

Oregon State University Ecampus Research Unit

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF LONG-TERM ONLINE INSTRUCTORS



Oregon State
University

Presenter



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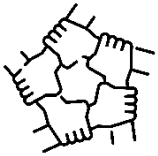
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About the Ecampus Research Unit

ecampus.oregonstate.edu



Original Research in Online Higher Education



Support for Online Education Research



Collaborative Studies and Programs



Research Literacy Tools

About the study

Goal: *Learn more about the experiences of long-term online instructors (defined as those who have taught online for 10+ years).*



Study Structure: 3 60-min interviews

Focus of interview questions:

- Individual origin stories for online teaching
- Professional development history
- Attitudes toward and beliefs about online teaching
- Perceived changes to online teaching over time
- Teaching and course development practices



Total respondents

33



Demographics: Teaching online

**Year started teaching
online**

Range 1990-2010

Average 2004

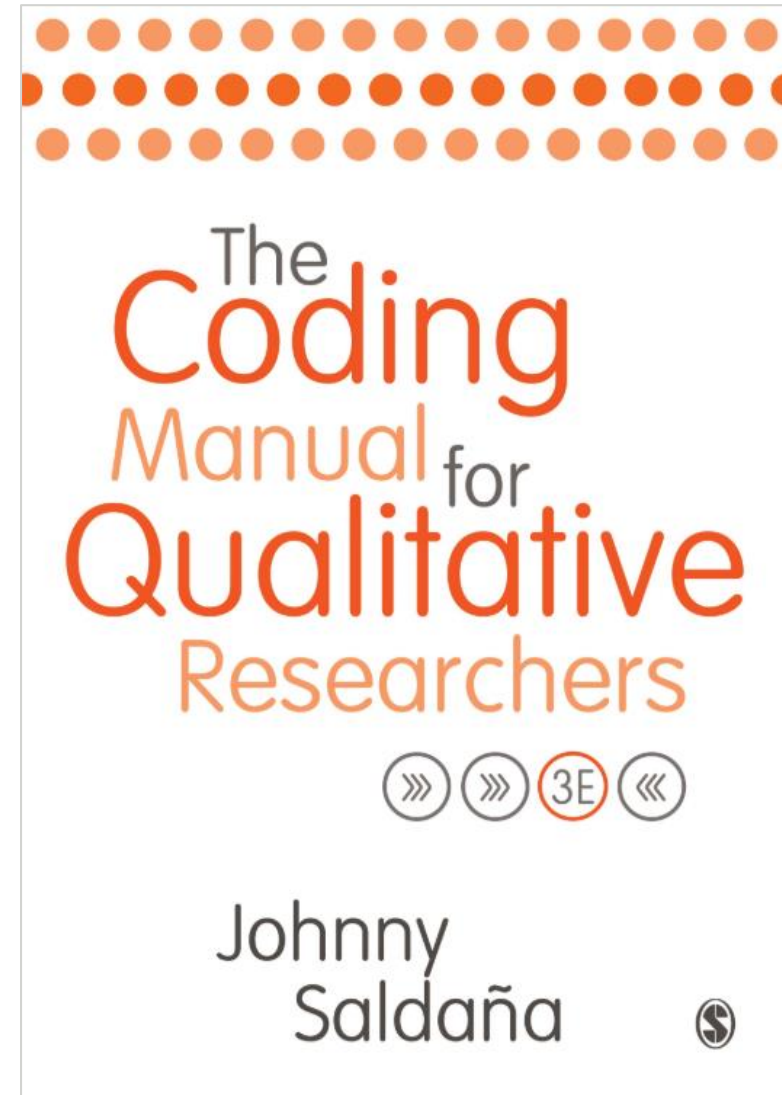
**Years taught online at
OSU**

High 31

Average 14

Data analysis

- Part 1** Precoding
- Part 2** Coding strategy plan
- Part 3** Analysis and discussion
- Part 4** Writing up the results



Initial projects

- 1 Faculty perceptions of skills for instructors
- 2 Faculty perceptions of the future of online learning
- 3 What has kept faculty teaching online
- 4 Advice for new online instructors



Project 1 | Faculty perceptions of skills for instructors and students

- What skills do you think are most valuable for online instructors to have?



