

# Stars in My Online Education World

A chronological directory of  
open and online educators  
I first encountered in the 2000s

Morten Flate Paulsen



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## Stars in My Online Education World 2000 - 2010



*How many of these 39 stars do you recognize from the photos?*



## Foreword



*The History is one of the three main works in Edvard Munch's aula decoration at the University of Oslo. When I visit the Kragerø viewpoint where Munch found inspiration to his painting History in 1910, I have dual sentiments. First as a young boy who learned some history from all the stars in this directory. Then as an old man who want to pass on my history to the younger generation. The photo is copied from [www.uio.no/english/about/culture/art/aula/history.html](http://www.uio.no/english/about/culture/art/aula/history.html)*

This is a tale of the stars in the third decade of [My Online Education World 1980-2020](#). It unfolds as a chronological narrative, illustrating how these individuals influenced my professional growth and shaped the various stages of my work in online education.

You may look up individuals of special interest to you, read it as a developing narrative of prominent people in my four books about the Stars I met over the four decades, or use it as an alternative perspective on [My Online Education World](#).

I crafted the directory from my personal anecdotes, archives, and imperfect recollections. It is based on my personal encounters with these Stars. So, it represents just a fraction of their impressive achievements.

The Stars I encountered in the 2000s are among hundreds of open and online educators included in the four decades I have chronicled. I know that there are countless others who deserve recognition: many I never met, some I don't remember, a few I try to forget, and others I first encountered after 2010.

The idea to assemble this directory stemmed from the initial list of Fifty Pioneers in Open and Online Education I shared on Facebook in January 2024. It was based on [the first volume of my chronicle](#) and met with more interest than I expected. So, I decided to elaborate on, and expand on, the initial list.

I started searching, cutting, and pasting paragraphs with recurring names from the four volumes of my chronicle. I edited the entries to weave a cohesive narrative, presented them in a chronological order to tell a developing story, dug up additional information, and added some people to fill in gaps and make the story more interesting.

I deliberately adopted an informal style in crafting this directory, eschewing professional titles, nationalities, and affiliations that change over time. This approach aimed to maintain a personal and relatable tone throughout the narrative.

After a while, I realized that the directory would benefit from contemporary photos of the people. So, I approached colleagues from the 2000s and continued to search the internet and my personal archives, which led me to interesting exchanges, cheerful picture moments, and unforeseen obituaries.

Then, I realized that Mark Nichols had interviewed at least a dozen of my Stars in his podcast [\*Leaders & Legends of Online Learning\*](#). So, I also included links to these interviews.

I am excited about the potential to expand this directory to encompass more stars in [\*My Online Education World\*](#), further illuminating the diverse tapestry of individuals who have shaped the landscape of online education over four transformative decades.

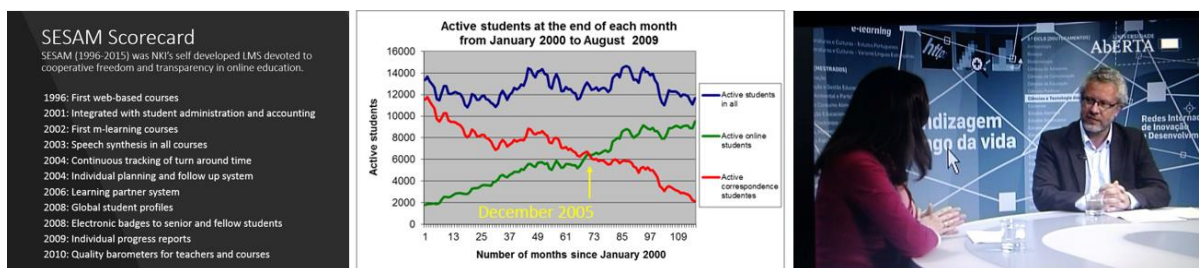
I have received so much positive feedback that I feel encouraged to also write the final volume of the Stars in My Online Education World which will feature the stars I encountered between 2010 and 2020.

Version 1, September 2024

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## Introduction to the 2000s



The three photos show innovations we introduced in the SESAM LMS system, the development of active students at NKI, and a screenshot of an interview with me on Portuguese TV.

My international experience expanded in the 2000s with visits to China, Canada, and Australia. Even so, the 2000s was my most European decade. This was when the Schengen Treaty, Skype, mobile phones, and easy access to free Wi-Fi made it easier to travel and work in Europe. I attended numerous EADL and EDEN conferences and meetings, and worked with more EU funded projects such as: From e-Learning to m-Learning, Web-edu, Delphi, E-learning quality in European SMEs, and Megatrends in e-learning. These European engagements motivated me to work a school year for Universidade Aberta in Portugal.

In 2001, we had integrated NKI's LMS system, SESAM, with our student administrative system (STAS) and accounting system. This included two decades of data logged in STAS about online and correspondence courses and students, which made it possible to develop dozens of new and innovative online services, and attractive for correspondence students to transfer from correspondence to online courses. The number of active online students grew from 2,000 to 10,000 during this decade. By 2004, the online students outnumbered the correspondence students.

As director of development for the NKI's fast-growing online school, I initiated and headed many innovative projects: m-learning courses, speech synthesised course content, tracking system for teacher response time, support system for individual progress plans and progress reports, learning partner system, global student profiles, electronic badges, and real time quality barometers. These projects supported my theory of cooperative freedom and transparency in online education, and also led to national awards and international recognition.

I was especially pleased to receive the Norwegian TISIP Award in 2007, and I'm still proud when I see this statement from the award committee:

*The price winner has worked with e-learning for 20 years. Since 1986, he has been the central person behind the development of the NKI Internet College and NKI's LMS systems. During these years, he has made more than hundred presentations at national and international conferences. He has published a large number of books, reports, and articles about e-learning in Norwegian, English, and several other languages. He has taken part in about 20 Norwegian and European research and development projects about e-learning. For the development of NKI's Learning Partner services, he received NKI's Boldic Award for the best development in distance education in the Nordic and Baltic countries in 2006. His Theory of Cooperative Freedom is quite frequently referred to in the international field of e-*

*learning. Morten Flate Paulsen has without doubt made a substantial and thorough research and development work in the field of online education.*

NKI's substantial number of online courses, students, and development projects provided many opportunities and valuable background for my 104 presentations and 56 publications listed in the yearly minutes for this decade, which included printed books and reports published in several countries and languages; a lot of arduous work motivated by my ambition to become a professor of online education.

## Alfredo Soeiro (EDEN 2000)



Photo from Alfredo's profile on EDEN Nap

In 2000, I met Alfredo in Barcelona when we were among 20 invited experts at the Ivette workshop, *Implementation of Virtual Environments in Training and Education*. Among the others were Armando Rocha-Trindade, Claudio Dondi, Friedrich Scheuerman, Kathy Kikis, and Martin Owen. During the workshop, Alfredo told me that he had become a member of the European Open and Distance Learning Liaison Committee, a committee aiming to facilitate cooperation between open and distance learning associations in Europe. The committee also hoped to persuade the EC to dedicate more resources to open and distance learning. The committee was established in 1999 by EADL, EDEN, and seven other institutions: ICDE, EADTU, the Coimbra Group, EuroPACE 2000, the European Federation of Open and Distance Learning (EFODL), the European Universities Continuing Education Network (EUCEN), and EDEN's Network of Academics and Professionals (NAP).

In 2006, Alfredo was among the first Europeans who were inducted in the [\*International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame\*](#). The Hall of Fame was initiated at the University of Oklahoma in 1993 and includes my profiled stars Gary Miller, Armando Villarroel, Otto Peters, and Michael Moore, as well as famous adult educators I studied with great interest (Malcolm Knowles, Charles A. Wedemeyer, and Paulo Freire), and professors I encountered at Penn State (Eunice N. Askov, Allan Quigley, and Jovita M. Ross-Gordon). So, I was pleased when Alfredo nominated me and looked forward to be inducted in the class of 2024 during an upcoming ceremony at the University of Florence as the second Norwegian member, after Sturla Bjerkaker.

I later met Alfredo at many EDEN events, especially as an active EDEN Fellow. At the EDEN 2008 conference in Lisboa, I congratulated him after Alan Tait announced that he was among the new EDEN Fellows. At the EDEN 2009 Open Classroom conference in Porto, he hosted a dinner at the fashionable faculty club at the University of Porto. He attended the first EDEN Fellows Day in Dublin in 2011. At the EDEN 2016 conference in Budapest, I congratulated him with his promotion to Senior Fellow.

Alfredo was elected to the EDEN DLE Board in 2020 and re-elected in 2024.

## Mario Barajas (Delphi 2000)



Photo of Mario from his LinkedIn profile

In 2000, Mario Barajas invited us to the University of Barcelona. It was the second of many visits to one of my favourite cities, and close to retreats in Castelldefels and Sitges, known for the works of Antoni Gaudí and Joan Miró. This was the scene of Ildefonso Falcones' fascinating 2009 novel, *The Cathedral of the Sea*, and the title of Freddie Mercury's legendary hit with Montserrat Caballé, which was highlighted during the 1992 Summer Olympics.

We were 20 experts at the Ivette workshop, *Implementation of Virtual Environments in Training and Education*, from November 16-18. Including Armando Rocha-Trindade, Claudio Dondi, Alfredo Soeiro, Friedrich Scheuerman, Kathy Kikis, and Martin Owen.



My paper, *Online Education - An International Analysis of Web-based Education and Strategic Recommendations for Decision Makers*, was later translated into Spanish and included in the workshop book. The book was titled, [\*La tecnología educativa en la enseñanza superior: entornos virtuales de aprendizaje\*](#), edited by Mario Barajas, and published by McGraw-Hill in 2003.

It gave me an inspiring boost to realise that some of my papers were now translated into Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese.

We were back in Barcelona in 2003 to kick off the Delphi project at the Vall Hebrón Campus. This project was supported by the EU programme, Minerva. The project aim was to establish an internet-based observatory on e-learning innovation in thirty EU-funded projects. I worked with Mario at Universitat de Barcelona, Katerina Kikis at Forth, Barbara Jones at the University of Manchester, Fritz Scheuermann at the Universität des Saarlandes, Peter Mirski at the Management Center Innsbruck, and Torstein Rekkedal at NKI.

In 2004, Barbara Jones hosted the final Delphi project workshop at the University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology. Seventeen experts attended the workshop titled, *Breaking barriers in education and training*. We discussed the question: *How can we make e-learning in education and training transferable, scalable, and sustainable?*

I recall meeting Wim Van Petegem from the University of Leuven, and Atle Løkken from the University College of Stavanger at the workshop, as well as disturbingly many intoxicated British students and teenagers outside pubs and discos near the university. I had a pleasant evening with Sirje Virkus and Tore Hoel at a British pub after the workshop, where we discussed that Gmail just was introduced as the first web-based email service, that the popular Mozilla Firebird browser had changed its name to Firefox, and that the first version of Skolelinux had just been introduced to promote free software in Norwegian schools.

My major contribution to the project was as author of the 2003 report, [\*E-learning – The State of the Art\*](#). It identified and discussed critical issues in e-learning that were used to develop a template for further analyses of key innovations in thirty projects funded by the European Socrates, Minerva, IST, and Improving Human Potential Programmes.

The workshop contributions were made available on the webpage, and my task at the workshop was to conclude and summarise the discussion together with Mario and German Bernal-Rios.

More reports and recommendations from the project are archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20050309122745fw/http://www.ub.es/euelearning/delphi/index.htm>

## Rory McGreal (2000)



*Photo of Rory from his LinkedIn profile*

In 2000, I discovered TeleCampus, the impressive database project headed by Rory McGreal at TeleEducation in New Brunswick. This database listed 28,000 distance education courses from 30 countries. It was the world's leading website for students seeking information about online courses, and for institutions wishing to promote their offerings. It was an interesting business idea for my Norwegian entrepreneur colleagues, who saw it as a potential partner with a need for investors; a business idea we never were able to materialize.



In 2005, I arrived at the conference arranged by the Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE) in a white limousine with Rory and Terry Anderson, a memorable ride from the airport to the Sheraton Wall Centre conference hotel in the heart of Vancouver. There, I gave a presentation about mobile learning at NKI in a session titled *Making the Transition to Mobile Learning* with Rory, Mohamed Ally, and Judy Roberts.

At the ICDE 2013 SCOP conference in Lisbon, I met Rory again and heard he was appointed UNESCO/COL Chair in OER, along with Wayne Mackintosh and Fred Mulder, and that he was taking over the role as editor of [IRRODL](#) after Terry Anderson.

At the EDEN 2016 conference in Budapest, Rory received the EDEN Senior Fellow Awards, along with Deborah Arnold and António Moreira Teixeira.

The gala dinner at the ICDE 2019 took place in the Round Room at the Mansion House in Dublin. There, I had the pleasure of announcing the ICDE awards and prizes. Ingeborg Bø and Fred Mulder were awarded Honorary ICDE memberships posthumously. Rory's personal recognition of Fred Mulder during the ceremony was memorable and emotional.

At the EDEN 2020 research workshop in Budapest, I took part in the plenary panel discussing *Quality Issues for Open Educational Resources*, with Rory, Grainne Conole, Demetrios Sampson, and Don Olcott. This was the same Don Olcott who received the EDEN Fellows Award and gave the concluding remarks at the conference.

At the ICDE 2023 conference in Costa Rica, I joined Rory McGreal's interesting session on academic publishing, open access, SciHub, as well as predatory journals and conferences.

 [Hear interview with Rory.](#)

## Roger Larsen (Fronter 2001)



*Photo of Roger in the Norwegian newspaper Tromsø, 24.01.2001*

In 2003, I made presentations at two conferences arranged by the Norwegian LMS company, Fronter. In June, I gave a presentation in Gothenburg titled: *Nordic and international experiences and visions on online education*. In September, I introduced: *The Three Headed Troll: Learning, Management, and System*, at Fronter's annual user conference.

The presentations reminded me of the 2001 meeting I had with Roger Larsen after we launched NKI's web-based LMS, SESAM, in 2000, where I presented our 15 years of experiences with the EKKO LMS system, and we discussed the future opportunities web-based LMS systems. After the meeting, I was impressed by Roger's enthusiasm and salesmanship, but somewhat worried that he would commercialise the LMS features I had revealed.

