

Editorial / Éditorial

Special Issue: Online Learning from the Instructional Designer's Perspective: Canadian and European French-language Case Studies

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This special issue concerns the work instructional designers do in dual-mode universities in French-speaking Canada and Europe. The thirteen case studies presented here are translations from the original publication: Potvin, C., Power, M. & Ronchi, A., Ed. (2014). *La formation en ligne : les conseillers et les ingénieurs pédagogiques*. Québec, QC: Presses de l'Université Laval, in which 20 case studies were presented. The underlying theme that unites these case studies is the role instructional designers (IDs) play in helping faculty create effective online learning experiences for their students. In some cases, these online experiences are created from scratch (i.e., a new course), while in other instances, the courses/experiences are converted from existing face-to-face courses. Each type of design presents its own set of issues and challenges; as such instructional designers typically wear a number of different hats. Regardless of the design requirements, the ID has to be both creative and responsive to his/her client. As the development/conversion process is rarely straightforward, the ID finds that he/she needs to guide and support the faculty as they make changes that have, at least to them, unknown consequences.

In the French-speaking world, instructional designers are often called by different names (especially when deliverables are late!). So, two terms are generally used: 1) *conseiller* or *conseillère pédagogique* (literally *pedagogical counsellor*), generally used in French-speaking Canada, and 2) *ingénieur* or *ingénieure pédagogique* (literally *pedagogical engineer*), the preferred term in French-speaking Europe. This ambiguity with regard to the role of the ID and his or her position on a course design and development team is similar to that found in the English-speaking world where several co-existing terms are used, often interchangeably, including *instructional designer*, *learning designer*, *learning technologist*, and *educational technologist*.

It is important to note that the case studies in this special issue are just that, case studies; hence, they are neither a completely accurate nor an exhaustive portrayal of the state of instructional/learning design in the French-speaking world today. Nevertheless, we believe these 13 case studies provide readers with an overall view of the kinds of challenges IDs face in their

daily work and how they develop what they deem to be appropriate instructional/learning strategies.

As noted above, 13 of the original 20 manuscripts were submitted to the editors and are included in this issue. Unfortunately the other authors were unable to provide their own translations or to obtain funding for translation. The included manuscripts required, in some instances, only minor and cosmetic changes whereas others needed to be heavily edited, if not entirely rewritten. This contribution to the literature in the field represents our attempt to reveal how French-speaking IDs support faculty in order to provide quality online learning experiences which have been designed logically, systematically, and painstakingly, to students across French-speaking Canada and Europe.

The issue is divided into two sections of cases: 1) the Canadian Cases and 2) the European Cases. The cases in each section are presented in alphabetical order, based on the surname of the first author. As an advance organizer, we provide keywords associated with each case study:

Canadian Cases:

- 1) Belzile: ICT competencies – instructional design – collaboration – technological tools – tutorial and Web site development – ADDIE
- 2) Carré: Management– blended learning tools – rapid design — learner support – synchronous and asynchronous learning environments-training strategies – virtual classroom
- 3) Gérin-Lajoie: Art studies– redesign – learning strategies - tools - Web 2.0 – instructional designer
- 4) Patry, Campbell-Brown, Rousseau & Caron: Instructional design – online learning – healthcare professionals – design models and processes – workshops – continuing education
- 5) Potvin (co-editor of the original publication): Correction digital marking – MISA (ID software) – Instructional multimedia– Prototyping – Redesign – Humanities – Storyboarding
- 6) Power (co-editor of the original publication): Humanities– rapid instructional design – graduate studies – socio-constructivism – learning management systems – synchronous and asynchronous learning environments
- 7) Savard: Formation à distance, program approach, multidisciplinary course design, learning strategies

European Cases:

- 1) Bachy & Lebrun: Complete online training – inter-university project – technological environments – international collaboration
- 2) Docq: Design specifications –online onboarding– blended learning – program approach – techno-pedagogical faculty support – ID stances - ID design specifications – innovation management
- 3) Mouton, Rodet & Vacaresse: Instructional engineering – synchronous-based learning – iterative processes – tutoring – collaboration – professional projects

- 4) Pereya & Benetos: Blended learning – e-learning–continuing education – project approach to learning– immersion learning
- 5) Platteaux & Hoein: Higher education –ICT competencies- blended learning – made-to-measure training - design
- 6) Ronchi (co-editor of the original publication): Training cohorts – technologically-supported learning environments– storyboarding– discussion forum.

Finally, a word about translation: the Roman philosopher Seneca, obviously a translator but also a cynic, once said: *Traduttore, traditore* (to translate is to betray). Now, when he said that, he was probably having a rather bad day... but, still, he has a point: when you attempt to translate a written text from one language to another, even between languages such as English and French that have been joined at the hip for centuries, the risk of “betrayal” is omnipresent. The translator is constantly assailed by doubt, by indecision, by the fear of going out on a limb as a reality in one language is not necessarily so in another or simply doesn’t exist. So translators try to provide the best rendering possible of such realities, in a way that readers will understand. All this is to say that when one is attempting to translate highly complex thought patterns and intricate intellectual processes, without the help of a professional translator or any budget whatsoever, well, suffice it to say that the indulgence of both authors and readers would be greatly appreciated.



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