

Editorial – Volume 14, Issue Number 3



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This issue of *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* is memorable for two reasons. The first is that this is the largest issue (23 research articles and a book review) in the 13 years of IRRODL publication. We assume this increase is directly related to the growing reputation of IRRODL as being a journal that is widely read (averaging 84,000 full text downloads/month), cited (55% of articles are cited by authors in other [Scopus](#) indexed journals and an [SSCI impact factor](#) of .69 in 2011), and indexed by all the major citation indexing systems. In addition authors have come to expect timely and helpful reviews. We have been able to review, edit, and publish in efficient and timely fashion (averaging less than 6 months from submission to publication) with acceptance rates slightly less than 50%, and to my knowledge no other journal publishes in the four different formats in which we distribute each article.

None of these accomplishments could have been attained without the efforts of a network of very talented and hardworking volunteers reviewers and editors. But journal production of the magnitude of IRRODL today could also not have happened without the leadership of our founding editor, Dr. Peter Cookson, nor without the full time work of our managing editors, first Jan Thiessen, then Paula Smith, and for the past five years Brigette McConkey. Finally IRRODL could not be distributed freely, and without author fees, without the sponsorship of Athabasca University and the funding we receive from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Thanks to all.

The second milestone marked by this issue, and the reason that I have cited the figures and noted the individuals above, is that with this issue I announce that after 10 years as the editor of IRRODL, I am passing the torch. I remain as a professor at Athabasca University and will continue to serve on the IRRODL editorial board. Two of my colleagues from Athabasca University will be editing IRRODL in the coming years.

The new IRRODL co-editors are Dr. Dianne Conrad, who many of you will recognize from her authorship of articles in IRRODL and other journals (including winner of the [Wedemeyer Award](#) for Outstanding Scholarship in Distance Education). Dianne is currently the director of the [Centre for Learning Accreditation](#) at Athabasca. The other co-editor will also be familiar to regular IRRODL readers. Dr. Rory McGreal is currently the [UNESCO/COL Chair in Open Educational Resources](#), a faculty member in the Centre for Distance Education at Athabasca, and also a Wedemeyer Award winner for Outstanding Practitioner in Distance Education.

I personally want to thank Dianne and Rory for allowing me the opportunity to pass on this task, with confidence that my efforts and those of many others leave a continuing and improving legacy. I would also like to personally thank those hundreds of reviewers who, though they all are busy, have said yes, when my request for reviewing help arrived in their email, to those authors who graciously accepted our advice and suggestions, and to those who responded with thanks – even when we declined the offer to publish their work.

Now to a brief summary of what is in store for you in this issue, 14(3).

The first article, from the USA, is entitled « Journey to Textbook Affordability: An Investigation of Students' Use of eTextbooks at Multiple Campuses. » Although etexts have been just around the corner for some number of years, we are finally beginning to see extensive use and adoption in many online courses. The next article from Germany, « De-Gendering in the Use of E-Learning, » provides data suggesting the de-gendering associated with the routinization of technology use in e-learning. The next article, from Pakistan, « Development of Reflective Thinking through Distance Teacher Education Programs at AIOU Pakistan, » uses Kember's *Questionnaire of Reflective Thinking* to investigate the development of reflective thinking in education students studying at a distance. The next articles is a case study from South Africa entitled « Looking Out and Looking In: Exploring a Case of Faculty Perceptions During E-Learning Staff Development. » It focuses on the change process instigated through professional development as distance education teachers move from print to electronically delivered teaching. « Challenges for Successful Planning of Open and Distance Learning (ODL): A Template Analysis, » also originates from South Africa and provides a model for developing an open distance learning unit in a campus based institution.

Next from Estonia, we present « Sustaining Teacher Control in a Blog-Based Personal Learning Environment. » Web 2.0 tools afford new ways to teach and learn, but in the process they tend to reduce the control teachers and learners have become used to in both classroom and distance teaching. This article documents the development and testing of a tool for Word Press that helps teachers to monitor and assist distributed learners. We next turn to an article from Canada that looks at best practices for « Addressing the Needs of Diverse Distributed Students. » Certainly distance students both need and have a right to equivalent levels of support as campus students, but providing these services can be challenging.

