

**THE FIRST TWO DECADES OF *NEW HORIZONS IN ADULT EDUCATION*:  
FROM WHENCE HAVE WE COME?**

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**Abstract**

This article describes the origins, development, and changing directions in the oldest peer-reviewed online journal in adult education. An analysis of journal issues by the first author provides evidence of the impact and legacy that *New Horizons in Adult Education* has had on the field of adult education around the world during the past two decades. The content analysis revealed the range of topics, as well as some timeless themes. The major areas covered include the following: the nature and diversity of adult learners, effective approaches and strategies to help them learn, and trends and issues related to distance education and developing technologies.

In 1985 the first author began working with the Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, to secure major funding for a project at Syracuse University. The project was envisioned to use leading edge technologies in providing electronic access to adult education information, research, and discourse. Subsequently, in September, 1986, the Syracuse University Kellogg project began (Hiemstra, 2003).

Two of the initial 14 project goals were as follows:

1. To create an electronic network for adult educators throughout the world (this became known as the Adult Education Network or AEDNET).
2. To create and publish a refereed journal that would be disseminated electronically (this became *New Horizons in Adult Education* and it was disseminated via AEDNET).

Work on creating the electronic journal began in the fall of 1986 during the time when AEDNET was created and launched. Procedures were established and editors, authors, and reviewers were sought. Subsequently, the first issue of *New Horizons* was transmitted to all AEDNET members on July 16, 1987. Hard copies were not disseminated although anyone accessing the journal could print out copies.

The journal was initially conceived as a refereed periodical managed by graduate students at Syracuse University in cooperation with graduate students throughout Canada and the United States. It operated that way for the first seven volume years, with one or two issues published each year. Initially only graduate students served as article authors. The first issue to feature an article by a college professor was in Volume 3. The first thematic issue was published in Volume 5. That volume year also marked the beginning of when subscribers could retrieve past issues of the journal and when they were encouraged to dialogue with each other about issues raised in the journal via AEDNET. Volume 6 included the first article where specific on-line discussion was encouraged and moderated; it also initiated the process of including a cumulative index.

As the Kellogg Foundation monies drew to a close, an effort was made to continue as many project initiatives as possible either at Syracuse University or at other locations. Bids were sent out for an institution to take on both AEDNET and *New Horizons*. The winning bid was submitted by Nova Southeastern University in Florida, and they took over operation of both entities in July, 1993. The second author, who had a part-time relationship with the institution, assumed the role of Co-Editor with Volume 8; Maria Ligas from Nova Southeastern also served initially as Co-Editor.

At Nova Southeastern University the decision to take over both AEDNET and *New Horizons* was strongly supported by the formation in 1993 of an Implementation Advisory Committee, consisting of university administrators, technical staff, adult education faculty, journal editors, and the AEDNET moderator. The committee met together several times over the next few years, as these programs continued to develop and new technical enhancements were added. Efforts were made to improve access and retrieval of back issues, as well as connections to ERIC and other indexes. By the fall of 1998, an announcement of the issue was placed on AEDNET with a link to the full text of the issue in a format that easily could be downloaded and printed. Efforts were made to maintain connections with adult education organizations and other networks, in order to provide access to the journal and to invite submission of articles for review from adult educators around the world. Plans are underway to continue these connections as Florida International University begins its leadership of AEDNET and *New Horizons in Adult Education*.

### **Analysis of Journal Issues**

Thus, this article provides some information to help understand of *New Horizons'* impact and legacy on the adult education field during the past two decades. All of the journal issues from Volume 1, Number 1 (July, 1987) through the most recent issue (Volume 19, Number 1, Winter, 2005) served as the database for this effort. A modified content analysis was utilized. Merriam (1991) defines content analysis as "a systematic procedure for describing the content of communications" (p. 116). In this analysis, such concepts or characteristics as article topics, authors, author origins, and information on administrative matters were sought. The normal content analysis protocol was modified in that categories of meaning were not sought nor was there an effort to do any hypothesis testing.

