. Like the MERLOT discipline-specific sites, the new CATS site makes it easier for CATS community to share their expertise with one another, and community member profiles help members find their counterparts at other institutions who can share their experience, provide advice, and solve problems without having to “reinvent the wheel.”

All academic technology support staff are encouraged to join CATS and participate in the community. Go to http://cats.merlot.org.

To learn more about MERLOT, go to http://www.merlot.org.

Keywords
Community of Academic Technology Staff, Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching, CATS, MERLOT, online learning, community, resources, repository, sharing