BULLETIN

From the guest editor, Barrie Todhunter

Welcome to 2014 from the members of the ODLAA executive. We hope you have a productive and rewarding year.

Once again, I have the privilege of being the guest editor for the monthly ODLAA Bulletin for February. In this Bulletin, we provide some information about what is happening in the world of ODLAA for the coming year, plus some information on forthcoming events that may be of interest to ODLAA members. We also present a bio of a leading academic in the world of open and distance education – Professor Ken Udas.

As indicated in our December edition, we are happy to provide information about employment opportunities that may be available in the area of open and distance education, so please let us know of any opportunities that arise. Send any information to executive@odlaa.org. We also like to provide a review of any publications in this domain so feel free to let us know what is in press or what has been published, and if possible send in your review of what you find. We would also like to profile practitioners in this area so please send in any bios of yourself or of key members of your organisations so we can help to raise the profile of educators in open and distance education. In our December edition, we asked readers to send in comments or to answer some brief questions as to whether you find the bulletin to be of value or not. To our knowledge, we did not receive any responses, so can only assume that readers are happy with what they receive and find it of some value.

If you do have any views on these matters, information or feedback can be sent to executive@odlaa.org.

On behalf of the ODLAA executive committee, we wish you a prosperous and personally rewarding 2014.

Associate Professor Barrie Todhunter
ODLAA Committee Member
University of Southern Queensland

Call for nominations for ODLAA Executive positions

The ODLAA constitution requires some members of the executive to stand down on a rotation basis after serving for two years. To comply with the constitution, the existing President, Treasurer, and two members will stand down and create vacancies on the executive committee. All of those sitting members are entitled to re-nominate on this occasion. On that basis, ODLAA is seeking nominations for the following positions on the ODLAA Executive Committee:

- President
- Treasurer
- Member 1
- Member 2

Each position is for a 2 - year period commencing immediately following the AGM (which will be held online in the week commencing Monday 31 March 2014). If you would like to nominate for one of these positions, please email your nomination to mkigitho@une.edu.au and include the names of two (2) current ODLAA members who have agreed to support your nomination. Please use the following wording:

> *I [name], a current ODLAA member, submit my nomination for the position of [executive position].*
>
> *My nomination is supported by [name 1, email 1] and [name 2, email 2] who are both current members of ODLAA.*

Please submit your nomination by no later than 5pm (EDT) on 7th March 2014.

Mutuota Kigotho: Secretary ODLAA

eAGM to be held in late March

As indicated above, the ODLAA eAGM will be held in late March so keep an eye out for details which will be circulated in the near future. Discussions will include a number of initiatives that are under way as well as some preliminary considerations for the ODLAA 2015 Summit. Your participation in the AGM and your votes on the motions to be presented are strongly encouraged to ensure the ongoing viability of ODLAA, so watch this space.

Award for Associate Professor Som Naidu

The Open University of Sri Lanka is conferring a D.Lit. (Doctor of Letters) (Honoris Causa) on Associate Professor Som Naidu for his contributions to Distance Education, regionally and internationally. The convocation will be held on May 28th in Colombo and Associate Professor Naidu has been invited to give a Convocation Address. More news and photos will be available after the event. Congratulations to Som for such a distinction.

Wikipedia indicates the following for those of us who are not familiar with this degree: "*In the United Kingdom, Australia, India and certain other countries, the degree is a higher doctorate, above the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), and is issued on the basis of high achievement in the respective field or a long record of research and publication. The Litt.D.*

degree is awarded to candidates whose record of published work and research shows conspicuous ability and originality and constitutes a distinguished and sustained achievement. University committee and board approval is required, and candidates must provide documented mastery of a particular area or field. The degree may also be awarded honoris causa to such individuals as the university or the learned body in question deems worthy of this highest academic award" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_Letters).

ODLAA Webinars

Once again, Jo Osborne will be facilitating some exciting webinars on topics that are important to the future of open and distance education as the political and economic landscape changes around us quite rapidly. A provisional schedule is suggested here and we would very much like some feedback especially if you (or a colleague) have a particular professional interest in one of the areas and would be able to contribute as a co-presenter.

