Continuous Evolution

By John O'Brien

Welcome to the first “Special Report” published by EDUCAUSE Review. After nearly two decades of publishing EDUCAUSE Review, we have reimagined our flagship print magazine, as advances in technology have changed both how we deliver our content and how you consume the material. This change is only the most recent. For example, somewhere in the early days we decided to take advantage of the emerging World Wide Web and post PDFs of our print articles; next we added HTML versions; and in 2009 we started publishing articles from our accompanying quarterly journal (EQ) online-only. As these changes unfolded, we began producing and incorporating multimedia such as podcasts, videos, and infographics, and in 2012 we merged all our content into the redesigned, mobile-friendly EDUCAUSE Review website. As a result of these subtle but eventually transformative refinements, the current print/online EDUCAUSE Review differs considerably from the first print-only issue published in January 2000.

You'll also notice a new look and feel in this first publication of 2019, with design changes that amount to more of an evolution than a complete redesign. Since EDUCAUSE Review has received nearly 100 awards over the years—many of them for print design, illustration, and overall publication excellence—we want to continue our tradition of producing a distinctive and well-recognized magazine with high-quality content. Whenever I walk into a CIO’s or president’s office and see a copy of EDUCAUSE Review, I’m reminded how uniquely compelling print articles are. With that in mind, we want to reward our print readers with an engaging experience. In this issue, you might notice some adjustments to white space, colors, and type treatments—all of which, together, create a clean, simplified, yet captivating background to showcase the innovative and thought-provoking articles written by our members and contributors.

Another shift for 2019 is our move to publishing four regular print issues of EDUCAUSE Review each year—in winter, spring, summer, and fall. (As always, each issue will be available to members and nonmembers alike on our website, supplemented with much additional, online-only materials every two weeks.) Going from six to four regular issues will free up our resources to focus more deeply on timely topics with the publication of special reports.
resources to focus more deeply on timely topics with the publication of special reports. Our first special report explores the EDUCAUSE 2019 Top 10 IT Issues. This annual list of issues has itself been a constantly evolving constellation of insights. At the second EDUCAUSE Annual Meeting, in October 1999, the Current Issues Committee suggested that EDUCAUSE conduct a survey of its members “to capture information about the most pressing issues or challenges in higher education information technology and resource management.” In June 2000, we published a four-page report on the survey, along with an article elaborating the top 10 challenges. The annual survey and article blossomed over the years, so that by 2014 we were devoting an entire issue of the magazine to the topic.

What started as a single list of issues focused on technology and resource management evolved into several lists of the most pressing challenges in higher education and the contributions of information technology in addressing them. In response to member feedback that the Top 10 IT Issues were light on technology, we added a companion report on the Top 10 Strategic Technologies, summarizing institutional leaders’ upcoming plans for emerging technologies. The Top 10 portfolio was later complemented with a Trend Watch report (to place both the issues and the technologies in the context of larger technological, higher education, and societal trends) and with the ELI Key Issues (to take a deep dive into teaching and learning). Today we are continuing to make adjustments to how we explore these issues. You can anticipate more changes in our Top 10 portfolio.

As we carry the higher education edition of the Horizon Report forward from our friends at the former New Media Consortium (NMC),1 we have a remarkable opportunity to meld these two product lines into a coherent portfolio that analyzes what we know is happening today and also forecasts what we anticipate will happen tomorrow. The result will be a powerful, broad view of current and future trends, challenges, and important technological developments in higher education.

What is the point of all these tweaks and shifts? We want to remain relevant and useful to you, our readers and members. Our goal is to help you know what’s important and where to focus. As the world changes around us, you must change, and we are changing with you.

Every year the Top 10 IT Issues reflect the state of the field, and 2019 is no different. Today technology strategy, institutional strategy, and cultural trends are increasingly comingle. As elaborated in this EDUCAUSE Review Special Report on the 2019 Top 10 IT Issues, data and student outcomes are taking center stage. The emphasis on incorporating data and technology into institutional practices and strategies for student success reflects a growing readiness for higher education information technology and resource management.” In June 2000, we published a four-page report on the survey, along with an article elaborating the top 10 challenges. The annual survey and article blossomed over the years, so that by 2014 we were devoting an entire issue of the magazine to the topic.

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Note
1. For more on EDUCAUSE plans for the Horizon Report and the NMC community, see Susan Grajek, “Future of a Futures Focus,” EDUCAUSE Review, August 16, 2018.