I later met Roger and his colleagues at several conferences organized by EDEN and Online Educa Berlin where they were sponsors and exhibitors.

Roger established the company, BusinessWeb AS, with Bjarne Hadland in 1998. The first version of their platform was named WebClass, and launched in 1999 with assistance from the University of Tromsø. The same year four students at the Bergen University College developed Itslearning as a competing platform. I learned much about Itslearning when I was invited to give a presentation about trends and challenges in online education at the company's 2004 user conference at Solstrand Fjordhotel in Bergen.

BusinessWeb AS changed its name to Fronter AS in 2000 and, for a short while, the platform was referred to as ClassFronter, before it was renamed to Fronter. It became a success and a household name in Norwegian schools for nearly two decades. It was also an international success with about seven million users, primarily in the Nordic countries, the UK, other European countries, and Australia. Fronter and Itslearning were systems I had to relate to as a father of three schoolchildren in the 2000s. Together, the two companies were the main reasons Norway became a world leader in LMS penetration.

Fronter was sold to Pearson in 2008, but Pearson never succeeded in turning it into a profitable company, and eventually sold it to Itslearning in 2015. This resulted in the merger of the two former Norwegian competitors, which then became Europe's largest LMS provider.

## George Ubachs (EADTU 2002)



Photo of George from <http://www.erasmusplus.nl/inspiratie-resultaten/op-naar-volwassen-toepassing-van-blended-onderwijs>

I first became aware of George Ubachs in 2002 when he started working for EADTU and became the man I first and foremost associate with EADTU, even though I earlier had met Jørgen Bang, who was President of EADTU from 2001 to 2005, and Piet Henderikx, who was Secretary General from 1995 to 2012.

[EADTU](#) was established in 1987 as the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities. Eleven founding members had an ambition to create a platform for collaboration with the European Commission, the five European Open Universities, and several national organisations. Among them were the Norwegian Association of Distance Education (NADE, later [Fleksibel utdanning Norge](#)). The founding meeting was organized by the Open University of the Netherlands in Heerlen. Erling Ljoså attended as chair of NADE. He elaborates on this in Norwegian in his [personal account about international engagements and cooperation](#).

At the EADTU 2006 conference in Tallinn, I met George and Secretary General, Piet Henderikx, and gave a presentation titled, *European Megaproviders of Online Education*, which was based on the preliminary results of the Megatrends project.

I remember George from several EDEN and ICDE conferences. We both attended the EDEN conferences in Zagreb (2014), Barcelona (2015), and Budapest (2016), as well as the ICDE world conferences in Dublin (2019) and Costa Rica (2023). George also attended some important conferences I missed, such as the EDEN 2019 conference in Bruges, and the ICDE conferences in Maastricht (2009), Bali (2011), and Sun City in South Africa (2015).

George showed special interest for topics like Virtual Mobility, Quality in Online Education, Open Educational Resources, MOOCs, and more recently, on Micro-credentials and Personalisation of Education.

At the Lillehammer 2019 Life Long Learning conference, George gave a presentation about EADTU, and its [virtual mobility publication](#) and related [mobility matrix](#). We sat together to further discuss this, and the future plans of ICDE and EADTU.

During the ICDE 2019 conference in Dublin we met to discuss collaboration between ICDE and EADTU on quality benchmarking online education, as EADTU has been appointed as ICDE Focal Point on Quality for Europe since 2016, representing [the E-xcellence benchmarking instrument](#) for quality in online and blended education.

## Torhild Slåtto (FuN 2002)



Photo from Torhilds's profile on EDEN Nap members area

I first encountered Torhild Slåtto when she started working for the Norwegian Association for Distance Education (NADE) in 2002. She took over as Executive Director after Ingeborg Bø in 2006 and continued in that position until 2018. She also was a member of the EADL Executive Committee from 2014 to 2018.

Browsing through the EDEN 2005 [proceedings](#), I found that Torhild gave the presentation *E-portfolio – A Beneficial Tool to Develop Digital Culture to Activate and Involve Citizens in Digital Learning Activities*. Other presenters from Norway were: Bodil Ask, Sven Åke Bjørke, Susanne Koch, and Astrid Høgmo.

Torhild was among the Norwegian notabilities and presenters at the EDEN 2006 conference in Vienna, along with Ingeborg Bø, Torstein Rekkedal, Per R. Stokke, Alexander Dye, Hege Christin Stenhammer, Bodil Ask, Harald Haugen, and Per Arneberg.

At the EADL 2009 conference in Oslo, Torhild organised the conference with her staff in close collaboration with NKI and the EADL secretariat. The conference gathered around 80 participants from all over Europe.

In 2010, Torhild interviewed me about NKI's global student profiles for the Nordic network for adult learning: [Globale studentpresentasjoner – unik kilde til kunnskap om nettstudenter](#).

The EDEN 2013 conference was organized with the Norwegian Association for Distance Education (NADE) at the University of Oslo, with a lot of work by Torhild and her NADE colleagues Petter Kjendlie, Ebba Køber, and Kari Olstad.

Later in 2013, NADE changed its Norwegian name, Norsk Forbund for Fjernundervisning (NFF), to Fleksibel utdanning Norge (FuN). The name change was the result of a lengthy process headed by Torhild and officially introduced during a reception at the university of Oslo, with video greetings from EDEN, EADL, FLUID, and ICDE.

During the first evening at the EDEN 2014 conference in Zagreb, Torhild invited the Norwegian delegates to meet the Norwegian ambassador, Henrik Ofstad. He told us that, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, they would celebrate the first anniversary of Croatia's EU membership, and that there were many challenges for this young nation that had worked hard to establish all of the legal, business, and civic structures that EU required.

In 2016, EDEN celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary during the annual conference at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. At the opening ceremony in the University Hall, EDEN President, António Teixeira, presented EDEN Fellow Awards to Torhild, Paul Bacsich, Antonella Poce, Elsebeth Korsgaard Sorensen, and Belinda Tynan.

I visited the remarkable Budapest Cave Church when Torhild and Alastair Creelman held their session about lurkers. At the cursor moment, I admitted that I was often a lurker in secondary school, as my thoughts wandered off during boring classes. Also, I sometimes turn off my camera during winding webinars.

Special 25th anniversary recognitions were awarded during the jubilee dinner. Torhild was among the people who received awards for Institutional Excellence for continuous support on behalf of Flexible Education Norway, the UK Open University, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, and Ellinogermaniki Agogi.

In 2016, we travelled together to Vilnius for a project meeting. The project aim was shown on the big screen during the press conference at the Parliament building. I sat next to Petter Kjendlie as we tried to figure out how we could “transfer the Kingdom of Norway’s knowledge and best practices to authorities of the Republic of Lithuania and Lithuania’s municipal authorities.” Both of us were grateful that Torhild and Giedrė Kviškienė managed most of these questions. My main contribution was a workshop presentation at the National Library titled: *Online Education Benefits*.

In 2016, I was elected to serve on NADE’s board of directors and continued until 2019. It was an interesting opportunity, allowing me to learn more about NADE and appreciate Torhild’s management of the association.

In 2018, Torhild retired from NADE and Torunn Gjelsvik took over her position. This made it possible for me to engage Torhild in a 20% position as my special advisor on Nordic issues at ICDE.

Torhild is still involved with international projects and has taken part in numerous Nordic and European projects over the years.

## Mette Villand (FuN 2002)



*Private photo of Mette from the study tour in Australia*

My first important memory with Mette Villand is from 2002. Thirty Norwegians and thirteen Swedes participated in an unforgettable travelling seminar in Australia from January 25 to February 10. We spent much time discussing and reflecting upon differences and similarities between the educational systems in Norway, Sweden, and Australia.

The seminar was arranged by Mette and her colleagues at the University College of Lillehammer. They also developed a website with information about the seminar and articles written by participants, archived at [australia.hil.no](http://australia.hil.no). The Lillehammer team deserves a lot of credit for making the travelling seminar one of the best experiences in my professional life. The MPI certified Per Eriksson had perfect control over all itinerary details. Mette, Torild Schulstok, Martin Rønningen, Kjell Ivar Iversen, Geir Haugsbakk, and Svein O. Haaland supervised, offering their knowledge and social skills.

One of the tour highlights was our short stop at Surfers Paradise, where we got a taste of the Gold Coast before we checked in at the Byron Bay Beach Club. We learned that it was acceptable to bring wine to a restaurant from a bottle shop across the street, if the restaurant was not permitted to sell alcoholic beverages. With Mette and Torild as lead singers, we even collected enough money to buy a bottle of wine when we performed with a local street musician.

Another highlight was our visit to the Charles Sturt University, where Mette studied for the Master of Honors in Education from 1999 to 2002. We took the ferry boat to Manly, had a photo stop at North Point Manly, and an unforgettable day with Charles Sturt University staff. We enjoyed a splendid evening at the Radisson Kestral Hotel, with plenty of tasty food and university labelled wine, followed by vigorous amateur performances of Australian traditional dances and erotic Scandinavian folklore songs.



During the study tour, Mette told me that her brother, Per, was diagnosed with ALS in 1999. The disease results in gradual paralyses of the nerve system and Per had been living with a respirator since 2001. These conversations with Mette had a heavy impact on me; it had been 15 years after my father had passed away with the same disease. I later learned about Per and Mette's ALS documentary project, *A Meaningful Life in A Paralysed Body: To Live with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Eit meningsfylt liv i ein lam kropp: å leve med amyotrofisk lateral sklerose)*. The documentary was published 2005, two years before Per passed away at the age of 44. The six-hour video took me weeks to watch and years to process.

I later met Mette at several conferences and seminars arranged by NADE, now Flexible Education Norway (FuN). She has been a member of the Quality Committee in FuN from 2012 to 2024. She has also been the leader of the committee for the last 7 years.

In 2015, NooA hosted the Nordic study labs visit to Lillehammer with the kind help of Mette and the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University College. The workshop dinner was at Maihaugen, Norway's largest open-air museum, with more than two hundred historic houses from the 13th century until present times.

In 2019, Mette was Head of the Organising Committee for the [Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Summit](#) along with Brit Svoen, Yvonne Fritze, Per Eriksson, and Jens Uwe Korten. I welcomed over 300 delegates from more than 30 countries on behalf of ICDE together with Kathrine Skretting, Rector of INN–Inland Norway University of Applied Science. Among the conference highlights were Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg's keynote presentation and [the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Road Map for Lifelong Employability](#). Memorable was also our visit to the Hunderfossen Winter Park with its Snow Hotel, Ice Bar, Ice Cathedral, and the Fairy-tale Restaurant, which were all close to the Olympic Hafjell Ski Arena.

The Lillehammer Lifelong Learning conference was held again in 2023 in cooperation with ICDE. There were 350 delegates from 38 countries, and I was thrilled to take part in the panel presentation led by Sophia Javaid: *"A Conversation Between Morten Flate Paulsen and Asha Kanwar Based on the Chronicle of About 300 Anecdotes Posted in My Online Education World, 1980-2020."*

## Svein Oddvar Haaland (ICDE 2002)



*Photo of Svein cropped from private photo taken at the ICDE office in 2017*

I saw Svein O Haaland a few times when he was Rector of Lillehammer University College in Norway (1992-2000) and served as Board Member and Chair of the Board of SOFF from its introduction in 1990 until it was merged with Norgesuniversitetet in January 2004. However, I first came to appreciate him as a friendly colleague during the unforgettable 2002 traveling seminar in Australia, where I learned about his passion for sailing and his yacht near Spillersboda in the Swedish archipelago north of Stockholm.

In 2002, thirty Norwegians and thirteen Swedes participated in an unforgettable travelling seminar. We spent considerable time discussing and reflecting on the differences and similarities between the educational systems in Norway, Sweden, and Australia. In Byron

Bay, Svein donned his new Crocodile Dundee hat, and we shared a memorable day together fantasising about buying a beach house and running an online school from there.

Svein also edited the 2003 book that resulted from the seminar, *Norden, Australia og hjem igjen: rapport fra et reisende seminar om fleksibel undervisning*. My chapter was titled “Online Education Systems in Australian and Scandinavian Universities: A comparative Study.”

Svein had close ties with the ICDE secretariat as Chair of SOFF. He served as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees (BoT) from its establishment in 2008 until I took over in 2017. I recall a meeting we had at the office ICDE shared with FuN at Lilleaker in Oslo. President Mandla Makhanya joined us via Zoom from UNISA in South Africa, and Helmut Heyer was present to follow David Sewart as Chair of the BoT. The meeting concluded with valuable advice from Svein and David, followed by a delightful dinner with Ingeborg Bø.

Svein was one of my trusted advisers during my period as Secretary General for ICDE. We recently reminisced about our visits to Universitas Terbuka, as Svein and David Sewart participated in the two first quality reviews in 2005 and 2010, and I was part of the fifth review in 2023.

## Carl Holmberg (EDEN 2002)



*Photo from Carl's profile on the EDEN Nap members area*

I first got to know Carl Holmberg as a wise and friendly gentleman in 2002 during a two-week study visit to Australia. I remember we talked about his work as a senior expert to the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science from 1995 to 1999, and his EDEN experiences after he was elected executive committee member at the 2001 conference in Stockholm.

Thirty Norwegians and thirteen Swedes participated in the unforgettable travelling seminar on the Australian east coast arranged by the University College of Lillehammer. We spent much time discussing and reflecting upon differences and similarities between the educational systems in Norway, Sweden, and Australia. So, I learned much about distance education in Sweden from Carl, Katrin Holmgren, Brittmarie Myringer, and

Mats Ericsson, the Director General of the newly established Swedish Netuniversity (Nätuniversitetet), the short-lived governmental initiative that provided 41 million Euros for online education in Sweden during its first two years.

The Australia seminar [program and documentation is archived](#), and I followed up with the *IRRODL* article, [Online Education Systems in Scandinavian and Australian Universities: A Comparative Study](#).

In 2003, Carl wrote the comprehensive chapter “On the Move Towards Online Education in Sweden,” in my book, *Online Education and Learning Management Systems*.

At the EDEN 2007 conference in Naples, I took over on the EDEN Executive Board after Carl as he was among the first seven people who were honoured as EDEN Senior Fellows. In the fall, we met at an Eden executive meeting on a spectacular ferry boat trip with MS Midnattsol along the Norwegian coast from Trondheim to Tromsø. Then again at the EDEN 2007 Open Classroom conference in Stockholm. I vaguely recall the reception in the Town

Hall, where the Nobel Prize Dinner parties also take place, and the young drummers from “Lilla Akademien”.

