



Articles from Jan 2005 JADOL Newsletter

President's message

Since its launch in July 2000, JADOL has grown slowly and progressed steadily with former President, Wesley Barrett, as faithful helmsman. Sincere thanks are accorded to Wesley and his Executive for getting JADOL 'up and running'. There is much that this small group of distance educators and distance learners can be proud of. Among these, three things are of significance. First, JADOL must be con-gratulated for its hard work, guidance and active involvement in the formation of the Caribbean Association of Open and Distance Learning (CARADOL) on whose Executive several JADOL members have been elected to leadership posts. Then JADOL's various lectures/seminars, though not attracting large audiences, were both well prepared and presented and provided audiences with solid and interesting content on various aspects of open and distance learning. Finally, the establishing of JADOL's Week of Activities has provided a platform for the public recognition of two Jamaican stalwarts – Professor Gerald Lalor and Mr. Arthur Williams – for their pioneering and innovative work in distance education.

These latter two activities are well worth continuing and improving and are part of the commitment of this new Executive Committee. Additionally, we expect to improve and expand our public image by increased, more focused work in public relations. This we see as important if we are to forge new links and cement older relationships with other organizations at home and abroad. As well, this will help us to attract the well-needed cadre of quality members from among those currently working in open and distance learning.

With the expertise vested in our Executive Committee, we echo the words of our former President in our intention to continue striving "to add value to (our) work and to bring benefits to all (our) stakeholders."¹ So, as we start this term of office, on behalf of the members of the Executive, I commit our efforts to fulfilling JADOL's Mission as well as to achieving its aim in an efficient and effective manner.

Vilma McClenan

President

¹JADOL Newsletter No. 1 August 2001

Champions for distance education and open learning

Mr. Wesley Barrett, co-founder and first President of JADOL, stepped down from that post after serving the maximum two terms of two years each, as set by the association's constitution. Ms. Vilma McClenan was elected as the new president at the Annual General Meeting, held in Kingston on October 25, 2004. JADOL will still benefit from Wesley's expertise in his capacity as Immediate Past President on the Executive.

Recognizing the importance and growth of open and distance learning that utilize a variety of

media for the delivery of educational programmes at various levels, the former Chief Education Officer spearheaded the establishment of JADOL in 1999, mobilizing a steering committee and working groups of persons involved in distance education to carry out the necessary ground work. JADOL was launched in July 2000 during a conference on *Distance Education in Small States*, which was organized by the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC).

A veteran educator, Wesley moved from classroom teacher (1965-67) and principal (1967-1973) to the Ministry of Education, where he rose through the ranks from Education Tutor (1973-1974), Education Officer (1975-1981), Senior Education Officer (1981-1988) and Assistant Chief Education Officer (1988-1989) to Chief Education Officer, from which he retired last year, after serving from 1989.

Wesley has been involved in open and distance learning from the 1970s when he was a member of the team that trained pre-trained teachers in the In-service Teacher Education Thrust programme (1973-1982), which used the distance education modality. His other activities in the field include coordination of a degree programme in Computing and Information Systems delivered online by Athabasca University (Canada) for 30 teachers and working with a team on upgrading teachers from the certificate to diploma level by distance education. Since 1989, he has worked closely with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in implementing projects in open and distance learning in Jamaica, including a feasibility study on open schooling in Jamaica, the report and recommendations of which are now being used by the Ministry of Education in a joint project with UNESCO for upgraded high schools.

A graduate of Mico College and The University of the West Indies [BA, MA (Ed)], in addition to pursuing various specialized project and management courses, Wesley participated in a UNESCO programme in Planning, Design and Management of Distance Learning, held in Paris in 1996. He has also attended several training workshops and seminars sponsored by COL, including an attachment to the Canada-based institution in 2001.

In addition to his membership in JADOL, Wesley is affiliated with the Association of Caribbean Chief Education Officers, which he chaired from 1996-2004, and is a Vice President of the recently established Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning (CARADOL).

Ms. Vilma McClenan, newly elected President of JADOL, brings to the position a wealth of experience, having spent the past twenty years of her long and illustrious professional career as an educator working in the development and delivery of distance education. She is currently the academic programme coordinator at the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC), a post she has held since 1996, with responsibility for co-ordinating the delivery of distance education programmes across The University of the West Indies (UWI). Prior to this she was one of the early contributors to the establishment of distance education at the UWI in the 1980s. In recognition of her work in distance education at UWI, she was recently presented by her UWIDEC colleagues with a citation for 21 years of service. She holds a Masters in Distance Education from the University of London, and is fully conversant with all aspects of the instructional design process. Her expertise has been brought to bear both within and outside of UWI.

Not only is Vilma versed in the instructional design process, but she also has worked with international agencies to develop proposals for the funding of distance delivered programmes and has also implemented them. She has been involved with all aspects of establishing and staffing distance learning sites including drafting job descriptions, training staff, preparing and procuring equipment and other resources and providing for a range of learner support services, including co-authoring the *Distance Student Handbook for UWIDEC students*. She has broad-based experience in strategy planning *continued...* and managing the delivery and evaluation of distance education programmes for academic qualifications as well as for non-academic

certification. All these skills combined with her strong leadership qualities make her well suited to the task of further developing JADOL her post as President.

Her international experience includes a stint in 1998-1999 in the Distance Learning Unit of the World Bank Institute in Washington, D.C., where she worked as an instructional designer, responsible for the conversion of face-to-face courses (e.g. Strategic Communication in Bank Projects) for delivery to World Bank countries, using an integrated mix of video-conferencing, video tapes, print and guest presenters. She was also involved in the planning and delivery of training in distance education techniques to World Bank Task Team Leaders.

Vilma was a member of the steering committee responsible for the formation of JADOL and chaired the committee that drafted the constitution. She also drafted the constitution for the Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning (CARADOL) which had its inaugural meeting in March 2004, and of which JADOL is a founding member.

The JADOL President has participated in a number of meetings and conferences on distance education and has given presentations relating to distance education, a recent one being *Providing Student Support Services for Distance students of The University of the West Indies*, in Hawaii in January 2004. She was an international guest speaker at the Australian Adult Learners Week Celebrations in 1999, speaking on three topics: *Experiences in distance education at The University of the West Indies*, *Adult Education in Jamaica and the Caribbean*, and *Literacy in the Caribbean*.

Her other passions include adult education and science education. She is a member of the Jamaican Council for Adult Education of which she was First Vice President from 1996 to 2002, the Caribbean Regional Council for Adult Education, which she chaired from 1998 to 2002, and since 1998 she has been the Caribbean Vice President on the Executive Committee of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) representing the 22 countries of the English-, French- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean.

With a Diploma in Education and a B.Sc. (Botany, Zoology) from UWI, her work in science education includes science teaching at the then College of Arts, Science and Technology (1970-1975), at The Mico Teachers' College (1975-1978), Curriculum Development Officer at the UWI Science Education Centre (1978-1983), and Director of Science and Technology in the Science, Technology and Research Department (STRD), Ministry of Agriculture (1987-1989). She has authored and co-authored several science publications.

In 2000, for her work in science education Vilma received the Institute of Jamaica's Silver Musgrave Medal for Science Education, the Jamaica Teachers Association's Golden Torch Award for "35 years of Dedicated Service to Education", and the Henry I. C. Lowe Award for Excellence and Creativity in Science and Technology Education. In 1991, she copped the Science, Technology and Research (STAR) Award for Excellence in Science Education, at which ceremony in Kingston she presented a paper on *UWIDITE* [UWI Distance Teaching Enterprise] *as a resource in science education*.