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## **SITE: From Our Society's Foundation Toward Shared Leadership for an Intercultural Future**

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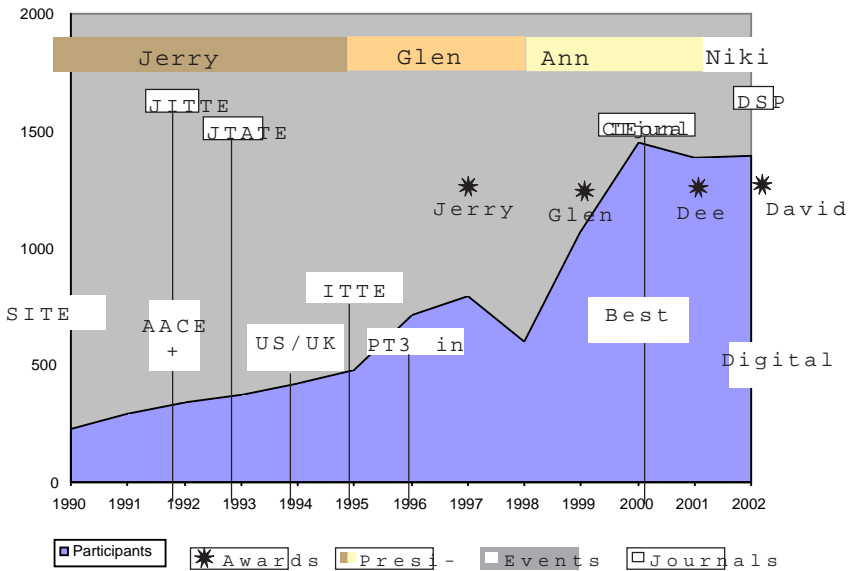
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The first decade of the Society of Information Technology in Teacher Education (SITE) has seen the formation of a wonderful loosely coupled system, which we enjoy. Part of that enjoyment is our common socialization—we think and act like teacher educators with enthusiasm and expertise with new technology. We enjoy sharing that enthusiasm and developing the scholarship and practice in our field and service to our societies worldwide. Even though we often do not communicate enough with each other, we can still coordinate our actions because we can anticipate what other SITE participants are thinking and doing and we enjoy hearing about it at our conference. We also share the administrative support of SITE, through the strong arms of the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).

Educational organizations are loosely coupled systems and as such require more leadership than tightly coupled bureaucratic systems (Weick, 1982, 2001). Our society is even more loosely coupled than a university or school organization and, within it, leadership comes from many angles. Leaders include editors, committee chairs, and leading researchers, as well as administrators such as the President and Executive Director, who all participate in the leadership of our society. We aim to increase this participation, so sharing the developments underway by as many forms of communication as possible is important. This editorial is adapted from the preface to the 2002 SITE Proceedings and draws upon the President's inaugural keynote of the SITE 2001 conference to encourage participation and shared leadership

## SITE'S FIRST DECADE

SITE 2002 marked SITE's 13th annual conference. Jerry Willis, DeeAnna Willis, and Glen Bull, among others, founded SITE in 1990 to provide a scholarly home for teacher educators who had come from many directions to find their place in preparing teachers to become comfortable with the use of information technology in education and to play their part in renewal of educational systems worldwide. (See Figure 1 for a timeline of SITE's development.)



**Figure 1.** A timeline illustrating SITE's growth from 1990-present

I met the SITE founders in a conference in Belgium, where I suggested a need for curriculum development in information technology (IT) in initial teacher training (Davis, 1990). We joyfully recognized each other as pioneers with a mission in a special field, the importance of which had yet to be recognized. At the time I was chairperson of the UK Association of Information Technology in Teacher Education (ITTE), a small collegial

body founded by Roger Keeling and others less than a decade before to promote development of IT in teacher education in the UK, especially preservice teacher education. This sympathy for a new scholarly community, many of whom had yet to recognize the importance of their work, was the reason for my joy in meeting up with SITE and its founders.

In 1997 SITE created an award for lifetime achievement in our field and named it after Jerry Willis, as the first recipient. In 2000, we presented the Willis award to Glen Bull and in 2001 we also gave special recognition to DeeAnna Willis as co-founder of SITE. All of them have continued to make outstanding contributions to our Society each year for more than a decade because they thought it was important for our field.

The UK Association, ITTE, became a sister to SITE. Older and smaller, its view complemented the expertise residing in the USA. Colleagues in ITTE continued to raise awareness of international issues and cultures and to share our evolving knowledge of the political context of technology in teacher education. I became a regular attendee of SITE, often representing ITTE along with the late Brent Robinson, who was the founding editor of the *Journal for Information Technology in Teacher Education* (JITTE). We also welcomed SITE's founders as representatives of SITE to the annual ITTE conference and our journal editorial board. Both organizations formalized this relationship with an Accord agreement, crafted by Brent Robinson and ratified by ITTE at the Annual General Meeting. Brent and I supported the establishment of SITE's own *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* (JTATE) and became members of the editorial board.