We later kept in touch when Carl was engaged as Secretary General of ICDE from 2008 to 2011 after Reidar Roll. Carl provided valuable advice when I started working for ICDE in 2018.

## Jørgen Grubbe (FLUID 2002)



*Photo of Jørgen from his LinkedIn profile*

I first remember Jørgen Grubbe from a Nordic project meeting in Kaunas in 2002. Jørgen coordinated the project, which was funded by the Nordic NordPlus programme, and aimed to establish a network for exchange of experiences in open and distance learning between the Baltic and Nordic countries. The Nordic Associations of Distance Education were represented by Astrid Berg and Jørgen Grubbe (Denmark), Jorma Rinta Kanto (Finland), Erica Sahlin (Sweden), Ingeborg Bø, and me (Norway). The Baltic countries were represented by Sirje Virkus (Estonia), Ilmars Slaidins (Latvia), Danguolė Rutkauskienė, and Audronė Valiuškevičiūtė (Lithuania).

I later met Jørgen Grubbe at numerous conferences, where he represented the Danish association for flexible learning (FLUID), an association he headed for at least three decades.

In 2010, the NADE conference was in Horten, the small coastal town where I served one year as a quarter master in the navy. [The program was published in Synkron](#) and a recurring theme was open and social learning. Jørgen videotaped my presentation, “[Læring for åpen scene,](#)” in which I discussed my experiences from Universitade Alberta.

In 2015, we were among fourteen people attending the kick off meeting in the Nordic Study Lab Project. This was a one-year project initiated by Jørgen, financed by Nordplus, and managed by Holbæk municipality in Denmark. The partners were from Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. These ten partners, from six Nordic countries, communicated in English, and shared experiences and memories of life from seven extraordinary exotic study tours to remote Nordic areas.

In 2017, Jørgen welcomed us on behalf of the Nordic hosts to the EADL conference in Copenhagen. I was happy that EADL sponsored my trip and asked me to share online education experiences from NooA. The conference also hosted the FLUID annual general meeting. So, I received updates on the latest FLUID developments from Jørgen and Poul Tang, who took over as head of the FLUID secretariate in 2016, after Astrid Berg, who held the position from 1999.

In January 2020, Jørgen came to Kragerø and stayed the night with us to discuss a project application focusing on collective intelligence. I’m glad he came but, in hindsight, happy that the project never materialised, as the pandemic was approaching.

## Alf Martin Johnsen (Moodle 2003)



Photo of Alf Martin from his LinkedIn profile

In 2003, Alf Martin Johnsen invited me to give a presentation about pedagogical challenges in online education at Gjøvik University College. The presentation was meant as an introduction to my Norwegian textbook, *Nettbasert Utdanning—Erfaringer og Visjoner*, since the book was used in a program about online pedagogy for the public sector that the college offered in collaboration with Alf Martin's company, Empirika.

We later tried, without real success, to develop online courses based on the online pedagogy program. I learned to appreciate Alf Martin's friendly support and competence in the widespread Norwegian learning management systems, Fronter and

Itslearning.

Alf Martin started Efaktor in 2004, and built the company around his competence in online education and learning management systems. The company gradually specialized in Moodle services.

In 2012, he invited me to give a presentation about online education from a European perspective at Efaktor's national Moodle conference at Rica Hotel Gardermoen. I argued that we both should enrol in an online course to become certified Moodle Course Creators. I also found a suitable online course taught by Maryel Mendiola in Mexico. HRDNZ (Human Resource Development International Limited) provided a course in New Zealand. It's as far from Norway as you can get. This is another reminder of how global online education could be.

It was helpful to be an online student again. Sitting for the one-hour online quiz exam on the Moodle platform was unnerving, but we both succeeded, and it felt good to receive the course certificates. Digital certificates made me realize that NooA could save a lot of resources if it could be a school without paper.

I encouraged Alf Martin to get Efaktor certified as an official Moodle partner, which he achieved later in the year. So, when I established NooA as a company in 2012, Efaktor was a trusted partner as I designed the first online courses and services in Moodle. With the help of Alf Martin, NooA soon had a Moodle platform in the cloud.

In 2015, eFaktor and Netsapiensis organized the first MoodleMoot in Scandinavia at the High Court conference centre in Malmö. In addition to Alf Martin, Martin Dougiamas, and Gavin Henrick, the following Moodle experts were listed as speakers: Laszlo Lukacs, Synnøve Arntsen, Alex Contis, Eivind Tore Hansen, Urs Hunkler, Fred Johansen, Lars Didrik Flingtorp, and Lars Sverre Gjølme.

My presentation was titled "Moodle Experiences from Campus NooA—the Nordic Open Online Academy." I returned home with a better understanding of *how to* use CSS styling, learning analytics, open badges, and Big Blue Button webinars in NooA's Moodle platform.

Later, in 2015, NooA hosted the Nordic study labs visit to Lillehammer with the help of Mette Villand and the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University College. Yngve Nordkvelle introduced the University College in Lillehammer and explained how the Olympic facilities lifted the college. Alf Martin presented eFaktor and the many opportunities in Moodle.



Alf Martin retired as CEO in 2023, but he is still owner and Chair of eFaktor. I'm grateful for all the help he and eFaktor provided as NooA's trusted Moodle partners for more than a decade.

## Yngve Troye Nordkvelle (Seminar.net 2003)



Photo of Yngve from [www.inn.no/finn-en-ansatt/yngve-nordkvelle.html](http://www.inn.no/finn-en-ansatt/yngve-nordkvelle.html)

Yngve Troye Nordkvelle persuaded me to write a chapter about European views on LMS systems in a 2003 book he edited with Geir Haugsbakk and Yvonne Fritze. The Norwegian book was titled *[I Dialog og nærhet – IKT og undervisning](#)*.

In January 2005, Yngve published the first issue of *[Seminar.net](#)* as an online journal focusing on ICT and media used in education, with an editorial team at the University College of Lillehammer in Norway. The journal is still headed by Yngve as it is approaching its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The editorial team asked authors to include videos that introduced their articles; an innovative, but challenging approach. So, Bente Midtsveen helped me make a video to introduce my article, *[Cooperative Online Education](#)*, in the second 2008 issue of *Seminar.net*. The video included cartoons made with toonlet.com, speech synthesis based on readthewords.com, and an interview with the author. The article manifested my acknowledgement that transparency in online education was both important and challenging. Maybe these contributions helped me to join the editorial board of *Seminar.net*?

In 2015, NooA hosted a workshop for the Nordic study labs project 2015, with the kind help of Mette Villand and the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University College in Lillehammer. Yngve introduced the University College and explained how the Olympic facilities lifted the college. He also shared his experiences with *Seminar.net* and discussed how asynchronous and synchronous learning related to target group preferences, study habits, computer skills, and motivation—issues my penchant for asynchronous online education still struggles with.

## Morten Tollefsen (Accessibility 2003)



Photo of Morten from <https://medialt.no/kontakt/>

In 2003, I visited Morten Tollefsen and his guide dog, the German Shepherd, Yanni, at their home office. Morten is a blind pioneer, who started the company, Medialt.no, to help people with disabilities to use ICT. I was impressed by the tools he demonstrated, and the competency and skills he possessed. I also learned that graphical interfaces on PCs and web sites were challenging for blind people.

So, I was glad Morten would work with NKI and FUNKIS (the Association for Adapted Adult Education in Norway) on a project to improve accessibility and universal design in online education for blind, visually impaired, and dyslexic students, while also providing better and more accessible services for all students.

Maybe we developed the world's first fully speech synthesised school, based on a project supported by SOFF in 2001 and 2002, which provided a free service powered by ReadSpeaker. This complimentary service allowed NKI's 6,000 online students to listen to all texts included in 400 different online courses. It enabled them to listen to "Henrik" with no need for special software or hardware, and to hear "Henrik's" speech synthesised voice in front of the actual webpage or from a downloaded MP3-file.

Many NKI students benefited from the project. Among them were Marte Baade who, in 2010, was honoured by NADE as online student of the year. Severely visually impaired, she had problems keeping up in upper secondary school. Therefore, she chose to study online instead, and completed education as a school assistant and educational assistant with good grades.

When I recently reminisced about these experiences with Morten, he emphasized that online education had been very important for many students with disabilities. He also explained how smart phones had made life easier for blind people. Initially, the small screens made it simpler to navigate and now they represent a revolution of useful services that are easily accessible for all users. Speech synthesis and automatic speech recognition services, like Siri and Alexa, makes life simpler. AI services also provide new, impressive services. One example is the free Envision app, which can explain the content of photos and answers questions about the scenes. Another app allows you to generate speech, based on your own voice.

A lot of such useful services are now available. The challenge is to inform people with special challenges about the services and how to use them.

## Dirk van der Mark (EADL 2005)



Photo from Dirk's LinkedIn profile

I first met Dirk van der Mark at the EADL 2003 conference at the Hotel Hafen in Hamburg. I shook his left hand as usual, but it took years before I dared to ask why his right hand was amputated. In relaying his story, he told me that he had contemplated whether he would have pursued an academic career if he had not fallen through a glass window when he was eight years old.

The main theme of the Hamburg conference was: *The Learning Business in a Changing World. Survival of the Fittest*. I participated in a round table discussion on online education trends. It was my first conference arranged by the European

Association of Distance Learning (EADL) after its name changed in 1999 from the Association of European Correspondence Schools (AECS).

I met Dirk again during the 2005 conference in Helsinki when he took over as president of EADL after Bernd Schachtsiek. I understood that he had been asked to take over the ownership of the successful Dutch training company, Dirksen Opleidingen.

The theme of the Helsinki conference was: *How to Gain Competitive Advantage in the Learning Industry*. My presentation was titled, *Online pedagogy: Balancing individual needs with collective support*, and my NKI colleague, Elisabeth Møystad, presented *How to turn enquiries into registrations*. The local organizer was the Finnish marketing institute,

Markkinointi-instituutti. During the conference, I was also appointed as a member of the EADL R&D Committee, which was responsible for EADL's annual conference programmes. This was a position that resulted in several interesting meetings and discussions with Dirk, executive director Kees Veen, and the members of the R&D committee: Michael Lammersdorf (Chairman), Tony Hopwood, and Heinrich Dieckmann. These meetings were primarily prepared the EADL conferences in Paris (2006) and Dublin (2007).

The EADL 2006 conference took place at the *Maison des Polytechniciens* in Paris. It was hosted by CHANED – *Chambre Syndicale Nationale de l'Enseignement Privé à Distance*. We had a memorable social conference evening on the Seine River Boat, passing the illuminated Eiffel Tower and the down-scaled replica of the Statue of Liberty. Svein Qvist-Eriksen's and my presentation was titled, *New media in students support services*. It included results from telephone interviews with 47 students about three phases of student support.

The EADL 2007 conference was organised by Kilroy's College in Dublin and held at the fashionable Westbury Hotel on Grafton Street. Dirk opened the conference, along with Charles and Patrick Kilroy. As a member of the program committee, I remember we focused on social media and internet marketing. We invited Tony Bates to talk about the impact of web 2.0 on distance learning, Christian Dalsgaard to reflect on social software in LMS, and Desmond Keegan to discuss mobile learning.

The EADL 2009 conference was held at the Grand Hotel in Oslo, a fashionable hotel located at Karl Johans gate, nestled between the Royal Palace and the Parliament in the city centre. The social program included a reception with the Mayor at the Oslo City Hall, followed by folklore, music, and traditional food at the medieval Akershus Castle. There was also a guided tour to the Nobel Peace Centre and a conference dinner in the Hall of Mirrors at the Grand Hotel. The main theme of the conference was "*Drinking from the digital well: How can we utilise the enormous digital opportunities to create digital learning resources and develop good services for distance students?*" Svein Qvist-Eriksen presented NKI Distance Education 1959 – 2009: Celebrating 50 years as a Norwegian Institution. My presentation was titled *Risks and opportunities of a social network*.

The EADL 2017 conference was prepared and hosted by EADL, Fluid in Denmark, NADE (FuN) in Norway, and the Nordic network for adult learning (NVL). The conference was located at Park Inn Radisson Copenhagen Airport Hotel. The conference focused on the theme, *Presence at a Distance – Technologies and Methods for Learner Engagement*. Dirk welcomed us on behalf of EADL and Jørgen Grubbe followed up on behalf of the Nordic hosts. I was happy that EADL sponsored my trip and asked me to share some experiences from NooA. Dirk gave a memorable dinner speech in which he reflected on his 12 years as EADL president, before he thanked executive director Kees Veen for his support during all these years and introduced John Trasler as the new EADL president.

My lasting impression of Dirk's EADL presidency is that he facilitated and sustained a community of distance and online educators in the private sector who were interested and willing to share ideas and experiences. This was an international community that supported and learned from each other, since they did not compete in each other's home markets.

## Kees Veen (EADL 2003)



Private photo of Kees received via e-mail

I was probably first introduced to Kees Veen by my NKI colleague, Elisabeth Møystad, during the EADL 2003 conference at the Hotel Hafen in Hamburg. But I later learned that we both attended the 1988 AECS conference in Istanbul.

I met Kees at the EADL 2005 conference in Helsinki. There, the conference theme was: *How to Gain Competitive Advantage in the Learning Industry*. I gave a presentation titled, *Online pedagogy: Balancing individual needs with collective support*. Elisabeth Møystad, who was on the EADL board from 2000 to 2009, presented *How to turn enquiries into registrations*.

In Helsinki, I joined the EADL R&D Committee. The committee responsible for the content of EADL's annual conferences, where I enjoyed many interesting meetings and discussions with Kees, Michael Lammersdorf (Chairman), Tony Hopwood, Dirk van der Mark, and Heinrich Dieckmann.

During our R&D meetings, I learned that Kees took over after Henricus Verwijen, who served as the first executive director of EADL from the mid-1990s until 2004. Kees also enlightened me about the formation of EADL when he explained that an organisation of European correspondence schools was founded in 1967. However, a dispute between the two Dutch institutions, LOI and PBNA, about representatives resulted in the foundation of two associations in 1968: the European Home Study Council (EHSC) led by PBNA, and the European Council for Education by Correspondence (CEC) led by LOI.