Skills for **Instructors**: Communication

“...the importance of communication, and to become an outstanding communicator with your students. You have to learn how you do it, how to do it well, and how you do it so much.” (#14)

“..good communication. That means a lot of different things, so being able to answer questions, being open to different interpretations of your words so you can make communications or expectations clear.” (#24)



Responsiveness

“They need to be able to spend a lot of time communicating with students via electronic means they have.... You will be doing a lot of online interaction and they have to be willing to do that.” [#16]

Tone of Voice

“So, it's almost conversational is what I figured out works best.... and not sounding so much as an academic writer, but someone that's in conversation with them about these things.” [#3]



Most valuable skills for instructors

Organization

- organizing material so it was self-explanatory, clear and understandable
- in both course design and teaching

Time management

- teaching
- responding to students

Technology Skills

- comfort level/familiarity with online course tools
- developing skills to instruct students



Project 2 | Future of online learning

- What do you think is the future of online learning?



Project 2 | Future of online learning

Code	Sample Quote
OL will increase access and accessibility	“So for international students who would like to access the intellectual rigor of the US university system, this online kind of experience, I think, would be really helpful.”
OL might replace brick & mortar institutions	“I do hope that there will always be some avenue for the face to face, if only for certain courses or certain skill development that really needs to get outside of what you and I are doing here right now. And whether it's soft skills like interpersonal communication or learning how to cook something, you know?”
OL won't replace brick & mortar institutions	
Technology development will increase	“I think that our online systems are going to become better at adapting to the individuality of individuals and how it is that they go about learning.”
Hybrid/blended learning will grow	“I think that even face to face, are probably going to need some type of web component just because there's so much out there, textbooks, reading materials, videos, whatever... I like to fantasize about what I would do with a face-to-face class, and I think for me, a hybrid class would be just optimal.”
OL will continue to be a money maker	“My dark future is it becomes a way to get a lot of money out of a lot of students really quickly and easily and not have to pay so many instructors and not have to pay much and lose accountability.”



Future of online learning: Horizon Report

Code	Sample Quote
Modularized and Disaggregated Degrees	“I think it's exciting because I think you should be able to do it [online learning] whenever you want from wherever you want... You're just grabbing some education and you need that to do this next task and it's...not linear.”
Redesigning Learning Spaces	“I think that our online systems are going to become better at adapting to the individuality of individuals and how it is that they go about learning... what they pursue and how they put the information together and what they do with it.”
Blended Learning Designs	“There’s going to be more hybridization. We're going to see more and more tools, more and more flexibility, more methods where students are learning using technology or online tools.”
Rethinking How Institutions Work	“I just have a sense that there are potential new interesting things that could happen in terms of how we do education...there's a lot of power in the way we communicate online and use the tools that, even new tools we never thought of.”
Collaborative Learning	“Online learning opens up the world. Multiple academic units. And that's a value. What you can learn from other people all over the world.”



Project 3 | Kept faculty teaching online

- What has kept you teaching online?



What kept faculty teaching online?

They Want to Make an Impact

- Online teaching effectiveness
- Providing access to education

“To me, this is golden. This is one of the things that keeps me going for as long as I do. It's so important for me that online teaching opens the doors where there used to be walls.”



What kept faculty teaching online?

Interest in Educating

- “Intrinsic interest” in content
- Passion for teaching
- Teaching facilitates new ideas
- Seeing students learn and grow

Online Teaching Benefits

- Flexibility
 - Work any time, anywhere
- Diversity of Students
 - “Non-traditional,” full-time employees, students unable to meet in person
- Enjoyed the challenge
- Preferred the pedagogy



Project 4 | Advice for new online instructors

- What advice do you have for new online instructors?



Advice for new online instructors

Consider the online medium. You are “changing the medium of delivery... use that medium to your advantage.”

Learn from others. Avoid “reinventing the wheel.” Learn from other online instructors, professionals in the field, and trainings.

Make your presence known. Communicate with students “frequently and regularly.” Consider using multiple methods.

Consider and support your students. Continually invite students into the course. “Look at a course from the eyes of being a student.”



Advice for new online instructors

Build an online community. “The students need to feel engaged and connected to you as an instructor, and to the other students.”

Be aware of the time and effort it takes. “A lot of upfront work” in developing new online courses. “More time than you think” once the term begins.

Believe in your ability to teach online. “If you have some disbelief, suspend that disbelief... pretend like you really believe in it.”

Focus on what you love about this. Enjoy the experience. “There has to be something you love about doing this. Focus on that.”





Implications and Discussion

Questions?

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Five (5) \$25 gift cards will be awarded