Provisional date	Topic	Presenters
Late March	**Experience with Quality Matters** (international program for the peer reviewing of online courses) AND other Professional Development options for quality assurance of online courses	Ed Development team at University of Tasmania; other offers please?
Late July	**More Stories from the MOOCs** (participant outcomes and institutional effects)	Offers please from educators and learners who have experience in this area
Early November	**Mobile Learning**	Offers please from educators and learners who have experience in this area

The focus of these webinars will continue to be from a practitioner aspect; we want to share experience and advice from the field rather than propose theoretical positions.

If you would like to help refine (or diversify!) the proposed topics and/or suggest possible presenters, please contact Jo directly at Jo.Osborne@utas.edu.au

Conferences and other events

Please send through any information on conferences or events related to open and distance education that you would like to have included in the monthly ODLAA bulletin

1: UQ Transforming Assessment Webinars – 5 March 2014 GMT 07:00 am

"Badges for Learning: a review of the formative role of badges in two open online courses"

Presenter: Simon Cross, Open University, UK

The emergence of open online learning courses brings in to sharp relief the viability of existing forms of teacher provided formative and summative assessment. For such courses that carry no charge for participation alternative structures for engaging, motivating and

sustaining study need to be sought. Badges or similar such visual public symbols that communicate to others a particular quality, achievement or affiliation possessed by the owner may have a role to play. This session will cover some potential social and psychological roles for badges and then report on the reception and use of badges in two 'massive' open online courses delivered in 2013. This will highlight the varied functions badges performed with particular attention to how they may support and guide learning in a 'formative' capacity during a course and the need for effective pedagogic design and alignment of the course badging strategy. This discussion will draw upon data from end of courses surveys that specifically asked about badges, pre-course surveys, and user comments made during the course such as on Twitter.

Hosted by: Professor Geoffrey Crisp (RMIT University, Australia) and Dr Mathew Hillier (Teaching and Educational Development Institute, University of Queensland, Australia)

Starting *GMT* 07:00AM (Duration approx. 1 hour).

See your equivalent local time at http://timeanddate.com/s/2hw9

Further information and RSVP instructions are at http://bit.ly/webinar5march2014

2: New Generation Learning Space Design 2014

'Next practices driving the transformation of learning environments that are more engaging and effective for all'

http://www.designforlearning.com.au/default.aspx?mac=1-6185292815

Massive adoption of new technologies, changing curriculum, and transformation of student study habits, all have resulted in education institutions needing to rethink teaching and learning environments. Based on the most recent research IQPC's 3rd Annual New Generation Learning Space Design spotlights today's immediate and future needs for learning spaces and the resultant designs to maximise opportunities for student engagement. With multiple case studies of innovative pedagogical designs, this event will explore four key themes emerging as defining elements:

- Collaboration
- Technology
- Engagement
- Sustainability

To explore these themes in depth, this event will engage participants through a variety of our ever-successful roundtables, together with international and regional showcases and small group discussions. Together, attendees will discuss which models and approaches are most effective, how are they being used to engage and retain students, and how we can apply them to advance the scholarship and practice of teaching and learning. Keynote sessions and panel discussions will focus on:

- Understanding the principles of effective pedagogy and design for the coming decade
- The latest thinking in the areas of learning theory, student and community engagement, social media technologies and sustainability
- The modes of creativity and productivity which education will need to address in the coming decade

- Gaining the latest research on learning analytics for designing effective learning environments
- Developing planning and design strategies for flexible facilities that serve a broad set of students and disciplines

3: Digital Rural Futures Conference, 25 – 27 June, 2014

Further information is available from http://www.usq.edu.au/digital-rural-futures, and registrations are now open.

The **Digital Rural Futures Conference, 25 – 27 June, 2014**, hosted by the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, is an initiative of the Regional Universities Network (RUN). The Conference aim is to raise awareness of opportunities and challenges affecting rural and regional Australia across three themes: regional futures, agricultural futures and digital futures.

Abstract submission: The Call for Abstracts is **open till February 28, 2014**. Multi-disciplinary collaboration is encouraged. You are invited to submit abstracts/posters designed to introduce your research, your group or institution, your business or your activity to other Conference delegates.

This conference provides an interface between the researcher and the primary producer, communities, government agencies, industry and other potential partners to facilitate discussion relevant to the regional agenda, providing opportunities to build cross-sector networks and partnerships locally, nationally and internationally.

