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### Encouraging role based online learning environments - The BLUE Report

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## Encouraging role based online learning environments - The BLUE Report

### Abstract

Project EnROLE has been a two year \$200,000 ALTC project to encourage uptake of online role based learning environments, with particular focus on what is commonly referred to by us as role play. Role play is widely acknowledged to be a powerful teaching technique in face to face, blended and online teaching contexts and has been previously singled out as an example of good practice by ALTC predecessors: CAUT, CUTSD and AUTC. The project goal was to encourage uptake of online role based learning environments using the strategy of building a community of practice at university, state and national levels which would better reward and recognise teachers already using role play and scaffold teachers wanting to get started with role play. Starting with the core team based at 5 NSW universities, Project EnROLE's community building activities have exceeded expectations, resulting in 26 outcomes (Table 1) involving hundreds of teachers Australia-wide, which affirms EnROLE's Dissemination Model of cascading university clusters and state networks. The BLUE Report describes these outcomes and achievements in 4 sections representing 4 phases of the project: Building, Linking, Understanding and Extending. The key finding is that a good practice database (repository) cannot be built without simultaneously building a community of practice and that the role of connector/broker is essential for community development. The BLUE report serves as a guide for educators interested in the field of online role play to assist them in identifying and accessing available resources. It also provides guides and frameworks of a more generic nature about Peer Review, Partnerships, Fellowships, Leadership and Uptake.

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project EnROLE  
BLUE report  
Building • Linking • Understanding • Extending

# encouraging role based online learning environments

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\* Dr Andrew Vincent died on April 5th 2008 in Beirut. We will all miss his fascinating insights on the Middle East and his contributions to the EnROLE project team. Andrew's Middle Eastern Politics Simulation was the seminal work in online role play in Australia. It has been running for 20 years in universities world-wide. It is a testament to its effectiveness that past students from Andrew's courses can decades later still recall the powerful learning experience provided by MEPS. It was Andrew who started most of us on the role play journey and it was Andrew who suggested we apply for a Carrick/ALTC grant. His spirit and knowledge will hopefully live on in the continuing use of online role play as a learning medium.

# Executive Summary

Project EnROLE has been a two year \$200,000 ALTC project to encourage uptake of online role based learning environments, with particular focus on what is commonly referred to by us as role play. Role play is widely acknowledged to be a powerful teaching technique in face to face, blended and online teaching contexts and has been previously singled out as an example of good practice by ALTC predecessors: CAUT, CUTSD and AUTC.

The project goal was to encourage uptake of online role based learning environments using the strategy of building a community of practice at university, state and national levels which would better reward and recognise teachers already using role play and scaffold teachers wanting to get started with role play.

Starting with the core team based at 5 NSW universities, Project EnROLE's community building activities have exceeded expectations, resulting in 26 outcomes (Table 1) involving hundreds of teachers Australia-wide, which affirms EnROLE's Dissemination Model of cascading university clusters and state networks.

The BLUE Report describes these outcomes and achievements in 4 sections representing 4 phases of the project: Building, Linking, Understanding and Extending. The key finding is that a good practice database (repository) cannot be built without simultaneously building a community of practice and that the role of connector/broker is essential for community development.

The BLUE report serves as a guide for educators interested in the field of online role play to assist them in identifying and accessing available resources. It also provides guides and frameworks of a more generic nature about Peer Review, Partnerships, Fellowships, Leadership and Uptake.

**Table 1: 26 Project Outcomes**

## Network

- ☺ community of practice for a new field
- ☺ 32 new role plays
- ☺ 21 partnerships in reuse of existing role plays
- ☺ 22 EnROLE Fellows to carry on the work
- ☺ 2 states cascaded from NSW

## Events

- ☺ 43 EnROLE events involving 816 participants in 3 Australian states
- ☺ Masked Ball as a unique professional development model

## Frameworks

- ☺ EnROLE Dissemination Model
- ☺ EnROLE Fellowship Framework
- ☺ EnROLE Peer Review Framework
- ☺ EnROLE Partnerships Framework
- ☺ EnROLE Uptake Model
- ☺ EnROLE Research Agenda