I later found [the proceedings from the first EHSC annual conference in 1968 In Amsterdam](#), which show that Norwegian, Einar Rørstad, was Executive Director of the association.

Kees became a member of the EHSC executive committee, and was in favour of merging EHSC and CEC. According to Kees, this took some time, but in 1985 there was a joint conference in Dublin, and the two associations merged into the Association of European Correspondence Schools (AECS). In 1999 the association decided the change the name to EADL.

I later met Kees at the EADL conferences in Paris (2006), Dublin (2007), and Oslo (2009). He shared experiences from his work at Elsevier publishing house in Switzerland, which included business with the Norwegian paper pulp company, Norske Skog. We talked about the two EADL publications, *Headline,s* and *Epistolodidaktika, the European Journal of Distance Education*. Kees vitalized the *Headlines* newsletter and increased the number of issues from two to six when he took over as editor. I contributed with input to several of the issues and still have many issues in my e-mail archive. *Epistolodidaktika*, which was published twice a year from 1971, was discontinued in the late 1990s. However, I still recall the two articles I contributed with: *Experiences with the EKKO computer-conferencing system at NKI* (1989) and *The Internet and World Wide Web - evaluation and experiences: pedagogical, economical, and organisational issues* (1998).

The EADL 2017 conference in Copenhagen was prepared and hosted by EADL, Fluid in Denmark, NADE (FuN) in Norway, and the Nordic network for adult learning (NVL). The conference was located at Park Inn Radisson Copenhagen Airport Hotel, and focused on the theme, *Presence at a Distance - Technologies and Methods for Learner Engagement*. I remember Dirk van der Mark's dinner speech where he thanked Kees for all the support



during Dirk's 12 years as EADL president before he introduced John Trasler as the new president. After dinner, I had to chat with Dirk and Kees. We reminisced about all of the R&D committee meetings we had, and the transformation of *Headlines* from a paper-based to an electronic newsletter.

The EADL 2018 conference was located at the Victoria and Albert Marriot hotel in Manchester, under the slogan: *Making Learning Visual and Viable*. The conference dinner was at the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry. There, EADL president, John Traxler, paid special tribute to Kees as he stepped down as executive director after 14 years of service to EADL, a position that involved him heavily in most of the annual conferences listed in the table below from 2004 - 2019.

2024 - Prague	2018 - Manchester, UK	2013 - Hamburg, Germany	2008 - Marbella, Spain
2023 - Brussels	2017 - Copenhagen, Denmark	2012 - The Netherlands	2007 - Dublin, Ireland
2022 - Copenhagen	2016 - Nicosia, Cyprus	2011 - Vienna, Austria	2006 - Paris, France
2021 - Virtual	2015 - Prague, Czechia	2010 - Cambridge, UK	2005 - Helsinki, Finland
2019 - Tallinn, Estonia	2014 - Edinburgh, UK	2009 - Oslo, Norway	2004 - Istanbul, Turkey

## Christian Dalsgaard (Transparency 2004)



Photo of Christian from his  
Twitter account

I first became aware of Christian Dalsgaard when I read his positive review of my 337-page book, *Online Education and Learning Management Systems* in the February 2004 issue of *Education Review*. The book was the result of much hard work and a decade of writing, so I especially appreciated his statement:

*One is overwhelmed by the amount of material presented in the book—and impressed by the clear structure of its presentation.*

I later discussed social media and learning with Christian over a cup of coffee at an EDEN conference. So, when I was a member of the program committee for the EADL 2007 conference in Dublin, I invited Christian to reflect on social software in LMS systems, Tony Bates to talk about the impact of web 2.0 on distance learning, and Desmond Keegan to discuss mobile learning.

I was also inspired by Christian's articles, [Social Networking Sites: Transparency in Online Education](#), and [Social Software: E-learning Beyond Learning Management Systems](#). So, I realized that we had a common interest in how social media and transparency could improve online education. We were both occupied with how we could help online students benefit and learn from each other, and how we could make it easy and meaningful for them to share resources—especially when they were not required to collaborate.

Our shared interest resulted in the joint 2009 *IRRODL* article, [Transparency in Cooperative Online Education](#), in which we discussed how social networking and transparency could be utilized within cooperative online education.

## Norine Wark (Academic writer 2004)



*Photo of Norine taken when she received the Governor General of Canada's Academic Gold Medal in 2019*

I first became aware of Norine Wark in 2004, when she wrote a very welcome review of my book, *Online Education and Learning Management Systems* in [ITFORUM@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU](mailto:ITFORUM@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU) and concluded:

*This is one of those resources that belong on all of our shelves. It is available in hard copy, .pdf, and e-book formats, and is supported by a web-site that contains digitized audio clips, multimedia presentations, and links to additional online resources... These additional resources make it even more attractive to those of us who would like to use it for foundational course reading. I sincerely hope you find this book to be as wonderful as I think it is.*

In 2019, I heard somewhere that Norine and Susan Bainbridge had started writing about female pioneers in online education. I thought this was an interesting initiative and suggested that they could present their work at the ICDE conference in Dublin. I later understood that my idea was premature and the project more ambitious than I expected. It resulted in the very recommendable 2023 book, [The Encyclopedia of Female Pioneers in Online Learning](#), with 30 comprehensive portraits including the following Stars in My Online Education World: Tian Belawati, Liz Burge, Lani Gunawardena, Starr Roxanne Hiltz, and Asha Kanwar. Norine was profiled, along with the book, in the October 2023 issue of [International Women Online Journal of Distance Education](#).

In 2023, Norine also wrote a welcome review of the chronological anecdotes I had posted at [www.nooa.no/my-online-education-world/](http://www.nooa.no/my-online-education-world/). Her review concluded:

*While Flate Paulsen suggests that these chronicles may be of interest to open and distance leaders, practitioners, researchers, and support staff, I humbly submit that learners, as well as anyone who is interested in the recent history of learning—or even in world travel, would find this to be an invaluable time-stamped treasure trove of humanity's collective history.*

In 2024, Norine offered her support as a copy editor and discussion partner during my work with the *Stars in My Online Education World*. This resulted in many pleasant, interesting, and useful e-mail and video exchanges about our Nordic heritage, winter sport experiences, and family relations. The conversations were useful, encouraged me to continue the work, and improved the quality of my publications. I also realized that Norine had considerable ICT competences and video editing skills when she made this [YouTube interview about the stars I met in My Online Education World During the 1980s](#).

## Wim E. A. Van Petegem (EDEN 2004)



Photo of Wim from [www.eden-online.org/recognition/eden-fellows/](http://www.eden-online.org/recognition/eden-fellows/)

I recall meeting Wim Van Petegem in June 2004, along with disturbingly many intoxicated British students and teenagers outside pubs and discos near the University of Manchester. Barbara Jones hosted the final Delphi project meeting at the Institute of Science & Technology, and we were among the seventeen experts attending the workshop titled, *Breaking barriers in education and training*. We discussed the question, “*How can we make e-learning in education and training transferable, scalable, and sustainable?*”

The EDEN 2009 conference gathered 325 participants from 44 countries in the Gdansk Music and Congress centre. The conference theme was *Innovation in Learning Communities. What Did You Invent for Tomorrow?* I remember the Annual General Meeting well, since I was promoted to Vice-President and Wim was elected to the Board of EDEN. I learned to appreciate Wim as a polite, friendly, positive, and constructive engineer, who enjoyed hiking, biking, and playing volleyball.

In 2012, Wim organized an EDEN board meeting in Leuven and later had a central role in the EDEN 2012 Research Workshop in Leuven. Maybe it was the historic setting, the social environment, or some alluring remarks from Wim, Alan Bruce, or Fabio Nascimbeni? I don’t remember why, but I ended the evening by smoking the first and only cigar in my life. I led the opening plenary. Ludo Melis welcomed the participants to the university. Wim introduced the conference theme. Grainne Conole talked about *Teaching as a Design Science: Innovations with Pedagogies and Technologies*. Wim chaired the third plenary session and I remember Helen Keegan’s presentation, *The Creative and the Curious: When Learners Roam Free*, and Claudio Dondi’s policy and research perspective on the question, “*Is ICT actually helping learners to drive?*”

My last executive meeting at the EDEN 2013 conference in Oslo was special. I received a 27-page hardcover memory book from the EDEN executive committee titled, *Our Friend, the President*. The book had many nice pictures from my presidency, and personal greetings from dear colleagues and friends. Wim wrote:

*At this point in your life and in our collaboration, I would like to give you this thought for reflection: “You never know if you have made the best choice, but of each choice you can make the best!”*

*I am confident a bright future is looking ahead for you and your beloved ones. And I am sure we will meet again, somewhere sometime in paradise EDEN.*

In 2017, the EDEN welcome reception took place in the assembly hall of Jönköping University’s School of Education and Communication. There, Wim received the Senior Fellow Award from EDEN President, Airina Volungeviciene, along with Steve Wheeler, Gila Kurtz, and Jack Koumi.

Between 2016 and 2018, Wim was Vice President of Research as EDEN introduced the PhD symposia and started the professionalisation of its publication processes. As a consequence, he took over as Editor-in-Chief for the *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning (EURODL)* after Ulrich Bernath in 2021.

At the EDEN 2024 conference in Graz, it was announced that Wim would become President of EDEN after Josep Duart. At the closing ceremony, Wim declared that he believed in risk, trust, and care; three words that probably will influence his presidency.

## Ulrich (Uli) Bernath (EDEN 2005)



Photo of Ulrich from [www.eden-online.org/dr-ulrich-bernath-and-professor-alan-tait-awarded-with-eden-eurodl-senior-emeritus-titles/](http://www.eden-online.org/dr-ulrich-bernath-and-professor-alan-tait-awarded-with-eden-eurodl-senior-emeritus-titles/)

I remember Ulrich Bernath from the EDEN 2005 conference in Helsinki where he rode a bicycle to the conference venue at the Helsinki University of Technology, Lifelong Learning Institute in Dipoli. At the EDEN 2006 conference in Vienna, I learned that he was keen on hiking and skiing, and had fond memories from the Norwegian mountains.

At the EDEN 2006 workshop in Castelldefels, I remember how proud and excited Uli was when he managed to convene Otto Peters, Börje Holmberg, and Michael G. Moore in a panel to discuss their theories on distance education. In hindsight, I understood how important this panel was to Uli when I browsed through the 15 volumes of [the ASF-Series on Distance Education](#). As editor of the series, Uli included several contributions by the panellists, which served as readings for the Master of Distance Education & E-learning program at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg.

I met Uli again in Naples when I was elected to EDEN's executive committee in 2007. Uli and Martine Vidal were Vice Presidents of EDEN, and Alan Tait took over as President after Ingeborg Bø. Our first executive meeting together was on MS Midnattsol, along the Norwegian coast from Trondheim to Tromsø. On the journey towards Bodø, we passed the Arctic Circle. The Northern was latitude 66 degrees and 33 minutes; the imaginary border to the land of the midnight sun, where King Neptun baptised us with ice cubes, and I learned to appreciate Uli as a friend with a keen interest and talent for human relations.

At the EDEN 2008 research workshop in Paris, the conference theme was Researching and Promoting Access to Education and Training - The Role of Distance Education and e-Learning in Technology-Enhanced Environments. Uli and Martine contributed much to the conference program and improved the referee scheme for acceptance of research papers. I also learned that Uli had used his modest savings to establish a foundation in 2006. It became [The Ulrich Bernath Foundation for Research in Open and Distance Learning](#), which supported the EDEN Best Research Paper Award from 2008 to 2021.

At the EDEN 2009 conference in Gdansk, I succeeded Uli as Vice President and he edited a comprehensive new EDEN book titled, *Distance and E-learning in Transition: Learning Innovation, Technology and Social Challenges*, along with Martine Vidal, András Szűcs, and Alan Tait. My contribution was titled, Tools and Instruments Supporting Cooperative Freedom in Virtual Learning Environments.

After the EDEN 2010 EDEN research workshop in Budapest, Uli and András Szűcs edited the first in a series of "Best of EDEN" publications, including collections of best research papers presented at EDEN conferences.

At the EDEN 2016 conference in Budapest, the EDEN Young Scholars Support Scheme was introduced. It was supported by The Ulrich Bernath Foundation until 2021. EDEN's first Young Scholar Award was awarded to Dávid Sík and Ágnes Gaul-Ács. At the same



conference, Uli, John Daniel, and Alan Tait were honoured as outstanding colleagues, who made decisive contributions to EDEN’s foundation, consolidation, and growth.

Uli made an important contribution to the EDEN community as Editor in chief of *EURODL* from 2014 through 2020. So, it was well deserved that Uli and Alan Tait were honoured with the Senior Editor Emeritus title in 2021 for their invaluable contributions to the progress of *EURODL*.

Uli has lately supported augmented and virtual reality initiatives through his foundation.

## Asha Singh Kanwar (ICDE 2005)



*Photo of Asha from ICDE’s 2018 annual report*

I first met Asha Kanwar at the CADE 2005 conference in Vancouver when she worked as an Education Specialist at the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). This was one year before she became Vice President in the Vancouver based organisation, which was established in 1987 by Commonwealth Heads of Government “... *to create and widen access to opportunities for learning, making use of the potential offered by distance education and by the application of communication technologies to education.*”

At the CADE conference, we joined a panel titled, *Research Views from Over There*, to provide an international flavour of the challenges facing distance learning researchers and practitioners. Others on the panel included Don Olcott from Western Oregon University, and Christine von Prummer from Deutche FernUniversität.

I met Asha again at the Scop 2013 conference in Lisbon the year after she became President of COL, a position that she kept until 2023. Ingeborg Bø told me that Asha had received ICDE’s Prize of Excellence in 2009, and navigated me towards Asha’s lunch table in the warm and sunny Portuguese weather. These were two female leaders I admired most in our field.

At the Lillehammer Life Long Learning conference in 2019, ICDE President and Conference Chair, Neil Fassina eloquently introduced Asha’s keynote titled, *Achieving Lifelong Learning for All: Where are we now?* In the presentation, she discussed lifelong learning in a global context and gave an overview of how the five Commonwealth countries, Australia, Malta, Singapore, South Africa, and Trinidad & Tobago, implemented lifelong learning.

