

## BEGINNING

*The beginning is the most important part of the work.*

—Plato

The *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* is a rigorously refereed journal publishing articles, research briefs, reviews, and editorials dealing with the theories, research, and practices of distance education. The *Quarterly Review* publishes articles that utilize various methodologies that permit generalizable results that help guide the practice of the field of distance education in the public and private sectors. The *Quarterly Review* defines distance education as institutionally based, formal education, where the learning group is separated and where interactive technologies are used to unite the learning group.

*Research that guides practice* is the heart of the mission statement of the *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*. The phrase is featured on the title page of the *Quarterly Review* as a constant reminder of the necessity for appropriate decision making. Jim Finn (1953) often spoke of the importance of research to the practice of a profession. In Volume 1, Issue 1 of *Audio-Visual Communication Review*, now called *Educational Technology Research and Development*, which is the *Quarterly Review's* older sibling also sponsored by the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Finn wrote that:

Finally, the most fundamental and most important characteristic of a profession is that the skills involved are founded upon a body of intellectual theory and research. Furthermore, this systematic theory is con-

stantly being expanded by research and thinking within the profession. The practice of a profession cannot be disjoined from its theoretical understanding and vice versa.... The antithesis to a profession is an avocation based upon customary activities and modified by the trial and error of individual practice. Such an avocation is a craft. The difference between the bricklayer and the architect lies right here (Finn, 1953).

The editors and editorial board of the *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* are dedicated to the development of skills for distance educators that are founded on a body of intellectual theory and research. With this issue we begin publishing intellectual theory and research to guide practice.

Actually, the process of publishing the *Quarterly Review* began over a year ago when several scholars in the instructional technology and distance education field were asked if they would be willing to contribute to the first issue of a new journal. To a person, they all agreed. These leaders submitted manuscripts that were peer reviewed, revised, and resubmitted. Their efforts are included in Volume 1, Issue 1 of this journal. Subsequently, others were either asked or volunteered manuscripts for review, and their efforts will appear in upcoming issues. It is hoped that 6-8 new articles will be published in each issue of the *Quarterly Review*.

This journal will also feature columns—research, international, and book review—

edited by Eric Plotnik, Steve Wheeler, and Karen Murphy. This issue contains an international column and a research abstracts column. Periodically, the *Quarterly Review* will include a short research brief. This issue contains a brief by Michael Simonson that presents updated scales for three measures used by distance educators. Normative data for the Innovativeness Scale, the Perceived Organizational Innovativeness Scale, and the Computer Anxiety Index are included.

Five articles are published in this issue of the *Quarterly Review*. The editors feel that some of the most illustrious thinkers in the field are authors.

First, Richard Clark from the University of Southern California offers "Evaluating Distance Education: Strategies and Cautions." He has four goals for his article. First, he discourages distance education questions and tactics that have not proven useful in the past. Second, he persuades readers to distinguish between the effects of two different technologies—delivery technology and instructional technology. Third, he provides descriptions of evaluation plans, questions, and examples. Finally, Clark looks at cost effectiveness issues. In short, Richard Clark emphasizes strategies that will give an accurate picture of the substantive contributions made by distance education while helping to avoid the pitfalls often found in technology evaluations.

The second article is by Lauren Cifuentes and Karen Murphy from Texas A&M University titled, "Cultural Connections: A Model for Eliminating Boundaries and Crossing Borders." It discusses a model for implementing constructivist, intercultural distance learning partnerships.

An international perspective is presented by Steve Wheeler of the Faculty of Arts and Education from the University of Plymouth. Wheeler's article, "Instructional Design in Distance Education through Telematics," examines current trends in educational

telematics. Also discussed are frameworks, models, and guidelines for the design and evaluation of distance education courses. Wheeler proposes key questions about the delivery of courses to distant learners.

Chris Sorensen from Northern Illinois University and Danilo Baylen from the University of Akron examine one of the most misunderstood topics in distance education practice—interaction. Their article, "Perception Versus Reality: Views of Interaction in Distance Education," reports on student perceptions of interactions in televised courses as compared to observations of those interactions. Sorensen and Baylen also report on how perceptions and reality change over time and on the use of group activities and the presence of the instructor in a television classroom.

The final article in this inaugural issue of the *Quarterly Review* is by Roger Kaufman of Florida State University and Ryan Watkins from Nova Southeastern University. Their article, "Assuring the Future for Distance Learning," sets a vision for subsequent publications. They correctly state that "The future of DL is being defined today" and, like Richard Clark, they emphasize that the field can learn from previous conventional and distance education approaches. They provide a vision, and support it with concepts, tools, and techniques to assist the practitioner.

With this first issue of the *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, the task of providing research that guides practice has started, and it is hoped readers will agree it is a task begun well.

## REFERENCE

- Finn, J. (1953). Professionalizing the audiovisual field. *Audio-Visual Communication Review*, 1(1), 6-17.

Michael Simonson  
Charles Schlosser