Studien und Berichte der Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg

Herausgeber:

Dr. Ulrich Bernath
Prof. Dr. Friedrich W. Busch
Prof. Dr. Detlef Garz
Prof. Dr. Anke Hanft
Prof. Dr. Wolf-Dieter Scholz

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The Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung (ASF) is a joint unit of the Center for Distance Education and the School of Education at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. It supports research and development in distance education. More specifically, the joint venture was set up to reflect upon the activities undertaken by the Center for Distance Education in the light of relevant international research in distance education and to facilitate the development of programs and courses within the university as well as in a national and international context.

In fulfilling its mission one of the outcomes of the ASF was the creation of the ASF Series in order to publish studies and reports reflecting upon the practices undertaken by the Center for Distance Education. The first publication in 2000 assembled contributions on a university networked program for professional development in dialysis of around 900 nurses, which was one of the larger and remarkably successful projects coordinated by the Center for Distance Education.

In Spring 2000 the online Master of Distance Education (MDE) program - jointly offered by the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) and Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg - was implemented. The realization of this program endowed the ASF Series with a new perspective, namely to provide a series of volumes that directly support specific courses in the program, as well as contributing to the overall scholarship in the field of distance education.

Holmberg and Peters, repeatedly awarded for their life-long contributions in the field of distance education authored volume 4 & 5 of the ASF Series, which became readings in the MDE's *Foundations of Distance Education* course. Currently in preparation are four volumes by Rumble, Beaudoin, Brindley, and Hülsmann that are also designed to serve as readings for students in other MDE program courses.

Volume 6 of the ASF Series - in hand - follows the original goal of the series. It reflects upon the undertakings of the Center for Distance Education. The MDE has become the center's largest endeavor in recent times with more than 500 students joining the program since its inception.

The editors of the ASF Series are grateful to the faculty, staff, and students of the MDE program, who followed the MDE program directors' and the editors' invitation to present a multi-faceted case study with "Reflections on Teaching and Learning in an Online Master Program". We like to express our special gratitude to Christine Walti and Franziska Vondrlik for their tremendous editorial assistance before handing this volume over to the University press.

It is our hope that the many involved in this program as well as the professional community are stimulated by the extraordinary efforts invested in volume number six of our series and enjoy the profusion of reflections.

The Series' Editors
Volume Editors' Foreword

The Master of Distance Education program was launched in January 2000 by the degree granting University of Maryland University College (UMUC) in partnership with Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, which contributes two of the six integrated certificates in the distance education program. The Master's and certificate degree programs are completely accessible online. There were only a few similar programs existing at the time and much of the curriculum needed to be developed as there was no "standard" program to follow. We felt the program to be both innovative and experimental. On these grounds we were challenged to reflect on what we were to do and at the same time set the standards for a graduate program in distance education.

The publication of this 6th volume of the ASF Series was a particularly challenging one for a number of reasons. It was our intention to do more than merely describe a graduate university program in distance education and, at that, one which is entirely online. We not only want to share the curriculum with our colleagues, but also the process, the critical reflections and indeed the emotional impact of developing and participating in such a project. It was - and still is - an evolving experience and one that we feel others could learn and benefit from. In order to achieve the different levels and goals to which we aspired necessarily meant including the many players involved - the program directors, the faculty and visiting experts, and the students - who all approach the program from different backgrounds, experiences, intentions, and perspectives. Collecting the various aspects and practices of program development for online teaching and learning provides us - those involved - and the distance education community with an extraordinarily rich picture and in this sense we call this work a case study.

The themes include institutional politics, program management, detailed cost analysis, student and faculty support, reflections on online and distance learners and learning behaviors, digital learning spaces, technologies, communication, facilitation, cooperation, and collaboration. Thus, we can also regard our work to be a handbook on issues that necessarily arise and need to be taken into consideration when planning and developing an online program. The multiple perspectives from the thirteen authors from Canada, Germany, Sweden, and the U.S. give each chapter a distinct feel, convey individual world views and often slightly different ways of looking at the same events within a larger framework. The detailed index invites readers to approach the volume from their own perspectives and interests.

We do not present our program as the correct way to do things... it was our way - based on the circumstances and the context along an existing timeline. However, what is unique about this publication is that the practice which has evolved has been extensively deliberated and is rooted in theoretical underpinnings and purposeful research supported by these experiences. It is a program designed and taught by reflective practitioners, who are willing and able to share these insights with their colleagues, students, and with a larger community, and they flow back into the program.

