The rapidity of technological change and the related explosion of interest and use of online learning in the past decade have resulted in a significant lag between practice and research in its management and administration. This is not a new phenomenon. Writing as recently as 2004, Michael Beaudoin (2004, p. 79) found only four book titles dedicated to open and distance education leadership and management published between 1990 and 2001. Taking into account the escalating rapidity of technological change and the usual publication lag, this paper focusses on research published since 2005.

This chapter addresses issues of research into management and organization, strategic planning and leadership, educational policy, and intellectual property and copyright. Other subjects and issues that pertain directly to effective management of online and distance learning are addressed elsewhere in this volume, notably professional development and faculty support, costs and finance, the management of educational technology, innovation and change, learner support, and quality assurance.
The discussion is limited to two kinds of institution: campus-based colleges and universities and post-secondary institutions dedicated to open and distance learning' and does not address corporate training and development of traditional or virtual elementary and secondary schools.

While they share significant similarities, there are important differences between the introduction of online learning into campus-based institutions and the impact of technology on open universities. The former seek ways to integrate online learning into an institution built around face-to-face teaching while open universities are struggling to adjust often dated technological processes in a rapidly changing environment.

After the completion of a literature review, three strong themes emerged: the ongoing need for more and better research into the area of organization and management in ODEL institutions, the critical importance of taking account of institutional cultures in the management of change, and the tendency for newcomers to the field to ignore its established literature.

One challenge for a review of this sort is confusion in the literature among various terms in and around online distance education. For example, the concept of learning is variously modified as distance, online, e-, technology enhanced, Web-based, Web 2.0, mixed-mode, networked, mobile, technology enhanced, hybrid, blended, or flexible. While some authors take considerable pains to define the terms in their own papers (for example, Pachler and Daly, 2011), many others take their own terminology for granted.

Given that new terms are being coined regularly in this fast-growing field, it is important that researchers define their terms precisely from the outset. Guri-Rosenblit and Gros (2011) provide a useful overview of this concern.

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

The influential British writer, Gilly Salmon (2010) sets the context for an interest in research into the organization and management of distance education and online learning.

University leaders already know much about learners’ needs, changing demographics, and the challenges of the complex relationships

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1 As almost all of these are open universities, that term will be used throughout the paper to refer to such institutions in general.
between technologies and pedagogies. However, they know less about how to prepare for changes in learners’ expectations, including what, in the range of opportunities, is significant and what is not. (p. 28)

The challenge goes well beyond learner expectations to include those of employers, consumers, and government in a context where higher education is much more publicly accountable and far less protected by the traditional ivory tower.

There has been a paucity of research into the organization and management of distance learning, and much of the literature, such as it is, is anecdotal and reflective rather than experimental or inquiry based. Perhaps the most popular approach is the institutional case study, either written by someone reflecting on his or her own leadership or by a more dispassionate researcher with interest in organizational issues. Hannum (2009), among others, has suggested that, while case studies were useful during the early stages of distance education, their application is limited to their specific context. He advocates for “optimization studies that look beyond technology as the variable that matters and instead look to those variables that directly influence learning outcomes” (p. 173). It is this sort of research he believes to be sorely lacking in the field.

This view is consistent with that of Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2011, pp. 196–97) who push for a major paradigm shift in educational research, emphasizing randomized control trials and learner-specific studies over more traditional descriptive approaches and correlation studies which they claim have little impact on improving learning outcomes.

There is a compelling case for a much stronger research orientation among practitioners in online learning, especially surrounding its introduction into traditional college and university programs. The past decade has seen a veritable explosion in online course offerings and enrolments in campus-based institutions, dramatically increasing the need to ensure the integration of these approaches into the mainstream of the institution. While researchers have been slow to respond, there is some indication that more are recognizing the importance of carefully designed, outcome-based studies intended to optimize the effectiveness of online teaching and learning.

As one example, Meyer and Barefield (2010) evaluated the availability and effectiveness of administrative support for online teaching faculty in a premier medical university in the US. They developed the Online Teaching Infrastructure Matrix and tested it with faculty in the university. The matrix
is divided into three parts: the foundation stage (six elements), the developmental stage (nine), and the maintenance stage (six). The matrix approach provides a good overview of the issues involved in introducing online teaching to a campus-based institution.

