

## GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

# Special Issue from the 12<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Mobile and Contextual Learning 2013, Doha, Qatar

*Robert Power, College of the North Atlantic-Qatar, Doha, Qatar*

This special issue of the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning (IJMBL) contains five revised and extended articles from the 12th World Conference on Mobile and Contextual Learning (mLearn 2013) held at the College of the North Atlantic in Doha, Qatar, in October 2013. This well-established conference series extends the theory and practice of learning and mobility in converging technological environments. This includes applications of innovative mobile and ubiquitous technologies for learning. It covers new educational and technological methods and concepts for supporting formal and informal learning, as well as seamless learning across contexts, and transitions between different types of learning.

The five articles in this special issue cover a range of aspects of mobile learning, from a conceptual mapping of the broad research field, to the creation of specialised mobile apps for immigrants, academic peer support and language learning, and from students in the classroom using iPads to medics in the field using mobile

tools to support their professional practice. Each of these revised and extended articles has undergone full blind peer review, prior to being selected for this special issue.

The first article in this issue, 'A Mobile Learning Overview by Timeline and Mind Map' by David Parsons, was originally presented as a poster at the conference, where it gained the best poster award. As a result of this positive response from the conference attendees, the material has now been written up as a full research paper. It includes both a timeline of important events in the history of mobile learning (from Alan Kay's conceptual 'Dynabook' to the first MobiMOOC), categorised into a series of developmental phases, and a mind map of key areas of mobile learning research, encompassing technology, learning, content, learner and research approaches. Its intent is to provide a broad overview of this field of study that can assist new researchers to position their work appropriately.

Our second article is ‘AnswerPro: Designing to Motivate Interaction’ by Balsam AlSugair, Gail Hopkins, Elizabeth FitzGerald and Tim Brailsford. The main emphasis of the work reported in this article is the provision of a mobile application to assist the process of academic peer support for school pupils. The study began by interviewing both teachers and pupils to help inform the design of AnswerPro, a mobile tool to enable peer support activities. Then a prototype system was evaluated by pupils. The results indicated the value of reward mechanisms and autonomy in motivating school pupils to engage in such mobile peer support systems.

‘Global MedAid: Mobile Learning for International Work-Based Learners’ by Joanna Colley, Claire Bradley, Geoff Stead and Jessica Wakelin was in fact originally presented at the 11th World Conference on Mobile and Contextual Learning (mLearn 2012), held in Helsinki, Finland. However it was not possible to schedule this particular paper into the special issue from that conference, so we chose to hold it over to the subsequent special issue and to include it here. The authors are not academics but practitioners at Tribal Group, a global provider of products and services to the international education, training and learning markets, based in the UK. Therefore the style of this paper is somewhat different from a typical academic submission to the journal. This work provides a fascinating insight into how a commercial software organisation has developed a mobile learning application for real world clients to support people working in areas of disaster relief. Evaluation took place with a large number of users across many countries. The core of the paper is a description of an iterative design and development process that shows important aspects of design science in action; working with potential users, getting feedback and applying this feedback to the next cycle of development.

Article four is ‘Post-Secondary Students Using the iPad to Learn English: An Impact Study’ by Christina Gitsaki and Matthew Robby. This article is based on one of the keynote pre-

sentations given at the conference, and describes a study of 370 high-school graduate students learning English as a second language using the iPad in an intensive academic preparation program. The study, undertaken in the United Arab Emirates, used a combination of data sources, correlating student survey responses regarding their use of the iPad to International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores achieved at the end of the program. It provides us with some insights into the levels of use and type of use of the iPad in an ESL program and helps to construct an explanation for the type of students and key activities of use that were associated with enhanced learning outcomes and English language acquisition.

The final article in this issue is ‘Creating Coherent Incidental Learning Journeys on Mobile Devices Using Feedback and Progress Indicators: The SCAMP framework’ by Ann Jones, Mark Gaved, Agnes Kukulska-Hulme, Eileen Scanlon, Charlie Pearson, Petros Lameris, Ian Dunwell and Jan Jones. This paper focuses on mobile learning in the context of the types of incidental learning that occur outside formal structured learning environments. The work described in the paper is part of the MASELTOV (Mobile Assistance for Social Inclusion and Empowerment of Immigrants with Persuasive Learning Technologies and Social Network Services) project. This project provides a set of mobile learning tools, the MApp, which includes navigation tools, the ‘help radar’ to find nearby volunteer assistants, and language learning activities to support immigrants, focusing on areas such as employment and healthcare. A translation tool supports this process through converting photographs to text and translating them, whilst a serious game provides playful learning about cultural differences. However within the larger activities of this project, this paper focuses more specifically on the SCAMP (Social, Cognitive Affective, Motivational dimensions for reviewing Progress) framework, which provides appropriate feedback and progress indicators. The main focus of the paper is on the importance of such feedback indicators in supporting mobile learners.

As the official journal of the International Association for Mobile Learning (IAmLearn), which organises the mLearn conference series, IJMBL is proud to bring you this special issue. We hope that reading these high quality articles will inspire you to make your own submissions to future mLearn conferences, and to support

the mobile learning research community by becoming a member of IAmLearn.

*Robert Power*

*Guest Editor*

*IJMBL*