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Rory McGreal

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Editorial – Volume 14, Issue Number 5



Rory McGreal
Co-Editor, IRRODL

This is my first editorial of IRRODL as one of the two co-editors with Dianne Conrad. As she did previously, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Terry Anderson for all the work he has done in building IRRODL into a world class scholarly journal, a leader in our field. And neither of us could manage this feat without the professional assistance of Brigitte McConkey, IRRODL's managing editor.

The articles in this issue of IRRODL have been grouped into two sections. The first provides us with research findings of interest to educational administrators and consists of articles on capacity building and leadership as well as more technical research on computer security and modeling. The second section is concerned with teaching and learning and consists of articles on training and teaching methods followed by research studies related to interactivity and social media.

Capacity building/leadership

Administration

Capacity building includes the development of leadership skills focusing on overcoming the obstacles preventing institutions from achieving their goals. Rubin and Fernandez introduce this section with an article stressing the importance of teacher as leader, arguing that teacher presence can have positive effects on student cognitive and social presence in class groups. The Babu et al. case study describes an elearning program on gender, crisis prevention, and recovery that could help reduce the brain drain in developing countries. The Sáez López article analyzing the concepts, attitudes, and practices of students in Spanish universities describes an experiment that demonstrates the need for training students in online searching. Shaw and Kennepohl report on a survey of senior undergraduate students and their instructors taking on research projects. Their results demonstrate that students became more interested in research; and teachers attested to the development of student cognitive abilities and their

independent thinking skills. Abu-Al-Aish and Love propose a model to determine factors influencing the acceptance of mobile learning, finding that expectancies, lectures, service quality, and innovativeness were all significant factors affecting behavioural intention to use mobile learning.

Computer security and modeling

Online learning administrators need to be more aware of issues surrounding computer security and computer modeling. In their paper, Chen and He use blog mining as well as a traditional literature search to determine the awareness of security risks in online environments, noting that security is not considered to be a top priority. On the other hand, Amigud conducted a survey of five distance education programs on their learner authentication strategies, confirming that at least in this one problem area, secure identification is possible at a distance. The Yildiz et al. paper describes a fuzzy model program designed to accurately predict students' performance, concluding that the most accurate results came from the model that was based on experts' opinions.

Teaching and Interactivity

Teaching

Using a qualitative meta-ethnographic approach, Mbatl explored student experiences using social media, finding that online discussion forums are ideal for the stimulation of learning in elearning programs. Shattuck and Anderson explored whether a training course had any impact on teaching practice. They recommend design principles for instructor training. Mavroudi and Hadzilacos adopted a learning needs approach to study the design of courses for elearning. They combined learner, context, and needs analyses into a coherent framework for replication.

Interactivity

Inter-personal interaction has been identified by many researchers as an important learning variable that can be supported online using social media. Castaño-Muñoz et al. studied thousands of students in three universities and the results have implications for determining the optimum level of interaction when designing courses. The contentious issue of peer feedback is examined by Ching and Hsu in their investigation of graduate students. Their research concluded that learners were generally supportive of their peers' work and helped advance their thinking. The importance of caring is the subject of the Velasquez et al. paper. In their phenomenological analysis, they argue that technology choices are integral to creating caring environments in an online setting.

I would like to end this editorial with a sincere thank you to all the researchers, reviewers, sponsors, and others who make IRRODL what it is. And let's not forget our +5000 subscribers and other readers. As the year 2013 comes to an end, I would request

reviewers to update your interests and authors, who have not already done so, to volunteer yourselves as reviewers using our online application. We try to keep reviewers to one review per year and not more than two. So, happy new year to everyone and all the best in 2014.

Athabasca University 