During the ICDE 2019 conference in Dublin, we had a short ICDE Executive Committee meeting. It was memorable and special because it was the last for me as acting Secretary General, for Belinda Tynan as President, and for Asha and Tolly Mbwette after their four-year terms on the EC. The three incoming EC members were Som Naidu, Mark Nichols, and Carlos Alberto P de Oliveira. Neil Fassina was chosen as the next President.

The Lillehammer Life Long Learning conference in 2023 was my first face-to-face conference after the Covid 19 pandemic. So, it was good to meet Asha again and attend her introductory speech “*Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development: New Paradigms, New Models.*” And I was thrilled that she joined the panel presentation led by Sophia Javaid, “*A conversation between Morten Flate Paulsen and Asha Kanwar based on the chronicle of about 300 anecdotes posted in My Online Education World, 1980-2020.*”

 [Hear interview with Asha.](#)

## Don Olcott Jr. (EDEN 2005)



Photo of Don from [www.eden-online.org/recognition/eden-fellows/](http://www.eden-online.org/recognition/eden-fellows/)

The first time I remember meeting Don Olcott, Jr. was at the CADE conference in Vancouver in 2005. The conference was organized by the Canadian Association of Distance Education, hosted by the Centre for Online and Distance Education at Simon Fraser University, and located at the Sheraton Wall Centre Conference Hotel in the heart of the Vancouver.

At the conference, we joined a panel titled, *Research Views from Over There*, to provide an international flavour of the challenges facing distance learning researchers and practitioners. Don represented Western Oregon University, Asha Kanwar the Commonwealth of Learning, and Christine von Prummer the Deutche FernUniversität. Don also moderated a panel later on the conference with Lucille Pacey, Open Learning Agency, Darcy Hardy, U of Texas System, and Sir John Daniel, President of the Commonwealth of Learning.

At the EDEN 2010 Research Workshop in Budapest, Don and I took part in the plenary panel discussing *Quality Issues for Open Educational Resources*, along with Rory McGreal, Grainne Conole, and Demetrios Sampson. I remember that Don received the EDEN Fellow Award and gave the concluding remarks at the conference.

At the ICDE 2013 conference Lisbon, Don was honoured with the ICDE Prize of Excellence for Individuals. Don was further honoured by ICDE at the 2023 World Conference in San Jose, Costa Rica, with the Prize of Excellence for Lifelong Contributions to Open, Distance, and Online Learning.

Don received the EDEN Senior Fellow Award at the EDEN 2018 conference in Genova and was one of the central people behind the EDEN Fellow Council when we initiated it at the conference in Genova and later formally established it in 2019. In 2021, Don took over as the second Chair of the council after Lisa Marie Blaschke.

It is always a pleasure to chat with Don at conferences, and I appreciate his friendly attitude, broad international interest, sincere engagement, and online friendship. As I write this, I receive the news that Don will be honoured with the 2024 United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) Outstanding Leadership Award. This reminds me that he was inducted to the [USDLA Hall of Fame](#) in 2014, following other distinguished colleagues I have encountered: Susan C. Aldridge (2013), Andy DiPaolo (2012), Marci Powell (2012), Farhad Saba (2010), Chere Campbell Gibson (2003), and Michael G. Moore (2002).

Don will also be inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame in Florence, Italy in November 2024.

 [Hear interview with Don.](#)

## András Szűcs (EDEN 2005)



*Private photo received from András Szűcs*

I have known András Szűcs, since I first saw him at the EDEN 2005 conference in Helsinki.

EDEN executives worked with András, the kind secretary, and the tough general who served for 25 years (1997-2022). He was the one and only Secretary General when the UK registered association had its secretariat in Hungary, until the Brexit-initiated changes. The EDEN Digital Learning Europe, with a new secretariat in Tallinn, was created to continue the operation once the UK left the EU.

András was the experienced manager who continuously developed EDEN along with nine of the ten presidents, from 1997, when EDEN's second President, Tamas Lajos, moved the secretariat from Milton Keynes, to the Budapest University of Technology and Economics.

András, the pragmatic strategist and prudent manager, consolidated the organisation around a sound and sustainable business model, and built a reliable organisation and a recognizable brand.

András was a kind man raised in a conservative, intellectual family that actively followed the Roman Catholic religion in a Hungarian society during the Soviet era. He was the humble listener with telling eyes that forebode his strong, and sometimes controversial, opinions. He was a diplomat, but not always diplomatic. I also remember him as the great gourmet; a friend of dogs and horses; a cultivated man, who liked classical music as much as hunting and horse-riding.

András is a respected colleague, with high skills in EU policies and projects. He is quite possibly the man who has contributed the most to the progress and development of distance education and e-learning in Europe.

## Vanda Garcia Vieira (ELQ-SME 2005)



*Photo of Vanda from her LinkedIn profile*

I met Vanda Vieira when she coordinated [E-learning quality in European SMEs \(ELQ-SME\) project](#) for [CECOA](#) in Lisbon from 2005 to 2007. The project was funded by the Leonardo da Vinci Programme. The central project participants were Alexandra Costa Artur (CECOA), Rene J.M. van Leeuwen (N.V. Interpolis), Natalie Morawietz (F-BB), Jörg Spath (BFI), Diederick Stoel (Profitwise), Niels Chr. Moe (NKI), Isabel Rucabado and Javier Coll (CCC), and Lehti Pilt and Triin Marandi (University of Tartu).

I recall a successful project meeting in Oslo followed by a boat trip on the fjord, a visit to the Viking Ship Museum, and a Seafood dinner at Aker Brygge. Vanda and I edited the first project report together, titled [The State of the Art Report: E-learning Quality in European SMEs. An Analysis of E-learning Experiences in European Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.](#)

E-learning was not common in SMEs in 2006, but we included 18 transnational case studies of e-learning experiences from SMEs in Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Norway, the

Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain, with examples of excellence from small, medium, and large enterprises and training providers.

We pointed out the following e-learning advantages from the case descriptions:

- Improved flexibility in time and location
- Reduced costs for travel, accommodation, and seminar rooms
- Swifter and cheaper distribution of learning material
- Quicker introduction of new products due to accelerated training of many employees
- Increased sales because customers perceive e-learning as a sign of high competence
- Increased sales because e-learning could add value to the product
- Improved relations with customers and suppliers

At the final ELQ-SME seminar in Lisboa on November 2007, I presented [our findings in the first PowerPoint I uploaded to SlideShare](#).

Attending project partners in Lisboa were Vanda and Alexandra Costa Artur, Rene J.M. van Leeuwen, Natalie Morawietz, Diederick Stoel, and Niels Chr. Moe. After the final project seminar, we had great fun at a local restaurant, with the longest laughing fit in my life. So, I remember ELQ-SME as the laughing project and look at the videos on my Facebook page when I need to be cheered up. Because of the good team spirit and sense of mission, we managed to achieve the objectives proposed in the proposal.

During the ICDE SCOP 2013 meeting in Lisbon, I contacted Vanda again, and enjoyed a pleasant evening and a delicious Portuguese dinner with her husband in their apartment.

In 2024, Vanda was on vacation in Oslo with her daughter, and I had the opportunity to show them Frognerstøeren and the Holmenkollen Ski Arena. We shared a thrilling ride in the Holmenkollen Ski Jump and Down Hill Simulator, and realized that the ELQ-SME was one of several European projects that developed noteworthy results, good experiences, and lasting friendships.

## Torunn Gjelsvik (EADL 2006)



*Photo of Torunn from ICDE web page*

My first significant memory of Torunn Gjelsvik is from the EADL 2006 conference in Paris. We had a memorable social evening on a Seine River Boat. I recall passing the illuminated Eiffel Tower and the down-scaled replica of the Statue of Liberty. We shared several bottles of wine with other delegates at the riverbanks near Notre Dame. I realized that Torunn was fluent in French, and remember that she and Kjersti Hatlevoll represented the Distance Education Centre at BI Norwegian School of Management, with a presentation titled, *From print to digital marketing*.

At the EADL 2007 conference in Dublin, we enjoyed the Gala Dinner, along with an impressive river dance performance at the Powerscourt House and Gardens. After dinner, I remember interesting conversations with Torunn, Michael Lammersdorf, Bernd Schachtsiek, John Traxler, and Kees Veen.

In February 2011, Kjetil Ørbek engaged Torunn as Director of Development at NKI. So, we were colleagues at NKI for nearly two turbulent years, which stopped when we both decided to quit.



In 2016, Torunn had started working for ICDE. So, at the EDEN 2016 conference in Budapest, she introduced ICDE's new Global Doctoral Consortium, and asked me to join its reference group with Mark Brown and Martin Weller. At the same time, the EDEN Young Scholars Support Scheme was introduced.

The ICDE Executive Committee met January 2018 at the Lysebu conference centre in Oslo. This was close to Nordmarka, my childhood's precious winter sport refuge. Torunn and Gard Titlestad represented the ICDE Secretariat, and Helmut Hoyer and I, the Board of Trustees. We met the new ICDE Board as Belinda Tynan was constituted President. I met Belinda, Neil Fassina, and Hyzel Rymer for the first time there, and said hello to Tolly Mbwette as he joined in via video from Tanzania.

Later in 2018, Torunn took over as Executive Director of NADE after Torhild Slåtto, a few months before I agreed to take over as acting Secretary General for ICDE, after Gard Titlestad.

In my closing remarks at the ICDE 2019 conference in Dublin, I was pleased to announce that Torunn would take over the position as ICDE secretary General after me in 2020. She was the first woman to hold this position; a good solution for ICDE, Torunn, and me. But I envied Torunn when I introduced the Brazilian Ambassador, Eliana Zugaib, who welcomed us to the next ICDE World conference in Brazil, since Brazil has a special place in my heart. At that time, none of us knew that the 2019 Coronavirus disease had started to spread.

For ICDE's 85th anniversary in 2023, Torunn invited me to compile a selection of ICDE anecdotes from *My Online Education World: 1980–2020*. This resulted in my publication, *Thirty Years of ICDE*, which also was the backdrop of [ICDE's 85th anniversary panel](#) in Costa Rica. The panel was chaired by Anna Fredriksen, and I shared some ICDE experience together with the legendary Sir John Daniels and Alan Tait.

In 2023, Torunn also engaged me to conduct a quality review of Universitas Terbuka (UT) in Indonesia with Ebba Ossiannilsson and KC Lee. This was an extraordinary pleasant and interesting challenge, and the reviewers had a welcome opportunity to reflect on the successful quality review with Torunn and UT President Ojat Darojat in a panel at the ICDE 2023 World conference in Costa Rica.

At the EDEN 2024 conference in Graz, Josep Duart honoured Torunn as a new EDEN Fellow. An award she accepted in a video recording in front of the Oslo Opera House.

## Deborah Arnold (EDEN 2006)



Photo of Deborah from <https://eden-europe.eu/team/department/fellows-council/>

I probably first met Deborah when we attended the EDEN 2005 conference in Helsinki. However, the first time I remember talking with her was at the EDEN 2006 conference in Vienna. We were among a group of people walking back to our hotels after the conference dinner at the Belvedere Castle, the baroque castle surrounded by charming gardens with a pleasant view over the city and the stimulating painting *The Kiss* by Gustav Klimt. Deborah and Helen Keegan led the way to a local pub, and we were all in a good mood. I was fascinated by the energetic, red haired, eloquent, British speaking woman, who had a hard time convincing me that she was (also) French.

At the 2010 EDEN Annual General meeting, we increased the

number of EC-members to eleven, and welcomed four women and one man as new members. They were Deborah, Gilly Salmon, Airina Volungeviciene, Ene Koitla, and Costas Tsolakidis. The conference took place at the Universidad Politecnica de Valencia in Spain and the conference theme was: *Media Inspirations for Learning What Makes the Impact?* [The conference blog](#) includes photos of Deborah as one of the new EDEN Fellows, along with António Teixeira, Airina Volungeviciene, and my Norwegian colleague, Berit Johnsen. My Penn State professor, Michael G. Moore, was also honoured with the Senior Fellowship.

At the EDEN 2012 Research Workshop in Leuven, Deborah chaired the second plenary session in which Marianne Poumay asked the rhetorical question, “*Students as pilots... But where is the map?*”, and Rok Primožič, from the European Students’ Union (ESU), discussed *Student-centred learning: Fact, challenge, or myth?*

I also appreciate Deborah’s 2013 greeting in my remembrance book, *Our Friend, the President*:

*Dear Morten, with foresight, enthusiasm and strong leadership in a velvet glove, you have been an inspiring President for EDEN in these challenging and fascinating times. I am both grateful and honoured to have worked alongside you on this journey and know that these qualities will serve you well for the next stage.*

Later, Deborah served as EDEN Vice President from 2015 to 2016, and I remember her as an excellent session moderator. She was always eloquent and to the point from the podium; immediately capable of invigorating a sleepy audience when I advised her to walk with the microphone among the participants.

At the EDEN 2016 Silver jubilee in Budapest, many conference papers focused on MOOCs and open badges. The Budapest University Chorus performed at the opening ceremony in the University Hall. There, EDEN President António Teixeira presented EDEN Senior Fellow Awards to Deborah and Rory McGreal. The upcoming President, Airina Volungeviciene, also honoured António as a Senior Fellow and Deborah launched the new EDEN Web Portal.

Deborah also was also one of the central people behind the EDEN Fellows Council, which was initiated at the EDEN 2018 conference in Genova, and formally established in 2019 with Lisa Marie Blaschke as the first Chair. From 2023 to 2024, Deborah served as the third Chair, after Don Olcott and before Albert Sangrà. Deborah’s term saw the creation of the EDEN Digital Education Leadership Academy (DELA), inspired by her research at UOC and by the D-TRANSFORM Erasmus+ project (2014-2017), in which EDEN was a key partner.



[Hear interview with Deborah.](#)

## Airina Volungevičienė (EDEN 2006)



*Photo of Airina from her profile on EDEN Nap members area*

I probably first met Airina Volungevičienė when we both attended the EDEN 2006 conference in Vienna. She later told me that she found my book, *Online Education and Learning Management Systems*, at the EDEN 2004 Research Workshop in Oldenburg. She used the book for teaching, recalled that it was a rare occasion to have a publication on online education at that time, and revealed that the Oldenburg workshop provided important published references for her future research in the field (by Gilly Salmon, Michael F. Beaudoin, and others).

