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Book review

Melanie Ciussi & Erik Gebers Freitas (Eds.) (2012), *Leading issues in e-learning research for researchers, teachers and students*. Reading, England: Academic Publishing International. ISBN 978-1-908272-54-6 (e-Pub).

Ciussi and Gebers Freitas's compilation of research articles and conference proceedings from the United Kingdom, Canada and Asia-Pacific region is a good read for eTeachers looking for ideas to explore with tertiary classes. Read between the lines to discern emerging issues in elearning.

In their introduction, the editors explain "the spirit of this collection" (p. v) in terms of innovative distance learning using Web 2.0 applications, with an emphasis on "best practice resulting from experimentation" (p. v). This captures the flavour of the book with greater accuracy than the title does. Editorial commentaries are provided at the outset of each article, serving as the book's organisational framework. Each chapter can be read as a stand-alone article, so it is possible to dip into the text in order to satisfy curiosity about the work of any particular author or any interest area represented. For example, for a practical and focused introduction to educational uses of popular Web 2.0 tools like Wikis, blogs and YouTube, refer to Duffy's chapter. For insight into serious gaming, refer to the final two chapters by Power (with colleagues) and Huang.

A substantial chapter by Hall considers the fusion of sources, spaces and technologies and captures the richness of Web 2.0 possibilities. Hall's discussion of social networking, user-generated content, virtual worlds and multimedia gives rise to the text's most succinct articulation of salient issues: "identity presentation and formation; engagement, agency and marginalisation; privacy and security; and developing technological confidence" (p. 23).

In a local instalment, Wright's microblogging project highlights a range of uses of Twitter in a professional context, to enhance student teachers' reflective awareness and as "a nimble personal support mechanism" (p. 81). In a similar vein, Jones outlines an innovative assessment practice employing Voicethread, also highlighting self-reflective practices as students evaluate their own progress and the supportive network generated by an online student community.

The studies of both Jones and Greener are notable for raising questions (issues) of teacher control, positing that teachers once upon a time exerted control over the curriculum, class discussion, and ultimately over students. Via Greener's "distant-instant-chat" (p. 85), teachers are exposed and challenged, and students' interests prevail.

The book ends with Huang's chapter on serious gaming, leaving the reader to draw the threads together and form independent conclusions. One possible reading suggests



that leading issues in e-learning revolve around pedagogy and power, whilst Web 2.0 tools afford greater control and choice (agency) for learners, necessitating self-reflective practices, and interactive support through communities of learners. All of these aspects are important for teachers, who also face the challenge of cultivating self-reflective practices and bringing the affordances to fruition through effective learning design.

This title of this volume appealed for its mention of “leading issues in e-learning”, and I had hoped to read of the most pressing problems, challenges and concerns associated with educational uses of ICT. I expected the text to foreground social, legal and moral issues, perhaps highlighting challenges to copyright, privacy, safety and equity in terms of affordability and access for learners and teachers. In keeping with the most recent Horizon Report (NMC, 2013, Higher Education Edition), I anticipated the leading issues would include consideration of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and the challenges these pose for higher education. Other leading issues in e-learning could include low levels of digital literacy among faculty, and how new ways of authoring and publishing might be reconciled with traditional means of evaluation in higher education. Some of these issues were touched upon within the case studies collated here, but overall the text does not seem to be issues driven. Perhaps a more accurate title would have been something along the lines of ‘Innovative strategies in e-learning: Case studies of tertiary teaching with Web 2.0 technologies’. For this is what the book provides in ample measure.

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