Regional Futures

- Skills for transforming regions
- Creating New Value – Clusters, hubs and value chains
- Growing innovation and entrepreneurism in regional Australia
- Enhancing regional wellbeing using digital technologies
- Building regional social capital

Agricultural Futures

- Agricultural extension including agricultural systems and megatronics
- Revolutionising farming using Big Data
- Digital decision making and discussion support system tools for agriculture and climate
- Innovative technologies for agricultural and regional issues

Digital Futures

- Digital literacies to transform rural and regional futures

- Early adoption of technology in education, health, agriculture and associated sectors
- Regional communication, digital and mobile networks and impacts of the digital divide on regional communities
- Assisted living and telehealth including digital applications for aged care
- Innovative approaches to learning and teaching including blended learning, flipped classroom, personalised learning, digital communities and learning spaces
- Research related to digital identity, digital inclusion, digital economy and digital society

Profile of an open and distance education practitioner

This month, we have the pleasure of bringing you the fascinating story of a leading figure in the world of open and distance learning – Professor Ken Udas from the University of Southern Queensland. Ken tells us in his own words of his journey in open and distance education across many continents and where he sees higher education moving in the future.

Ken Udas: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services) and Chief Information Officer, University of Southern Queensland

Although I have moved around extensively and have served in quite a few sectors, I have always worked in higher and continuing education. I started my career in student services but I first became actively and directly involved with open and distance education in 1995 when I agreed to teach my first online course for the University of Maryland, European Division. At the time I had just moved from College Station, Texas and was living in Vienna Austria. The University was trying to meet the needs of a highly mobile student population who were being sent to locations in the former Yugoslavia. I had already started teaching for Maryland in their "traditional program" and I was routinely traveling 10 hours or so to "get to work" at various bases and barracks throughout Europe for weekend classes. So, I raised my hand quickly when the faculty was asked if any of us wanted to try to teach online. The technology was very primitive; there was no orientation, no learning designers, and so on. We were using Majordomo, an email list server as our teaching environment. I eventually begged a little web space from a student who ran IT at IIASA, an international research institute in Laxenburg just south of Vienna. I believe that my first message to the class indicated that this is nothing like a physical classroom, so let's not pretend. Let's do something special and different.

To be honest, it was very liberating. I think that we lost a lot of creativity in the following years as we adopted a physical classroom metaphor for our learning and teaching environments. It seems that much of the complexity that we struggle with can be traced back to trying to reproduce the classroom experience. My experiences with online learning created opportunities for students at both Univerzita Komenského in Slovakia and the International University of Vienna, where I also taught. As I started to embrace online learning it allowed my students the opportunity to engage in internships, professional obligations, exchanges and other valuable activities that would have been significantly constrained without the ability for study at a distance. Most of the online experiences, aside from those at Maryland were hybrid - simply extending the classes or providing opportunities for some students in a rather circumstantial way.

Shortly after returning to the US from Europe, I had the opportunity to launch and contribute to a series of new initiatives. It was a great time for trying new things. I know that we talk

about the current pace of change in higher education, but I do not know if it is any greater than in was in 2000 - at least for some of us. First, in 2000 I joined the founding team at Harcourt Higher Education, where I served as designer and teaching faculty member while launching the first fully online and for-profit university in Massachusetts. Although we were quickly sold to Reed Elsevier and then to Thompson, and I was subsequently laid-off, I had the opportunity to learn about state licensing, accreditation, and working for a big company. In fact, although I did not know it at the time, I was sowing the seeds for a job that I would have almost 10 years later at the University of Massachusetts. I then moved on to a pre-IPO company named Spotfire that needed to build its online training program to support drug discovery, genomics, and proteomics research in labs across the globe. It had become impossible to provide traditional face-to-face software training, so we launched a web-based effort.

By this time I was looking for another international experience and I was fortunate enough to receive an appointment on an aid project in Central Asia, where I launched the Distance Learning Network. The DLN was a consortium of 11 Central Asian Universities in five countries that agreed to work together and share resources to improve distance and online learning in the region. Although I was based in Almaty Kazakhstan, I had the chance to visit over 80 universities throughout the region to learn about local capacity for distance and online learning. But, as political winds shifted, I also shifted; this time to New Zealand to serve the Open Polytechnic, where I received my first real lessons in flexible learning, open source software development, and open educational resources. At the time, the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission were making some remarkable investments to effectively incentivise pan-sector collaboration around online, adult, and extended education. These efforts spawned a series of projects whose effects are still evident in New Zealand and beyond.

