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

Volume 9

Jane E. Brindley, Christine Walti &
Olaf Zawacki-Richter

Learner Support in Open, Distance and Online Learning Environments

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Series Editors' Foreword

The editors of the ASF series on distance education found compelling reasons to bring together leading authors and active practitioners to create Volume 9 on *Learner Support in Open, Distance and Online Learning Environments*. There is widespread recognition that learner support in the form of effective teaching, advising and counseling, library, information and technical assistance, and efficient administrative services can make an important positive difference to the distance learning experience. This volume addresses the latest in theory, practice, research and evaluation in the field.

Since the launch of the Master of Distance Education (MDE) program – jointly offered by the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) and Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg in the year 2000 – the ASF Series has published several volumes mainly to accommodate students in core courses of the MDE. Volumes 4, 5, and 6 are recommended in the *Foundations of Distance Education*, Volumes 2 and 7 in the *Management of Distance Education 1: Cost Analysis*, and Volume 8 serves the *Management of Distance Education 2: Leadership in Distance Education* course. With Volume 9 – our latest publication – we have continued this tradition by developing a comprehensive textbook for the course on *Student Support in Distance Education and Training.* However, that being said, Volume 9 will also be of interest beyond the classroom. Practitioners, both novice and experienced, will find it of value.

EDEN, the European Distance and E-Learning Network, entrusted the University of Oldenburg with the hosting of the 3rd EDEN Research Workshop on *Supporting the Learner in Distance Education and E-Learning* in March 2004. Authors of Volume 9 were invited to present the content of their contributions at the Workshop, and many chose to do so. As well, the keynote addresses from the EDEN Research Workshop are included in the DVD that accompanies Volume 9, and three of the keynotes appear in print version in the book.

The topic of the EDEN Research Workshop extends through the 25-year history of the Center for Distance Education at Oldenburg University like a red thread. Supporting students in distance education through advising, educational counseling and tutoring are the core tasks of the Center and inspired the desire for a publication on *Learner Support in Open, Distance and Online Learning Environments*. Volume 9 provides the reader with an excellent overview of the major challenges and approaches to providing effective learner support in the current context of institutional competitiveness, pressure to balance scale with connectedness, scarce resources, technological change and opportunity, and an increasingly heterogeneous student population.

We express our gratitude to the authors and editors who followed our invitation to participate in this exciting endeavor for the occasion of the Center's 25th anniversary. It assembles an impressively large number of chapter contributions from active practitioners in the field of learner support today. They provide a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and experience, as well as a basis to critically reflect what needs to be done in order to support students and learners in open and distance education, and in online learning environments.

Of the many participants our special thanks go to Jane Brindley, Christine Walti and Olaf Zawacki-Richter for their unrestricted willingness to take on the edition of Volume 9.

Jane Brindley is a faculty member in the School of Psychology at the University of Windsor and serves as an adjunct faculty member for the University of Oldenburg in the course *Student Support in Distance Education and Training. S*he served as co-chair in the EDEN Research Workshop international program committee and is a distinguished expert in the field of learner support. Christine Walti and Olaf Zawacki-Richter participated in their roles as members of the Center for Distance Education at Oldenburg University. Christine is Oldenburg's faculty for the *Foundations of Distance Education* course and co-teaches *Student Support in Distance Education and Training* with Jane Brindley. Olaf Zawacki-Richter recently earned his doctorate on student and faculty support in online distance education. He now works for the Bankakademie and continues teaching the MDE course on *Learning and Training with Multimedia*. Franziska Vondrlik has again provided her tireless editorial assistance which in the end made this publication possible.

The Series' Editors

August 2004

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Terry Anderson is a professor and Canada Research Chair in Distance Education at Athabasca University *Canada's Open University*. He has published widely in the area of distance education and educational technology and has recently co-authored two new books: Anderson and Kanuka (2002) eResearch: Methods, Issues and Strategies and Garrison, D & Anderson, T. (2003). E-Learning in the 21st Century and has edited an Open Source book Theory and Practice of Online Education (2004) available at http://cde.athabascau.ca/online_book. Dr. Anderson is a lead investigator on a number of research and development projects including EduSource Canada, Campus Alberta Repository of Educational Objects (CAREO) and Broadband Enabled Life Long Education (BELLE) and is active in provincial national, and international distance education associations. He has been instrumental in the development of the CANCORE metadata specification for identifying and retrieving educational objects. Dr. Anderson holds B.A. and B.Ed. degrees from the University of Alberta, an M.Sc. in Computer Education from the University of Oregon, and a Ph.D. in Education Psychology with a specialty in Educational Computer Applications from the University of Calgary. Further details and some current publications can be found at http://www.athabascau.ca/html/ staff/academic/terrya.html.
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