A significant number of authors decry the haphazard and random way that online learning has been introduced in so many colleges and universities (see, for example, Pachler and Daly, 2011, p. 6). Many, such as Vasser (2010), speak to the importance of instructional design, which was so instrumental in the development of the Open University (OUUK) and its many imitators around the world, an issue covered by Campbell and Schwier in Chapter 13 of this volume. Others advocate not only for course and program design but also for strategic planning, evaluation, and attention to the sustainability of distance learning courses.

Chaney, Chaney, and Eddy (2010) take the latter approach, suggesting five assumptions that can be used by program planners of distance learning courses and programs. The assumptions are based on self-assessments of the successes and failures in the authors’ collective 57 years of program design at six different American distance learning universities. They conclude their analysis with a lengthy list of performance indicators for quality assurance in distance education.

Paolucci and Gambescia (2007) identified the range of general administrative structures employed by universities offering online degree programs by surveying 239 American universities that offer at least one completely online graduate degree. They found that 90% of the institutions were delivering their online degree programs with an internally-based administrative arrangement, but noted a trend for the distance education unit to succeed the academic department as the chosen administrative structure (External administrative structuring, paras. 3, 4, & 10).

Conducting a case study of Indiana University’s Kelly Direct online degree program, Magjuka, Shi, and Bonk (2005) offered 10 critical design and administrative issues for online program success. Schauer, Rockwell, Fritz, and Marx (2005) similarly used a modified Delphi study to assist an expert panel to identify 62 concepts organized in 8 issue categories important to implementing distance education courses and programs. Not surprisingly, the most important concepts were faculty commitment and skill development. They concluded that implementing distance education must be a collaborative effort among
the department, college, and central administration with the departmental chair as the pivotal point in the entire process (Summary, para. 1).

Pina (2008) looked at 30 factors found in the literature that influence the institutionalization of innovations. One hundred and seventy distance-learning professionals rated the implementation success of each factor. The most highly-rated components were course management systems, and online registration and library resources, while the lowest ratings were given to professional and financial incentives to faculty and recruiting faculty participation. It is also interesting to note that administrators rated their institutions more successful than did faculty (Results, paras. 1–2). It would be useful to conduct further research comparing overall college and university performance according to which components were seen to be successfully integrated in each case.

Pachler and Daly (2011) worry that in the current economic climate e-learning will be seen as a way of cutting higher education budgets rather than encouraging research-informed pedagogical development (p. 132). Citing the work of Laurillard (2008), they lament research that distorts the coherence of the overall educational environment while giving technology disproportionate impact.

One of the most prolific and influential writers about the management of technology and education is Tony Bates. His most recent book, written in conjunction with Albert Sangrà (2011), is based on empirical studies of e-learning practice in over 20 universities worldwide and in-depth case studies of 11 universities and colleges, 6 in Europe and 5 in North America. Written primarily for senior academic administrators, the book uniquely addresses the integration of technology not only into campus-based universities and colleges but also into open universities. Using nine criteria to judge the extent of technological integration, Bates and Sangrà found a discouraging gap between hope and reality in their research. They found no evidence, either in the case studies or the literature, to show that the investment in technology was leading to improved learning. Instead of saving money, there was evidence that technology costs were rising, particularly in the areas of faculty workload, learning management systems, and learning technology support. Like many writers, they emphasize the importance of strategic planning and holistic thinking. They propose specific and sometimes radical changes necessary to improve learner performance and to reduce costs, and they encourage reader responses to their ideas.
Paul Bates and Sangrà recognize that the biggest challenges facing academic change are cultural, not technological. This is consistent with much writing on leadership and change in higher education (Paul, 2011, pp. 49–71, Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, and Schein, 2010). While those seeking to integrate technology into any form of post-secondary institution will look first to the specific studies on open and distance learning referred to in this paper, they will also find value in the broader literature of change and academic culture. As one example, the quadrant approach to learning innovation promoted by Salmon (2010, pp. 33–36) can also be understood through the cultures of the academy identified by Bergquist and Pawlak.

In advocating a Web 2.0 strategy for online learning students, Lee and McLoughlin (2010) address the needs and concerns of students studying at a distance. Rather than following “the widespread practice of incorporating traditional classroom pedagogical strategies into the Web-based delivery of courses,” they advocate developing “authentic and relevant learning spaces and experiences for students through Web 2.0” (p. 66).

