Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue from the Mobile Innovation Network Australasia (MINA)

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In 2015, Mobile Innovation Network Australasia (MINA) was created from the desire to extend collaboration beyond Aotearoa–New Zealand[1], also to officially encompass the on-going connections and cooperations with Australian colleagues, as well as collaborators. As a result, the Fifth International Mobile Creativity and Mobile Innovation Symposium (#mina2015), hosted in Melbourne (AUS), offered another singular set of conversations around creative, innovative and institutional communities focusing on current and predictive mobile evolution. During the symposium m-education, m-learning, m-teaching and m-collaboration were part of the recurrent interests and discussion for advancement. Therefore, we decided to join forces with the *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning* (IJMBL) team, conjointly to expand our call for papers to the MINA fellows to shape and establish this first and thriving special edition.

In the first article "Mobile Devices and Mobile Learning: Shifting the Mindset of Teachers and Learners" by Philippa Smith, Lynn Grant, Clare Conway and Vickel Narayan (Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand), the authors reflect on students' experiences and a design-based research approach, which assisted the lecturers to use the transition of the paper in Communication over a two year period. The iCommunicate paper's case-study discusses how a change in mindset and skill base was necessary in adapting to a mobile learning environment. It also articulates the undergone changes that needed to occur and highlights the advancement of mobile technologies, challenges and improvements for the students and the lecturers. Furthermore, it supports a suggestion that mobile learning researchers can provide a vision for the future to imagine opportunities ahead of the technology.

The second article "Open Courses, Mobile Photography and Informal, Social Learning" by Mark McGuire (University of Otago, New Zealand) investigates MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and articulates a new paradigm where MOOCs, cMOOCs and xMOOCs compete with each other in an open and connected network. It also discusses the notion of Creative Commons (CC) licenses in relation to core skills and competencies and contextualises them within the broader trends of open, informal and mobile learning. Lastly, Phonar (pho-tography and nar-rative) Nation, a free, open, five-week photography course designed for 12-18 year olds is critically analysed as a case-study for open, collaborative and connected learning, and is discussed as an experiment in alternative approaches to teaching and learning.

The following reflective article "mLearning and Creative practices: a public challenge?" by Laurent Antonczak (COLAB – Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand), Thomas Cochrane (Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand), Helen Keegan (Salford University, UK) questions and ponders the ethos of open, sharing experiences and user generated content enabled

by mobile social media within the creative and academic sector. It discusses the international project (#moco360) as a case-study in order to present three principal concerns: confidence, recognition, and individualism. As a consequence, the authors, based on their phenomenological understanding of m-learning experience, development of professional online identities, and international collaboration, suggest a set of recommendations to prepare future graduates for the ethical use of mobile social media.

The last article "Mobile VR in education: From the fringe to the mainstream" by Thomas Cochrane (Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand), explores the development of virtual reality (VR) use in education and the emergence of mobile VR based content creation and sharing as a platform for enabling learner-generated content and learner-generated contexts. It provides a conceptual framework for implementing student-generated mobile VR using a low cost approach via Google Cardboard and compatible social media platforms as well as discussing three specific case-studies in Journalism, Paramedicine and Graphic Design. The three proposed scenarios are the first impetus for further research in exploring the possibilities to move VR from the fringe of educational experience into the mainstream. Overall, this paper is a first step for further research about how immersive experience could enhance learning.

In summary, this special issue addresses an eclectic range of perspectives which explores mobile technologies in relation to academia through four different avenues from online open courses to traditional classroom environments, from photography to virtual reality, from formal to informal learning contexts, and questions some of the communication and best practices while engaging online with international and multiple culture. We hope that you will appreciate this first collaborative Mobile and Blended Learning prospect.

Lastly, I would to like to thank Dr David Parsons for this tremendous opportunity, for his collaboration and support. This special edition would not be possible without the authors and their dedication, their patience and their generosity in sharing their findings with us. Also, I would like to thank all the reviewers, namely Prof. Ilona Buchem, Assoc. Prof. Gerda Cammaer, Dr Geraldene Peters, Felipe Cardona, Vickel Narayan and Dr David Parsons himself, for their earnestness, their constructive feedback and diligence.

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ENDNOTES

[1]   Mobile Innovation Network Aotearoa (New Zealand) was founded in 2011. For more information, please visit www.mina.pro.

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