At the EDEN 2010 Annual General meeting, we increased the number of EC-members to eleven by adding four women and one man. I was pleased to welcome Airina as one of our new colleagues, along with Gilly Salmon, Deborah Arnold, Ene Koitla, and Costas Tsolakidis, as new members of the EC.

In 2013, we appointed Airina as Vice President for Research in EDEN, and I remember her as a friendly, supportive, constructive, and well-prepared board member. I also appreciated her salute in my 2013 remembrance book, *Our Friend, the President*:

*Dear Morten, we need community to learn, to share, and to grow. You guided the EDEN community to open learning, transparent sharing and responsible growth. We have learnt, we shared, and we grow. It was my pleasure to follow your value-based guidance for the past three years.*

Airina took over the EDEN presidency after António Teixeira in June 2016, when the Brexit referendum took place. In 2019, she passed on the presidency to Sandra Kucina Softic.

At the EDEN 2023 conference in Dublin, I joined Airina, Alan Tait, António Teixeira, and Sandra Kucina Softic in a panel discussion, where we shared our experiences as former EDEN presidents. There, Airina highlighted the challenges with Brexit during her presidency and her work to establish EDEN Digital Learning Europe in Estonia, to carry on in case there would be a Brexit with no withdrawal agreement (which apparently happened later).

Airina's contributions to strengthen the collaboration of national associations working in online and distance education resulted in the annual EDEN European Distance and eLearning Week establishment in collaboration with USDLA in 2016 and the European Open Education week as a part of the Global Open Education Week, in 2017.

Airina also stated that her mission was to strengthen the link and collaboration between the wisdom of the EDEN Fellows and the enthusiasm of the youth. So, the PhD Symposium and the EDEN Fellow Council were introduced at the EDEN 2018 Research Workshop in Barcelona.

 [Hear interview with Airina.](#)

## Lisa Marie Blaschke (EDEN 2006)



*Private photo of Lisa Marie in 2012 when I handed over the EDEN Fellow Award*

The first time I talked with Lisa Marie Blaschke was at the EDEN 2006 workshop in Castelldefels. We sat next to each other on the bus to the conference dinner. So, I learned that she started out as a Wisconsin farm girl and studied technical writing before she moved to Germany and became a successful corporate manager working with SAP. We even exchanged experiences about our adopted children.

I also associated Lisa Marie's name with the Master of Distance Education & E-learning programme, which was offered by the Maryland University College and Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. The programme was introduced in the late 1990s by Uli Bernath, Eugene Rubin, and Thomas Hülsmann. Lisa Marie was one of the first students to graduate from the programme and took over as the programme director when Thomas Hülsmann retired.

At the EDEN 2010 Research Workshop in Budapest, Gilly Salmon and I presented the Best Research Paper Awards to Lisa Maria and Jane Brindley for their paper, *Establishing a Foundational Framework for Development of Reflective Thinking: Learning Journals in the MDE*. Lisa Marie later told me that was the moment she felt accepted as a real academic.

At the EDEN 2012 conference in Porto, during the welcome reception in the Noble Hall of Alfandega Congress Centre, I had the pleasure of honouring Lisa Marie with the EDEN Fellow award together with Andrea Karpati, Michael Auer, Diana Andone, Laszlo Komaromi, and Fabio Nascimbeni.

During the Annual General Meeting, I presented the [president report](#), thanked the three retiring EC members, Andrea Karpati, Tapio Koskinen, and Gilly Salmon, and welcomed the three newly elected EDEN EC members. Lisa Marie was not present at the meeting, but her video recording was obviously good enough for her to be elected, together with Grainne Conole and Fabio Nascimbieni. Anyway, we soon met face-to-face at the next EDEN EC meeting at the Menon office in Brussels.

António Teixeira presided over the closing plenary of the EDEN 2012 Research Workshop in Leuven, where Lisa Marie and a representative of Leuven Union of Students in Pedagogical Sciences impressed me with their summary of the workshop in their concluding remarks.

I also appreciated the salute Lisa Marie's wrote in *Our Friend the President*, the remembrance book I received as I stepped down as President of EDEN in 2013, "*Dear Morten. Wishing you all the best today and in the future as you embark on new adventures. Your leadership and guidance within the EC will be greatly missed!*"

In 2016, Lisa Marie was promoted to Vice President of EDEN with special responsibility for NAP and membership issues, which resulted in her growing interest in how EDEN could better involve its fellows.

At the EDEN 2018 conference in Genova, Lisa Marie received the EDEN Senior Fellow Award and we met at the EDEN Fellow's meeting. I gave a short presentation, including this statement taken from my PowerPoint:

*I'm worried that **open and distance education becomes less flexible as mainstream education becomes more flexible**. Traditional distance and online institutions are merged with, or acquired by, larger mainstream institutions that intend to become more flexible. The result is often that the smaller institutions must adapt to the more rigid culture and systems of the larger institutions. National quality assurance regulations and agencies establish schemes for online education that are founded on not so flexible mainstream education.*

The Fellow's meeting resulted in the establishment of the EDEN Fellows Council with Lisa Marie as the first chair, a position she held until Don Olcott Jr. took over in 2021, which was talked about in [Steve Wheeler's interview with her at the EDEN conference in Bruges](#).



[Hear interview with Lisa Marie.](#)



## Stephen Downes (OLDaily 2006)



Photo of Stephen from Maria Maria Leal's one-question-interview with him at <https://lealmaria.wordpress.com/2010/04/12/1-question-interview-stephen-downes>

The first time I remember meeting Stephen Downes was at the EDEN 2006 Research Workshop in Castelldefels where he gave a keynote presentation titled “[Understanding Learning Networks](#)”. It was EDEN’s fourth research workshop and my first. So, I was surprised that my paper *COGs, CLIPs, and Other Instruments to Support Cooperative Learning in Virtual Learning Environments* was selected finalist in the Best Paper Award competition. And I was thrilled to read Stephen’s [OLDaily blog post](#):

*When Morten Flate Paulsen spoke in Barcelona last October, he outlined what I feel was an important distinction between collaborative learning and cooperative learning (one that is reflected, I think, in the distinction between groups and networks). In*

*[[Michael F. Shaughnessy's lengthy interview](#)], he discusses this and other aspects of his theory of cooperative freedom. The idea is to preserve autonomy while acquiring the benefits of groups. One technique, for example, is the idea of 'cooperative gating' - you can access a cooperative resource, but only if you have performed a task that contributes to the community resource.*

In 2008, Stephen delivered the online course Connectivism and Connective Knowledge with George Siemens. The course content explained connectivism and used some of the theory. The course was free to anyone and over 2,000 people around the world enrolled. The phrase Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) may have come from this course.

In 2010, I taught an online course for master students at the Universidad Aberta in Portugal. There, I urged the students to find relevant readings online and make one-question-interviews with the authors. The students soon identified Stephen as one of the most interesting and prolific scholars focusing on online learning technology and new media. So, Maria Leal approached him and was pleasantly surprised when he took time to respond. Which he almost always does. [Maria's interview with Stephen is still available in her blog](#).

For decades, I have been interested in providing online teacher services to improve their teaching and reduce their workload. So, I appreciated to be on a panel at the 2011 NFF-conference in Oslo to discuss Stephen's presentation “[We don't need no Educator: The role of the teacher in today's online education](#)”.

At Online Educa 2014 in Berlin I spent some time with Stephen at the presenters' reception. We talked about Stephen's interest for photography, his two presentations on [How to Build a MOOC](#) and [MOOC Tools](#) and mine which discussed “How the Nordic open online Academy (NooA) uses Moodle for Cooperative Freedom and Transparency in Online Education”. I remember it as a special meeting with a modest man and an extraordinary mind who stood out among all the suits and ties. For some reason, a picture of Albert Einstein passed my thoughts when I wrote the previous sentence.

In 2021, Stephen wrote the following in a [blogpost](#) about the anecdotes in [My Online Education World 1980-2020](#) which was a major encouragement to continue my work:

*Other people have written year-by-year histories of online and distance education, but this is written by someone who was there from the beginning and actually did the hands-on work. I first encountered Morten Flate Paulsen in the 90s on the DEOS*

*mailing list where, working with people like Michael G. Moore and Peter Cookson, he was already sharing his fifteen years' experience. Although only complete to 1991 (with more promised in the new year) what I really like about this presentation is that, while this is a personal reflection, it's not self-promotion. It really feels like the focus is on other people, as Paulsen works with, connects with, and celebrates the many people who created the foundations of our field.*

In a recent video chat with Stephen, I asked him how he found time and energy to write so many blogposts and respond to all requests from around the world. His answer made me appreciate that the Canadian National Research Council engaged him as a researcher on learning and collaborative technologies back in 2001.

 [Hear interview with Stephen.](#)

## Albert Sangrà (EDEN 2007)



*Photo from Albert's profile on EDEN Nap members area*

My friendship with Albert Sangrà started when I was elected to the EDEN executive committee in 2007, where Albert served from 2003 to 2009. I especially remember my first committee meeting at the Hurtigruten ferry from Trondheim to Tromsø, sailing out the fjord, approaching the Norwegian Sea, Albert looked uneasy when we observed sprays of sea water outside the fifth deck window. Then there were a growing number of uncomfortable faces around the table. Albert turned unusual silent. No major discussions arose. Seasickness is recommended for quick agreements.

In 2010, I enjoyed the lively carnival in Barcelona, combining a family trip with an Advisory Board meeting with Albert, about the Master Program in e-learning at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. There, I learned that Albert was about to become Vice-President of the European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning (EFQUEL), a position he held until 2014.

In 2014, I was invited by Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (OUC) to be on a doctoral commission, in which Antonella Esposito successfully defended her doctoral thesis, *The Transition "From Student to Researcher" in the Digital Age*. I enjoyed the lunch celebration with Antonella, her supervisor, Albert, and the rest of the commission at a local restaurant, but was surprised by the tradition, which implored the defendant to pick up the bill. I also appreciated the opportunity to meet my colleague, Pedro Fernández, from the Megatrends project, and attend a local concert with Albert's wife's choir.

The EDEN 2015 welcome reception in Barcelona took place in the *Centre de Cultural el Born*. There, EDEN President, António Teixeira, honoured Albert with the Senior Fellow Award, along with Alan Bruce, Terry Anderson, and Roberto Carneiro. The reception concluded with a colourful Catalan castells performance of acrobats forming human towers. I remember that the conference hashtag, #EDEN15, generated over 1,400 tweets on the first day, and that Albert gave a keynote titled, *"Expanding Learning Opportunities for the Last 25 Years."*

At the EDEN 2024 conference in Graz, Albert took over as Chair of the EDEN Fellow Council, after Deborah Arnold.

 [Hear interview with Albert.](#)

## Ildikó (Sünci) Mázár (EDEN 2007)



Photo of Ildikó from [www.eden-online.org/sustainable-fishing-in-the-eu/](http://www.eden-online.org/sustainable-fishing-in-the-eu/)

I came to know Ildikó Mázár through her friendly and efficient presence during my first EDEN conferences, and learned that she started as a student helper with pedestrian work, like enveloping conference brochures. But her involvement in student union work made ESIB (now the European Student Union ESU) become the first student organization in EDEN. Hence, Ildikó's role started changing from occasional conference assistant to regular project assistant. Later, she worked as Project Manager from 2002 to 2013, and Deputy Secretary General to 2016.

Starting in 2007, I spent much time heading the Megatrends project, which aimed to identify and analyse the largest European online schools, and learn from some of the failures in the field. In the project, I worked closely with Ildikó, and the other enthusiastic and competent partners: Per Arneberg, Lourdes Guàrdia, Desmond Keegan, Jüri Lössenko, Pedro Fernández Michels, Torstein Rekkedal, Albert Sangrà, Jan Atle Toska, and Dénes Zarka. We met in Oslo and Dublin, and I was impressed by Ildikó's knowledge about European research programs and projects. Later, I was happy to learn that she regarded Megatrends as one of the most memorable projects she was involved in. Having seen so many other projects (only) focusing on positive experiences and building on best practices, she found the Megatrends approach to learning from failures, as well as successes, very refreshing, insightful, and inspirational.

After quitting EDEN in 2016, Ildikó has continued working in the edtech industry and is currently focusing on digital credentials.

In 2018, it was nice to reconnect with Ildikó in Potsdam, where I represented ICDE and appointed her as member of EPICA's External Advisory Board. The project focused on Strategic Partnership for Co-Design of an Innovative and Scalable ePortfolio between businesses, organisations, and universities in Europe and Africa. I clearly remember our excursions to the Potsdamer Weihnachtsmarkt and the Sans Souci Palace. Ildikó later reminded me that all of the partners, particularly the colleagues from Africa, were very energised and passionate. We talked a lot about work, culture, and life in general, walked a lot, laughed a lot, and yet, the light-hearted atmosphere took nothing away from the hard work and professionalism during the meeting.

As we recently reminisced about our shared experiences, Ildikó sent me an e-mail including these words that meant much to me:

*I will always remember you as the humble great mind, who listened to everybody attentively. Even when I was still on the lower rungs of the career ladder you made me, and others, feel equal. Maybe it's a Nordic trait, but you always accommodated differences of opinion, and made sense of it. You never took rushed decisions and your vision and direction was always realistic but meaningful. I seem to recall that you never particularly enjoyed being on stage in the limelight, your forte was probably rather written than spoken words, but you didn't need to be a 'showman' to earn genuine professional respect.*

At the EDEN 2019 conference in Bruges, Ildikó was honoured with the EDEN Fellowship Award.

## Anna Wagner (EDEN 2007)



*Photo of Anna when she received the certificate of excellence from António Teixeira and Ildikó Mázár in 2016*

I first learned to know Anna Wagner when I was elected as a member of the EDEN executive committee after Carl Holmberg in 2007.

Anna and I spent some memorable days together at my first EC meeting on the Hurtigruta ferry boat, MS Midnattsol, along the Norwegian coast from Trondheim to Tromsø. There, I understood that Anna and András Szűcs started working for EDEN in the mid-1990s, when Tamás Lajos was president.

