Shaping the Futures of Learning in the Digital Age

Foreword: The Final Installment

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Abstract: This final installment of the ShapingEDU special issue was inspired by the concept of a "sibling" body of work to compliment the first publication installment. The themes of both bodies of work overlap in their calls to action, yet each article stands solidly on their own. Educators, learning designers, and education leaders have felt the responsibility of helping to usher in the right solutions that will spur student engagement, inclusion and success. Eleven articles unpack the various intertwined journeys we must embark on together to bolster digital equity and inclusion, to recognize all forms of learning and to spur an even more harmonious connections between our institutions and the workforce of the future.

Introduction

2020—the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, of course, but also the year Taylor Swift (2020) released two surprise albums: *folklore* and *evermore*. Not only that, but she characterized them as "sister" albums—sonically similar with intersecting narratives and themes. So when it

came time for us to compile the second and final installment of our ShapingEDU special edition of the CIE Journal, we felt inspired by this concept of sibling bodies of work with songs in both installments that overlap in both themes and calls to action. And yet, each article stands on its own solid footing on the forest floor.

The criteria for articles in this edition are the ShapingEDU actions (ShapingEDU, n.d.) that help us to understand and advance the futures of learning in the digital age. And, as we escaped further into the brush-filled woods that COVID propelled whole education systems into, we have been enthralled by the new possibilities—afforded by untethering ourselves from traditional learning paradigms. Our first installment centered us as it delved into how we can humanize learning experiences during a time in life where we are all realizing just how human we are, as discussed in the special issue introduction (Becker et al., 2020).

Educators, learning designers, and education leaders have felt the responsibility of helping to usher in the right solutions that will spur student engagement, inclusion and success. With new territory to chart, many of us have had the opportunity to create our own folklore when it comes to shaping the future of learning. What does utopia look like? How do we get there?

Eleven articles unpack the various intertwined journeys we must embark on together to bolster digital equity and inclusion, to recognize all forms of learning and to spur an even more harmonious connections between our institutions and the workforce of the future. We're pleased to share with you our own track list that both concludes this special edition and points at next steps toward the future as we continue to shape education together—forevermore!

Track List
1. Designing Learning Experiences for the Future of Learning in the Digital Age - Thurber
2. Inclusive Access for All – Dority Baker, Lindburg
3. An Untapped Resource for Fostering Student Success - Whitmer
4. Helping STEM Students Thrive: Adult Learning Pathways - Prusko
5. The Digitization of White Women's Tears - Messmore
6. Innovatively Preparing the Teacher Workforce - Reinking
7. Self-Mapped Learning Pathways - Crosslin
8. A Collective Case-Study on Navigating Faculty Bilingualism - Geringer
9. Catalyzing a Culture of Care and Innovation Through Prescriptive and Impact Analytics To Create Full-Cycle Learning - Kil, Baldasare and Milliron
10. Thinking Backward - Haymes
11. The Castle and The Paths - Berman

For the first track, Derek Thurber opens the journal installment by grounding us in what is practical. We already have hundreds of years of pedagogical research and best practices to build upon, so how do we get started? The article focuses on designing learning experiences that build on existing instructional design models but also incorporates a deep understanding of humans, how we learn, and ultimately what motivates us.

Track two reveals the major hook—the lynchpin of shaping the future of learning: inclusion and access. A duet from authors Marcia Dority Baker and Jaci Lindburg for this article share firsthand how their OER (Open Education Resources) and Inclusive Access Pilots are helping students save money and gain access to vital learning materials. Learn how the approach to service is being iterated in an agile manner thanks to a growing chorus of stakeholder feedback.

Track three, authored by Susan Whitmer, strikes a utopian chord, envisioning an education system that honors every learner's unique lived experiences and supports the expectations of learners for their individual life goals. Principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provide a framework for creating this caliber of digital and physical environments.

We reach a crescendo in our installment as we arrive at track four. Patrice Prusko illuminates three women's reactions as they have been surrounded by stories of underrepresented and first-generation students who were lagging behind or dropping out. They launched an online series dedicated to helping STEM students thrive, leveraging the Women in STEM cooperative—56 institutions, eight organizations, four countries, and 23 states. Talk about back-up vocals!

Look at how these tears ricochet. It's worth noting that track five historically represents what [Ms. Swift considers to be the most vulnerable track](#) on every album (Bain, 2020). In our track five, author and poet Niki Messmore gets candid on how sometimes the higher education practitioners and scholars discussing social justice across social media may unintentionally perpetuate the same systems of oppression they detest.

The sixth track in the installment is from Anni Reinking that explores the innovative practice of virtual training for teachers in an effort to reduce stress, and increase success of the educator workforce. This paper looks at a small study of novice and preservice educators, and the use of virtual professional development to address the challenges of the profession in an effort to reduce professional burnout.

In the seventh track Matt Crosslin highlights the effectiveness of Self-Mapped Learning Pathways that cut through the traditional (perhaps outdated) paradigm of a single predetermined pathway. Crosslin's paper explores course design leveraging instructivism and connectivism modalities, and offers design considerations based on practical application and research findings.

The eighth track in this anthology from Laura Geringer explores the relationship between research and reflection around faculty experiences navigating bilingualism. The research study examines faculty experiences of native French speakers working in an English-language university and academic setting. Through a thoughtful reflection, Geringer highlights the first-hand experience of embarking on a research process and her thoughts on the relationship between research and field practice.

David Kil, Angela Baldasare, and Mark Milliron raise the beats per minute (BMP) as we hit the ninth track. The authors explore the central tenet of student success to the mission of higher education, and examine the gap between the idealized synergy of people, processes, and machine learning (ML) and what is often not the case. Their paper examines how ML can be used in promoting a culture of care and innovation through full-cycle learning.

The tenth and penultimate track on this installment is Tom Haymes's thought piece challenging us to look backwards and understand the implications of the Newtonian-rooted paradigm of our current educational information exchange, so we can be better prepared for the future of information. This paper posits the needs to shift from the aforementioned information exchange schema and transition to an Einsteinian (or relativistic) model to intentionally facilitate the augmentation of human knowledge. Haymes provides a vision for what this information exchange might look like, and how it might be able to be built.

The final track crafted by Michael Berman, is an engaging story that takes place in a village setting where the townspeople look to the mysterious castle upon a craggy rock imbued

with intrigue and exclusivity. A King working to limit the number of villagers who could enter this prestigious castle and earn their "badge" of honor and prosperity. As the villagers increase their demand for access to the castle, the King has to make decisions—this story has two endings for you the reader to choose. Does this story end happily ever after for the King and townspeople? Or does it end on a darker cautionary tale of greed and exclusion that leads to the ruin of the castle? That will be up to you.

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