THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FEMALE PIONEERS IN ONLINE LEARNING

Written by
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As an academic librarian, I am interested in books that fill a gap in the literature. Yes, all of good academic research aims for that. But hear me out. My interest is piqued by publications that fit into a field of literature while simultaneously challenging that field's systemic bias. Bainbridge and Wark's (2023) Encyclopedia of Female Pioneers in Online Learning does just that. The title alone tells us where the authors are going to take us through their nearly 500-page tome. It presents what we would expect, information on female pioneers in this field. The first part of the book is devoted to individual interviews with 30 pioneers. The second part is a thematic analysis of those interviews. The authors conducted each interview with rigour and transparency, by asking consistent questions (with the slight differences being reported) and then by including the full transcripts in print and audio formats. The audio is a rich inclusion that breaks the silent rapport between the text and the reader. When the authors of the encyclopedia state, "the main goal of this book is to capture and share the voices and contributions of female pioneers in online learning" (p. 3) they deliver these as written transcripts, thematic analysis of data from those transcripts, and the literal recordings of women's voices. The recordings allow the "reader" to discern from the spoken tone of each woman what cannot be expressed in text. This is a meaningful approach to capturing and recording histories from within this field.

GLIMPSES IN TIME

The interviewed pioneers began their participation in open and distance education field between the years of 1970 and 2009. This gives the opportunity for readers to understand the information and communication technology changes over time, along with the breakthroughs, challenges, and successes of adapting them to open and distance education. While the book was published in 2023, it provides rich first-person historical accounts of landmark events in the provision of formal and informal education being delivered using print, radio, television, satellite, computer, and high-speed broadband Internet technologies over five decades.

THE LIST OF PIONEERS INTERVIEWED FOR THE ENCYCLOPEDIA

Belawati, Tian
Beukes-Amiss, Catherine Margaret (Maggy)
Brindley, Jane Elizabeth
Burge, Elizabeth June (Liz)
Chen, Li
Fainholc, Beatriz
Farley, Helen Sara
Gibson, Chere Campbell
Glennie, Jennifer (Jenny)
Gregory, Sue
Gunawardena, Chandra
Gunawardena, Charlotte Nirmalani (Lani)
Henri, France
Herring, Susan
Hiltz, Starr Roxanne

Jung, Insung
Kanwar, Asha
Keough, Erin M.
Koroivulaono, Theresa
Kurtz, Gila
Lamy, Thérèse
Meeks Gardner, Julia (Julie)
Moran, Louise
Murray, Denise
Roberts, Judy
Seelig, Caroline
Simmons-McDonald, Hazel
Spronk, Barbara
von Prümmer, Christine
Young, Arlene M. C.

INTERNATIONAL SCOPE

The authors admit a delimiter for the research was that they conducted the research in English. They acknowledge that there is an opportunity for future to research to break that linguistic barrier (p. 448). The authors mitigated some of the impact of this delimiter by selecting a wide range of pioneers to interview. The thematic analysis comparing profiles of the pioneers showed, "not only did most individual profiles have 50% or less in common with the average profile, but the areas of commonality between individual profiles and the average profile also varied greatly" (p. 447). I will add to this that the authors' selected pioneers' whose careers were not geographically narrow. By this I mean, I counted each country that was named in the interview transcripts as places where the pioneers worked, while I did not count locations of attendance like presenting at a conference or studying at a university. These thirty women have directly impacted open and distance education policy, teaching, and learning in 92 countries. Hello. That got my attention. These pioneers certainly have the authority to speak to global experiences of the field.

COMPELLING READ

Encyclopedias are usually used as reference material to be flipped through alphabetically to find the single entry that is relevant to one's research. They usually are not read sequentially, in their entirety. This book may be the rare encyclopedia that one enjoys reading cover to cover. I will admit that as a kid I preferred reading through my family's set of encyclopedia rather than reading a novel. The depth of the entries in Bainbridge and Wark's encyclopedia makes this a compelling read.

RECOMMENDED AUDIENCES

I would be remiss in my review if I failed to discuss the audience for this book. The authors list an intended audience as, "policymakers, administrators, educators, historians, researchers, writers, and students who are interested in distance education (DE), online learning, educational technology, and gender issues topics" (p. 3). How the pioneers navigated the challenges (such as but not limited to funding, sector acceptance, technology change, innovation, and gender biases) echoes present day challenges in open

and distance education. Current day educational trailblazers can draw from these experiences as the field continues to evolve. One finding from the book's data analysis was that the leading reason these 30 women initially engaged in field of open and distance education was for social justice reasons (p. 401). Social justice was also the most prevalent sub-theme among the benefits of open and distance education that the pioneers named (p. 415).

An example from this intended audience would be researchers who wish to pursue any of the six research questions proposed in the Future Research section (p. 448). The first of these is continuing the pursuit of evidence of the Matilda Effect in the field of distance and online learning. The Matilda Effect refers to women's achievement being falsely attributed to their male colleagues. The century's old phenomenon was named by Margaret Rossiter (1993) in tribute to Matilda Joslyn Gage who, in 1870, documented cases of women's scientific invention being incorrectly credited to men.

As an academic librarian my work is connecting people to information that will be of use to them. I would say one accidental audience for this book would include non-DE researchers who want to interrogate their own field for evidence of the Matilda Effect. These researchers could adopt the authors' approaches to methodology, analysis, and transparency in sharing findings. This would have two upsides. One is using it like a recipe saves the researcher's time in designing the study. The other is that consistencies between Matilda Effect studies conducted in different fields increases the opportunity and strengthens the results of any cross-disciplinary meta-analysis studies on the Matilda Effect. Another accidental audience would be librarians wishing to expand their libraries' collections in the area of history of open and distance education. The bibliographies in this encyclopedia can be used to develop library collections in this field.

REFERENCES

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Gage, M. E. J. (1870) *Woman as Inventor.* New York State Woman Suffrage Association. https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:2575141$6i

Rossiter, M. W. (1993). The ~~Matthew~~ Matilda effect in science. *Social Studies of Science, 23*(2), 325–341. https://doi.org/10.1177/030631293023002004

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There was no conflict of interest in writing this review.

BIODATA and CONTACT of the REVIEWER

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