We have all heard claims and counter claims of the differences of the so called net generation. In the next article from Catalonia, Spain, entitled « Do UOC Students Fit in the Net Generation Profile? An Approach to their Habits in ICT Use, » the authors use data from multi-national sources to explore the network use and competence of older students who typically enroll in distance education programming. Studying at a distance requires increased levels of self-regulation and motivation. In a study from France entitled « The Influence of the Openness of an E-Learning Situation on Adult Students' Self-Regulation, » the author analyses data using an actantial model of qualitative data to examine perceptions of openness of adult learners.

How could we publish an issue in this the « year to talk about MOOCs » without at least one article on this emergent model of distance education? In « MOOCs: A Systematic Study of the Published Literature 2008-2012, » the authors review five years of MOOC research. Next, the open and distance landscape demonstrates quite different modes of instructional design with varying amounts of individual, collaborative, instrumental, and interactive learning. In a study from Trinidad and Tobago, the author investigates « The Preferred Learning Modes of Online Graduate Students. »

Teachers must be constant learners and in this our record breaking second article from Estonia in one issue, the authors provide and analyze a model for « Promoting Teachers' Learning and Knowledge Building in a Socio-Technical System. » Distance education programs need to be continually evaluated to insure their effectiveness and efficiency. In a study from Turkey, « Applying the Context, Input, Process, Product Evaluation Model for Evaluation, Research, and Redesign of an Online Master's Program, » a model and a case study of effective program evaluation is presented.

Next from the USA, we present a study of K12 teachers, studying in an online course. « Interaction, Critical Thinking, and Social Network Analysis (SNA) in Online Courses » reveals the impact of teaching presence. Once again, but this time from Canada, we present an article dealing with professional development for K12 teachers. In « Synchronous Online Collaborative Professional Development for Elementary Mathematics Teachers, » the authors highlight the effect of programming delivered using synchronous online technologies. Next from Germany we present a more philosophical article that uses the idea of Bildung to help us in « Rethinking OER and their Use: Open Education as Bildung. » The next article, « An Explanation for Internet Use Obstacles Concerning E-Learning in Iran, » looks at barriers to the development of quality programming using internet delivery technologies. Although mobile devices have proliferated throughout the world, there is little empirical evidence of their impact on formal education. In a quasi-experimental study from Thailand, « Enhancing Motivation in Online Courses with Mobile Communication Tool Support: A Comparative Study, » the authors provide evidence of increased motivation in distance education programming associated with mobile phones.

Netx from Spain, « Virtual Attendance: Analysis of an Audiovisual over IP System for Distance Learning in the Spanish Open University (UNED) » shows the effect on

learning and attendance when high quality videoconferencing is used to supplement distance education deliver at learning centres. Our second paper using social network analysis also comes from the USA and is entitled « Online Learner Self-Regulation: Learning Presence Viewed Through Quantitative Content- And Social Network Analysis. » The article adds a new dimension of “learner presence” to the original community of inquiry model. Finally our third article from Spain, « Pedagogical Roles and Competencies of University Teachers Practicing in the E-learning Environment, » presents data from a survey investigating teacher skills needed to promote e-learning.

This issue also contains two articles in our Research Notes section, which provide case studies of innovation in distance and open learning. The first, from Canada, details the challenges (and the innovative solutions developed) to provide « First Year Chemistry Laboratory Courses for Distance Learners: Development and Transfer Credit Acceptance. » The second is from Russia, « The Experience of a Distance Learning Organization in a Private Higher Educational Institution in the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia): From Idea to Realization. »

We also present Dr. Barbara Miller Hall’s book review of the 2012 text *Student Participation in Online Discussions* by K. F. Hew and W. S. Cheung. Asynchronous online discussions remain the most extensively used teaching and learning tools for online learning. Dr Hall provides a critical review of this text, noting both its strengths and weaknesses.

I hope you enjoy this issue, tweet, reference, and pass along relevant links to colleagues who will benefit from our shared knowledge. The IRRODL network continues to make a difference for teachers, developers, institutions, and most importantly for learners.

All the best and I hope to meet many of you face-to-face or online in the coming years.

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