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Editorial - Volume 13, Issue Number 1

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Editor, IRRODL

Best wishes to all IRRODL readers, editors, reviewers, and authors. We are very pleased to start the new year off with a large IRRODL issue that contains 15 articles.

I want to do three things with this editorial. The first is to summarize IRRODL's position and influence with respect to the growing interest in, and use and adoption of, open scholarship. The second is to help clarify the different sections in IRRODL for the benefit of authors as well as readers. Finally, as usual, I offer a brief overview of the contents in this issue.

Open Scholarship

I have had the privilege of delivering a number of keynote talks on open scholarship (sample slides at http://www.slideshare.net/terrya/follow-the-sun-2011). I find that it takes more and more slides to even touch on all of the initiatives that are exploding under the general theme of open scholarship. But this is welcome news as each new open access development complements the others in a growing network of expertise and commitment to using, developing, and, of course, sharing open resources. I won't dwell more than in passing on open source software – the success stories of projects such as Moodle, Linux, or Apache, or the failed projects such as SourceForce that litter repositories. However, there is no doubt that open source software can be developed with both commercial and social success. There is certainly much to learn about leadership, networking, team building, and economics from these earliest open projects.

Of perhaps greatest interest to IRRODL readers are open educational resources (OERs). We continue to see developments in the repositories, in government and institutional policy, and in the quantity of both tools to create (for example, Apple's new iBooks Author) and to distribute open learning content. More recently, we are witnessing the development of programs from both existing institutions and completely new institutions that are de-

signed to exploit OERs. You have likely heard the buzz from MIT with the addition of their credential-light tool set and the emergence of OERu consortium, which seeks to both create and credential learning achieved through use of OER content. The People's University, with the moniker "World's first Tuition-Free University," continues to expand its programming, while Khan Academy diversifies and adds staff from ad-generated revenue.

Open Access publishing thrives as demonstrated by the seven issues produced by IRRODL last year and the increasing number of open access journals listed on [Directory of Open Access Journals](#) (currently over 7,000 journals with 230 from [Canada alone](#)). We also note the continuing increase in the number of journals hosted using the open source [Open Journal System](#), the platform used to manage and host IRRODL.

Open Science thrives as well, forecasting a future in which science is an activity not just for men in white lab coats, but one that engages and benefits a global population. Open data initiatives abound, allowing citizens access to government data and the capacity to manipulate, display, track, and mash data from a wide variety of public and private sources. Of course, open publication through blogs and wikis also thrives, bringing a voice to millions of Earth's guardians—as well as diverse political propagandists.

No doubt this list could and will be expanded as open initiatives continue to gather support and we get better at developing and managing open resources and communities. I won't suggest that we have solved the sustainability challenges associated with many open initiatives, but these initiatives prove that open access is critically important to a world that needs to act more intelligently, to create more equal opportunity, and to more equitably share our finite resources.

We are proud to be playing one small but active part in the Open Scholarship movement, and as a reader, author, editor, or reviewer for IRRODL, we hope you share this sense of contribution and community as well.

Component Sections of IRRODL

As an evolving open journal, IRRODL is regularly developing new sections in order to find an appropriate place and category for each of the diverse contributions submitted for publication. This can be a bit confusing, so I want to share our understanding of the various sections and invite your contributions to or comments on any of these.

Research Articles: Articles in this section have all been rigorously blind reviewed by at least two peer reviewers. These works must show high qualities of scholarship, rigour, and originality. Research articles usually contain new data, but occasionally exceptionally strong theoretical pieces and literature reviews are published in this section.

Research Notes: Sometimes we get submissions that will likely be of interest to the distance education community but that do not provide the rigour or completeness of a full research article. These may also be papers announcing new or ongoing research projects. Many of these articles are peer reviewed, but some are edited only by the editor and copy

editors.

Field Notes: Similar to research notes, these submissions usually lack the literature review, theoretical grounding, or empirical results of a full research article, but they are likely of interest to our readers.

Technical Notes: Since distance education is, by definition, enmeshed in some type of communications technology, many of our readers appreciate being informed of developments in appropriate new technology. This section provides an outlet for such reviews. Many of these articles are written by graduate students, and they are usually edited by faculty members but are normally not subjected to blind peer review.

Article Notes: Scholarship is based on discussion and debate. Thus occasionally we get well-argued reactions to previously published research articles, which we print in this section. We occasionally ask for a response to the response from the authors of the original articles, but articles in this section are also not peer reviewed.

Book Notes: As is common in many journals, IRRODL publishes reviews of books that are particularly relevant to our field. Some of these are solicited by our Book Notes editor, but we also appreciate unsolicited reviews of recently published books that are relevant to open and distance learning.

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This is a general issue that contains 12 articles and three notes.

