KEEGAN, D. (2000). *Distance training: Taking stock at a time of change.* Routledge Falmer Studies in Distance Education. London: Routledge Falmer (pp. xiv, 152).

The growth of virtual and distance learning was recently summed up by Sir John Daniel of the U.K. Open University:

> Not long ago we all wished that the world would take more interest in what we did and show more appreciation of the virtues of distance learning. Today we must often wish we could be released from the close embrace of Wall Street, the technology companies and the media. (1999, p. 34)

With increasing interest in the development of distance learning by educational institutions, the media, technology companies, corporations, and people wishing to improve their education or qualifications, this volume, written by a well-known figure in the field, is very welcome. Keegan will be known to many distance educators as the author of the *Foundations of Distance Education* (Routledge, 1996, 3rd ed.) and as the founder of the journal *Distance Education*. In this volume, aptly subtitled *Taking Stock at a Time of Change*, Keegan has provided a brisk and concise overview of the state of the field of training at a distance at the turn of the twenty-first century. The purpose in writing this book, in the words of the author, is to address:

> the tensions and interfaces in the evolution from d-Learning to e-Learning to m-Learning. d-learning is distance learning, e-Learning is electronic learning and m-Learning is mobile learning based on the wireless technologies of the 21st century.

A great deal of attention in this volume has been given to the provision of careful definitions and the drawing of boundaries. Keegan makes the useful distinction, for example, between distance training that is group-based and for full-time students and that which is for part-time students. It is this attention to the demarcation of boundaries in the field that provides the reader with a good understanding of the current domains of distance training.

I found this book provided useful insights into ways in which the field is changing and developing. I found Keegan's position on the shift from dLearning to eLearning to mLearning particularly interesting because I use the term "mLearning" in Canada to mean something else—moderating online learning. The idea of learning being mobile, though, is something that those in the fields of telelearning, distance learning, and open learning have possibly not considered until now. In what Keegan terms the "mobile revolution," interesting statistics are provided on the growth in ownership of mobile phones (e.g., in late 1999 there were approximately 500,000 mobile phones in the world and by 2004 there will be one billion). These figures give

anyone involved in the electronic delivery of education reason to reflect on where we are going and what this sort of development portends. For example, this growth of personal mobile phones will make it possible to teach face-to-face at a distance and, as Keegan notes, "to restore eye-to-eye contact electronically."

Keegan's chapter on the Internet is rich in boundary demarcation and the provision of definitions. McGreal's database is highlighted (1999) in which seventeen levels of training online are outlined. Keegan proposes a simpler set of five classifications which distance trainers will likely find interesting.

The author's notion of "kernels" intrigued me. Keegan explains kernels (pp. 102–103) in the following way:

> Institutions faced with the decision to transfer some or all of their face-to-face and/or distance training provision to the Web, face further choices on the shell or kernel to run their Web-based training system. These decisions have far-reaching implications for the didactic strategies of the institution, and for the continuing costs of the training system. There are three options: rent a kernel from one of the leading providers; adapt an existing kernel for use in one's own system, or develop one's own system.

Distance Training: Taking Stock at a Time of Change is a brisk, authoritative introduction to the field of distance training and an excellent reference for anyone seeking for clarification of terms that are often used interchangeably. I anticipate Keegan will be widely quoted from this volume in future.

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LOCKWOOD, F., & GOOLEY, A. (Eds.). (2001). *Innovation in open and distance learning: Successful development of online and Web-based learning*. London: Kogan Page (pp. 224).

In the foreword of this book, Fred Lockwood discusses student-centred learning approaches and constructivism. He sees ICT as a means of achieving these: academics questioning the very basis of learning and, consequently, how they teach. Essentially this is the thrust of the book.

This book, a cooperative venture between Australia and England with a smattering of international contributions, has authors already known to many in the field (Bernadette Robinson, Bruce King, Anne Gooley), but equally includes new blood, and in particular a broad range of Australian contributors brought by Gooley. It also features a chapter by New Zealand's Cathy Gunn and Claire McLachlan-Smith.

Chapters include innovation in distributed learning, the influence of teacher beliefs, developing low-cost environments, generic structures, integrated environments, flexible tool-boxes, lifelong learning, student recruitment and retention, networking tools, mentoring, online assessment, and professional development. There are also specifics on pictorial materials, video, and Lotus LearningSpace. There is good coverage with a mixture of research and case studies. It is good to see student support, mentoring, and change management addressed in a broad-based approach, as well as the specifics of online and Web-based learning.

Although you may need to look for them, several themes appear woven through this book: distributed learning, funds and resources, organisational issues, human resources, and appropriate media. Each of these brings its own challenges and issues. But in general the book is heartening. It reports a range of initiatives, some high profile, others low cost, but all that either describe success or identify how problems that have been faced may be addressed by others new to online and Web-based learning.

