

Letter to the Reader

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Dear Reader,

We would like to start our service to you, our readers, by expressing our most sincere appreciation for your curiosity about this initiative. This project has finally taken shape after years of planning and countless communications among a significant number of people.

In true modern fashion, even though we have been working together for years, we have no idea what most of those within our extended team look like. This fantastic world of technology once again enables us to produce significant works without the need of direct or even synchronous interaction. It is this very aspect of today's global infrastructure that plays the most central role into this project: the ability of interacting socially through electronic media, focussing on research and practice applied to the modern classroom.

Our interest in e-education stems from the pure curiosity of 'how can we improve our teaching' once we became faculty members, with a significant load of classes to manage every semester. Our initial studies were concentrating mainly in agent-based simulations and artificial intelligence, interests that are still deeply rooted within us and that we carry on exploring. It is the classroom aspect of our jobs that has led us to exploring new and more efficient ways to utilize technology in teaching. Whether we are carrying out office hours in multi-user virtual environments, letting the students review programming concepts until the very last minute before the exam through some online demonstration, or thinking about the next project, we are researchers and practitioners just like you.

The pervasiveness of information systems keeps breaking its own records, as we get to a degree of connectivity that is continuously increasing. Although its presence is not uniform through the entire globe, the possibilities that this intercontinental infrastructure offers appear nearly endless. It is in the intersection where we find the niche of e-learning and e-education that attracts us the most.

As teaching is one of the most ancient practices, it has witnessed innovation first-hand. Without education we couldn't transmit our knowledge and discoveries to others; this practice has transferred innovation from one person to the next, effectively taking a predominant role in the history of humanity. For this very reason it is only fair that education should not just teach about modern infrastructures, but it should also get a well-deserved makeover through distance learning and teaching practices.

The idea of e-education is one that goes well beyond what typical readers generally perceive. When we describe our work and research to our friends and family, they often assimilate the greater field of e-education to formal schools. This idea breaks free of the traditional scholastic paradigm and reaches people who are using the Internet to learn new notions, companies who are training new employees embarking on new and exciting careers, or children who cannot utilize the traditional instructional tools in the manner most people do. E-education affects not only learners, but also society, economics, psychology, and a countless array of other aspects of every-day life. It breaks barriers and levels of users of any age, race, or credo. The ICST Transactions on e-Education and e-Learning aim at witnessing and reporting on the progress that this field is bound to walk from today's explosive potential to tomorrow's affective action.

Just like any proud parent seeing their baby for the first time, we have very high hopes and dreams for this publication. We would like to share some of those with you. First of all, the multidisciplinary nature of e-education appeals to a greater audience. Given the interest that e-education has generated in the last few years, we are trying not to limit our audience to experts in the field of education or computing, but to a much larger audience. Our articles aim at conveying sometimes difficult concepts in a practical and replicable manner. The second aim of this publication is not to lose the true focus of any information technology infrastructure: the person. We are not working to advance the state of the art for

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its own sake; we want to constantly remind the reader that these solutions must facilitate the life of the people who use them. The third and perhaps most important aim of this publication is to create a community where readers and authors alike are able to interact and discuss freely about the work being published.

Issue 1 of the transaction includes several exciting articles! Adams and DeVaney in the article '*Digital Ethnicity: Discussion of a Concept and Implications for Education*' discuss change influenced by technology and its relation to the emergence of new cultural patterns as people interact with various digital communication technologies in the world today. Specifically they discuss the Digital Ethnicity Scale and its relation to investigating digital ethnic profiles in order to provide insight into the educational needs of changing societies and groups. The next article, '*Conceptual Design of Collaborative Virtual Environments for Education Using a Theatre Based Metaphor*' by Bucciero, Guido, and Mainetti, the authors use the metaphor of a theatre to help educators and designers to construct effective 3D virtual worlds for education. Following is '*On the Importance of Social Network Sites in the Transitions which Characterize "Emerging Adulthood"*' by Frozzi and Mazzoni. Here, the authors discuss the transitional state of 'Emerging Adults' and the usage of social networking sites as a mechanism to facilitate and support individuals during their years of education and vocational training. Authors Dib and Adamo-Villani in their article titled '*An E-tool for Undergraduate Surveying Education: Design and Evaluation*' describe an innovative e-tool for Surveying education including a discussion of a pilot study from using the tool. The authors discuss the tool in detail and how it can be used to teach students in the area of Surveying, comparing use of the e-tool to that of traditional approaches. Concluding the issue is '*The Design of Inclusive Curricula for Multi-User Environments (MUVEs): A Framework for Developers and Educators*' by Wood. In this article the author discusses trends in education to use MUVEs as a means to facilitate a more collaborative and participatory approach to learning. Wood highlights important areas of using MUVEs such as the need for access and to be inclusive to all students which in turn can allow for a greater reach. The paper reports on research funded through an Australian Learning and Teaching Council grant, which aims to increase the opportunities for learners to participate more fully in education through an accessible multi-user virtual learning environment.