I spent much time with Anna during EDEN meetings and conferences for about a decade. My impression was that she was very focused on work, in full command of all details, and very supportive to the needs of EDEN staff and executives. She did not share much about her private life, but I understood that she was fond of her children and grandchildren, playing bridge, and reading literature. She worked very closely with Secretary General András Szűcs, and her hardworking staff members during my presidency, who included Project Manager, Ildikó Mázár, Project Officer, Éva Szalma, Administrative Officers, Éva Suba and Livia Turzo, Office Assistant, Gábor Cser, and ICT Manager, Gábor Román.

I soon realized that Anna was the efficient EDEN office manager who always provided invaluable support from behind the scenes, but never felt particularly comfortable with accepting public acknowledgement for her efforts.

I gradually realized that I enjoyed the position as EDEN President and the interaction with so many kind and gifted EDEN members, and that I was able to handle formal meetings, speeches, and ceremonies with excellent help and preparation by the EDEN secretariat. Anna always served me with detailed agendas, speaking points, and all necessary assistance.

Anna deserves a special thank you for all her support and hard work for EDEN executives and members. Anna received the certificate of excellence at the EDEN 2016 in Budapest for her “long term exceptional commitment, the smart and generous contributions to the success of the association over the years.”

Anna retired from EDEN in 2018, and currently enjoys her life as a grandmother of ten.

## Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook 2007)



*Photo of Mark from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark\\_Zuckerberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Zuckerberg)*

I have not met Mark Zuckerberg and he is not my favourite star. But he deserves to be included in this directory, since he transformed the life of many educators. In hindsight, Facebook has been important for my work and social life.

In April 2007, I set up my Facebook profile at [www.facebook.com/mfpaulsen](http://www.facebook.com/mfpaulsen), to learn more about the social media platform developed by the company Mark founded in 2004. Facebook was created for Harvard students, but gradually expanded to other North American universities, and was open in 2006 to anyone over 13 years old with an e-mail address.

To my delight, I found many of the same features in Facebook that we had developed in our SESAM LMS, including profile pages with several levels of access control, and opportunities to



connect with study buddies.

The EDEN 2009 Open Classroom conference in Porto was the first with a dedicated [Facebook page](#) and a coordinated Twitter coverage, using the #edenporto09 tag—a top trending Twitter hashtag in Portugal, due to the arduous work of Paulo Simões.

In 2010, Facebook passed 500 million registered members and I taught the course *Processos Pedagógicos em Elearning* for Master students at Universidad Aberta in Portugal. I accepted student requests to become their Facebook friends. It was interesting, but work intensive, to follow the students' online work because it was published in several different web2.0 services on various blogs, webpages and social media channels. They created their personal learning environment (PLE) outside the University's LMS; something that could be challenging and threatening for teachers and educational institutions.

Facebook gradually became more commercial, and earned a lot on quick and easy advertising between 2010 and 2020. This annoyed me as a user, but also helped me a lot, as I wanted to reach out to potential students with information about courses I offered through my private online school, NooA.

In 2016, my daughter showed me a Facebook profile. And it all made sense. The hometown, the name, and the facial features. The Facebook newcomer, primarily connected to family members and people in the local Brazilian community. It had to be Andrea's biological mother. When we adopted her in 1993, I had never, ever imagined something like this. I had read disturbing and touching stories. Watched TV-documentaries about adopted children who got professional help to find their biological families. But never heard of anyone who casually succeeded through social media.

2021 started with the frightening January 6th insurrection in Washington D.C. It then continued with daily news about the pandemic and good news of vaccine development. Scary news about new mutations, sickness, and deaths resulted in increasing criticism of Facebook's business model, and its harmful supply of conspiracies and controversies.

In 2024, the mother company of Facebook and Instagram, Meta, announced that they would not ask for permission to use our user data to develop its AI services. This resulted in so many protests that Meta had to change its strategy. Many users dropped out, but some found it hard to drop out of social media because they had built a network with many friends and memories.

## António Moreira Teixeira (EDEN 2008)



Photo of António from [www.eden-online.org/recognition/eden-fellows/](http://www.eden-online.org/recognition/eden-fellows/)

I first remember António Moreira Teixeira from the EDEN 2008 conference in Lisbon. He was Pro Rector at the *Universidade Aberta* (UAb) and deserved a lot of credit for making the conference a success for the 529 delegates representing 42 nationalities. As one of the 40 participants from Norway, I enjoyed the delicious Pastéis de Belém and many of Belém's historic attractions.

In 2009 António, helped me get appointed for one year as *professor associado* at UAb to develop and teach the online course, *Processos Pedagógicos em Elearning*, as a part of the Master's program, *Mestrado em Pedagogia do Elearning*.

I drove with António from Lisbon to Porto to attend the EDEN 2009 Open Classroom Conference. He was Chair of the local organising committee, and the conference was organised by Universidade Aberta and the University of Porto at the Alfândega do Porto convention centre. Under the slogan, *Incubating Creativity and the Capacity for Innovation: Open Content, Social Networking Tools, and Creative Learning for All*. António involved a team of students from UAb's Master's programme to cover the conference in online media. It was very successful, and resulted in organized conference blogging, social media coverage, and live streaming of plenary sessions at the following EDEN conferences.

I learned to know António as a friend with excellent social skills and lots of connections. I appreciated visiting his home and meeting him for private dinners with Carmo. I still appreciate collaborating and talking with him on telephone and video conferences, even though he usually talks much more than me.

At the EDEN 2010 conference in Valencia, I became President of EDEN and was lucky to have António and Alan Bruce as my Vice-Presidents. In my opening presentation, at the EDEN 2011 conference in Dublin, I honoured them for instigating the first EDEN Fellows' Day, and pointed out that there were 13 Senior Fellows and 40 Fellows, including 18 women and 35 men from 19 countries.

During the EDEN 2013 conference in Oslo, António and José Mota presented a paper, which introduced iMOOC as an alternative to the then dominant cMOOC and xMOOC approaches. Their idea was to combine a connectivist and more structured approach to bridge the gap between massive, non-formal learning opportunities and formal higher education.

At the end of the Oslo conference, António followed me as President of EDEN and announced that I was included in the exclusive group of twelve EDEN Senior Fellows. It was an unexpected emotional moment when he read the laudation:

*Morten Flate Paulsen - our dear Morten - is one of the most distinguished researchers and practitioners in online learning. Having been one of the pioneers, he has made an extensive and remarkable contribution to the field with such great achievements as the seminal theory of cooperative freedom and transparency in online education and his work at establishing the NKI Internet College and more recently the Nordic open online Academy - NooA.*

*Morten's contribution to EDEN has also been extensive and significant. He was an EC member, a regional editor of Eurodl, a Vice-president and also an inspirational President in a time of great challenges for the organization.*

I still blush when I read António's warm words in EDEN's remembrance book, *Our Friend, the President*:

*You've been an inspirational leader for EDEN in a time of demanding challenges and important changes. Someone who will remain a reference to us all.*

*But, most importantly you are a wonderful human being. The best of colleagues one can wish for and the dearest of friends.*

*In this magical moment, we look back with admiration to the great things you've achieved. But, should also look forward with anticipation to the impressive new endeavours you'll most certainly embark on. Thank you for everything!*

Later, I stayed at the Hotel Estoril Eden when I attended the EDEN/ICDE SCOP 2013 conference in Lisbon. António welcomed us as EDEN President, along with UAb Rector

Paulo Dias and ICDE President Tian Belawati. He was also among the prominent speakers and session chairs, along with Alan Tait and Tony Bates.

I later met António at all three annual conferences during his presidency: Zagreb (2014), Barcelona (2015), and Budapest (2016), when Airina Volungevičienė took over as president. Unfortunately, I did not attend the EDEN 2014 Research Workshop, which was organized with the OUUK in Oxford, but I later learned that António fought to revitalize the workshop, and that the conference was a success and had high impact on the research community.

António used his networking skills to strengthen and expand EDEN's alliances, partnerships, and collaborations. He revitalised collaboration with ICDE, USDLA, and EADTU; forged strategic alliances with ABED and Contact North; and signed memorandums of understanding with the European Parents Association, OEC, AarU, and Ascilite, and a reciprocal membership agreement with the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association (HTL).

Among other major EDEN achievements during António's presidency were the first 3-year operating grant from EU, the designation of specific portfolios to the Vice-presidents, and the creation of the EDEN Young Scholar Awards. Other developments included online card payment and open badges for conference related activities.

 [Hear interview with António.](#)

## Steve Wheeler (EDEN 2008)



*Photo from Steve's profile on EDEN Nap members area*

My first memory of Steve Wheeler is from the EDEN 2008 conference in Lisbon, where he was among the most active contributors to [the first EDEN conference blog](#).

I later had many memorable encounters and conversations with Steve. I also remember that he often brought his wife, Dawn, to EDEN conferences, which frequently clashed with his birthday in June.

The EDEN 2010 conference in Valencia was well documented in [the conference blog](#), with numerous observations and photos by Steve. He also wrote many sharp and witty EDEN reflections in his personal blog, Learning with 'e's, including [Setting a President](#), which offered this statement when I was elected EDEN President.

*I'm sure Morten will do an excellent job, because coming from Viking stock, he will take no nonsense from anyone. Actually, joking aside, Morten is one of the nicest guys you could ever expect to meet, quietly spoken, but extremely intelligent, well qualified, hugely popular and a very good looking guy as well. OK, I'm creeping here, because I gather there are some Presidential bodyguard jobs going and I love to wear the shades and hover my hand meaningfully over the inside pocket of my jacket.*

One of my fondest personal memories is welcoming and thanking Irish President, Mary McAleese, as a keynote speaker at the EDEN 2011 conference in Dublin. The [#edendublin Tweeters reported that the President sparkled](#), and the delegates' hearty applause was echoed in [Steve's blog](#).

At the EDEN 2013 conference in Oslo, Steve was again one of the main contributors to [the conference blog](#). The others were Alastair Creelman and Helen Hughes. Steve also chaired the keynote session with Sir Ken Robinson and Sugata Mitra, and summed it up in his blog post, [Standing on the shoulders of giants](#).

Steve served as Chair of the EDEN Network of Academics and Professionals (NAP) from 2014 to 2017. During that period, he created EDEN's Twitter chat feature with the hashtag, #EDENChat, started the online seminars, and developed EDEN's social media presence. He also hosted a series of popular [YouTube interviews with keynote speakers at several EDEN conferences](#).

The welcome reception at the EDEN 2017 Jönköping conference took place in the assembly hall of Jönköping University's School of Education and Communication. There, Steve was honoured as EDEN Senior Fellow by President Airina Volungeviciene.



[Hear interview with Steve.](#)

## Arne Jansen (NKI 2008)



*Photo of Arne Jansen from  
Webjournalisten.com*

In 2008, NKI received NOK 300,000 in support from Norgesuniversitetet to develop a course in Online Journalism. This initiated an innovative and inspiring collaboration with my NKI colleagues, Arne Jansen and Nhat Chu, to create Webjournalisten.com, NKI's online journal for students in Online Journalism. This allowed students to work in a virtual newsroom and publish articles in Joomla.

Webjournalisten.com was inspired by the City University of New York's Graduate School of Journalism and their student driven online journal [NYCityNewsService](#), a service promoted as a state-of-the-art multi-media-newsroom.

In September, the international fiscal crisis accelerated when the American investment bank, Lehman Brothers, filed for bankruptcy. At the same time, Arne published the first articles as editor of Webjournalisten.com and teacher in Online Journalism. He argued that online journalism differed from traditional journalism in several areas. Continuous updating, use of photo series, video, flash animations, and links created new opportunities and challenges for journalists. He also pointed out that students appreciated the opportunity to publish their work in an online newspaper written by students and open to everyone. It was so much more transparent, real, and interesting than just submitting their student work to a teacher.

In 2010, we got a follow-up grant from Norgesuniversitetet to establish a Scandinavian program in multimedia journalism. This funded three online courses giving 30 ECTS:

1. A Swedish course on audio journalism, with podcasting developed by Berghs School of Communication
2. A Danish course on video journalism, on the web developed by UPDATE—the Danish School of Media and Journalism
3. A Norwegian course on text journalism in a virtual newsroom, developed by NITH—the Norwegian School of Information Technology



The courses were administered by NKI. The students published their articles, videos, and audio files in Webjournalisten.com. Arne also initiated a Facebook page, titled Multimediejournalistikk.

The courses had individual start up and progression timelines. We also introduced individual exam dates, letting students know that they could choose a date they wanted to do their exam. And from day one, everyone knew they should submit three news stories at the end of the exam: one text, one video, and one audio. The topic of the stories would be announced in the morning of the chosen exam day.

For some students it was a challenge and a barrier to read course content in another Scandinavian language. This was something we tried to alleviate by installing Google translate on the web server.

I also did an informal survey about how well Scandinavians understand each other. I concluded that Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes would rather have online courses in English than in another Scandinavian language. However, there were still many who could imagine studying courses in another Scandinavian language. Anyway, it turned out that most of the students were Norwegian.

In 2011, the multimedia journalism project received the Boldic Award at SVERD's annual conference in Stockholm. According to the [Boldic website](#), there were six nominations. So, it was an honour to be at the conference with Kristiina Müllersdorf to receive the award on behalf of NKI Nettstudier, Berghs School of Communication, and the Danish School of Media and Journalism.

I miss Arne, who passed away far too early during the pandemic. He was an online pioneer and esteemed colleague, whom we honoured by attending the funeral, which was streamed online.

## Kurt Karlsen (NKI 2008)



*Photo of Kurt from the 2008 interview in Nettskoleavisen*

I have encountered thousands of online students since I taught my first online course at a distance in 1987. I have taught online courses for NKI, Connect Education, Athabasca University, University of Syracuse, NooA, and Universidade Aberta in Portugal. In addition, I have communicated with hundreds of prospective students via phone and e-mail, and conducted dozens of surveys and interviews with online students. These encounters were crucial for my online education work and initiatives.

In 2001, we integrated NKI's student administrative and accounting system with our SESAM LMS. In 2005, we included learner profiles with contact and course information from the student management system and urged students to add profile pictures and personal information. In 2009, we started to show all completed courses in the student profiles, along with bronze, silver, and gold badges provided to students who respectively had completed 10, 15, and 20 distance education courses. Most impressive was Kurt Karlsen, who topped the list, as he had completed 56 NKI courses as a distance student.

