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## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Trevor Colbourn*

*Editor*

Belanger, F. and D. H. Jordan, *Evaluation and Implementation of Distance Learning: Technologies, Tools and Techniques* (Hershey, PA: Idea Group Publishing, 1999). 245 pp.

Belanger and Jordan provide a comprehensive overview of planning, implementing, and evaluating distance learning. Their book serves as an excellent resource for institutions in the beginning stages of online programs as well as an effective evaluation rubric for more advanced initiatives. They begin by exposing the reader to assumed benefits of distance education and follow with a contingency model of synchronous and asynchronous environments by delivery location.

The book's organization takes the reader through important program variables, distance learning technologies, media conversation, instructional design, deploying technologies, multimedia content, program implementation and evaluation. This sequence facilitates understanding distance education as a series of components, the interaction of which is more important than the individual elements. Throughout the book, Belanger and Jordan supply their readers with important resources such as definitions, readings, and internet references.

The authors present several theoretical models for summative and formative evaluations of distance education and develop a useful paradigm for scaling the appropriate mix of technology support and face-to-face instruction. The book concludes with three hypothetical case studies that focus on strategic course conversation and infrastructure evaluation. Their examples present several data collection protocols and contain a model for cost benefit analysis. Belanger and Jordan provide a solid resource for considering the impact of distance education on students, instructors, and institutions.

— Charles D. Dziuban

Patsy D. Moskal

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Charles D. Dziuban is Director of the Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness at the University of Central Florida. Chuck received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin and specializes in applied multivariate and latent trait analysis. He is currently conducting an impact evaluation of Distributed Learning at the University.

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**Linda Lau, ed., *Distance Learning Technologies: Issues Trends and Opportunities* (Hershey, PA: Idea Group Publishing, 1999). 252 pp.**

Distance learning is often either little known or has an increasingly broad meaning. In *Distance Learning Technologies: Issues, Trends and Opportunities*, Linda Lau has created a collection of sixteen chapters that give insight into the diverse methodologies, approaches, and resulting issues surrounding distance learning deliveries in a variety of settings. Whether the reader is a novice interested in discovering uses of distance learning or an expert practitioner planning for innovation, *Distance Learning Technologies: Issues, Trends and Opportunities* has useful examples and recommendations. No presumptions are made. No universal definition of distance learning is given. Lau's commentary is minimal; rather, chapters progress from theoretical to conceptual approaches and finally application.

Distance learning takes various shapes and as such requires changes in thinking about teaching and learning. Beginning with chapter one, many readers will agree with Morpheus's assertion that constructivism is the new paradigm for learning, but may disagree that most web-based learning employs behaviorism. In chapter two, Purcell-Robertson and Purcell advocate a learner-centered approach including the use of feedback. Their methodologies imply attention to process and faculty preparation contradicting an assertion made by Nguyen and Kira in chapter three that Internet-based teaching is often unstructured. These authors do agree that institutional commitment is required to support distance learning in contrast to collections of individual faculty initiatives. Institutional commitment may result in the change in a profile of an organization compared to mere distance learning events as described by Berge and Smith.

Frequently as distance learning programs mature at individual institutions, collaborative initiatives emerge creating new issues that must be addressed. Some institutions agree to collaborate on distance learning initiatives from the start. Rayburn and Ramaprasad illustrate some of the issues confronted by alliances in chapter six. The authors warn distance educators of the risk in joining alliances that may lead to undesired change in an institution's mission and identity. Following this warning to guard one's mission is a series of nine elements (chapter seven) linking distributed learning activities with institutional strategic planning and program evaluation. The military has adopted the term distributed learning instead of distance learning. While no specific definition is given for distributed learning, similarities abound with distance definitions.

Schrum gives suggestions for ensuring student success as well as tips for designing the instruction itself for online delivery. Citing increased attrition rates for distance learning classes, Schrum calls for counseling students about required metacognitive skills and preferences. Adrian follows along in chapter nine stating how students may have greater ownership of the learning process in distance learning courses when a TQM approach is used. Appropriateness of technology used is also addressed through TQM. "...Quality Management concepts serve as a template for the application of electronic technologies and distance learning" (p. 116). The later chapters of *Distance Learning Technologies: Issues, Trends and Opportunities* provide case study examples of the use of particular distance technologies in settings ranging from a doctoral program at Pepperdine University, digital video uses at West Point, Web-based training for Marketing, and the first Web

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site for children in Egypt based on the study *Little Horus*. Lau has not attempted to elaborate on the issues or opportunities for the future of distance learning. *Distance Learning Technologies: Issues, Trends and Opportunities* speaks for itself and leaves the reader to decide what possibilities exist.

— Barbara Truman-Davis

Barbara Truman-Davis is the Director of Course Development and Web Services at the University of Central Florida, with responsibility for faculty and course development to create online courses and programs. Barbara has a background in instructional design and has written and made numerous presentations on UCF's award-winning faculty development program.

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