## Documentation

- ☺ definition of role based learning
- ☺ enrole.uow.edu.au website
- ☺ 128 role based learning activities and 158 role play designers catalogued
  - 16 discipline areas
  - 6 Australian states
  - 8 countries
- ☺ 50 role play descriptions on website
- ☺ 17 EnROLE Family Trees and a Generation Matrix - new approaches to tracking generations of reuse

## Publications

- ☺ design guides and resources on website
- ☺ cluster leadership guide
- ☺ 68 refereed publications
- ☺ 8 related forums for publication identified
- ☺ 23 quality assurance recommendations
- ☺ international co-authored book in preparation
- ☺ forthcoming international edited book
- ☺ BLUE Report

# Introduction

NOTE: This project was funded under the ALTC (formerly known as the Carrick Institute) program priority: Innovation in learning and teaching, particularly in relation to the role of new technologies. The project in part extends the work of a previous project on Learning Designs (2000-2003) funded by Australian Universities Teaching Committee. Project EnROLE outcomes also relate to ALTC projects on Peer Review, the ALTC Learning Networks program and projects informing the development of the ALTC Exchange.

*AUTC Learning Design Project, Online Role Play Expert Reference Group, 2002:*

*We use online role play because it encourages deep approaches to learning through safe, yet challenging, explorations of perspectives.*

Project EnROLE has been initiated with a two year national grant of \$200,000 from ALTC to encourage uptake of online role based learning environments, with particular focus on what is commonly referred to by us as role play. The field of role based learning intersects with fields using a variety of other terms such as “authentic learning”, “experiential learning”, “situated learning”, “role play simulations” or “virtual worlds”. The following features of role play were agreed in order to differentiate role play from simulations:

- ☺ designed to increase understanding of real life human interaction and dynamics
- ☺ participants assume a role in someone else's shoes or in someone else's situation
- ☺ participants undertake authentic tasks in an authentic context
- ☺ task involves extensive in-role interaction with other roles for collaboration, negotiation, debate.

The project focussed on online and blended role plays used and developed in Australian universities. All role plays were substantial enough that learning outcomes were assessable and generated opportunities for student reflection.

Role play is widely acknowledged to be a powerful teaching technique in face to face, blended and online teaching contexts. It provides students with engaging and active learning experiences. It also enables the exploration of real life issues and the development of specific skills in the safety of the classroom setting (van Ments, 1989). In the online environment, role play activities have some added benefits: they can be asynchronous and anonymous (Bell, 2001). Their asynchronous nature allows more space and time for composing ideas and reflecting on action, whilst their anonymity provides freedom for full immersion in the role and uninhibited expression (Linser, 1999). Furthermore, most role play designs have common aims, even though teaching contexts may be quite different: the role play process itself (be it online or face to face) is often focused on the development of generic skills i.e. negotiation skills, understanding multi-disciplinary team work, intercultural communication, conflict resolution and in some cases, international collaboration.

The project goal was to encourage uptake of online role based learning environments using the strategy of building a community of practice at university, state and national levels which would:

- ☺ better reward and recognise teachers already using role play
- ☺ scaffold teachers wanting to get started with role play.

**What teachers say about the student learning experience with role play:**

*In all my years of teaching I've never seen students this engaged.*

*Engaging in an activity in role can free students from feeling as though they themselves are being judged.*

*The role of risk in developing innovative education is challenging learners to “step outside the square”, extend themselves and strive for enlightenment. Risk can cause discomfort but is essential in the process of change.*

*Conditions for learning are optimised when learners are actively participating, collaborating and contributing to their learning because they feel safe, respected, supported and encouraged to do so by peers, topic and teacher.*

**What students say about learning with online role play:**

*I believe that as a learning tool, the e-sim was a spectacular success.*

*This simulation has probably been the most beneficial task in teaching me ideas that will be useful to me as a professional engineer for years to come.*

*It made it easy to approach strangers in the class and have something common to talk [about]. It made the group closer, more friendly – a great change for such an isolating experience as an Arts degree.*

*There was no avoiding 'learning'. You HAD to absorb things and research other players to get on.*

*It was an incredibly organic, 'natural' way to learn. The insight gained would not have been possible in a straight, text-based course.*



# Introduction

The Project Leader's previous research (Wills & McDougall, 2006) had shown that role play designers in universities were mostly operating in isolation. There were only one or two in each university. They may have been supported in part by their university's Educational Development centre but they have rarely communicated and benefited from interaction with each other.