The protocol used involved the first author examining the first two volumes to develop a set of concepts, headings, and topics that, in his view, represented a basic understanding of the

journal, its contributions, and its administration. These findings served as the foundation for reviewing the remainder of the issues with appropriate additions made upon their discovery. However, it should be noted that only the first author carried out the analysis, and triangulation or inter-rater reliability was not attempted. The second author, who served as journal editor for many years, added her experience and knowledge in affirming the results reported here.

This analysis provided the authors with concrete information regarding the development of the journal, as well as its content, themes, and contributions over this period. The results of this analysis as described in the next section are the basis for the reflections and observations in the final section of the article. They also serve as a mechanism for the new editors to chart future directions.

## Findings

### *Administrative Responsibilities*

A number of graduate students were involved during the initial seven volumes in co-editorship roles. Some were involved with only one or two issues, while others had more substantial roles. In addition, other students were involved in copy-editing, consulting, and transitional roles. After the move from Syracuse University to Nova Southeastern University, faculty and staff took over most of the responsibility for publication of each issue.

A huge thanks is in order for the many people who played some type of role in putting the dream of an electronic journal into a reality that has served the adult education field well for nearly two decades. Table 1 details information for those individuals who served as an editor, co-editor, or associate editor in three or more volume years throughout the life of the journal. More detailed information on all those who served in these various roles can be seen in Hiemstra (2005).

Table 1  
*Individuals Serving as a New Horizons Editor During at Least Three Volumes*

Name	Institution	Number of volumes
Charles Awasu	Syracuse University	04
Daniel Eastmond	Syracuse University	04
Michael Ehringhaus	Syracuse University	04
Nancy Gadbow	Nova Southeastern University	24
Linda Howard	Nova Southeastern University	20
Maria Ligas	Nova Southeastern University	03
Linda Newell	Syracuse University	03

Another important role in the success of the journal was that of editorial board members. Such individuals provided counsel, article reviews, and advice for authors whose articles were not accepted. Forty-seven people served as editorial board members. They represented 32 higher education institutions, with one from Australia, six from Canada, and the remainder from the United States. Some institutions provided extensive editorial board leadership with five

individuals from Syracuse University serving in this capacity during those initial years. Four also came from the University of British Columbia, four from the University of Missouri at Columbia, and three from Nova Southeastern University. Table 2 details information for those individuals who served as an editorial board member in at least four volume years throughout the journal's life. The number of issues included in this service is shown, too (See Hiemstra (2005) for more extensive details).

Table 2

*Individuals Serving as a New Horizons Editorial Board During at Least Four Volumes*

Name	Institution	Number of volume years	Number of issues
Judith Adrian	University of Wisconsin	05	07
H. K. (Morris) Baskett	University of Calgary	11	20
Ina Sue Brown	Syracuse University	04	05
Sue Collard	University of British Columbia	06	08
Dale Cook	Kent State University	11	20
Karen Garver	University of Nebraska	12	24
Wayne Hartschuh	Arizona State University	04	06
Jan Jackson	California State University	12	24
Janice B. Johnson	University of British Columbia	12	22
Kathleen King	Fordham University	08	18
John Kingsbury	Nova Southeastern University	06	11
Mary Klinger	State University of New York-Empire State College	08	18
Patricia Lawler	Widener University	12	24
Norma Long	College of Notre Dame of Maryland	09	15
Christine Olgren	University of Wisconsin	04	06
Karen Overfield	The Art Institute, Pittsburgh	04	10
Robert Preziosi	Nova Southeastern University	12	24
Anita Prieto	University of Missouri-Columbia	04	06
Mark Rossman	Walden University/Capella University	11	23
Alice Schawo	University of Missouri-Columbia	05	07
Burt Sisco	University of Wyoming/Rowan University	11	21
Susan B. Slusarski	Syracuse University/Kansas State University	13	26
Marlene Smadu	Nova Southeastern University	05	07
Tom Sudduth	University of Wyoming	04	05

The editorial board members from a number of institutions in the United States, Canada, and Australia have provided a rich resource of perspective and direction for the journal over these years. Not only did they offer feedback on specific articles they reviewed, they also guided the journal so that it reflected the changes and emerging directions in the field.

