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EDITORIAL

It is conference time. Hence, the next issue of DEOSNEWS will not be posted
until the last week of August. In the meantime, I look forward to taking
part in these three conferences:

IFIP WG 3.1 Working Conference "Impacts of Informatics on the Organization
of Education", University of California, Santa Barbara, August 5-9.

Designing for Learner Access: Challenges and Practices for Distance
Education. Seventh Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning.
Madison, Wisconsin, August 14-16. For more information, call the conference
directors Patricia Takemoto (+608-262-9970) or Lin Compton (+608-263-2082).

Scandinavian Conference on Distance Teaching, Education, and computer-
mediated communication (Nordisk konferanse om fjernundervisning, opplæring
og dataformidlet kommunikasjon). Several of the presentations will be in
English. Oslo, Norway, August 19-21. For more information, e-mail
NEK@usit.uio.no

Another interesting upcoming conference is the 40th Annual Adult Education Conference in Montreal, Canada, October 15-18. For more information, contact AAACE, 1112 16th St., NW, Washington, D.C., 20036. Telephone: +202-463-6333.

INTERVIEW

Speaking Personally with Reidar Roll

For half a century distance education's international organization was administered by volunteers. In 1988 a Permanent Secretariat was established with offices in Oslo, Norway. Reidar Roll was appointed its first Secretary General. He is interviewed for The American Journal of Distance Education by Michael Grahame Moore, Editor.

MGM: What is the International Council for Distance Education?

RR: The International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) is the only worldwide nongovernmental organization specializing in all types of distance education systems, from primary to tertiary, as well as nonformal education and professional training. It has acquired renown within the scientific and professional community, and its competency is recognized by international organizations like United Nations agencies.

MGM: What is the connection with the United Nations?

RR: ICDE is affiliated with UNESCO as a specialist nongovernmental organization representing distance education worldwide and is regarded as UNESCO's technical arm of operation in this field. As you are aware, distance education figures prominently among strategies proposed by The World Declaration on Education for All to assist developing countries to escape from educational crisis. The past years have seen growing interest among educational authorities in developing countries in evolving some form of distance education to help alleviate problems their educational systems are facing. This means that all agencies involved in multilateral and bilateral activities are interested in cooperation with a solid international organization such as ICDE, since our members represent a variety of experience within distance education.

But it is also important to mention that ICDE is cooperating with UNDP, UNICEF, The World Bank, and several bilateral agencies such as USAID, CIDA, NORAD, etc. This cooperation will increase in the years to come.

MGM: When was ICDE formed?

RR: ICDE was formed in 1938 under the name of International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE). The name was changed to International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) at the Vancouver Conference in 1982. The change of name to the International Council for Distance Education was more than semantic. The new title recognized that the Council had moved a long way from representing mainly government secondary-level correspondence schools and proprietary colleges, as it did in 1938, and was recognizing the wave of state supported open colleges and universities that had begun to emerge in the 1970s using a multimedia approach.

MGM: Who are members of ICDE?

RR: The Council has a large membership of distance teaching institutions, government ministries, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, networks, and associations, be they national or of a regional or sub-regional character, in all corners of the world. The ICDE membership also consists of distinguished practitioners and academics, as well as national and international policy makers, both politicians and senior servants. Many ministries of education in different countries are formal members of ICDE.

Our members provide a most valuable reservoir of research capacity for the ICDE and a worldwide pool of specialists that can be called upon for advisory services and can be shared for the development of high-quality distance teaching systems and programs. The international dimension of the ICDE facilitates the transfer of know-how in a South-South, North-North, and a North-South manner.

MGM: What is the job of the Secretary General?

RR: My function as the Secretary General is to manage the ICDE Permanent Secretariat, in accordance with the ICDE Executive Committee and the ICDE Constitution. This includes activities such as membership recruitment and maintenance, liaising with Council members and outside agencies in accordance with Council policy and in consultation with the Executive Committee, initiating distance education projects in developed and developing countries and, of course, promoting knowledge about distance education and its development to politicians and decision makers. The Permanent Secretariat is located in Oslo and receives financial support from the Norwegian government.

MGM: What are the objectives of ICDE?

RR: The aims of the ICDE, as stated in its constitution, are:

1. to promote knowledge of, and improvement in, distance education throughout the world;
2. to act as the coordinating body for international distance education.

In order to implement the policy laid down by the Executive Committee of ICDE, which is composed of elected representatives from all the regions of the world, the ICDE shall:

- a) disseminate information on current developments in distance education;
- b) hold world conferences and other conferences, seminars, and training/-professional development sessions in the area of distance education;
- c) promote research and scholarship in distance education;
- d) assist in the development and strengthening of regional and national distance education associations;
- e) support the coordination of the regional and international development activities of associations and institutions involved in distance education;
- f) undertake projects, consultancies and programs; and
- g) seek funds and sponsorship from donor bodies and other organizations to assist developing countries.

MGM: In what ways does ICDE promote knowledge and improvement of distance education throughout the world; can you give an example of this work?

RR: ICDE promotes knowledge and improvement of distance education in many ways. First, we can mention the ICDE World Conferences which function as an international meeting point for professionals from all over the world and where information is shared in formal and nonformal ways through presentations and discussions. The World Conferences and ICDE's regional workshops are important communication channels for members, researchers, and politicians. As a network organization, ICDE also distributes its own Bulletin to its members and libraries.