*Until the EnROLE project popped up I really felt like an oddball character, tucked away in the corner of the castle and not really spoken to by many people. There are other folk out there doing this sort of thing..... So now there are others of the same species out there, it's good. To interact with them is even better.*

In a case study of role play in the recent report on *Dissemination, Adoption and Adaptation of Project Innovations in Higher Education* for the Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC), Alexander reported the following issues for role play designers: **workload, recognition and reward, support, policy, sustainability** (pp. 103-4).

Prof David Sadler, UK Higher Education Academy, and member of EnROLE's Reference Group, in the grant proposal also reinforced **sustainability** as a major issue.

*...where role-players act in isolation there is less possibility of a strategic approach being taken by the Faculty or Department in which the academic is housed. If the role-player were to leave, ...the student experience is denied the role-play opportunity if there is not an institutional commitment.*

The project therefore aimed to link the small but growing number of university teachers using online role play, connecting them into a community via three strategies which address Alexander's concerns:

- ☺ **recognition** - developing a repository of sharable/reusable role play learning designs with an associated peer review process
- ☺ **support and reward** - facilitating evaluation and publication of refereed papers about their role plays
- ☺ **workload and sustainability** - establishing national and international role play partnerships and developing a checklist of policies and procedures for assuring quality and sustainability of role play.

Most importantly, in the spirit of role based learning, the project team, who did not previously know each other, set out to have **Fun**. Although it was hard work, on top of our already busy lives, we often said "this is the fun part of our jobs" and our final event, a Masked Ball, was no exception. The ball demonstrated by doing that serious learning should be fun and so should be our own professional learning.



Assoc Prof Sandra Jones, RMIT and Dr Elizabeth McDonald, Director of Programs and Networks, Australian Learning and Teaching Council



Elizabeth Rosser, EnROLE National Manager



# Masked Ball

All will be revealed...



This showcase of online role plays from a range of discipline areas unmasked the academics who designed them.

Philip, Philippa and Genevieve  
Gissing, G#:Sing Trio



L to R: Claire Brooks, Latrobe; Wendy Meyers, UOW and John Shepherd, UNSW



Elysabeth Leigh, UTS



Dr Carol Russell and John Paul Posada, Faculty of Engineering, UNSW

# Building: 1 to 5

## Achievement 1: Community of practice

Project Goals	External Evaluation
To better reward and recognise teachers already using role play	A number of participants indicated that being part of a project that had a 'name' was really important for recognition within their departments and/or institutions. They stated that having the term 'EnROLE' that they could attach themselves to meant that people realised that what they were doing was legitimate and was part of a national ALTC project rather than just an interest.
To scaffold teachers starting to use role play	Over forty percent of survey participants indicated they would not have engaged with online role play if it was not for the project.

Project EnROLE's strategy in support of these two goals was **building a community of practice** at university, state and national levels.

Communities of practice are open and voluntary associations (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder 2002). They have a core membership and people who come and go, depending on the value each individual seeks from the association. Communities can be nurtured and supported, but cannot be engineered, because a compulsory community would have no need to deliver value to its members.

Each of the five project members (UNSW, UTS, Macquarie, Sydney and Wollongong) were responsible for building a **University Cluster** of role play designers in whichever manner was meaningful for that university. Over the two years predictably some of the cluster leadership has changed due to restructures, study leave, promotion, workload, illness, several broken bones and various other life events such as the death of role play pioneer Andrew Vincent in the Middle East in 2008. However the project has succeeded in always having the five NSW universities actively involved for over two years, and the core team, who began as acquaintances and professional contacts, became friends and trusted colleagues.

After feedback from participants in early university cluster events, the five partner universities formed into a **NSW State Network** earlier than anticipated, to organise state-wide activities. These NSW activities – online workshops, professional development events and writing retreats – gave participants a structured approach to designing, building and running online role play and introduced them to ideas and collaborators from other universities. As the project progressed, these state activities turned into **National Network** activities (Figure 2).