Every year the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and the Campus Computing Project collaboratively conduct a survey to obtain data on the instructional, operational, and technology infrastructure of online programs in higher education in the U.S. Their November 2010 report found significant increased investment in faculty training programs for online and distance education programs, with more than half of its surveyed institutions making such training mandatory. Notwithstanding rapidly growing online enrolments, almost three-quarters of respondents identified faculty resistance to teaching online courses as a significant barrier to their expansion and success. Another significant finding was that most of the institutions surveyed had either reorganized the management of their online education programs within the past two years or expected to do so in the next two. Budget issues and the need to coordinate instructional resources were primary reasons for the reorganizational efforts (Green, 2010).

The rapid development of new technology has posed equally significant challenges to open universities, which have evolved from correspondence models to the kind of course team/instructional design/student support approach first developed at the Open University of the United Kingdom (OUUK) and subsequently mimicked by open universities around the world.

A fascinating case study is the Al-Quds Open University (QOU), which serves more than 50,000 students in Palestine, the majority of whom have
no other options for higher education. Matheos, Rogoza, and Hamayil (2009) examined QOU’s efforts to redesign its existing model to a blended learning model that would offer a wide variety of delivery options and open resources. This was a direct challenge to the epistemology of its traditional distance offerings and the limitations of using only one resource, the course text (para. 6). Through faculty and student surveys, the authors deemed the associated extra work for both groups a worthwhile investment (Discussions and Conclusion, para. 1), however their paper somewhat glosses over the challenges of changing the prevailing delivery model as well as the associated cost and workload increases. No matter the positive impacts, introducing and trying to integrate new modes of delivery can render courses less cost-effective. It will be fascinating to track the institution’s ongoing wrestling with such an ambitious change agenda.

One of the world’s largest universities, with over one million off-campus students, the Anadolu University in Turkey has also undergone significant change to its primary distance education technology in recent years. Through the use of surveys, Akbulut, Kuzu, Latchem, and Odabasi (2007, p. 348) found only a minority of the faculty involved in innovation, research, and diffusion in open, distance, or e-learning. The authors noted a widespread need for professional staff development outside the Education and Open Education faculties. A concomitant concern is that faculty will focus less on specialized research into distance education, one of the supposed advantages of institutions dedicated to it.

Even though apparently operating independently of the literature and experience of open universities, some American advocates for improvements to online learning on traditional campuses are proposing models that nevertheless emulate the structures and processes of single-mode institutions. For example, Lowenthal and White (2009) propose centralized administration and oversight, collaborative and standardized course design, and faculty assessment and training—concepts all too familiar to experienced practitioners in open universities outside America. It will be interesting to see if practitioners can find an approach that avoids the worst pitfalls of both the creative but inefficient “craft” model of course production and the mass production, industrial model of single delivery mode universities.
Whether in the context of corporate change (Wasyluk & Berge, 2007) or traditional colleges and universities (Keaster, 2005; McFarlane, 2011; Portugal, 2006; Tipple, 2010), strong leadership is an important element in bringing about the necessary changes and support for an effective online learning strategy. Following Beaudoin (2002), Portugal (2006) emphasizes the importance of leadership as distance learning becomes part of the academic mainstream. Through the presentation of a wide-ranging review of the literature, she indicates the need for leaders in the field to be aware of the relevant research and to develop a variety of skills across all facets of distance education.

McFarlane (2011) examined the leadership roles of distance learning administrators in light of the demand for value and quality in educational distance learning programs and institutions. Applying Mintzberg’s (1989) theory of informational, interpersonal, and decisional managerial roles and activities, he identifies three key challenge areas: quality of instruction, misuse of technology, and cost effectiveness, and he envisions the responses in terms of 12 leadership functions.

In his study of a traditional academic department in a public American university, Keaster (2005) looks at the case of his own department, which evolved from no online courses in 1999 to a robust online element a few years later. The department made a number of changes in policies and processes to adapt to the new reality. Keaster notes that adaptation was aided by its ability to hire new, young faculty members who were significantly less resistant to change than some of their longer-serving colleagues.

