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Sabbaticals

Heather Kanuka

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Editorial

Sabbaticals

It has been my pleasure to be the acting editor of IRRODL while Dr. Terry Anderson has been on sabbatical leave. While the value and need for academic sabbaticals has been passionately debated for decades (and will likely continue to be debated for decades to come), within the academy most, if not all, academics understand both the value and need for a career pause.

An academic sabbatical is a prolonged leave, typically for one year after six years of continuous employment. Harvard University was the first to grant academics a sabbatical in 1880. The primary purpose was, and still is, to provide an opportunity for academics to fulfill a career goal (i.e., write a book, travel for research or an opportunity for collegial inter-visitations). The word 'sabbatical' has biblical origins connected to the practice of leaving land unplanted as a means of rejuvenation. The word originates from the Mosaic law of ancient Judea, during which farmers left land fallow for a year after six consecutive harvests. The spirit of rejuvenation and harvesting has remained unchanged within the academy. Similar to 'leaving the land unplanted,' academics 'leave the daily demands of university life' (e.g., teaching and service commitments) for an opportunity to regenerate new ideas and pursue professional growth.

In the next issue of IRRODL, Dr. Anderson will be returning to us 'refreshed and recharged.' I'm sure you'll join me in welcoming Dr. Anderson back and look forward to hearing about his new ideas!

Sincerely,

Heather Kanuka
Acting Editor, IRRODL

In this issue of IRRODL, we have a broad cross section of articles, book reviews, and re-broadcasted presentations called *CIDER Sessions* from the [Canadian Institute of Distance Education Research](#).

First in our line-up is a paper entitled, *Cross-Cultural Delivery of e-Learning Programmes: Perspectives from Hong Kong*, by Wong Lap Sang. Wong examines a typically overlooked facet of e-learning, namely cultural hegemony. By examining Hong Kong's approach to education policy vis-à-vis the importation of cultural artifacts, Wong examines e-learning "from a critical-dialectical perspective." In particular, he examines the cultural implications that Hong Kong faces from the cross-border importation of e-learning courses and programs. As more and more universities seek to capitalize on new

and foreign markets, and both learners and governments seek educational opportunity from global suppliers, cultural hegemony could very well present problems.

Next, we move to report of a study conducted at the University of California, Irvine. In *Persistence in University Continuing Education Online Classes*, Jia Frydenberg examines student persistence and attrition in online versus 'onground' classes. Clearly, attrition is a problem. What is interesting is that Frydenberg's study found that despite fairly consistent reports in the literature indicating higher drop outs for distance education students, this was not the case at the University of California, Irvine once the course has begun. Attrition in open and distance education is a critical factor, but studies such as Frydenberg show that attrition is multifaceted and often clouded by a host of confounding variables.

The next paper in this issue, *Going the Distance: Towards a new professionalism for full-time distance education faculty at the University of the Philippines*, by Patricia Arinto addresses issues of training and professional development in distance education. Arinto's paper is interesting because she explores the literature grounded within the context of her own experiences teaching in a distance education faculty of a respected Filipino university.

Increasing access to educational opportunity is the driving motivation of much distance education programming. *Access to Communication for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and ESL Students in Blended Courses*, by Gary Long, Karen Vignare, Raychel Rappold, James Mallory, reports on how the online components of blended courses afford positive outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing ESL students.

Our next two papers examine open educational resources and open source software. The first paper by Mimi Miyoung Lee, Meng-Fen Grace Lin, and Curtis Bonk *OOPS, Turning MIT Opencourseware into Chinese: An analysis of a community of practice of global translators,* explores the dynamics of the open source community – specifically how volunteers negotiate 'obstacles' to bring the benefits of open courseware to the new audiences.

The next paper is entitled, *The Emergence of Open-Source Software in North America* by Guohua Pan and Curtis Bonk. This paper, is a [companion piece](#) published earlier this year in Insung Jung's Regional Focus Issue (IRRODL Vol .8 No. 1, 2007) on *Changing Faces of Open and Distance Education in Asia.*

Pedagogy is the basis of quality education, regardless of delivery method or technology used. In *Identifying Effective Pedagogical Approaches for Online Workplace Training: A case study of the South African wood products manufacturing sector,* Iain Macdonald, Mark Bullen and Robert Kozak report on an investigation of pedagogical techniques for workplace e-learning programs in the South African wood products manufacturing sector.

Is our education system meeting the needs of today's and tomorrow's students? Our next article by David Annand, *Re-organizing Universities for the Information Age* examines this issue through the lens of organizational theory. It is an informative read for those interested in cost effectiveness and the administration of distance education systems.

Same Size Doesn't Fit All: Insights from research on listening skills at the University of the South Pacific (USP), by Rajni Chand explores how 'listening skills' – a sub-component of a larger study skills course, is 'actually' being taught at a distance. This paper illustrates the apparent disconnect between teachers' perceptions of what they felt they were teaching versus students' perceptions of what they felt they were actually learning. It also examines the complexity of delivering a distance course across a very wide geographic region.

Next, we have three Research Notes papers. First in our line-up is an informative paper entitled: *Combating HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Nigeria: Responses from National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)* by Ambe-Uva Terhemba. Effective response to HIV/AIDS clearly needs holistic policies that formally recognize and address the entire scope of this global pandemic – including its impact on universities and the people who work within them.

We then move on to *Lessons from an International e-Learning Project* by Paul Breen. While Breen points out that distance education projects rarely form part of any larger plan in Africa, so-called 'agenda free' assistance from western agencies or educators remains equally problematic. Those interested in the multifaceted potential for distance education projects in developing countries will find Breen provides interesting and critical insights.

Montana State University is the setting for our final article, *Incorporating Screencasts in Online Teaching*, by Elaine Peterson. Despite success in teaching a library course online, one component remained a problem for Montana State students: learning the Dewey Decimal Classification System. Peterson reports on the preliminary results of an intervention designed to address this challenge.

We then bring to you two book reviews on James Paul Gee's *Good Video Games + Good Learning: Collected essays on video games, learning and literacy*, reviewed by Sharon Stoerger; and Susan D'Antoni's *The Virtual University – Models and Messages: Lessons from case studies*, reviewed by Denis Mayer.

Finally, we wrap up this issue with rebroadcasts of the latest CIDER Sessions, hosted by the *Canadian Institute for Distance Education Research*. It's a large issue, so enjoy!

Athabasca University