

Editorial – Volume 16, Issue Number 3

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Rory McGreal
Co-Editor, IRRODL

We are pleased to present another issue of IRRODL to our research community, to open and distributed learning educators, and to our readers internationally. This issue has a variety of themes, including analytics, learner support and online teaching, and includes references to MOOCs, the community of inquiry, and interaction equivalency.

Veletsianos and Shepherdson lead off this issue with an examination of the complexity of digital learning, constructing a statistical analysis of interdisciplinarity in MOOC research. They investigate the trend towards interdisciplinarity in both xMOOCs and cMOOCs. This is followed by a bibliometric study by Avello Martinez and Anderson, in which they identify and classify the leading articles in IRRODL. They assess the impact factor of these highly cited articles comparing the citation rates with the number of views by readers. The next article consists of an investigation of video collections. Chen and Summers focus on informal learning in relation to the content, viewership and interaction supported by videos. They identify several gaps in academic areas and point out that this does not seem to affect the average of “flipped” classrooms.

The following three articles focus on the learner. Van De Bogart and Wichadee experimented to see if the LINE application could be used for supporting learning, focusing on the factors affecting the users’ intentions. Their research revealed that perceptions and attitudes were positively correlated to perceived usefulness, while establishing no correlation between perceived ease of use and attitude. In the next article, Ng examined learners’ goal profiles and their achievement patterns, assessing motivation and learning using person-centred analytics. The results showed that learners with multiple goals demonstrated more interest than those with a single goal, but there was no difference in the achievement levels of the different learner types. Mobile learners are the focus of Shin and Kang’s article, which made use of structural equation modeling to test several factors that influence mobile learners’ levels of acceptance, satisfaction and achievement.

Shin and Kang's findings can be used as a guide for those implementing mobile learning in their institutions. Student engagement is the focus of Henrie, Bodily, Manwaring, and Graham's longitudinal study. Their results show that clarity and relevance are more important than the medium of instruction in determining student satisfaction. They also note that exploring tools and previewing assignments were useful indicators of successful learning. Gallardo-Echenique, Marqués-Molíás, Bullen and Strijbos conducted a literature review of the "digital natives" concept that might be surprising to some readers. They reveal that there is no commonly-accepted definition of "digital-native" and furthermore demonstrate that their digital competence may be much lower than their digital teachers. The different roles of facilitator and learners are explored in Skrypnik, Joksimović, Kovanović, Gašević, and Dawson's cMOOC study. Using social network analysis of Twitter interactions (both human and technological actors), they discovered that the teaching function seemed to become distributed among the influential actors in the network. Nevertheless, the official facilitators managed to preserve a high level of influence over the information flow.

The next group of articles focus on teaching. Mbatha looks at the motivation of academics in adopting disruptive learning innovations at the University of South Africa. Results showed that there was a great variation depending on the technology adopted; even so, these innovations are playing a "pivotal role" in facilitating collaboration. They also emphasise the need for technology training for instructors. Najafi, Rolheiser, Harrison, and Håklev follow this using interviews to evaluate the experience of MOOC teachers/developers at the University of Toronto. They found a wide range of motivations including expanding access and showcasing the university. They describe the evolution of MOOC support from technical to instructional design issues. They found that MOOC teachers changed their classroom-related teaching practices to support more active learning. Instructor presence is the focus of the next article by Richardson, Koehler, Besser, Caskurlu, Lim, and Mueller. The authors investigate the behaviours of online instructors using a case study of the implementation phase of an online course. It highlights the way various instructional presence elements work together.

In a more theoretical vein, Padilla Rodriguez and Armellini examine the interaction equivalency theorem. Applying this theory in the corporate sector, the authors expand it to include satisfaction, knowledge transfer, business results, and return on expectations. They conclude that of the three interaction types (learner-content, learner-teacher or learner-learner), only one type of interaction needs to be featured prominently to be effective. Nevertheless, they caution that focusing on one type of interaction can cause confusion, disengagement or missed learning opportunities.

In the last article in this issue, Stewart investigates networked scholarship. Her findings suggest that networked scholarship fosters extensive collaborations and connections between individual academics rather than between institutions or roles.

And lastly, we offer you an examination of the relationship among MOOCS, assessment and attrition. Specifically, Katy Jordan has studied the effect of peer grading in MOOCs, finding that more research will help us better understand the interconnection of peer grading, completion rates and attrition in these courses. Jordan's research was supported by a grant from the MOOC Research Initiative, funded by the Gates Foundation.

We believe that you will find these articles interesting and useful. Please pass the links and a free subscription suggestion to your colleagues. Lastly, Dianne and I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who help us bring you IRRODL without charge through their gifts and skills of sponsorship, scholarship, review, editing, and production.

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