Several of the chapters deserve greater attention. McLachlan-Smith and Gunn's "Promoting Innovation and Change in a 'Traditional' University Setting" will chill many New Zealanders. After describing two initiatives with varying degrees of success, they state:

> In conclusion, these flexible courses have been successful essentially against the odds: due in part because they met the needs of their niche market and in part to the time and dedication of the "early adopters" who coordinated them. (p. 50)

They go on to say that the University of Auckland should look to far greater resourcing and support for initiatives if future success is to be guaranteed. It was the champions and their enthusiasm that led to the successes described. But this is in contrast to what seems to be happening elsewhere—other contributors to this book report an institution-wide commitment to funds to support online and Web-based learning.

Bruce King will be known to many through his keynote address at the 1995 DEANZ conference in Auckland. King's "Making a Virtue of Necessity: A Low-Cost, Comprehensive Online Teaching and Learning Environment" describes and reflects upon the development of UniSAnet, an online environment for teaching and learning. What the University of South Australia wanted is familiar—a common front-end, consistent use of authoring and communication tools, and academic, technical, and student support—all designed to readily allow academics and others to readily and easily place materials online. Although largely descriptive and short on reporting results, King's chapter does include a useful brief evaluation of the project by an independent expert.

Chris Morgan and Andre Smit in "Mentoring in Open and Distance Learning" focus on "the somewhat neglected area of mentoring in open and distance learning contexts where opportunities can be created to enhance student interactions, learning and well-being" (p. 160). They use Smit's three-dimensional mentoring model to evaluate specific opportunities for distance learners: creating multiple

discourses; helping overcome isolation; enabling the development of work-based competencies; providing higher levels of flexibility; creating dialogue between theory and practice. Case studies are used to explore types of mentoring relationships among distance learners and they in turn are evaluated in terms of the model. This is a well-written, informative chapter with practical application.

In "Professional Development in Distance Education: A Successful Experiment and Future Direction," Ulrich Bernath and Eugene Rubin present data and experiences and provide some general evaluation of three virtual seminars on professional development. Each of the seminars contained modules that were hosted by an expert in their field and involved one to two weeks on a designated topic, where an introduction was drafted containing pre-prepared contributions from the leaders and an outline of the structure for the following discussion. Typically, individuals would make comments, and leaders would respond with a summary that was posted at the end of each week. Thought was given to the smooth transition from one module to another. Modules covered included the foundations of distance education, institutional models, theory, organisational trends, applications, technology, support, and instructional design. The last two seminars included standardised modules.

A goal was cross-cultural sharing of experiences, ideas, and opinions. The broad base of opinion led to a more comprehensive analysis and understanding of critical issues, particularly with reference to low tech and high tech technology. Otto Peters observed that "knowledge building communities" had been established where public as well as private knowledge structures flourished. Helmut Fritsch reported "witness learners." He described how analysis showed that many of those enrolled did not actively participate, but instead witnessed the interactions of others. When contacted many had actually witnessed on a daily basis and had learned from the comments, statements, and questions of others. Mind you, $US580 is a high price to pay to be a silent witness! Although few New Zealanders took part in these seminars, those that did reported favourably. However, numbers participating globally have remained constant in the low forties.

The contributors to this book are realistic. Not all initiatives and projects gave positive results, but whether they did or not, each has something worthwhile to say and of interest to New Zealanders in the ODL community. This is a useful book worthy of buying and a useful contribution to Kogan Page's Open and Distance Learning series.

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NICHOLS, M., & UCOL (2001). *Teaching for learning: Designing resource-based learning courses for the Internet age.* Palmerston North, NZ: TrainInc.co.nz (P. O. Box 872, Palmerston North, NZ).

How long is it since a New Zealander working in the field of flexible learning has produced a text/resource on best practice for local and international use? Mark Nichols from UCOL stunned those at the 2001 ODLAA conference by setting up a stand in the corner of

a large meeting hall and promoting this CD-ROM.

At first sight it is interesting and easy to navigate. There is both a Word and Acrobat version with plug-ins to download if you don't have the ability to view the CD-ROM from existing software. You can also email the author or go to the "book's" Website.

The outline is familiar. There is an introductory section (pretty much what you would find in any book). Then part one deals with principles of teaching and learning (the need for effective teaching and learning; universal principles of teaching and learning; resource-based learning as a term; and VARIES—an introduction to this acronym for the approach to course design that Nichols advocates), so often missing from many texts on flexible learning. Part two is in greater depth, and devotes six chapters to clarifying and extending the VARIES concept (variety, access, reflection, interactivity, explicit, and support). Part three is on developing the course of the future (integrating the principles; the role of education managers).

Nichols uses anecdotes and case studies frequently to make his points. In part one he gives particular attention to deep learning and the theories of Ramsden, principles of adult learning (and Knowles in particular), learning styles (with an emphasis on Honey and Mumford), and motivation. He does this well. In this section I would have liked to have seen a more explicit analysis of the role of constructivism in resource-based learning, and even here it would have been worthwhile to have mentioned the use of technology in supporting this. Where, too, is the analysis of the social basis of learning and how this mode of learning may simulate that of the classroom's interaction?