Given that so much of online learning has come to campus-based institutions through the efforts of individual faculty members, often without initial institutional support, it is not surprising that a number of writers have identified the importance of formal strategic planning for online learning, a crucial management tool that is too frequently overlooked. For example, Pisel (2008) developed a 10-phase planning model for distance education using the informed opinion from a panel of peer-nominated experts via iterative Delphi questionnaires.

Tipple (2010) stresses the need for effective leadership of online adjunct faculty who are increasingly playing a key role in the delivery of online courses. He documents the startling growth of the percentage of part-time
faculty in American colleges and universities from less than a quarter of faculty ranks in 1970 to about half today, and, hence, the importance both of integrating them into academic ranks and helping them develop the requisite teaching skills. He draws parallels between the needs of online adjunct faculty members and online students for effective systems and personal support.

Tipple’s work is supported by Bedford (2009) who did a qualitative analysis of the role of the adjunct in five American universities, three online and two traditional campuses. Suggesting that the resistance of tenured faculty to teaching online in the face of continuing growth of online programs and enrolments will continue to result in the demand for adjuncts to fill the void, she advocates managing adjunct faculty members in ways that respect their unique professional position. Puzzifero-Schnitzer (2005) also is concerned about the management of adjunct faculty, suggests adoption of Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) well-known seven principles of good practice in this context.

Leadership in distance learning is not confined to those directly responsible for online courses and programs in a campus-based university. The attitudes, knowledge, and support of chairs, deans, and provosts are also critical. Olson and Hale (2007) surveyed these groups in five American universities, first in 2000 and again in 2006 to assess the impact of the explosion of Web-based courses over that time period. While they found administrators to be positive about Web-based courses and supportive of increasing their numbers, they were concerned about their impact on faculty time as well as issues of academic dishonesty and student self-discipline. Olson and Hale offer four potential explanations for the disparity between generally positive faculty attitudes towards online learning and their overwhelming preference for traditional classroom teaching and analyze each in turn (Discussion, para. 1).

While most of the work listed above is American, there are strong similarities with the materials prepared for senior administrators in New Zealand by Ako Aotearoa, the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence. The project, Taking the Lead: Strategic Management for e-Learning (www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz), sets out six primary areas for senior managers to consider: strategy, structures, resourcing, decision-making, collaborating and outsourcing, and selecting technologies. The regularly updated project includes key questions for senior executives in the tertiary sector and a very useful set of case studies.
As an advocate for understanding institutional culture as a prerequisite to effective organizational change (Paul, 2011, pp. 69–71), I am particularly drawn to the analysis by Cowie and Nichols (2010) that depicts hybrid learning course development as a clash of cultures. In a study of New Zealand’s Laidlaw College, they found significantly different perceptions of the chosen project management model between faculty members and instructional designers. It was only after this clash of cultures was recognized and addressed and the project management model altered accordingly that the college progressed effectively within a new, shared culture.

Similarly, an Australian study at the University of Sydney focussed on using project management to align the personal and pedagogical goals of academics and instructional designers as a key to integrating e-learning practices (Ward, West, Peat, & Atkinson, 2010), while Doherty (2010) underlined the importance to project success of ensuring that processes meshed with the collegial nature of the University of Auckland. The importance of such project management approaches to e-learning is underlined by the recent dedication of an entire number of the Journal of Distance Education to the topic (Pasian, 2010).

The pace and complexity of technological change increasingly demands that leaders know about and understand the most recent technologies and how they might be effective in assisting the institution to achieve its goals. Chester (2006) suggests the value of seeing chief information officers (CIOs) as advocates for and champions of technologies best aligned with institutional missions and mandates. This approach puts less emphasis on the technology itself, placing the CIO more in the forefront of decision making and strategic planning.

The rapid evolution of online learning is pushing leaders of open universities to rethink their entire academic model as they are increasingly forced to compete with more nimble and responsive uses of the Internet that make traditional approaches to distance education (course teams comprised of subject matter experts, instructional and visual designers, editors) look cumbersome and expensive in comparison. Many advocate directed planning strategies for open universities. Using examples from India, South Africa, Canada, and Hong Kong among others, Panda (2008) argues for both the necessity of strategic planning and sensitivity to its shortcomings and limitations.

