

# Current Issues in Emerging eLearning

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## Foreword

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# FOREWORD

This first publication of *Current Issues in Emerging eLearning (CIEE)* opens and closes with research studies on eLearning practice. The studies frame three theoretical discussions regarding the judicious adoption of eLearning technologies and one extended narrative regarding the various factors behind innovative best practices.

In *Discovering Behavioral Intervention: A Parent's Interactive Guide to ABA*, a team of three scholars from UMass Medical School's EK Shriver Center team up with a collaborator from Praxis, Inc. to provide results of their study of an online course on applied behavior analysis (ABA) offered for and evaluated by the parents of children with autism spectrum disorder. The study evaluates how well the online course helped parents meet the goal of becoming "well informed and knowledgeable about intervention options" available to help meet their child-rearing challenges (Fleming et al), and thus empowers practitioners to develop and apply current, effective, evidence-based practices in teaching, training, and learning. The authors note that "parents seek information on ABA through various media channels, including the Internet. Unfortunately the information they encounter there can be unsupported by scientific evidence, inaccurate, incomplete, or biased toward product promotion" (Fleming et al). The authors describe their implementation of the classic instructional design process used to develop a self-paced online course intended to remedy the prevalence of misinformation on ABA.

The central four theoretical articles in the issue break into two sets of companion pieces. Tara Ashok's *Development of a new mindset for eLearning Pedagogy* provides a researched narrative of the eLearning tool kit adopted by a life-long biology and anthropology instructor who left her native India to teach in the United States, drawn by access to student-centered technologies that supported her teaching goals. Ashok's article is complimented by Dennis Maxey's *Dewey, Desi, and DEC: Exploring the educational philosophy of Indian open, online, and distance education*. Maxey looks not at the sparse eLearning landscape from which Ashok emigrated in 1993, but at the India of today, where the constructivist narratives regarding diverse online learning practices align with the principles espoused by John Dewey but often expose behaviorist underpinnings.

This issue of *CIEE* pairs the work of our Founding Editorial Board Member, Edna Pressler, with a piece by our journal's Editor-in-Chief, Apostolos Koutropoulos. Each explores an application of data analytics which has the potential to enable academic programs to design and deploy technology to optimize learning, teaching, and training. Pressler's *Logging in to Learning Analytics* responds to the growing international learning analytics agenda. Trained in organizational change theory, Pressler applies the McKenzie 7S model to identify seven areas of an organization that require specific attention to adopt a big data eLearning initiative. Koutropoulos proposes a new approach to the portal systems of academic libraries, identifying both opportunities and missteps in the current Library 2.0 movement. He proposes a new application that leverages analytics, naming this tool the *Library Portal 2.0: The Social Research Management*

*System*. Pressler and Koutropoulos write separately but connectively about changes in the academy that could have transformative power, changes that frighten us in terms of the potential for breaches of user privacy but which could revolutionize teaching, learning, and researching.

Storey Mecoli's closes this issue with *Beyond Assumptions: How Urban Students View and Practice Digital Literacies In and Out of School*. Fittingly she returns us to a research study on eLearning practice, the very genre with which Fleming et al. open this inaugural issue of journal. Mecoli provides a qualitative, ethnographic case study of digital literacy practices and the perceptions of students from an urban metropolitan high school. She finds a disjuncture between students' in and out of school practices. We welcome Mecoli as a graduate student researcher representing this special category of submission to this journal. And we thank her, and all the contributors, to this first issue for their thought-provoking narrative on the practice and study of eLearning in its many forms.

We hope that you walk away from this issue inspired by the results of practical applications of eLearning. The examples our authors provide serve as a starting place for your own research and practice. We hope that you are energized to gather under the banner of the theoretical work proposed in this inaugural issue and engage more with emerging research and practice in these areas. We are eager to help build a community around the research and scholarly use of eLearning theory and eLearning technologies within and across educational sectors. You as a reader, researcher, and practitioner play a vital role in this emerging community. As you read through the articles, we encourage you to contact the writers with your thoughts, comments, and ideas, *and* be in contact with the *Center for Innovation and Excellence in eLearning*, a center of the College of Advancing and Professional Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. In this way we will continue to participate in mindful and active engagement with these intriguing emerging topics, and continue to establish findings on eLearning as a distinct body of knowledge, serving as a connection point for critical thought in the field.