He makes links with lifelong learning and devotes considerable space to flexibility, prompting us to ask "Flexible for whom? For whose ends?" He acknowledges institutional and other constraints and spends time on eLearning as a subset of resource-based learning. Finally, this first section looks critically at assessment. Much is written about summative assessment, though there is less on diagnostic, ipsative, or formative assessment.

In part two, the concept of VARIES is expanded greatly. Although each of the elements introduced is explored in a different chapter, there is a conscious effort to integrate each of them. It would, however, be useful if each section here included its own references and bibliography.

In the section on variety, many examples of variety are given, covering delivery, assessment, and presentation. Face-to-face teaching is included. Attention is given to synchronous and asynchronous interaction. Listservers are addressed. A table that addresses the merits of various technologies is introduced so that decisions regarding media to use are made easier.

The section on access is realistic and critical in its view of access. Delivery technologies are assessed in terms of access and emphasis is given to mediating technologies.

The section on reflection is carefully written. It makes clear connections with interactivity, revisits surface and deep learning, and links with earlier work written about the nature of learning

styles and adult learning. Kolb's experiential learning cycle is introduced, and there is a separate section on preparing students for reflection.

A disappointing feature of the section on interactivity is that there appears to be little acknowledgement of the social nature of learning and maybe the need to simulate the normal classroom interactions that students have with each other. Interactivity is defined as "a process of being changed as a result of one's actions," really an inadequate explanation. There are, though, passages on a range of interactive technologies and special attention paid to hyperlinks and self-assessment.

Explicit(ness) is the name given to the section that deals with what has traditionally been called course design. This section is detailed, with a sound introduction that discusses being explicit in design, expectations, and instructions. A distinction is made between core elements and core documents and all the important aspects that we would expect to see are addressed.

The last section, support, is written well. The roles and responsibilities of tutors and learners are addressed, attention is given to the expensive nature of quality support, and there is agreement that support is additional to many expected workloads. There is considerable emphasis on support and the role of technology in its delivery. The customisation of support is an interesting topic discussed.

Part three of the CD-ROM revisits VARIES in terms of a systems approach to the design process, describing how the mix of the elements of VARIES is determined by internal and external factors that affect the design process itself. A complete section is devoted to policy, best practice, strategic and financial implications, and the roles and deployment of staff. The final paragraphs are on institutional commitment.

There is strength in Nichols's work, in his enthusiasm and energy, his commitment to resource-based learning, and the concept of VARIES which he introduces and expands well. He clearly understands a rational model of the design process, technology, and its applications in resource-based learning.

I would have liked to have seen a greater acknowledgement of the social nature of most learning, greater attention to copyright issues, and a more visual presentation throughout (clearly a CD-ROM lends itself to this) that breaks up text and tables.

This is an interesting publication and as New Zealanders we should support it. It is a useful guide to course design and resource-based learning.

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PICCIANO, A. G. (2001). *Distance learning: Making connections across virtual space and time.* Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice-Hall (pp. xviii, 253).

This is an excellent text for providing teachers and educational institutions considering distance learning with an introduction to the current state of the field. Anthony Picciano's writing is direct, easily understood, current, and grounded in the research literature. Each chapter concludes with a summary of

the content that has been covered, followed by a case study or two, which effectively illustrate the issues raised in the preceding pages. The technology of distance learning is summarized in ways that enable the reader to make comparisons (e.g., print, audio, video, computer-digital) and there is a discussion about blending technologies for teaching and learning. This leads to what for me is the most interesting part of the book, in which Picciano introduces some challenging views about pedagogy and distance learning.

In his chapter on instructional design for distance learning, he notes "A general pedagogical theory for distance learning does not exist now and will not likely exist in the near future." A variety of debates about the nature of distance education are briefly reviewed (Keegan, 1993, 1996; Wedemeyer, 1977; Moore, 1994; Peters, 1988). Picciano poses the question (p. 66), "In searching for or developing a pedagogical theory for distance learning, a major question to be addressed is whether or not it is a distinct form of education." He notes that Shale (1988) considers that the process of education and learning is the same regardless of whether teacher and student are face-to-face or at a distance. This debate is introduced but not discussed in any detail by the author. Picciano takes the position that "major societal forces such as the demand for greater educational opportunity and lifelong learning, and rapidly evolving technological advances are changing the nature of distance learning." The result is that distance learning is becoming more decentralized and more student-centered and is "routinely being offered in conjunction with traditional academic programs." A new form of education is emerging:

> It is quite possible that distance learning is, in fact, becoming more traditional while traditional learning is using techniques formally associated with distance. Virtual systems may be the vehicles whereby traditional learning and distance education begin to merge and form a new paradigm for education. (p. 67)

Unfortunately, Picciano does not spend a lot of time on this promising line of thought which is likely to be of interest to distance educators. This book, nevertheless, is a first-rate guide to the preparation of courses at a distance, the use of Web pages for instruction, the place of instructional development, synchronous and asynchronous communication, and various types of interaction between students and teachers.

This is a book that is intended for the distance learning practitioner, although the author provides some challenging scholarly insights into the direction of the field. It should find wide acceptance and use by those who are preparing to consider the "new paradigm."

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