Welcome to the first regular issue of the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning. Those who are already familiar with the journal will know that the inaugural issue contained invited articles from leading researchers in the field, while issue two, guest edited by John Traxler, was a special issue containing selected extended articles from the MLearn 2008 conference. The first regular issue is therefore something of a milestone in establishing this journal as the premier publication in its field.

It is important to recognize that this journal is about both mobile learning and blended learning, so I am very pleased to have a balance of articles in this issue between these important (and synergistic) aspects of our field of research. Two of the articles focus specifically on blended learning, while the other two concerns themselves with mobile and pervasive learning issues. All, however, provide us with new insights into what can be accomplished using technologies to support the mobile or distant learner.

This issue opens with “Exploring the effects of web-enabled self-regulated learning and online class frequency on students’ computing skills in blended learning courses” by Pei-Di Shen and Chia-Wen Tsai. In a context in which on-line learning alone is not possible due to local regulations, the authors have evaluated the effects of blended learning in contrast to more traditional approaches in vocational education. Their results clearly show the benefits of blended learning, with the students who studied in a blended learning environment gaining marks ‘significantly higher than those who learned through traditional teaching.’ The authors go on to say; ‘This study highlights the necessity of applying innovative teaching methods and technologies, and appropriate arrangement of Blended Learning courses to help students learn.’

Our second article is “A study in developing a mobile learning system based on human-computer interaction design principles”, by Kuo-Wei Su, Cheng-Li Liu and Meng-Fang Kuo. It has become something of a mantra in publications related to mobile learning on small devices to highlight usability issues with small screens and keyboards. However few researchers have attempted to evaluate
how human-computer interaction design principles developed in other contexts might apply to mobile learning when integrated into the systems development process. As the authors assert, ‘Mobile services will not be successful if we do not understand and design for the needs of the end-users, which are very different from those traditionally studied in HCI research.’ Perhaps one of the most pertinent findings from this article, which provides extensive analysis of data gathered from users of a prototype system, relates to the use of landscape mode for presentation, since an increasing number of devices are now able to support this mode of content delivery. Su, Liu and Kuo suggest that a preference for either portrait or landscape mode is dependent on the type of content, and go on to provide some examples of which content seems to work better in landscape or portrait modes.

In our third article, “An adaptive and context-aware scenario model based on a web service architecture for pervasive learning systems” by Cuong Pham-Nguyen, Serge Garlatti, B.-Y.-Simon Lau, Benjamin Barbry and Thomas Vantroys, the authors address issues of context in pervasive learning. They begin their article by asserting that ‘Pervasive learning is becoming a new wave in technology-enhanced learning’, and go on to provide an online survey, semi-structured interviews, and an emailed survey, the research described in this article progressively gathered data from a range of key stakeholders to identify the value proposition of blended learning in this particular environment. The author concludes that the development of a blended learning solution for teachers in this context means that ‘geography, climate, cost, and isolation will no longer be barriers for these professionals.’

As editor in chief I hope you find the articles in this issue both informative
in their detail and encouraging in their scope, demonstrating once again, as if such demonstration were needed, that the field of mobile and blended learning is a rich and varied context of research with practical application. Future issues of the journal will include a special issue of articles from the 2009 IADIS Mobile Learning conference, held in Barcelona. Once again I am sure that we will see quality articles on a broad range of topics that will continue to push the boundaries of research into mobile and blended learning.