The first research article presents a case study of a set of content objects from one of the most successful open educational resource (OER) projects. "An Open Education Resource Supports a Diversity of Inquiry-Based Learning" documents the use and impact of music OERs from the Connexions repository. As the author notes, making OERs available is one thing, but understanding or even knowing about their use in different contexts is another challenge all together.

The next article is from faculty at the Open University of Israel and is entitled "Toward a CoI Population Parameter: The Impact of Unit (Sentence vs. Message) on the Results of Quantitative Content Analysis." This is a quantitative article that examines the impact of the unit of analysis on computer conference transcript analysis. This is an area dear to my heart as it reminds me of the challenges we faced with this issue when developing and validating the community of inquiry in the late 1990s. This issue is still not fully resolved, but is greatly informed by this article.

Every good teacher tries to match his or her instruction and learning activities with the capabilities and background of the learners. This is sometimes challenging at a distance where opportunities for informal assessment and feedback may be limited. Thus "Pretesting Mathematical Concepts with the Mobile Phone: Implications for Curriculum Design" is a useful guide and exploration of the challenges and benefits of assessing prior understand-

ing by the use of mobile phones.

Heutagogy, along with connectivism and the pedagogy of nearness, was the first formal learning theory that was explicitly based on the affordances of a ubiquitous Internet. In "Heutagogy and Lifelong Learning: A Review of Heutagogical Practice and Self-Determined Learning," the author takes us back over the first decade since the development of heutagogy and revisits its potential to guide learning design and activities.

We present two articles that focus on an area of huge potential and many challenges—that of providing science teachers and professional development for them to schools in rural Zimbabwe. "Science Teacher Training Programme in Rural Schools: An ODL Lesson from Zimbabwe" reviews the challenges and innovations in bringing much-needed professional development to rural schools in Africa and suggests the need to train and recruit local teachers, rather than outsiders, for this important job. The second, "Challenges of Virtual and Open Distance Science Teacher Education in Zimbabwe," looks at similar challenges in a different province, this time dealing with practicing teachers. Together these articles paint a stark but promising picture of the importance of open and distance learning in a region facing many challenges and opportunities.

Despite the huge and growing influence on and time committed to social networking, these technologies are little used in distance- or campus-based formal education systems. This issue features two articles focusing on issues of adoption. "Investigating Instructional Strategies for Using Social Media in Formal and Informal Learning" illuminates the concerns, fears, and challenges of teachers as well as the potential of deeper integration of these media into formal education. "Online Social Networks as Formal Learning Environments: Learner Experiences and Activities" notes the attitudes of learners and reinforces the need to bring informal technologies into the formal assessment process if effective use is to be made by our often instrumental learners.

We also feature two articles focused on teachers in virtual schools. Loneliness is an experience of many distance learners, but distance teachers also need to overcome many professional, technical, and academic challenges. "Rapport in Distance Education" details the concerns, and strategies for alleviating such concerns, of a sample of Canadian distance education teachers. The second article, "An Investigation of Communication in Virtual High Schools," documents the efforts made by teachers to maintain interest and commitment of school-age distance learners.

In "Connectivism and Dimensions of Individual Experience," the authors examine behaviour and interactions in a massive open online course (MOOC). This recent evolution of distance learning allows scalability, yet relies on individual motivation and commitment to learn. The authors examine the dimensions of individual experience in connective environments and explore the meaning of autonomy, connectedness, diversity, and openness.

Despite the growth of global learning resources and the networks to distribute them, learning is always a localized experience. "The Implications of the Local Context in Global Vir-

tual Education" provides a useful analysis and suggestions for exploiting, rather than ignoring, the cultural context within which all learning—even that developed elsewhere—must operate.

We present one note from the field exploring the challenges of moving to a new learning management system or virtual learning environment, "Learning Management System Migration: An Analysis of Stakeholder Perspectives." This study will be useful for any institution facing the challenges of changing the major platform for its distance or blended learning delivery.

The research note compares successful distance learners to those who did not qualify to write a final examination in a distance delivery engineering program in Sri Lanka. "Motivating Factors that Affect Enrolment and Student Performance in an ODL Engineering Programme" examines the prior experiences, attitudes, qualifications, and knowledge that were associated with positive and negative outcomes.

In the final section, Article Notes, the principal creator of the community of inquiry model, Randy Garrison, writes a response to "Social Presence within the Community of Inquiry Framework," an article by David Annand that was published in IRRODL, 12(5). Dr. Garrison, perhaps not surprisingly, is critical of Annand's analysis, largely because of differing epistemological assumptions of learning and knowledge construction. This is an old debate, but it is brought to light with the development of what Jon Dron and I (2011) referred to as three different generations of distance education pedagogy—all of which are thriving and have strong adherents within our scholarly and practitioner communities.

We hope you enjoy and learn from all of these contributions, and I invite you to share your responses and appreciation of these gifts with the authors.

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