The volume is divided into three parts. In the first part the program directors from the partnering institutions (Bernath and Rubin) describe the historical origins of the Master of Distance Education, outline the basic structure of the program and discuss the organizational and managerial issues that need to be dealt with in the development and early pilot phases of such an endeavor. This sets the stage for the second part where
MDE faculty, visiting experts, and staff (Beaudoin, Brindley, Holmberg, Hülsmann, Peters, Roberts, Zawacki) review the program from various aspects and their experiences. The third part of the volume, the students' perspective (Fox, Offenbartl, Smith, Walti) gives voice to those who are the target audience of the program's efforts to convey and create new knowledge.

The combination of reflective practice and experiencing theory leads to a strengthening of both areas, with the added value of providing substantive knowledge to the community at large.

The more than 500 students who have joined the program since its inception, the array of international faculty and visiting experts, the experiencing of collaborative and differing approaches to a number of issues as well as the possibilities and challenges encountered in the online environment - these are all components in the work accomplished here. With "Reflections on Teaching and Learning in an Online Master Program - A Case Study" we invite the readers to join us in the discussion.

We are very much obliged to all who contributed to this volume.

Ulrich Bernath & Eugene Rubin
Oldenburg & Adelphi, March 2003
List of Contributers

Michael F. Beaudoin, Ed.D., is Professor of Education at the University of New England (UNE) in Maine, where he previously served as founding dean of a college offering innovative graduate and continuing education programs for adult learners. At UNE and several other institutions, he has designed, directed and taught in distance education programs, utilizing varied delivery systems including correspondence, video, Internet, and other online formats. Beaudoin is actively engaged in research, writing, and conference presentations on distance education topics. He also frequently serves as an evaluator, consultant and trainer in the field, and is on the editorial board of the American Journal of Distance Education. He currently serves as a faculty mentor in two distance education programs. mbeaudoin@une.edu

Ulrich Bernath, Dr., is director of the Center for Distance Education at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. In 1992 he co-founded the EuroStudyCentre Network of EADTU, and in 1995 the German Association for Distance Education (AG-F). Since 1997 he serves as a member of the ICDE World Conferences' international program committee. In 2002 he became an elected member of the steering committee of the EDEN Network of Academics and Professionals (NAP). Bernath has been project manager for program developments in distance education. He published on projects and practices, in particular on organizational and conceptual issues in distance education and open learning. He graduated in Economics in 1970 from Justus-Liebig University of Giessen/ Germany and holds a Ph.D. in Education (Dr. phil.) from the School of Education at Oldenburg University. In 2002 he was appointed adjunct professor by UMUC's Graduate School. ulrich.bernath@uni-oldenburg.de

Jane E. Brindley, Ph.D., has over 20 years of experience as a clinician, educator, researcher, and administrator in open and distance learning. She is a chartered psychologist who specializes in the development, delivery, and evaluation of support services for adult learners using alternate delivery modes. Brindley has held a variety of positions in post-secondary settings, including director of Student Services at Athabasca University in Alberta, coordinator of Planning, Development, and Review at Cambrian College in Ontario, and special consultant to The Centre for Innovation in Learning at Contact North/ Contact Nord in Ontario. Currently, she is intake coordinator at the Centre for Psychological Services at the University of Windsor in Ontario, an adjunct faculty member for Oldenburg University in the MDE program, and she continues to work as a researcher, consultant and trainer in distance education in Canada and internationally. She holds a B.A. from the University of Alberta, an M.A. in Counselling Psychology from the University of British Columbia, and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Ottawa. jbrind@uwindsor.ca