Having now developed a better idea of the potential impact of online and open learning, I moved on to a series of leadership roles at major US universities including the State University of New York (SUNY Learning Network), Penn State University (World Campus), and the University of Massachusetts (UMassOnline), which were all remarkable experiences that offered me the opportunity to meet and serve with an incredible array of talented and creative educators. As it turned out, at least according to some, UMassOnline was launched at least in part in response to the work Harcourt was doing in 1999-2001, while launching an online university. So, in some small way, I feel partially responsible for UMassOnline. My experiences at these major US universities and university systems provided me with some insights about the challenges most US universities seem to have while working with adult learners at a distance, so I started co-developing and informing an education service model, which eventually led to Everspring, an education services company. I served Everspring as Chief Academic Strategist for a short while until accepting the DVC position at the University of Southern Queensland. I was mostly drawn to USQ because of the University's historical commitment to reducing barriers and enhancing access to educational opportunities and because of its involvement with OERu, from which I assumed a broader interest in the openness agenda. I must also admit that I was influenced by my wonderful experiences in New Zealand a decade earlier and the "spark" in my conversations with Jan Thomas, USQ's Vice-Chancellor. This was enough to inspire a move from Chicago to Toowoomba, Australia.

Sprinkled throughout all of this, I have enjoyed teaching assignments at a range of colleges and universities including UMass Boston, Penn State, the University of Maryland University College, Babson College, Univerzita Komenského, and a few others. I also had the opportunity to earn a Ph.D. in Education Administration and a Master's of Science in Business Analysis, MIS from Texas A&M University an MBA, and an undergraduate degree in Biology,

all from public universities during a time when public education was still affordable and was guided by a public mission. Mixed into this I also had the opportunity to contribute to a range of other efforts including the short lived Open University foray into the United States, the US Open University, which I think, could have been a big deal.

Sector Trajectory

As I look forward, I have the feeling that the notion of varied "delivery" methods and technology-supported learning will become a basic hygiene function for the university. Although it will all keep developing, I do not think that it will fundamentally address the challenges we are facing in developed economies. That is, issues like cost and price, relevance, and value will not really be addressed through technology applications. I think that more fundamental questions and directions will emerge, and although the answers may be partially dependent on technology, the real ground will be made on understanding the broader role of an academic experience. First, I think that all universities need to think more holistically about the learner and learning experience. What would it really mean to be a life-long learning partner? This may lead us to asking questions about what universities are particularly suited to offering that other types of organisations are not, and what should universities avoid doing. I do not think that we can turn to politicians for help either. They have provided little effective, consistent, and reliable guidance for the past few decades. Public education policy tends to be superficial, short sighted, and reactive.

I am guessing that at the end of the day, occupational and professional job training is something that will not distinguish universities from each other, and frankly it is something that universities may not do as well as a whole range of other types of training and education providers. Those universities that best know how to engage learners and faculty in experiences for employment, citizenship, and intellectual disruption will be poking at what distinguishes universities from trade and professional schools or free Internet-based courses. In complex societies this means including those members of our communities who have been historically excluded from the social mobility benefits offered through education; not only to benefit those members directly, but to also challenge the social order more generally. Expanded access reflects the traditional value of distance and open education. The low hanging fruit for open and distance education has been programming for employability, with few catalogues including rich educational experiences in the humanities and programming characterised by critical and reflective curriculum and pedagogy. I believe that this is the next challenge for the University community. If we want open and distance education to be part of the very best of university tradition and identity, it must be an integrated part of university life, not just a source of revenue or a means of "tapping into new markets." And if we want the university's multiple missions to remain relevant, it must be made accessible. In these terms, the role of open and distance education seems obvious.

ODLAA Executive Committee

ODLAA is managed by an Executive Committee elected every two years from ODLAA members. The current executive is as follows:

- **President and Executive Editor,** *Distance Education*: Associate Professor Som Naidu
- **Vice-president:** Dr Julie Willems
- **Treasurer:** Mr Stephen Relf
- **Secretary:** Dr Mutuota Kigotho
- **Publications Officer:** Antonina Petrolito
- **Committee Member:** Diane Hockridge
- **Committee Member:** Shane Moore
- **Committee Member:** Jo Osborne
- **Committee Member:** Dr Jennifer Roberts
- **Committee Member:** Associate Professor Barrie Todhunter
- **Committee Member:** Sherrill Whittington
- **Executive Officer:** Joanne Scott

Communications with members of the executive committee can be sent to executive@odlaa.org.