

# Introduction to the Special Issue

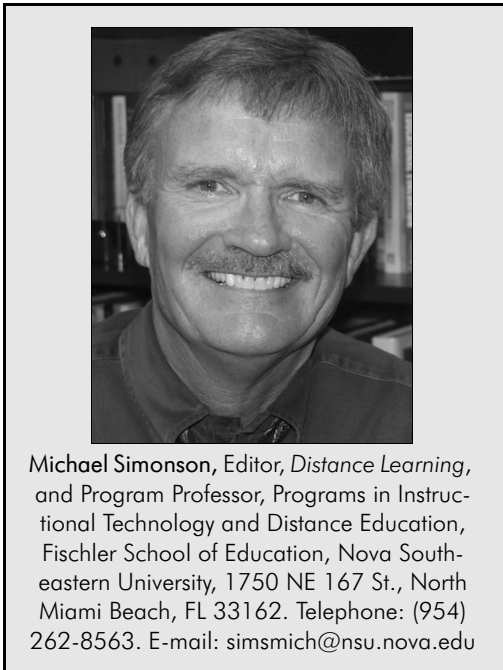
**Michael Simonson**

When examining the last dozen years of *Distance Learning*, it is apparent that the field of distance education has evolved—emerged in education as something real, vibrant, and growing—maybe matured. Distance education is now widely accepted, even if often misunderstood. Keywords used in *Distance Learning* such as skeuomorph, virtual design, and accreditation have been replaced in more recent issues by words such ethics, colonialism, and bookicide.

What has happened to the field? Obviously, distance education, e-learning, and virtual schooling have matured. It is now common to see advertising on TV, hear speakers at conferences, and read articles

in local newspapers about the field. And, it unfortunately is also common to hear about fraud, ethical violations, malpractice, and the end of books as side effects of the growth of distance education. Perhaps distance education has not matured into adulthood, but is still in its adolescence.

Are the problems with distance education “bad” or typical? Probably both. This issue of *Distance Learning* looks back over the last decade and reintroduces significant issues, most of which remain important, and concentrates collections of “And Finally” columns on issues that need additional emphasis. Three sections and 24 topics are included in this issue of *Distance Learning* journal. Enjoy!



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