

Introduction to the Special Issue

Web-Based Distance Learning (WBDL) in Leisure Studies and Recreation Education

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The field of leisure studies and recreation education has witnessed an increased presence of web-based distance learning (WBDL) environments. From institutions of higher education to professionally based associations such as the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), WBDL is rapidly becoming a common platform for education and training delivery. Although WBDL courses and programs have been utilized by leisure studies and recreation education departments since the 1990s, their presence as a method to educate students has ballooned in recent years.

Various terminologies have been used to describe WBDL: e-learning, online learning, hybrid learning, Internet learning, distributed learning, networked training, distance training, tele-learning, virtual training environments, web-based distance learning, and computer-assisted training (Ahern & El-Hindi, 2000). All of these terms imply that the learner is at a distance from the instructor, that the learner uses some form of technology (usually a computer) to access learning materials, that the learner uses technology to interact with the instructor and other learners, and that some form of support is provided to the learners (Smith & Long, 2004). WBDL environments in leisure studies and recreation curricula are diverse, ranging from individual courses that are hybrid-based or fully online to programs offering a 100% WBDL baccalaureate and/or master degree. Most, if not all, of these WBDL programs are premised on their flexibility by enabling learners to acquire desired knowledge and skills at a time, place, and pace that are commensurate with their own particular circumstances.

This special issue sought to expand the conceptual and empirical research on the many issues and trends surrounding the effective management and implementation of WBDL programs in leisure studies and recreation education. As the WBDL environments are varied, we attempted to keep the special issue call broad with the following areas identified as possible topics:

- Instructional design strategies in WBDL
- Student learning and motivation in WBDL
- Instructor & student perceptions in WBDL
- Management of WBDL programs
- Implementation of WBDL programs
- Hybrid WBDL programs
- Learning styles and WBDL

- Student and/or instructor outcomes in WBDL
- WBDL impacts—social, cultural, financial, etc.
- Trends and issues in WBDL

The call resulted in one paper that was accepted for publication. The study, conducted by Vassar, Havice, Havice, and Brookover examined the role of lecture capture technology on attitudinal outcomes in two undergraduate courses in parks, recreation, and tourism management. Lecture capture is conceptualized as an instructional strategy involving the capturing, indexing, publishing, and storing of course lectures/presentations in a web-based environment. Eighty-seven students in the two courses completed an online survey that measured their overall satisfaction with the course and their satisfaction with using lecture capture presentations. The study found strong student support with the lecture capture presentations implemented in the two courses and identified specific advantages with the instructional technology including convenience, ease of use, and overall usefulness. Additional findings and implementation strategies are shared and discussed.

We hope you find the special issue insightful and that it might spark a few ideas for you and your web-based distance learning programming. Thank you for your ongoing dedication to the pedagogical practices and scholarship in parks and recreation courses, curricula, and teaching at the college level.

References

- Ahern, T. C., & El-Hindi, A. E. (2000). Improving the instructional congruency of a computer-mediated small-group discussion: A case study in design and delivery. *Journal of Research on Computing in Education*, 32, 385–400.
- Smith, R. D., & Long, L. K. (2004). The role of Web-based distance learning in HR development. *Journal of Management Development*, 23(3), 270–285.