*Elizabeth Leigh, UTS cluster leader:*

*Having the clusters as points of contact enhanced connections among universities as well as supporting staff within them. The process of sharing capabilities enabled cluster leaders to re-evaluate and better appreciate their own academic expertise. Involvement in the project was a legitimisation of professional practice and a means of encouraging others to take the 'risk' of stepping into a different learning environment.*



Figure 1. EnROLE badges used at all events and conferences were a successful marketing tool that created interest and a sense of community membership.

*Elizabeth Devonshire, USydney Cluster Leader:*  
We thought (originally) that the cluster model would drive the development of the community of practice from the bottom up - taking note of the specific character/needs of each university. However, in reality, the workload required to gather the momentum to establish and maintain cluster activities etc was considerable. In recognition of this issue I started to invite other cluster leaders to advertise the USydney cluster events to encourage buy in from their clusters and to share the workload across the state network. This reality was one of the main drivers for establishing the workshops that became known as the 'fellowship series'. On reflection I think the interaction across and not just within universities was most valuable. Plus it shared the workload around, enabled us to keep EnROLE top of mind within the various universities etc.

Wenger et al (2002, p51) also note that "Because communities of practice are organic, designing them is more a matter of shepherding their evolution than creating them from scratch. ... As they develop, communities usually build on pre-existing personal networks". This was certainly the case in Project EnROLE's development, in that a number of people previously involved in running online role plays and developing online role play environments, reconnected and contributed their experience to encourage newcomers. Cluster activities showed a similar pattern.

*Elysabeth Leigh, UTS Cluster Leader:*  
I organised two evening events in conjunction with the Games and Simulation Network, which meets regularly at UTS, because this is an established community of practice involving people with relevant interests. These events enabled those attending to share ideas and learn with and from each other – in the spirit of community that EnROLE modelled time and again.

*Carol Russell, joint UNSW Cluster Leader:*  
Although the EnROLE launch meeting at UNSW in 2006 was well attended by individual academics, there was little response to a follow-up invitation. So in 2007, we focused on encouraging participation in New South Wales events from existing networks and groups such as the 60 or so Innovative Teaching and Educational Technology (ITandT) Fellows and the UNSW Network of Faculty and Educational Development (UNFED). This proved more successful, and has resulted in several new online role play designs through collaborations forged at NSW workshops – projects that have drawn in academics who had not previously considered using online role play.

The project has had to deal with a number of barriers to participation in EnROLE events. The idea of academics taking time out to learn, formally or informally, about their teaching work may lack legitimacy within a disciplinary community. Even experienced researchers and adult educators can have difficulty legitimizing a focus on their own workplace learning (Boud and Solomon 2003). EnROLE team members also had pressures from other work priorities. So the support of ALTC funding was crucial to establishing legitimacy of the work involved in organizing events and projects, as well as in encouraging others to participate.

Another barrier was that, although communities of practice can support adoption of new educational methods, media and tools, this requires that academics surface the tacit and discipline-specific knowledge embedded in current teaching practices and review the associated assumptions about how students learn. Yet attempts to educate university academics in the scholarly review of teaching practices have had limited success (Elton 2003, Trigwell et al. 2005). Engagement in cross-discipline learning and teaching communities greatly facilitates this review of discipline-specific teaching practices, but this can be hard work, and it is not widely supported by formal university systems (Russell 2008).

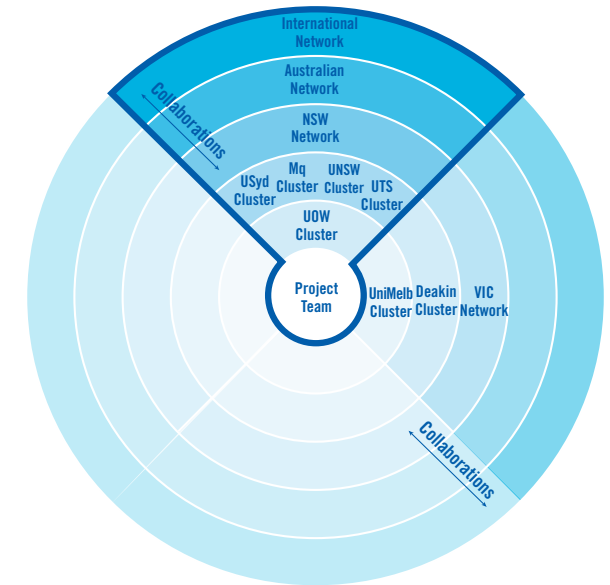


Figure 2: EnROLE's proposed Dissemination Model starts with building a NSW Network based on university clusters.

