

Letter from the Editor

Bridget N. O'Connor

How can we best characterize the focus of our OSRA community of researchers? What words get at the heart of what we do? How can we best describe our overall purpose to those who write for, read, and learn from our journal?

First and foremost, we're about *information technology (IT)* applied to support individual, group, and organizational goals. Therefore, we're interested in investigating the application of an increasingly-sophisticated and useful set of technology tools used to support desktop level work at anytime and anyplace. What are these individual and collaborative IT tools and what are their promises and limitations?

Second, we're about *learning (L)*. Everyone gains when end users are able to skillfully apply IT to their work. The systems developer finds acceptance for the system. The manager sees work done smoothly. The end user feels a sense of accomplishment. We are convinced that carefully planned learning strategies are vital to the successful implementation and eventual assimilation of IT. Advancements in the capability and speed of IT will result in a need for end users to invest many more resources and much more time on learning activities. So many questions come to mind! What predicts the success of learning activities? Is it the match between the end user's learning style and learning strategy? What do we know about how adults learn that will guide us to an investigation of appropriate, effective, and cost-efficient ways to ensure that **L** is the result? What are the pros and cons of training and educational experiences that are live (e.g., hands-on workshops) vs. mediated (e.g., computer-based or web-based training)?

Third, we're about *performance (P)*. While the ultimate image of future work may still be hazy, the trends are clear. The most significant productivity improvements have been achieved by using IT to change the way people work. Productivity improvements are not a result of enabling people to work faster. Many studies of the impact of IT have shown an inverse

relationship between an investment in IT and productivity—meaning that when IT is implemented it may mean that the wrong things are simply done faster! Performance, we believe, is a more useful term than *productivity* to consider the impact IT has on individuals, groups, and organizations. How can we document this impact? To what extent does what we know about IT management practices, ergonomics, and job and work process redesign impact **P**?

So, welcome to the first edition of our newly renamed journal, *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*! The **ITL&P Journal** is devoted to supporting IT practitioners and academics as we describe “what is” through cases and trends, and use strong theoretical underpinnings as we investigate the individual, group, and organizational impact of IT on learning and performance.

About this Issue

In the lead research article, Johnson, Stallard, and Tanner examine the concepts that should be included in a college senior-level data communications course from the perspectives of both practitioners and academics. They found limited differences between the two groups and considerable consensus that such a course be more practical than theoretical. In the second article, Woodland and Szul expand IT ergonomic research in an investigation that explains the impact of end users' visualization abilities and screen color configurations on their ability to detect typographical errors. They uncovered a relationship between visualization ability and proofreading, but not between visualization ability and color configuration. In the third article, Feather uses Johnson and Johnson's stages of

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collaborative learning to compare both traditional and group support systems (GSS)-supported learning experiences. She found that while the technology had little impact on group development, the GSS-supported sessions were characterized by reduced rebelling and differentiating.

In our “Making a Difference” section, Chen offers researchers a qualitative research procedure that can be used to gather and analyze learners’ verbal protocols when using computers to solve ill-structured business problems. Chen’s model is based on literature related to problem representation and processes, problem-solving methods, the nature of problem solving, and human-computer interaction. In the second article in this section, Heaps, Kelley, Olivo, and Valencik, noting the impact that IT was having on secretarial workload inequities, document what happened when support staff at a Midwestern university was part of a continuous quality

improvement project to determine the core duties and responsibilities of department secretaries. In the process, the problems were addressed and the enhanced communication created synergism and an enhanced commitment to the University.

Finally, this issue introduces the first (of hopefully many) book reviews on issues and topics related to Information Technology, Learning, and Performance. How appropriate that Sheets reviews a book written by one of the early leaders in our field, Don Tapscott. *Growing Up Digital*, Sheets says, is a must-read for anyone with children or who is attempting to figure out how the N-generation is transforming learning and society.

In short, **ITL&P** are themes that run through all of this issue’s articles. We look forward to your comments and suggestions as well as the submission of both your theoretical and applied research articles. Let us hear from you!

Guidelines for Authors

The *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*, formerly known as the *Office System Research Journal*, publishes articles related to the field of organizational and end-user information systems (OEIS). Submissions may present the results of research in the discipline, deal with research methodologies and data treatment techniques, or describe research or experiences related to instruction in the discipline. For the “Making a Difference” section, manuscripts that discuss our theoretical bases or describe an innovative policy, procedure, method, technique, or practice that has potential benefit for systems professionals and/or educators and technology trainers are encouraged. We also accept reviews of current books—both academic and popular presses—related to OEIS. All submissions are submitted to a blind review process.

Authors should follow the style described for manuscripts and bibliographies in the Fourth Edition (1994) of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*; however, tables should be single-spaced. Authors should not be identified anywhere in the manuscript. Submit four copies of the manuscript. On the original copy, include a cover page with author name, title, organizational affiliation, telephone number, and email address. A 100-150 word abstract of the manuscript should be included with the manuscript.

Manuscripts should be submitted exclusively to the *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*. Previously published manuscripts are not acceptable. Manuscripts are selected through a blind review process involving the editors and referees selected from the Editorial Board. The Journal is indexed in the *Business Education Index*, the *Current Index to Journals in Education*, and the *Computer Literature Index*.

Upon acceptance, a digital copy in Microsoft Word format will be required. Send four copies of your manuscript to Bridget N. O’Connor, OSRA VP Publications and Editor, Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal, New York University, 239 Greene Street, Suite 300, New York, NY 10003.