

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Distance Education in Essence.

B. Holmberg, 2001, ISBN 3-8142-0799-8, US\$13.00

The Costs of Open Learning: A Handbook

T. Hülsmann, 2000, ISBN 3-8142-0724-6, US\$12.00

Distance Education in Transition.

Otto Peters, 2002, ISBN 3-8142-0813-7, US\$15.00

*Oldenburg, Germany: Bibliotheks-und Informationssystem
der Universität Oldenburg*

These three books are part of a sequence published by the Centre for Distance Education at the University of Oldenburg. They are excellent references, and I recommend them for your bookshelf. The books are the outcome of work supported by the European Commission's Socrates program.

Five have been published, and the sixth is in press. Two are published only in German (vols. 1 & 3).

Vol. 2: Hülsmann

Vol. 4: Holmberg

Vol. 5: Peters

Vol. 6: *Reflections on Teaching and Learning in an Online Master's Program*, Bernath and Rubin, 2002, in press

North American Distributor: The Learning Market Place SFSC 1210, University of Maryland University College, 3510, University Boulevard East, Adelphi, MD 20783-8095 or

<http://www.umuc.edu/distance/odell/mktplc.html>

(Orders of at least 20 copies of vols 2, 4, and 5 receive a 25% discount).

The Costs of Open Learning by Thomas Hülsmann has an introduction by Hilary Perraton. As they explain, "this book is designed to help educational managers who are deciding how to use open and distance learning" (p. 5). They examine the comparative costs of various educational technologies, suggest how we can examine and control costs, and set out some of the difficulties in doing this. They have studied four technologies: print,

sound (audiocassettes or radio), audiovisual communication (videocassettes, closed circuit television, videoconferencing and open circuit broadcasting), and computers. They report the findings under clear headings: What we found, How we found it, Why these things are difficult to interpret, How to apply it, and How to justify your decisions. The second part of the book provides 11 case descriptions of various programs. These are reported under a standard framework for examining and analyzing the costs. They end with 12 recommendations that includes this: If there is no clear preference given, go for print because of its flexibility.

The Costs of Open Learning: A Handbook focuses on Borje Holmberg's interest in the delineation of the theories and research in distance education, which has propelled his work for close to half a century. He has identified mediated student-teacher/tutor interaction and mediated subject matter presentation as the two key elements constituting distance education. As a result of work done in cooperation with the Universities of Oldenburg and Maryland, he has drawn out what he sees as the trends and issues facing distance education at the beginning of the 21st century. His 10 chapters include subjects such as distance education as innovation, the technology debate, the theory of distance education, research in distance education, and distance education and society. The book also contains a reprint of his 1995 article in *Open Learning* on the evolution of the character and practice of distance education. Holmberg concludes that although there have been "several descriptive, critical and querying studies of distance education, its principles and practices," much remains to be known.

Distance Education in Transition focuses on the work of Otto Peters. Already well known for his calls for greater equity and equality in our industrialized model of distance learning, these papers focus on his growing interest in online learning. He now calls for a move from teacher-focused to learner-centered learning and for a pedagogical focus that will support the autonomous, but not isolated learner. He is especially interested in how information communications technologies will affect educational institutions and the already occurring structural changes that accompany them. The book contains a number of his keynote addresses and papers published since 1996. Each of the 10 chapters contains one of these speeches, articles, or book chapters. The titles include "The Educational Paradigm Shifts," "Online Learning: Vision, Hopes, Expectations," "New Learning Spaces," and "The Pedagogical Flexibility of the Virtual University." The papers are engaging and provide much food for thought.

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