As this is the first step of a hopefully long journey, we were not able to implement all three goals into one issue. Perhaps we will not achieve our goal with the second or the third either. But we will work hard to accomplish all three goals and serving not only the discipline, but also the people who decided to trust our work. In the issues to come we wish to expand the inclusion of research to scholars with whom we have not previously worked. Moreover, we would like to include a more active involve-

ment of communities such as research centres and conference organizers. The original plan hoped for the release of the first issue of these Transactions in close proximity to the realization of its own conference. Although we were not able to let both projects come to fruition, we have not abandoned the idea of pairing a conference to these Transactions. We will be working hard to realize this goal, in an effort not to remain a publication with faceless e-mail contacts, but a community of educators, researchers, and practitioners proud of collaborating towards the same goal: tailoring e-education to people.

As we humbly embark on this new endeavour we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the many people who made this project possible. First of all we would like to thank our authors, who chose our publication as a vehicle to disseminate their excellent work. We would then like to thank the talented members of the Editorial Advisory Board, who are always ready to help us by providing guidance, suggestions, and reviews in a professional manner. We would also like to thank the Institute for Computer Sciences, Social Informatics, and Telecommunications Engineering for the opportunity of expressing our vision through the pages of this journal. In particular, within this group, we would like to thank all those who played a significant role in physically enabling the publishing of this issue (and many more to come). At last, but by no means the least, we would like to thank our families and friends for their tireless support and often deliberate help in shaping us into the people we are.

Sincerely,

Giovanni Vincenti and James Braman
Editors-in-Chief

About the Editors-in-Chief

Giovanni Vincenti is a Lecturer in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences at Towson University, in Towson, MD. He received his Doctorate of Science in Applied Information Technology from Towson University in 2007. He has been teaching undergraduate and graduate courses for several years, letting him develop his interest in instructional technologies that range from simple learning objects as a supplement to in-person instruction, all the way to the utilization of virtual worlds in the classroom. He has been collaborating for years with James Braman, co-authoring several published works including the edited volumes titled *Teaching through Multi-User Virtual Environments: Applying Dynamic Elements to the Modern Classroom* and *Multi-User Virtual Environments for the Classroom: Practical Approaches to Teaching in Virtual Worlds*. Vincenti and Braman are also leading e-Learning projects for the Institute of Computer Sciences, Social Informatics, and Telecommunications Engineering (ICST). In addition, Dr Vincenti also serves as a consultant to companies and universities that focus on online learning.

James Braman is a Lecturer in the Department of Computer and Information Sciences at Towson University. He earned a M.S. in Computer Science in 2006 and is pursuing a D.Sc. in Information Technology. James serves as joint editor-in-chief for the Institute for Computer Sciences, Social Informatics, and Telecommunications Engineering (ICST) Transactions on E-Education and E-Learning along with Dr Vincenti. He has published several edited books, the most recent, Multi-User Virtual

Environments for the Classroom: Practical Approaches to Teaching in Virtual Worlds. He has been involved in virtual world research for several years, along with providing consulting and research services for businesses and organizations utilizing virtual worlds and augmented reality. He has also published numerous research articles related to affective computing, intelligent agents, computer ethics, and education in virtual and immersive environments.