*Claire Brooks, Victorian State Network Co-leader:*  
This has been a wonderful project to be involved with, especially because of the support it has given to us when our internal support for teaching innovation has been low.

**In total there were 43 EnROLE events involving 816 participants in 3 Australian states.**



# Building: 1 to 5

The EnROLE community of practice, as it evolved over the life of the project, enabled in-depth discussion of these difficulties and some of the publications resulting from the project deal with them specifically – see for example Leigh, Myers, and Rosser (2007).

The deliberate and sustained focus on building a community of practice meant that project team members provided and shared multiple forms of leadership. This enabled a variety of ideas to emerge and gain energy as members grew in confidence and enthusiasm about the project's goals. So the community focus was a significant factor in sustaining activity, encouraging inter-disciplinary and cross-campus collaboration, and making new connections among otherwise isolated individual academics using role play in their programs.

In this way EnROLE is a significant model for future development of broader perspectives on academic teaching practices. It has provided a way of developing new knowledge across discipline boundaries for academics working within formal systems that prioritize support for individual face-to-face teaching and pay less attention to the possibilities of collaboration to introduce innovations.

The community of practice is proving to be self-sustaining, in that there are now activities driven by people other than original project/cluster leaders, and which are continuing beyond the life of the project. Some examples are:

- ☺ An activity on “Learning design through role play glasses” at the 2009 HERDSA conference, run by members of The University of Sydney cluster.
- ☺ An online role play collaboration involving the Schools of Mining Engineering and Public Health in UNSW, to be launched in July 2009.
- ☺ Several partnerships to produce academic publications based on online role play projects generated by Project EnROLE.

The imprimatur of ALTC supported the project team and cluster members to obtain institutional support for partnerships and involvement in activities and events. In addition, clusters received seed funding to assist in promoting project priorities set at the local university level. While useful in legitimising the work of cluster members, the small amount of cluster development funding was not nearly as important in engaging participants as the recognition of being part of the bigger picture of enriching student outcomes and experiences through teaching innovation.

*Academic participant in the NSW State workshops: I started designing the current online role play I'm working on because of the EnROLE project. I've done role plays before in my teaching; face to face but not online. With one of the very first workshops where they showed examples of things, I was really impressed by one of the examples. The advice that the EnROLE people gave throughout the workshops was don't do anything too crazy, just start simple and go from there. So that's certainly how they influenced me.*



Project Team (from left to right) Carol Russell, Elizabeth Rosser, Elizabeth Devonshire, John Shepherd and Sandra Wills (photo taken by Elizabeth Leigh).

**Table 2: EnROLE Events by Network 2006-2009**

NSW Network Events	Type of Event	Event Focus	Cluster Host	Date	Participant numbers
	Inaugural Workshop	Cluster launch: Project EnROLE	UOW	Sep 2006	19
			UNSW	Oct 2006	40
			Macquarie	Mar 2007	18
			Sydney	Jun 2007	30
	Workshops and seminars	Cuban Missile Crisis	UOW	Aug 2006	15
		First Fleet	UOW	Sep 2006	5
		Middle East Political Simulation	UOW	Oct 2006	7
		Round Table Discussion	UOW	Dec 2006	6
		Mekong e-Sim	UOW	Apr 2007	11
		Middle East Political Simulation	UNSW	Jun 2007	12
		A Business Simulation With A Difference	Sydney	Sep 2007	8
		Student Developed Role Play Resources	Sydney	Oct 2007	15
		Big Paper b-Sim	UOW	Nov 2007	12
		XB Business Simulation	UOW	Oct 2008	16
		Designing Online Role Play for Cross Faculty Implementation	UNSW	Oct-May 2008	8
		Big Paper b-Sim	Sydney	Apr 2008	10
		Teaching Law Through Online Role Play	UOW	May 2008	13
		Facilitating/Moderating role play	UTS	Jun 2008	11
		A New Media Adventure In Marketing Education	Sydney	Jun 2008	6
		Trends & Issues in Simulations Uses & Applications: Online Role Play	UTS	Aug 2008	10
	Writing retreat	3 day EnROLE Writing Retreat (held at Bundeena)	UNSW	Jun 2007	6