### *Contributions to the Knowledge Base*

Perhaps the greatest legacy a journal can leave is its impact on a field's knowledge base. Future researchers will need to do a thorough content analysis of the articles published in *New Horizons in Adult Education* to determine how the journal has added information, changed our ideas about adult education, and even taken the field into those important new directions.

In the analyses for this article, only a perusal of the editors' comments about each issue and article abstracts was completed to determine the content areas touched on or central to a piece. In rare occasions when clarity was not achieved, an article was skimmed to help determine the contents. In addition, information regarding author names, origins, and institutional affiliations were recorded.

The first author made decisions on content areas based on his experience in and awareness of the field. However, the fact that there were not additional people involved in this assessment and decision making suggests a limitation that requires further research for verification. In addition, it was rare that an article centered on only one topic. It was more common that an article was designated as representing two or even three content areas. Given these procedures noted above, 75 articles were printed in Volumes 1 through the first issue of Volume 19. Two were listed as forums; one was depicted as a readership report; one was shown as an invitational column; two were described as invitational articles, and one was a lengthy piece written by an editor. All were included as part of the 75 articles. They covered 43 content areas. Many of the content areas pertained to only one or two articles. A full description of these content areas, as well as information on book and film reviews included in the journal, can be seen in Hiemstra (2005). Table 3 provides information on those content areas designated as key for four or more articles.

Table 3  
*The Most Popular Content Areas Addressed in New Horizons Articles*

Content areas	Number of articles
Adult education students/Adult learners	17
Adult teaching and learning	17
Distance education	15
Computers/Technology/WWW	13
GED/Literacy/Workplace literacy	09
Higher education	08
International adult education	08
Planning/Evaluation/Curricular development	08
Feminism/Women	07
Community adult education/Community development	05
History/History of adult education	04
Perspective transformation/Transformative learning	04
Writing/Publishing	04

Many scholars contributed to this knowledge base. Fifty of the articles were single authored pieces; 17 were authored by two people; six by three people, and two by four co-authors. They also represented 65 different institutions or organizations, including 57 colleges and universities. These organizations were from across the United States, from several Canadian organizations, as well as organizations in Australia, Mali, Nicaragua, and Nigeria. Hiemstra (2005) provides more detail on these contributors.

### **Reflections and Observations**

The content analysis does reveal some of the changes in the field of adult education since 1987, as well as some timeless themes. Clearly, the increasing interest in online learning and the use of technology in various types of programs is evident. The diversity of adult learners, regardless of the specific adult education area or region of the world, is an underlying theme in a number of the articles.

The amazing diversity in this field is reinforced when one reads an article by an adult educator working in a very different setting or type of program than one's own. Frequently such an article may provide new learning, or support one's own experience, regarding adult learners and effective strategies for helping them be successful. Reports by readers of how a particular article was helpful or how it provided new insights have confirmed the importance of *New Horizons* to the field. Inquiries and requests for information regarding *New Horizons* over the years also have confirmed the interest of adult educators around the world in sharing their research and experience and in learning from others.

### **Future Expectations**

The range of topics covered in these past nearly two decades can only be expected to expand in the future. The importance of the oldest peer-reviewed online journal in adult education is clearly evident. The continuation of *New Horizons* at Florida International University is expected to add to this wealth of valuable information for both scholars and practitioners.

Having had a part of its history from the inception as a part of a visionary project funded by a Kellogg grant, the authors celebrate the continuation of these two valued resources for the field (AEDNET and *New Horizons in Adult Education*). We appreciate the commitment of Florida International University for carrying on these two historic and valuable adult education programs and wish them much continued success.

### References

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