Ironically, a significant planning and leadership challenge for today’s open universities is the rapid rise of interest in open educational resources
(OER). When MIT launched its OpenCourseWare (OCW) project in 2001, making almost all of its course materials freely available online, it could do so without threatening its core mission because it was not entering the world of distance education. It offers no credit for the OCW courses: they are not a path to an MIT degree (Walsh, 2011, p. 63). The result has been a worldwide public relations coup for the university as individuals see the quality of its course materials and other institutions adopt and adapt them for their own use.²

For an open university, on the other hand, making courses freely available is to threaten their lifeblood because the courses are already designed for independent study at a distance. Its leaders fear a devastating loss of enrolments—why would students pay for a course that they can already get for free? There have been a number of interesting responses: the OUUK’s OpenLearn (www.openlearn.open.ac.uk), and the collaboration among a number of universities to establish the Open Educational Resources University (http://wikieducator.org/OER_university). There are obvious parallels with music, movie, and, most recently, book-publishing industries are also dramatically confronted with the commercial challenges of openness.

A fear of losing enrolments spurred current research being conducted by the Open Universiteit of the Netherlands (Shuwer & Janssen, 2011). Students were surveyed on three different applications of OER to their institution’s courses: offering short courses, 10% of course materials, or 100% of course materials for free, in the latter case charging fees for all related tutoring, services, and examinations. First indications are that the students responded positively to all alternatives with a slight preference for the third. To the researchers’ surprise, there were no significant differences among age groups. An unpublished follow-up qualitative analysis reaffirms their earlier findings (Shuwer, Janssen, & Mulder, 2012).

Decrying the lack of research on leadership in distance education, Tait (2008) presents a compelling case for leadership development in the field and outlines its central components, both in terms of values and skill development. Given the challenges currently facing open universities, strong institutional leadership is critical to the continuing success of such institutions in a much more competitive, agile, and fast-moving post-secondary environment.

² It will be interesting to follow the impact of the very recent MITx initiative, which gives students the opportunity (at no cost) to obtain a diploma (but not a degree) from the university.
Wallace and Young (2010) examined the types of policy and process issues that arose during a pilot project to redesign a single graduate program using blended learning at the University of Manitoba in Canada. They were particularly interested in the gradual transition from individual instructors’ initiatives to institutionalized practice, noting that such change usually results from initiatives challenging existing policies and practices rather than as a single, comprehensive institutional response. Given the early stages of adopting blended learning into the institution, many of the issues raised had not been previously extensively examined, let alone resolved. The most important policy issues included course approval and equivalency, faculty workload, and resources (Discussion, para. 1).

A related study by Wallace (2010) goes into more details about the specific policies, academic and administrative, that had to be addressed with the rapid development of e-learning. With the blurring of distinctions between traditional and online teaching and learning, she found an increasing need for academic policy that addressed both contexts (p. 97).

Pachler and Daly (2011, p. 49) note how difficult it is to embed e-learning into a campus-based university. Technologies are often oversold and underused, leading to policy tensions with current researchers. They suggest there is strong evidence that innovation suffers when practitioners experience pressures to work with multiple initiatives of a complex nature, so that they can even be counter-productive in the long term (p. 50).

Based on a study of written distance education policies in four land grant universities in the US, Irele (2005) challenges the notion that distance education is being accepted and integrated into the mainstream of higher education. Direct references in institutional policies tended to be add-ons, so that, while they co-existed, “the overwhelming evidence from the study is that, as they accommodate distance education, the universities are showing signs they consider it to be a foreign body within their system” (Integrating the Distance Education System, para. 3). It would be interesting to repeat Irele’s review today to see if policies are significantly more integrated, given the explosion in enrolments and programs since 2005.

Litto (2008) recounts recent attempts in Brazil to update educational policies even though there is a continuing tendency to treat distance learning “as a shadow of conventional learning” (p. 681). A more detailed,
institutional case study looks at the policy issues and strategic planning at the University of the West Indies that culminated in the establishment of its Open Campus (Kuboni, 2008).

Thompson and Vidal (2011) give a useful overview of the chapters contained in the second edition of Moore’s *Handbook of Distance Education* (2007), which respectively addresses policies, administration, and management.