Brian F. Fox is the programs coordinator for the Business Programs department at Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) in Gainesville, Florida. At SFCC he is also an adjunct faculty member and workshop trainer in software applications, where he has developed courses and taught traditional, vocational, continuing education, and senior students. He has served as a content provider and community manager for WebCT and currently manages the Career and Technical Education Directory, an online resource for faculty and students. Fox is currently pursuing his MDE degree with UMUC. brian.fox@sfcc.edu
Börje Holmberg, Ph.D., is emeritus professor of distance-education methodology. He has worked both as a practitioner and a scholar in distance education since 1953, when he wrote his first correspondence course. Originally a linguist, assistant professor of English at the University of Lund in Sweden, he was engaged by Hermods, a large distance-education foundation enrolling some 100,000 students every year, was educational director of this foundation 1956-65 and its director general 1966-75. In the years 1975-1990 he held a chair of distance-education methodology at the FernUniversität in Germany and was director of the Institute for Distance-Education Research at that FernUniversität. After his retirement from there he led the creation of a new distance-education university of applied sciences in Darmstadt and was its founding rector (1995-2001). He has received honorary doctorates from Deakin University and the OUUK. In 1999 he was awarded the ICDE 'Prize for Lifelong Contribution to the Field' together with Otto Peters. Holmberg has directed many research projects, has written several books and a great many articles on distance education. He is still active as a writer and also regularly functions as an online tutor for the Maryland-Oldenburg MDE programme.

boerje.holmberg@strandhusen.se

Thomas Hülsmann studied at the University of Tübingen and the London School of Economics (LSE) before he obtained his Masters Degree in Mathematics at the University of Bielefeld in 1976. After a decade of teaching mathematics in several African countries, he came to distance education through his experience in developing schoolbooks for mathematics in Madagascar where he worked for the GTZ (German Association for Technical Co-operation) until 1994. He then took a Masters Degree in Education and International Development/Distance Education at the Institute of Education (IOE) in London. 1996 he joined the International Research Foundation (IRFOL) under its director Hilary Perraton to do research on cost-effectiveness of distance education in a number of European countries. Since 1999 he is a member of the academic staff of the Center for Distance Education and a member of the ASF at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. He has taught OMDE 601 several times and has developed OMDE 606, which he regularly teaches with Greville Rumble as visiting expert. Recently Thomas Hülsmann developed two courses (OMDE 625 & 626) for the Certificate Distance Education in Developing Countries program. Hülsmann is member of the Editorial Board of 'Distance Education', a leading Journal in the field.

thomas.huelsmann@uni-oldenburg.de

Susanne Offenbartl, Ph.D., is head of the telemedia learning division within the Hessian Telemata Technology Competence Center (httc), an association for further education and for multimedia and distance learning at Darmstadt University of Technology. Her main focus is to advise Darmstadt University of Technology on the institutional level to develop towards a dual mode university. She also consults different departments and chairs in the areas of project management, instructional design, and online teaching and has herself designed and taught online courses. Offenbartl studied political science, sociology and philosophy in Munich (Germany) and is a student in the MDE Program since summer 2000. susanne.offenbartl@httc.de

Otto Peters is Professor Emeritus at the FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany. He was born in 1926 in Berlin and studied Education, Psychology and Philosophy at the Humboldt University and the Free University in Berlin and earned his doctorate at the University of Tübingen. He has been active in describing and interpreting distance education since 1965, first at the Educational Centre in Berlin, then at the German Institute for Distance
Education Research in Tübingen and then as professor of Didactics in Berlin. In 1975 he became the founding rector of the FernUniversität in Hagen and served in this function for nearly ten years. After this he devoted his time exclusively to distance education research. Peters received honorary doctor's degrees from OUUK, Deakin University, Empire State College, and OU Hong Kong. In 1999 he was awarded the ICDE 'Prize for Lifelong Contribution to the Field' together with Börje Holmberg. He visited many distance teaching institutions on all continents, wrote a number of books, the latest in 2002 on 'Distance Education in Transition'. otto.peters@fernuni-hagen.de

Judy Roberts has over 25 years’ experience in national and international applications of learning technologies, with particular emphasis on distance and open learning, and telemedicine. Before starting her consulting practice, she was senior founding staff member of projects such as Telemedicine in Newfoundland and Labrador, Telemedicine for Ontario in Toronto, and Contact North/Contact Nord in Sudbury Ontario. Judy Roberts & Associates/Associés Inc. specializes in enabling clients to harness information and communications technologies to meet their learning and performance support needs. Services, available in French and English, include applied policy research, and strategic and business planning; project planning, management and evaluation; and capacity building. In addition to serving on the editorial board of several distance education journals, Roberts teaches the foundation course on Technology in Distance Education (OMDE 603) in the online MDE. judyrobe@istar.ca