Over the years, the ITTE struggled with the notion that it should support an international membership. There are less than one hundred institutions of initial teacher training in the UK, less than a tenth of the number that are in the USA. So ITTE has been more than happy to promote the international role and responsibility for SITE.

## MATURITY FOR SITE

SITE has provided over a decade of scholarship, and the annual conference has grown from a few hundred to over a thousand participants. Today SITE is well established, with significant ongoing participation from across the

USA and from more than 40 countries worldwide. Most activities are currently supported and managed through AACE, under Gary Mark's able leadership as SITE's Executive Director.

The scholarship and expertise of the Society's membership is recognized, yet the founders and past and current presidents wish to retain the informal scholarly community and support that was the early hallmark of SITE. Given today's challenging environment for education, especially teacher education, we need all the networking and support we can give each other. We are fulfilling our aim to have a significant role in promoting reflective, participative leadership in the deployment of new technology, especially in teacher education.

There is too much to do! However, it appears that the informal open membership for all committees has resulted in less participation rather than more—probably due to conflicting needs. This is true, as well, for the Governance Committee that had been deliberating for many years. Challenged to retain open governance, the society also needed to constrain it within a framework. Glen Bull and I took on the challenge during 2000 and vowed that we would get it done! The result is a Governance Document ([http://www.aace.org/site/Site\\_governance.htm](http://www.aace.org/site/Site_governance.htm)), which was debated and ratified during the SITE 2001 conference. The Governance envisages the work of SITE to be firmly rooted in its committees, which undertake their collaboration in an online environment and at its conferences and meetings. Our governance lays out our society's mission, which is "to encourage appropriate uses of information technologies in teacher education worldwide." We aim to keep our membership "open to all those with an interest in information technology in teacher education," and we welcome all participants in our conferences to share our mission.

### **SITE DEVELOPMENTS UNDERWAY**

Significant development of online environments has been underway with the collaboration of SITE participants and AACE, its organizational home. SITE has developed a sophisticated presence on the web. The structure of the organization is also undergoing a rapid maturation that will be described in this section.

## SITE Conference and Its Proceedings

Each year the SITE conference web site (<http://www.aace.org/conf/>) provides key information for prospective delegates and then provides the portal through which they submit their proposals and register for the conference. AACE, under the leadership of Gary Marks, our Executive Director, has developed an effective SITE conference web site with integral proceedings collection and publication. Dee Anna Willis as senior general editor, has led the reviewing of around 1500 submissions, resulting in acceptance of over 1000 presentations and the coordination of more than 25 sections within the proceedings. Gary Marks and Jerry Price's careful web designs ensure that those papers can be reviewed online, that the abstracts can be moved to the database providing the conference program of abstracts, and that papers uploaded by delegates can become the source file for the proceedings on CD-ROM.

Coordinated by the editors, the individuals and teams who write the section introductions step into action during Christmas vacation, working to ensure that the SITE proceedings remain an important resource for technology and teacher education across the world. You may also notice the web site being transformed as the executive committee leads the firming up and finalizing of the conference program each year. The previous conference committees' suggestions are implemented during this process where practical.

The society does much of its work at its conference, but we also hope that all committees and working groups online can collaborate throughout the year through the SITE Forums (<http://www.aace.org/site/forumintro.htm>) that are being established during 2002. The formal structure of SITE's committees is laid out in the governance. However, it is the informal structure and the feeling of community and collaboration that are more important to our society. Our members have indicated that they wish to have more opportunities to contribute to SITE. During 2002, the major focus for SITE participants must be the establishment of these working communities, facilitated by meetings (face-to-face and online). The digital scholarship portal, described later, also aims to promote the development of our scholarly community.

## Awards

The awards that SITE has established have proven their value:

- Best paper awards have permitted the society to highlight interesting and important work from around the world. The section leaders will continue to nominate papers for consideration of an award.
- SITE makes awards for the best poster/demos. It is important to note that SITE sees these awards of equivalent value to papers in our field, due to the rich scholarly discussions that take place around poster display. The demonstration of software, student work, and web environments is much valued by our society.
- The Willis Award for lifetime achievement acknowledges those who have become lifetime fellows in our society through their sustained commitment to information technology in teacher education.
- The new Digital Equity award inaugurated during the 2002 conference has a specific purpose. Nominations are sought accompanied by a brief description of the ways in which an individual or group have worked to increase digital equity in teacher education. It also includes the ways in which the issue of digital equity is integrated into courses, service learning, or ways in which teacher education has been expanded to include underrepresented populations.

## SITE Scholarship

Our scholarly journal on paper is developing to complement our web-based journal, *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* (CITE Journal), through new discussion forums. Together the journals provide the foundation for a Digital Scholarship Portal for technology and teacher education (Bull, Sprague, & Bell, 2001).