It is unfortunate that the implications of moving to blended or fully online course delivery in so many campus-based institutions are dealt with only when it becomes highly evident that current policies are inadequate. Effective online education requires a full-scale overhaul not only of teaching and learning practices and academic policy, but of all the institution’s services to students as well. That is why educational policy review and revision is an important component of effective strategic planning for online learning.

**INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND COPYRIGHT**

Significant copyright issues are associated with the ease with which faculty and students can acquire digital content for online courses. Sweeney (2006) found that, aside from a small percentage of academics with web design or copyright training, very few were aware of their institution’s specific copyright and fair use policies. Given that such ignorance can lead to costly legal infringements, it follows that institutions must make compliance information more accessible to faculty.

Sweeney (2007) examined the impact of online course materials on copyright issues between faculty members and the administration in public and private doctoral research-intensive universities in the US. Her findings emphasize the importance of faculty-administration cooperation on intellectual property—its absence can significantly hamper the institution’s ability to respond to student demand for distance education courses. Kranch (2008) reinforces this conclusion after reviewing both faculty and administrative viewpoints on copyright matters. Johnson (2006) stresses the importance of establishing an institutional protocol for the management of intellectual property for distance learning. Nemire (2007) offers a useful review of copyright rules and regulations and the outcomes of several court cases around the issue of fair use for distance educators. Many countries are in heated legislative battles between copyright owners and consumers; effective college and
university leaders will do everything they can to ensure that the needs and concerns of their students and faculty are in the forefront of the debate.

A confounding factor in understanding copyright is the importance of national context and the specific legalities that apply in a given jurisdiction. Notwithstanding the efforts of organizations like the Creative Commons to develop one approach across all nations (Bissell, 2009, p. 100), it is important to look at specific national cases to understand fully the issues filtered through their particular legal provisions. Examples include Dooley, Lindner, and Dooley (2005) and DeVary (2008) for the United States; Geist (2010) in Canada; Vuori and Gururajan (2002) in Australia; and Davies (2011) and Secker (2010) in the UK. The latter is of particular interest because she discusses copyright issues and fair dealing provisions for e-learning in several English-speaking contexts, including the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the US (pp. 7–24). Secker’s article gives a comprehensive overview of e-learning and copyright in the United Kingdom, including a case study at Brunel University to illustrate how one institution seeks to respond to the challenges posed by the increased use of e-learning environments and e-resources (pp. 17–20).

TWO SOLITUDES IN RESEARCH?

The relatively recent American *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* (OJDLA) is one of the very few peer-reviewed journals dedicated to the management side of online learning. Counting from 2005 forward to the most recent edition in the fall of 2011, almost 20% of the 199 articles are of direct interest to this paper: organization and management (21); leadership (5); institutional case studies (5); strategic planning (3); policy (2); and copyright (1). Other related subjects covered in this collection include faculty perceptions of online learning and associated rewards, development and support (28 articles), student perceptions and success factors (18), quality assurance (17), technological applications to teaching and learning (15), student retention and support (15), financial issues and sustainability (8), instructional design (8), marketing and communications (8), knowledge and course management systems (6), comparisons with face-to-face learning (5), academic dishonesty (4), and the use of adjunct professors (4). Almost all concern higher education with an overwhelming
emphasis on the challenges of integrating online learning into campus-based institutions.

At the Barcelona research workshop of the European Distance Education Network (EDEN) in 2006, during a panel discussion among three giants in the field—Börje Holmberg, Otto Peters, and Michael Moore—there was speculation about whether those interested in bringing distance education to campus-based universities would look first to the literature of open and distance learning or whether they would proceed almost independently of it. The fear was expressed that most newcomers to the field would ignore several decades of research and practice.

These fears seem to have been well founded. At least for those writing in the OJDLA, the context is overwhelmingly American and there is almost no acknowledgement of earlier distance education literature. Even a couple of specific references to the history and context of distance education make no mention of any of its known theorists—the above trio plus perhaps Desmond Keegan and Greville Rumble. The only exception is the OJDLA paper by Irele (2005) of Penn State University who cites all five!

A tendency for newcomers to distance education and online learning to publish research without consulting the established literature in the field is not confined to a single journal or country. Based on her experience as a reviewer for Canadian, American, British, and Australian journals, Conrad (2007) offers thoughtful reflections on the current state of research in distance education and on the tendency for new entrants to the field, whose background is in another discipline, to ignore its established literature.