Eugene Rubin, Ph.D., is the chair of the Master of Distance Education program at the Graduate School at the University of Maryland University College. Previously, Rubin was an associate dean at the Graduate School and associate vice president and director of the Office of Instructional Development at UMUC. He is the founding president of the Maryland Distance Learning Association and was executive director of the InternationalUniversity Consortium, a group of world-wide universities that share courses designed to be delivered at a distance. He was also director of the Institute for Distance Education, which has the mandate for development and support of distance education across the University of Maryland System. Rubin was a graduate faculty member at Athabasca University in Canada, and former editor of 'Research in Distance Education'. He has a broad background in distance education and training, educational technology, instructional design, and course production and delivery. He has a Ph.D. in Education and Psychology from the University of Michigan, and a M.S. in Experimental Psychology from Kansas State University. erubin@umuc.edu

Linda J. Smith, M.A., is a student in the MDE program at UMUC. She is preparing for a career as a consultant in distance education to which she can bring considerable experience both as an educator and as a manager in quality assurance, process evaluation, and research and development. Smith's teaching experience includes freshman English courses at Florida State University and a variety of courses she designed and taught for staff development at the Social Security Administration where she is currently employed. Her present endeavors in distance education include writing, a prototype course for developing student skills in online collaborative learning, and conference presentations. ljsmith7@bellatlantic.net

Christine Walti, MDE and MSW, is a member of the academic staff of the Center for Distance Education and a member of the ASF at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. She was a student in the online MDE Program and graduated in August 2002.
She currently (co-)instructs two courses in the program, and is engaged in research, writings and presentations on topics that deal with the MDE in particular and/or other activities at the Center for Distance Education. Prior to her permanent employment at Oldenburg University she had been contracted by the same to evaluate OMDE 601 courses and served as a senior student assistant in a number of courses and sections and participated in several faculty meetings during this time. Previously she had been contracted by Anne Arundel Community College's Distance Learning Center to do research for that unit. christine.walti@uni-oldenburg.de

Olaf Zawacki is a member of the academic staff of the Center for Distance Education and a member of the ASF at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. He is involved in various online distance learning programs offered by Oldenburg University. Since 2002 Zawacki is lecturer at the School of Education, and as of the spring semester 2003 he will co-teach OMDE 620 with Hilko Donker. Zawacki earned a certificate in 'Online Education and Training' from the University of London, Institute for Education. He has published papers and articles in the field of distance education and e-learning and presented on national and international conferences. His dissertation addresses the topic of student and faculty support in online distance learning. Zawacki was the faculty support coordinator for Oldenburg's MDE faculty. He graduated in 1999 from Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg (M.Sc.). olaf.zawacki@uni-oldenburg.de
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ABC, activity based costing, see costs
ALN, Asynchronous Learning Network, see Sloan Consortium
ASF, Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung; see Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg
AT&T, see American Telegraph and Telephone Company
CBT, see computer-based training
CLT, Center for Teaching and Learning, see University of Maryland University College
CMC, see communication, computer-mediated
C-RAC, see Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions
DE, see distance education
DL, see distance learning
EADTU, see European Association of Distance Teaching Universities
EDEN, see European Distance Education Network
EOL, see Essentials of Online Learning
FAQ, frequently asked questions
GBP, United Kingdom Pound
GDLN, Global Development Learning Network, see Worldbank
HSP III, see Hochschulsonder-programm (a federal & states government grant program)
ICDE, see International Council for Open and Distance Education
ICT, see information and communication technology
IFIS, see UMUC, Interactive Faculty Information System
IHEP, see Institute for Higher Education Policy
ILS, see UMUC, Office of Information and Library Services
IRFOL, see International Research Foundation for Open Learning
ISP, Internet Service Provider
MHEC, see Maryland Higher Education Council
MOU, see Memorandum of Understanding
NEA, see National Education Association
ODELL, see UMUC, Office of Distance Education and Lifelong Learning
OMDE, Online Master of Distance Education, see Master of Distance Education program
OUUK, see Open University United Kingdom
PDF, portable document file
SLH, see student-learning hours
SME, see subject-matter expert
TA, see teaching assistant
UMUC, see University of Maryland University College
UNIOL, see Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg
VS, see Virtual Seminar for University Faculty and Administrators ‘Professional Development in Distance Education’
WBT, see web-based training
WCET, see Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications
ZEF/UNIOL, Zentrale Einrichtung Fernstudienzentrum, see Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Center for Distance Education
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