Second, ICDE as an international expert organization is represented in international, regional, and national seminars which are organized by UN agencies, governments, etc., where ICDE has the opportunity to promote distance education systems.

Third, ICDE as a project organization is involved in planning and implementing projects with the aim of improving educational systems, especially in developing countries.

MGM: I want to talk about research. Prior to the 1990 World Conference in Venezuela, ICDE and our American Center for the Study of Distance Education sponsored a three-day workshop on international research. In what other ways does ICDE promote research?

RR: ICDE will, with financial support from private and public institu-

tions, encourage its members to carry out research activities in the field of distance education. ICDE will, in the near future, revive its Research Fund where members can apply for support for international research projects.

For the moment ICDE is involved in projects and activities such as:

- Planning and coordination of the development of distance education activities at regional, subregional, and national levels in Africa, connected to priorities of United Nations agencies.
- Planning and coordination of projects in China in cooperation with the Chinese government and United Nations agencies.
- Joint projects with Japanese institutions involving the development of futuristic scenarios of education and computer-based surveys of educational resources in Asia.
- Evaluation studies have been undertaken and published in cooperation between ICDE and UNESCO of the major distance teaching systems of Asia.
- In cooperation with United Nations agencies, ICDE is undertaking worldwide and regional surveys of distance education resources.
- ICDE is undertaking the coordination of global educational programs in priority areas, like the environment, in cooperation with intergovernmental agencies and national authorities.

MGM: The last issue of The American Journal of Distance Education referred to the possibility of forming an American Council for Distance Education. What is ICDE's position regarding national and regional councils?

RR: The establishment of an American Council for Distance Education (ACDE) is very important for the United States and for ICDE since your country represents a variety of experiences and experts which are needed in the international community. From an international point of view, it is easier to work together with a coordinated distance education organization in the United States and, through an ACDE, organize international activities. But an ACDE is, of course, also very important for coordinating internal activities in the United States.

ICDE does already harmonize with and/or participates in regional associations, such as the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association (ASPESA), African Association of Distance Education (AADE), Distance Learning Association of Southern Africa (DLA), Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE), Latin American Network for Development in Distance Education (REDLAED), and European Distance Education Network (EDEN).

As an example of a regional ICDE activity currently undertaken by the General Secretariat in Oslo, ICDE assisted the European members to develop a representative, open, and democratic regional nongovernmental network for collaboration in distance education among distance teaching institutions,

policy makers, and academics. The European Distance Education Network (EDEN) was established this year and its secretariat is based in Cambridge, England. EDEN is an important part of the ICDE umbrella.

Similar activity was undertaken by ICDE in Latin America, when the Latin American Network for Development in Distance Education (REDLAED) was established in May 1989. The Network functions within the framework of ICDE, and undertakes development activities, exchange of information, research, training, and joint projects. Members of the network are the major distance education institutions and networks in Latin America. A Centre of Excellence in Distance Education was established in 1990 and based at the Universidad Nacional Abierta (UNA) in Caracas, Venezuela. This ICDE Centre for Latin America is funded by the Venezuelan government.

MGM: I have heard it said that ICDE represents only low technology, especially correspondence instruction, and that different international organizations are needed to deal with such technology as satellite and computer-mediated instruction. What is your reply to this suggestion?

RR: This is very incorrect. It is important to emphasize that ICDE has the most advanced high-technology distance education institutions in the world as members. These organizations are very active within ICDE in promoting and developing new ways of integrating advanced technology in distance education. Besides, we must be aware of the paradigm changes which are happening in the educational society today. The integration and utilization of technology in education require an innovative and creative combination of conventional and modern education, such as distance education. A synthesis using the best of both systems will, under professional planning and management, generate an "alternative educational approach" including utilization of multimedia. The integration will set new patterns for organized learning systems, especially regarding lifelong learning. This is a consequence of technological developments and of the fact that no nation, however rich, can afford to solve the learning needs of its citizens without the use of cost-effective distance learning systems of high quality aimed at large target groups. Regional and international "joint ventures" will increase, and the need for coordination of international cooperation, e.g., to utilize resources better and to avoid unnecessary competition and wasting of resources, will increase. Too many international organizations with different interests in distance education can be an obstacle to this development. ICDE welcomes every institution that can play an active role within the organization to promote quality-based high- or low-technology distance education.

MGM: Who decides where a world conference will be held and what are the criteria for being chosen?

RR: The Executive Committee decides where a World Conference will be held. One tries to make World Conferences circulate between the different world regions. The country or institution chosen to host the World Conference must organize the Conference in accordance with the ICDE conference directives.

MGM: In summary, why should any reader of The American Journal of Distance Education consider becoming a member of ICDE?

RR: Among the benefits you get through a membership in the ICDE are participation in workshops, conferences, receiving publications from various parts of the world, and the development of an invaluable network of scholars and practitioners. It seems that in the future international connections will be even more important than in the past, and the ICDE is a means for distance education institutions and their members to obtain access to colleagues in other countries.

MGM: How can one find out more, and how can one join?

RR: For additional information, please write to:

ICDE

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0486 Oslo 4

NORWAY

Phone: +47-2-950630

Fax: +47-2-950719

ICDE welcomes professional individuals and organizations as members in the world community of distance education.

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