Those familiar with the literature of open and distance learning, as represented in the top five journals identified by Zawacki-Richter, Bäcker, and Vogt (2009), will tend to agree with Conrad, but, since most practitioners in traditional universities around the world will probably never read the journal in which her comments are published, it is difficult to see how the situation will change, in the near future at least. This is an important issue for further consideration.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Three primary challenges for research into the organization and management of online and distance learning arise from the above review:
research-based leadership, the critical importance of institutional culture, and the need to break down the two research solitudes.

**Research-Based Leadership**

Leadership of higher educational institutions has become much more intensive and complex in recent years and senior management needs all the help it can get. While there will always be an intuitive aspect to the art, institutional heads cannot afford to make decisions without the best available information about the probable outcomes of competing strategies.

Pachler and Daly (2011) argue for a different way of conceptualizing e-learning research to address the integration of temporal and contextual issues and to be inclusive of the possibility of multiple distinct themes and the complex linkages across them.

There is an acknowledged gap between the growing research base and much policy-making in educational institutions regarding adoption, course design, and, crucially, practitioner development (p. 134).

Institutional leaders must be research oriented in their approaches to the management and organization of online and distance learning. Referring to the earlier examples, research should be learner driven (Salmon) and outcome-based (Hannum), not technologically driven (Pachler and Daly).

It is also vital to recognize that the rapid changes in our society are challenging fundamental assumptions about what constitutes knowledge and how it is created and applied. This is a subject that should be of primary importance to faculty and senior management alike. As Bates (2010) expresses it:

> This epistemological issue is a direct challenge to the primacy of academic knowledge and has specific relevance to how or whether universities should address the issue of lifelong learning and applied knowledge. It raises questions about the role of scientific thinking, the power and nature of collective intelligence, the extent to which knowledge can be created independently of individuals, and how innovation occurs. The response to such questions will affect not only the content of the curriculum, but also how learning should be structured and where it will be delivered. (p. 20)

The pace of change is not going to slow down as ICTs increasingly dominate our lives. While institutional leaders are wrestling with the challenges
of blending online learning into their institutions, students are increasingly preoccupied with social media, which have the capacity to change the learning paradigm much more dramatically than any technological change has made to date. As has so often been the case in the past, the new communication technologies will be incredibly disruptive but they can also be harnessed for learning and communications of unprecedented effectiveness. It will be up to institutional leaders to make sure that it is the latter, not the former, that prevails.

Our established colleges and universities will continue both to embrace and resist change. The opportunity and need for first-rate research into how institutions plan for and implement change is greater than ever.

The Critical Importance of Institutional Culture

While some aspects of research into online and distance learning in either traditional institutions or open universities are unique to the field, change-oriented leaders will ignore the broader literature on institutional culture at their peril.

In his book, *The Decentring of the Traditional University*, Francis (2010) is interested in educational research that has “started to map out and describe the ways participatory cultures support the emergence of self-directed learning activities beyond formal educational contexts” (p. 21). For him, the implications for educational policy and practice are profound as learners, not administrators, drive change. He has a very useful section on directions for further research, including learner as designer; using a variety of digital tools for creative appropriation; understanding better how individuals cultivate, nurture and mobilize globally distributed funds of living knowledge; learning through serious play in virtually figured worlds; and “development work research” helping teams become more aware of the mediated nature of their own collective activities (pp. 124–28).

There is ripe opportunity for innovative research of this sort that will be of immense value to institutional leaders in the field.

The Need to Break Down the Two Research Solitudes

It is one thing to acknowledge the research solitudes between campus-based and open universities, and quite another to redress the problem. The burgeoning interest in research on online and e-learning, especially in
America, is to be welcomed but it would be even more useful if it were more strongly based in theory.

The argument here, then, is less about what research needs to be done than how it should be dispersed and shared, so that the two solitudes recognize the lessons each other has to offer. The litmus test would be much more cross-over writing in the various journals so that each is read by a broader cross-section of the higher education communities around the world.

As campus-based and online institutions evolve towards each other, their leaders could benefit immeasurably from the experiences, successes, and failures of each.

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