The 'bottom-up' approach to web-based learning began in the classroom and was integrated into that experience by contrast with the 'top-down' policy of most institutions which sought to use ICT as a substitute for it.

Andrew began by explaining the title he had chosen for the session. The 'bottom-up' approach to web-based learning began in the classroom and was integrated into that experience by contrast with the 'top-down' policy of most institutions which sought to use ICT as a substitute for it. The website was first set up in 1998 and had developed through three phases: migration, resources and interactive.

The migration phase made available on the website materials which had previously been handed out to students: e.g., the outlines of the course he taught: Film and American Society; Civil War America; Modern America; and Hollywood. The resources phase added weblinks to information relevant to the problems being discussed in class: e.g., Michael Woodiwiss, Organised Crime USA, a BAAS pamphlet accessible on its website. Students were warned about the drawbacks as well as the advantages of using information downloaded from the web. The interactive phase introduced students to exercises in which they responded to historical situations. Thus in Civil War America they could engage in a simulation exercise Crisis at Fort Sumter on the website of Tulane University in which they are invited to respond to the various options available to President Lincoln. On the Film and American Society course, students could be tested by a WebCT quiz, in which they had to identify characters in film clips. In Hollywood students could give multi-media presentations and peer review each other's work. (This will be an LTSN-funded project, Sharing History Essays on the Web, 2002-03.)

The discussion raised several points about the pros and cons of web-assisted learning. Some scepticism was expressed about making available on the website material which could be handed out, when it cost ten times more to put information on the web than it did on paper. There was concern about the lack of uniformity between various packages, which could mean that students would have to acquire different skills for each. A Norwegian member of the session pointed out that a standard Humanities package was available in Norway. Andrew effectively demonstrated that web-based learning involved students in various exercises which would have been impossible without the web.