

## GUEST EDITORIAL

This special issue of TOJDE is based on the theme of "Web 2.0 and Social Software in Distance Education". The Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005) movement, epitomised by such nascent technologies as blogs, wikis, RSS, podcasting, as well as tag-based folksonomies, social networking, collaborative editing and peer-to-peer (P2P) media sharing applications, is purported to be redefining the way we conceive and make use of the Internet, and is enjoying considerable attention and popularity in both mainstream society and education. A major aim of this issue is to encourage ongoing discussion on the question of whether, and if so, in what ways, the advent and continued growth of Web 2.0 and social software has specific implications for the field of online and web-based distance education.

The special issue opens with an article by P. Clint Rogers, Stephen Liddle, Peter Chan, Aaron Doxey and Brady Isom (all from the USA), who argue that the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, and the possibilities and the realities they represent, are fuelling profound changes to theoretical views of learning and teaching. According to the authors, in contrast to earlier e-learning efforts that simply replicated traditional models of learning and teaching in online environments, "E-Learning 2.0" (Downes, 2007) offers opportunities to move away from the centralised industrial model of learning of the past era, towards achieving individual empowerment in a global learning community. The article features a case study of the experiences of a university that is moving towards E-Learning 2.0 while simultaneously increasing interoperability by using e-learning standards reflected in the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM). They analyse SCORM, with particular reference to its ability to allow learning management systems to exhibit Web 2.0 character.

The second article focuses on the use of a specific Web 2.0 technology, namely web logs (blogs). Written by Abdullah Kuzu (Anadolu University, Turkey) the article looks specifically at pre-service teachers' perceptions of the use of blogs for instruction and social interaction. From a broader viewpoint, Kuzu contends that rapid development of technology and unique characteristics of the creative society require a shift from traditional, instructor-driven teaching models towards making learners the centre of the learning process.

Elisabetta Cigognini, Giuseppina Mangione, Maria Chiara Pettenati and Elizabeth Guerin from Italy, the authors of the third article, examine the use of Web 2.0 and social software tools to facilitate the development of Personal Knowledge Management (PKM) skills that they believe are critical for lifelong learning in the knowledge society of the 21st century. They contend that "Social networking tools and methods provide... tremendous opportunity... to lead the learner into a learning and knowledge landscape in which PKM skills and competencies are both the enabling condition and final outcome of the... learning experience." From the implementation perspective, they also propose an instructional design model to support such applications, based on Connectivist (Siemens, 2004) theory.

The special issue then continues with an article by Eren Kesim and Esmahan Agaoglu (Turkey), who take on the view that Web 2.0 and social software herald a major paradigm shift for the field of distance education. In arguing their case, the authors examine Web 2.0 in the context of historical development of distance education, tracing the evolution of learning technologies since the 1960s. Their article concludes with a discussion of emerging trends and implications for educators, institutions and learners.

The fifth article, "Bounded and unbounded knowledge: Teaching and learning in a Web 2 world", Judy Nagy and Chris Bigum (Australia) discuss how the advent of the 'read/write Web', incorporating web-based software that gives anyone and everyone with Internet access the ability to publish online, poses ongoing challenges and issues for traditional distributors as well as creators of content and knowledge. In the same vein, these changes have caused the role of universities as content producers for credentialed learning to be questioned, prompting many educators to explore new ways of supporting online learning. In particular, Web 2.0 software affords new opportunities for and different modes of collaboration, which some believe points to student participation in knowledge creation. Nagy and Bigum highlight the lack of empirical data and situated contextual knowledge concerning intellectual property rights for knowledge

constructed in a collaborative context. Furthermore, they explore issues pertaining to the maintenance of academic integrity and quality when knowledge building occurs in a collaborative online setting.

The sixth article, by Palitha Edirisingha (UK), Chiara Rizzi (Italy), Ming Nie (UK) and Libby Rothwell (UK), reports on a study involving the use of podcasting (Curry, 2004) to provide teaching and learning support for an undergraduate module on English Language and Communication. The findings led to the development of a model for integrating podcasts in on-campus/blended learning, which also has potential applications in distance learning contexts. The model is based on three main features of podcasts identified as supporting student learning: learner choice and flexibility; accessing tacit knowledge of peers through discussions; and informality of learning.

The final refereed article is by Penny de Byl and Janet Taylor (Australia). It describes a Web 2.0/Web3D hybrid e-learning platform, called the AliveX3D platform, which involves the application of the Web 2.0 ethos to an online 3D virtual environment. The platform and accompanying tools are designed to enable the creation of authentic learning experiences with a large degree of learner control, and to promote collaborative dialogue between learners. The immersion in the 3D worlds enables learners to negotiate meaning based on their own personal cognitive, affective and kinaesthetic experiences rather than relying merely on descriptions of others' experiences. The authors conclude by suggesting that the choices embedded within the worlds allow the learning focus to shift away from isolated pre-designed interactions, towards encouraging a high level of self-directed and self-managed learning.

Last but not least, the "Notes to the Editor" section contains a contribution from Yavuz Akbulut and Mübin Kiyici (Turkey), on the instructional uses of blogs. Also included in this issue are two book reviews.

We hope you enjoy reading the articles in this special issue, and welcome your feedback, rejoinders and reflections. Please direct all such correspondence to [malee@csu.edu.au](mailto:malee@csu.edu.au).

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