

Editorial

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Editorial

Terry Anderson
Editor, IRRODL

We are pleased to present another extensive issue of IRRODL, which features five research articles, one field note, two book reviews, two technical reports, and two transcripts from recent CIDER sessions. In this editorial, I briefly review the contents of the issue, with a hope that you are induced to read, bookmark, recommend, and forward the links and the RSS feeds to your colleagues and your networks.

The first research article by Patrick Parrish and Jennifer Linder-VanBerschot is entitled “[Cultural Dimensions of Learning: Addressing the Challenges of Multicultural Instruction](#)” and focuses on the important role of culture in the design and delivery of distance programming. As an international journal, we are acutely aware of the mediating effect of culture on journal publication, but its importance to education, with high stakes and often high costs, can not be overlooked nor minimized.

The second article focuses on an equally critical component of distance education programming – cost effectiveness. In “[Unbundling Faculty Roles in Online Distance Education Programs](#),” authors Jan Tucker and Patricia Neely help us sort out the true costs of program development and delivery under different models of faculty responsibility and employment.

The third research article, “[Process-Based Assessment for Professional Learning in Higher Education: Perspectives on the Student-Teacher Relationship](#)” by Peter Bergström, reports on a mixed methods doctoral dissertation study of the complex relationships between students and teachers in a professional nursing program.

Paul Gorsky, Avner Caspi, Avishai Antonovsky, Ina Blau, and Asmahan Mansu next bring us, once again, to the fascinating study of interactions, as revealed in the transcripts of computer conferences produced by distance education students. In this study, “[The Relationship between Academic Discipline and Dialogic Behavior in Open University Course Forums](#),” the researchers examine differences in dialogic behaviour between postings by

students in the humanities and in the sciences. They use the popular community of inquiry model to analyze teaching, cognitive, and social presence differences.

Distance education has, by definition, always involved shifting geographic spaces, but it can also involve shifting time as in shorter, longer, or self-paced courses. In the final research study, “[Length of Online Course and Student Satisfaction, Perceived Learning, and Academic Performance](#),” researchers Janet Ferguson and Amy DeFelice provide the results of a quasi-experimental comparison between shorter and longer courses – with interesting results!

The Field Notes section contains an interesting account of the challenges and affordances of distance education in an African context. In “[The Challenges of Implementing Distance Education in Uganda: A Case Study](#),” authors Gudula Naiga Basaza, Natalie B. Milman, and Clayton R. Wright detail the many challenges faced by Ugandan educators but, as importantly, suggest three strategic directions to meet these challenges.

In the Book Notes section, Nataly Tcherepashenet’s review of [Learning Cultures in Online Education](#) by Robin Goodfellow and Marie-Noëlle Lamy (2009) returns to the critical theme of culture in distance education. Ramesh Sharma’s review of [Perspectives on Distance Education: Open Schooling in the 21st Century](#) by Dominique Abrioux, former Athabasca University president, and F. Ferreira overviews the increasingly critical contribution of distance education in providing access, flexibility, and opportunity for school-aged learners.

Dr Jon Baggaley and his students in the Master of Distance Education program at Athabasca University provide two technical reports for this issue. The first is an excellent report by Tanya Elias, “[Universal Instructional Design Principles for Moodle](#),” which evaluates the capacity of a typical Moodle-based course to meet the inclusivity guidelines of universal design. The second report, “[Thirty Years of Distance Education: Personal Reflections](#)” by Terralyn McKee, examines distance education systems through the lens of the five generations of distance education technology proposed by James Taylor.

Finally, the slides and web conference transcripts of two CIDER sessions are included. The first presentation by Geoffrey Roulet, “[Message Interactions in Online Asynchronous Discussions: The Problem of Being Too Nice](#),” looks at the extent (or lack) of critical dialogue in web conferences. In the second recording, I present an [overview of three generations of distance education pedagogy](#), which moves us from defining distance education generations by the technology used to deliver it and brings us back to a pedagogical orientation.

I am sure you will agree that there is a great deal to learn from in this extensive and wide-ranging issue. We hope you will enjoy, learn from, and share these insights.

