

Editorial – Volume 16, Issue Number 1

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February – 2015

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Rory McGreal
Co-Editor, IRRODL

With this first 2015 issue of IRRODL, you will notice a change in the heading of our website and a name change from "Distance" to "Distributed" Learning. These changes were made with support from UNESCO to emphasise our increased focus in the journal on "openness" and particularly on Open Educational Resources (OER). This is part of my mandate as an OER Chair on the UNESCO/Commonwealth of Learning/International Council for Open and Distance Education. The journal is also being directly linked to the [OER Knowledge Cloud](#), a repository of almost 1000 scholarly articles and reports on open learning. In this way, we are expanding the mandate of the journal beyond distance education to include a wider range of technology-assisted learning research. In support of this, we have appointed several UNESCO, Commonwealth of Learning, and International Council for Open and Distance Education Chairs to our Editorial Advisory Board.

In this issue, quite appropriately in line with this change, the lead articles are all concerned with different aspects of openness. Zancanaro, Todesco and Ramos open this issue with a mapping of the characteristics of OER-related publications. The article sheds light on the patterns and trends in journals, showing the growing importance and relevance of OER. Kerres and Heinen's paper reveals the mechanisms of open informational ecosystems and how they contribute to OER use and reuse. Reusability is the key to the success of OER. Chiappe and Arias review the scholarly literature on reusability as it migrated from a technological to a pedagogical concept.

The open movement connects directly to the issue of MOOCs. Impey, Wenger and Austin describe their implementation of a MOOC teaching astronomy to "astronomical" numbers of learners. They recognize the low completion rates, but point out that the small percentage of learners that do complete do so quickly and in much larger numbers than in the traditional courses. Soffer and

Cohen provide an Israeli view of MOOC delivery. This pilot study examines the scope and intensity of student activity as well as their attitude towards the new course model.

Mahodi and Ebrahimzade provide a different Middle East perspective through their examination of student persistence in relation to interactions using synchronous discussions and asynchronous emails. They identify family and job commitments, the loss of instructional motivation, and economic problems as major causes of student attrition. In an African case study, Tarus, Gichoya, and Muumbo shed light on the challenges faced in implementing elearning in Kenyan public universities.

The next five articles address technological issues in learning. Richardson and Alsup conducted a qualitative study on teacher identity, how it is affected in moving to digital learning and how it can be “cultivated” to support innovative teaching as well as retention. In a qualitative-to-quantitative study, Harrison assesses teacher experiences and suggests that attention should be paid to student access, planning, short segments, flexible scheduling along with progress indicators. M-learning is rising in importance, and in the next article, Keskin and Kuzu use design-based action research to study the perceptions of academics, finding that a mobile learning system was appropriate. Somyürek's article looks at adaptive hypermedia systems for learning, providing a review of existing literature and revealing trends and approaches. She defines categories and suggests reasons why these adaptive systems have not been adopted widely. Virtual worlds and online gaming are the subject of the fifth technology-based learning article. Blackmon examines the experiences of teachers who are using these techniques in their teaching.

The growing accessibility of data using computer systems has made possible learning analytics. The next two articles offer different takes on this phenomenon. Giannakos, Chorianopoulos, and Chrisochoides use analytics to provide insights into video learning and teacher training. Their longitudinal study examines the relationship between video navigation and cognitive levels of participants. Data-driven decision making using “big data” is the subject of Prinsloo, Archer, Barnes, Chetty, and Van Zyl's article where they ask the question “Is bigger better?”, thus raising issues to be considered in realising its potential. Koper examines how students differ in their preferences when taking online courses, grouping them into profiles and comparing student achievement and dropout levels with these preferences seeking correlations.

The final paper by Bozkurt, Akgun-Ozbek, Yilmazel, Erdogdu, Ucar, Guler, Sezgin, Karadeniz, Sen-Ersoy, Goksel-Canbek, Dincer, Ari, and Aydin consists of an extensive review of trends in distance education research. Combining content, descriptive and social analysis approaches, they organized keywords to show trends, also noting the most frequently cited authors.

I hope you find personally useful content in this issue. Please share with your friends and colleagues; after all, this is an open access journal that is now even more committed to openness. We want to ensure that as many researchers, teachers, course developers, administrators and other interested parties will benefit as much as possible from our shared knowledge. We hope that

IRRODL will continue to make a difference for teachers, developers, institutions, and most importantly, for learners.

Please note the [Open Education Global Conference 2015](#) to be held in Banff, Alberta, Canada, in late April. Dianne and I hope to meet with many of you there.

Athabasca University 