- The Journal of Technology and Teacher Education (JTATE) (<http://www.ace.org/pubs/jtate/default.htm>) is SITE's traditional paper-based journal. In 2001 Debra Sprague (George Mason University) took over the editorship of JTATE, which was founded in 1993 by Jerry Willis

and Dee Anna Willis. Debra Sprague, in collaboration with Glen and Gina Bull, has added a series of editorials to acknowledge the contribution of the two founding editors and to plot the new direction of the journal.

- *Contemporary Issues In Technology and Teacher Education* (CITE Journal) is SITE's online journal. Glen Bull and Jerry Willis became co-editors of this innovative and exemplary journal with support from a PT3 catalyst grant. The innovative approach of CITE journal is to place its content sections within the direct control of the teacher educator associations for the core content areas of mathematics, science, social sciences, and English, while retaining the technology and teacher education sections under the control of SITE (Willis & Bull, 2000). In addition, care is being taken to model exemplary practice for others, including research and development support from the Digital Libraries project at the University of Virginia, to ensure that the potentially transient contributions with integral multimedia will remain accessible for generations to come.
- JTATE's sister journal in the UK is the Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education, available to SITE members through the accord agreement between SITE and ITTE. During 2001 I handed over to a new editor, Avril Loveless of the University of Brighton in the UK. JITTE went online some years ago, at <http://www.triangle.co.uk/jit>. From volume 11 JITTE will be renamed, *Technology Pedagogy and Education: The Journal for IT in Teacher Education*.

## Interorganizational Collaboration

The challenges faced by SITE are also shared by other scholarly and professional societies. The Association for Teacher Education has convened a task force led by Paul Resta of the University of Texas at Austin to guide that association in its use of technology. As a member of that task force I will be using my experience with SITE and ITTE to guide that community and hope that we can also build collegial links between the two societies to the benefit of both.

Such collaborative procedures have already been established under the leadership of Glen Bull and his colleagues at the University of Virginia. The National Technology Leadership Initiative, funded by a PT3 catalyst grant, has been promoting the leadership of technology in teacher education through National Technology Leadership Retreats to reflect upon technology and teacher education and to share educational philosophies. These retreats have brought together, in an unprecedented way, leaders from all core content areas, plus those for technology. They included leaders from the professional organizations for teachers of science, social science, mathematics, and English, and their teacher education associations. The National Technology Leadership Initiative has consolidated and disseminated this important strategic collaboration. Future action aims to encourage the spread of this approach to other content areas and other countries.

There has been discussion regarding a collaborative conference sponsored by SITE, ITTE, and the UK University Council for the Education of Teachers. We hope to follow this through and organize a collaborative conference in Europe on a topic of mutual interest. It may also be possible to develop further collaborative links in the Asia Pacific region through the AACE Asia Pacific chapter. I also see myself representing SITE in the UNESCO task force that is creating an ICT curriculum for teacher education in UNESCO supported countries (Resta & Semenov, in press).

On a more personal level, I am delighted to note that we have been successful in gaining the first BC-US (European-USA) collaborative project that focuses specifically on the preparation of future technology using teacher educators, which will develop an intercultural certificate (Brown et al., 2002) Students from the six collaborating universities in Europe and the USA will undertake studies together online and study abroad, as well as addressing issues raised by the lack of digital equity nationally and internationally.

These collaborative developments represent a few of the creative scholarship and service activities associated with SITE participants, especially in the USA where the PT3 program is currently providing significant resources and impetus.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

SITE stands at a threshold of exciting opportunity and increased challenge. The importance of both teacher education and new technologies is widely recognized. In order to fulfill our responsibilities to future teachers and their students, we must refocus our resources of expertise and knowledge to establish new models of good practice for society. Clearly, communications technologies can and are being deployed to support learning and collaboration. However, mobilizing new ways of working together will require engagement by a significant proportion of SITE's participants in ways that serve their individual pressing needs and concerns.

The Society will need to be creative to ensure wide participation in its meetings and in online environments, while avoiding duplication and competition with other organizations that have overlapping goals. The CITE Journal shows us that, with artful leadership, such shared leadership is possible. We now need to go further and encourage a similar synergistic collaborative ethic within SITE's reformed committee structure, and expand our collaboration across into complementary organizations' committees where relevant. Similarly, new approaches to team teaching and scholarly research are becoming viable with stronger online tools and techniques.

The opportunities for innovation have never been more exciting, just the sort of work technology-using teacher educators enjoy! SITE's interlaced knowledge community will require both technical and social engineering to address our needs and challenges. The social engineering that I lead will be transparent, showing our dilemmas and reasoning for the choices that we make. I believe that ensuring that processes are transparent to all participants, as we develop our knowledge community, is an important aspect of a knowledge society. It is a means of ensuring ease of transition between roles and receiving support from one another, hopefully without increasing administration (Collins, 2001). This is also a means to educate the next generation of leaders. I hope that it will be accompanied by artful delegation and support for shared leadership, so that our community grows by spreading our knowledge and recognition as far and wide as possible.

Our challenge is to synergize the expertise within our membership in a way that opens our SITE community up to legitimate peripheral participation and strong growth of our scholarship across many cultural contexts, as well as to respond to the many challenges faced by the educational systems of the world.

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