This prompted me to interview Kurt for *Nettskoleavisen* about his experiences in 2008. I discovered that he had a background as construction worker, carpenter, and janitor. In 2000, a workplace reorganization prompted him to seek greater control over his career. Having

previously completed correspondence courses at NKI, he recognized distance education as a viable option for furthering his education.

Kurt decided to take a two-year unpaid leave from work, defer his mortgages, and secure a student loan to pursue his studies. He began with the Janitor School and progressed to a leadership program for janitors. This mode of learning suited him well; he received valuable feedback from teachers and found the course material engaging and relevant.

Upon completing his studies, Kurt effectively applied his newfound knowledge. The flexibility of studying at his own pace allowed him to read at his convenience, study from home, and avoid the costs and time associated with travel. This additional competence opened more job opportunities. He spent two years working for a private construction company before returning to Aurland municipality, where he was responsible for the operation and maintenance of municipal buildings.

Kurt's testimonial is one of many success stories I have procured and promoted in media to advocate online education. This still reminds me why I dedicated my career to online education and how important the work of online educators has been to millions of students around the world.

In 2009, I wrote the book chapter, "Tusen NKI-studenter viser ansikt," based on my reviews of student profiles and stated that that NKI's 9,000 online students represented a broad section of the population. The vast majority were ordinary people who found that online studies was a good and flexible form of study. For many, online studies had been the only relevant opportunity to get the education they wanted. This applied, for example, to working people who did not have time or opportunity to follow traditional education, women who cared for young children (70% of NKI's online students were women), Norwegians abroad (NKI had online students in at least 35 countries), students with disabilities, people on rehabilitation, and inmates in prisons.

## Alan Bruce (EDEN 2008)



Photo from Alan's profile on EDEN Nap members area

I first became aware of Alan Bruce at the EDEN 2008 conference in Lisbon when he gave a keynote titled, *Innovative Intercultural Learning in Post-war Environments*. The presentation gave me the first insight in his longstanding focus on e-learning as a method to address systemic issues around social inclusion and emancipatory learning.

I met him again at the EDEN 2009 conference in Gdansk when he was Chair of the EDEN NAP Board. Then again at the EDEN 2009 Open Classroom conference in Porto, when Alan and Anestis Papadopoulos received the best paper award for *Preparing Pupils for a Changing Planet: Learner Empowerment and Cultural Competence through Innovative Best Practice*.

When I became President of EDEN in 2010, I was happy to have Alan and António Teixeira as Vice-Presidents.

At the EDEN 2011 conference in Dublin, Alan was Master of Ceremony when Her Excellency, Mary McAleese, President of Ireland, addressed the 425 delegates from 40 countries. It was the first time a Head of State addressed an EDEN conference. She gave an

excellent keynote presentation, and the audience was really impressed by her speech. After her address, it was my privilege to give a thank you speech to the President.

Alan also instigated the first EDEN Fellows' Day, together with António Teixeira, in the Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin, to celebrate EDEN's 20th anniversary, and to reflect on the remarkable developments in e-learning and the challenges ahead. Twenty-four EDEN Fellows, as well as members of the EDEN Executive Committee, and invited guests from the USDLA, took part. Keynote presentations were delivered by Sir John Daniel, Maruja Gutierrez-Diaz, András Szűcs, and Marci Powell. The workshop concluded that all major developments during the last five years had been predicted, although not by all. Even so, the Fellows agreed that resistance to educational innovation persisted. In fact, developments were mostly substantial slower than foreseen because educational institutions inertia was much more effective than hoped.

Alan was heavily involved with the EDEN 2012 Open Classroom conference in Athens. The conference theme was "Never Waste a Crisis." He gave a presentation on educational visions, challenges, and perspectives and, with the political and economic backdrop at that time, I was intrigued by the optimistic attitude of the 206 delegates from 28 countries, who focused more on opportunities for change than on the dire economic situation in Europe. Several of the presenters argued that **an educational crisis would spur innovation**, and that the need for cost effective education would result in many opportunities for e-learning. The active involvement of many delegates from the Greek professional community of schoolteachers was a special asset of the conference. The special treatment at the conference dinner—including Alan's speech—and the guided tour to the Acropolis Museum made October 28th especially memorable for me. I thought everyone celebrated my birthday, until I learned that Greece celebrates Oxi Day on October 28th. Oxi Day commemorates the day Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas rejected Mussolini's ultimatum to allow Italian troops to pass through the Pindos Mountains.

The welcome reception at the EDEN 2012 Research Workshop in Leuven took place in the Gothic City Hall located at the Market Square since 1439. There, I had the pleasure of honouring the new EDEN Fellows. Maybe it was the historic setting, the social environment, or some alluring remarks from Alan, Fabio Nascimbeni, or Wim Van Petegem; I don't remember why, but I ended the evening by smoking the first and only cigar in my life.

At the EDEN 2015 conference in Barcelona, the welcome reception took place in the Centre de Cultural el Born. There, Alan was honoured as Senior Fellow by EDEN President António Teixeira, along with Terry Anderson, Albert Sangrà, and Roberto Carneiro. The reception concluded with a colourful Catalan castells performance of acrobats forming human towers. And then I took off to Sitges.

I also appreciated Alan's warm words in my remembrance book, *Our Friend, the President*:

*It is with the greatest pleasure that I add my voice to the many others who wish you every blessing for the future Morten. It really has been excellent to work and collaborate with you and to serve under your leadership as our EDEN President. You have had the grace and courage to develop our community in positive and energized ways. And it is our friendship I will continue in future years. Every success in your future endeavours and thank you so much for your example and professional voice.*

## Arne Heimestøl (Globalskolen 2009)



*Photo of Arne from his FaceBook profile*

The first meeting I remember with Arne Heimestøl was online in 2009. Since Arne was a teacher for my youngest son, who studied tenth-grade online courses at Globalskolen when we lived in Portugal. Globalskolen offered training in the three special Norwegian subjects (Norwegian, social studies, and RLE), which were not available at the local and international schools that the children attended. Globalskolen had 1,000 students in 90 countries from first to tenth grade.

I had followed the development of the Globalskolen since it started in 1998, and authored the article, “*A Global Primary School*” in 2003.

Since Globalskolen had students aged six and up, the school depended on parents helping the children. Therefore, parents received a separate account at Globalskolen to follow their children’s schoolwork. This gave me better insight into my son’s progress than I had when he went to a regular school.

After a couple of months of experience with the Globalskolen, I was particularly impressed by the multimedia content, and the excellent communication between my son and Arne. Arne proved to be a caring teacher, who was exceptionally accessible on Skype, and competently explained the features and content of the learning platform if there was something my son needed help with. I concluded that Globalskolen was a unique opportunity for Norwegian children living abroad.

In 2011, I gave a presentation at Møre Folkehøgskole during an internal workshop for 20 online teachers at Globalskolen. There, I was especially happy to meet Arne again. I also remember meeting Bente Rui, whom I had interviewed in 2003 about her experiences with teaching six-year-old students online. In the evening, we first received a wonderful reception in scenic surroundings at the home of the Globalskolen’s newly appointed headmaster, Lilli Brenne Røv. Then, we enjoyed a three-course dinner at the local restaurant, LivElida. There, I was impressed by Helge Standal’s speech and all the good words he received as outgoing headmaster.

In 2014, the Norwegian Association for Distance Education honoured Arne, naming him the online teacher of the year. The laudation presented him as teacher and teaching inspector at Globalskolen, an online primary school he helped start with 15 students in 1998. In 2014, the school had 1,300 students in 100 countries. The laudation also included his impressive work with the open education resources about the Norwegian language at [Norsksidene](#).

In 2016, Torhild Slåtto and I represented the Norwegian Association for Distance Education in a joint effort with representatives for Globalskolen at a meeting with politicians at the Norwegian Parliament, where we successfully argued for sustained financial support to Globalskolen.



## Gilly Salmon (EDEN 2009)



Photo from Gilly's profile on EDEN Nap members area

I became aware of Gilly Salmon through her bestselling books, *E-Moderating: The key to teaching and learning online* (2000), and *E-tivities: The Key to Active Online Learning* (2002). These books led to many invitations for Gilly to give presentations about online learning.

I wanted to include Gilly in the EDEN family and was happy when she was elected as a member of the EDEN executive committee at the 2009 conference in Gdansk. Unfortunately, she decided to withdraw from the EC when she moved to the University of Southern Queensland in 2012.

Gilly gave a Keynote at the EDEN 2010 Research Workshop in Budapest titled, "The tree of Learning: Nurturing the Growth." As President, I had a busy agenda: meeting executives and partners, presenting the EDEN Fellow Awards at the welcome reception, and chairing the first plenary session with Andras Benedek's opening address, and introducing keynotes by Gilly Salmon, Olaf Zawacki-Richter, and Grainne Conole.

We also met at a 2010 conference at the University of Oslo about "pocket learning" (Læring rett i lomma). This conference focused on new learning opportunities made available as podcasts and video-content became available on mobile phones. Gilly gave an interesting presentation titled, "*The renaissance for voice: Transforming learning.*" Marianne Talbot, from the University of Oxford, presented reflections on her successful philosophy course, which ranked number one of the top downloads from iTunes U. Maria Hancock and Ben Hubbard from UC Berkeley gave the presentation, "*Fifteen years' experience with podcast.*" The conference chair, Bent Kure, challenged me to sum up the conference. So, in my concluding video presentation, I indicated that future students would make much more innovative web2.0 presentations than most video lectures we saw in 2010, and that a lot of students already had their own YouTube channels.

Educational institutions experimented with a range of additional products and services, such as iTunes U, YouTube, Matterhorn, and Camtasia, to make lectures available on the web. This was good for educational transparency and flexibility. But are everyday lectures worthwhile distributing via the web – or is it wiser to spend some of the resources on developing better or alternative instructional content?

At the EDEN 2011 conference in Dublin, Gilly gave the presentation "Would you start from here? The 5-stage model revisited." At the EDEN 2014 conference in Zagreb, she gave the presentation "Learning Innovation: A Framework for Transformation."

## Stars in My Online Education World 2010-2020

Here are some people I consider including in the final volume of my directory.

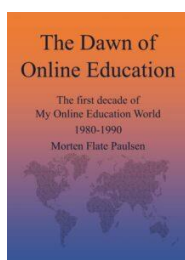
Belawati, Tian .....	Olstad, Kari.....
Brand, Johan .....	Onarheim, Leif Frode .....
Brown, Mark.....	Ossiannilsson, Ebba.....
Creelman, Alastair.....	Papandreou, George.....
Dougiamas, Martin .....	Poce, Antonella .....
Fassina, Neil.....	Prensky, Marc .....
Holm, Dennis .....	Siemens, George .....
Isaksen, Torbjørn Røe .....	Softić, Sandra Kučina .....
Jean-Louis, Maxim .....	Titlestad, Gard .....
Kjendlie, Petter .....	Tveiten, Oddgeir .....
Kvieskienė, Giedrė.....	Tynan, Belinda.....
Nichols, Mark .....	Utstøl, Lars .....

## Stars in My Online Education World 2010 – 2020

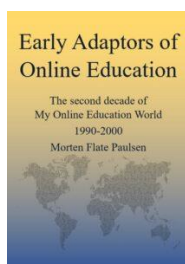


*How many of these 24 stars do you recognize from the photos?*

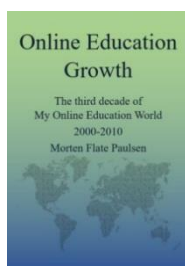
## Five open access books in *My Online Education World*



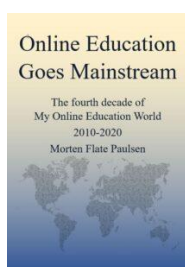
**[The Dawn of Online Education](#)** was published in January 2024. In 1980, distance education was synonymous with correspondence courses, educational radio, and television. But the eighties totally transformed our perception of distance education. The major driver of the development was new technology: PCs, modems, and learning management systems. In the eighties, I started working as a hardware engineer with keen interest in microcomputers before I joined a group of people who established Norway's first private ICT college. There, I taught ICT courses, bought a modem, and headed the development of a learning management system for online education. In 1987, I taught my first distance education courses online and visited online education pioneers in the US and Canada.



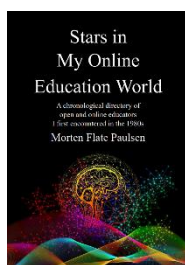
**[Early Adaptors of Online Education](#)** was published in April 2024. The 1990s was a decade of amazing innovations. The decade that introduced PCs with colour- and graphic interfaces. New Internet services opened the world, and the web brought it all together. Search engines provided immediate access to mindboggling sources of information. Online journals, early web-based learning management systems, digital cameras, and personal digital assistants (PDAs). And mobile phones that changed our lives. In the early 1990s, I was a doctoral student and graduate assistant for the American Center for the Study of Distance Education. There, I established *Deosnews* as one of the first online journals in the field. Back in Norway, I learned html, developed websites, designed my first web courses, and initiated the development of a web based LMS.



**[Online Education Growth](#)** will be available in the fourth quarter of 2024. It covers a decade with substantial growth in online education. A decade that introduced Wi-Fi, multimedia PCs, online bank accounts, and PayPal. Skype, Spotify, podcasts, creative commons, and open educational resources. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and many other social media services. Learning Management Systems became omnipresent in Norwegian schools and universities. Systems that I had to relate to as a father of three schoolchildren. As director of development for a fast-growing online school, I took part in a dozen European R&D projects and led several innovative projects.



**[Online Education Goes Mainstream](#)**, will likely be available in the beginning of 2025. The 2010s introduced smart phones, iPads, video communication, MOOCs, electronic badges, nano learning, learning analytics, and cloud computing. A decade with increased focus on online education in public universities. Partly due to media coverage of MOOCs. A decade I worked as professor of online education in Norway and Portugal, established my own online school, became President of the European Distance and E-learning Networked (EDEN) and had many international experiences as Secretary General for the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE).



During the writing process, I realised that I have learned from so many brilliant people around the world. To honour them, I started to develop a chronological directory of ***Stars in My Online Education World***. The directory unfolds as a narrative which shows how these individuals influenced my professional growth and shaped the various stages of my work in online education. Readers may look up individual stars of special interest, read it as a developing narrative of prominent people in the field, or use it as a supplement to *My Online Education World*.