Victorian Events	Type of Event	Event Focus	Cluster Host	Date	Participant numbers
	Inaugural Workshop	Cluster launch: Project EnROLE and poster at METTLE Forum	Melbourne	Jul 2007	16
	Workshops and seminars	Online Role Based Learning	Melbourne	Oct 2007	10
		EnROLE Victoria: State Network Directions	RMIT	Jun 2008	11
		Plagiarism e-Sim	La Trobe	Sep 2008	10
		At the Teaching and Learning Colloquium	La Trobe	Dec 2008	80

South Australia Network Events	Type of Event	Event Focus	Cluster Host	Date	Participant numbers
	Inaugural Workshop	Cluster launch: Encouraging Role Based Learning Environments	Adelaide	Nov 2007	10
	Workshops and seminars	Types of Scenarios	Adelaide	Apr 2007	11
		Scenario Based Learning for Hospitality	TAFE SA	May 2007	11
		50 Minutes on Online Scenario Based Learning (series of 3 workshops)	Adelaide	Aug-Sep 2007	9
		EnROLEd in Situational Learning	Adelaide	Nov 2007	50
		Role Play in Biological Sciences	Adelaide	Nov 2007	30
		Plagiarism e-Sim	Adelaide	Jun 2008	20
		50 Minutes on Online Scenario Based Learning (series of 3 workshops)	Adelaide	Aug-Sep 2008	3
		Present Role Based Learning	Adelaide	Oct 2008	25
		Scenario Based Learning	Adelaide	Feb 2009	18

Australian Events	Type of Event	Event Focus	Cluster Host	Date	Participant numbers
	Professional development	An Orientation to Online Role Play	Fabiusi, UOW	Aug-Sep 2008	41
	Fellowship series	Writing and Communicating about Role-based Innovation in TandL	Sydney	Jun 2008	28
		Establishing Role Play Partnerships	UOW	Jun 2008	32
		Designing Role Play Activities	UNSW	Jun 2008	38
		Facilitating Role Play Activities	UTS	Aug 2008	21
		Evaluating Role Play Activities	Macquarie	Nov 2008	30
		EnROLE Masked Ball	UNSW	Apr 2009	39

# Building: 1 to 5

## Achievement 2: Repository and website

The original project application, based on research by Wills (2006), documented 43 existing role plays in Australian universities and proposed to double the number of role plays and role play designers by the end of the project to 100 and 150 respectively. Project EnROLE has succeeded in this goal (Table 3).

Growth in Online Role Play	1990-4	1995-9	2000-4	2005-6	2007-9
Number of role plays	2	7	23	43*	128
Number of role play designers	2	11	36	54	158

\* in 2006 12 of these 43 role plays were not currently running but most anticipated running again in the future

The project has collected and catalogued a database of 128 online role based learning activities and 158 practitioners involved in online role based learning in the university sector, nationally and internationally (Table 5).

Table 4 shows the catalogue's discipline spread in 2006 before EnROLE and the discipline spread in 2009. The increase is due not only to the increase in number of role plays but because we have indexed the related fields in 2009 entries, not only their original discipline. This is a deliberate strategy to foster trans-disciplinary reuse and repurposing.

Table 4: Role Play Catalogue 2006 vs 2009: disciplines and related fields

Area	06	09	Area	06	09	Area	06	09	Area	06	09
Business	3	21	Environment	9	18	Industrial Relations	1	11	Law, Mediation	2	16
Economics	1	10	Geography	4	13	International Studies	2	32	Media, Journalism, PR, Communications	6	3
Education	8	17	Health	7	15	Information Technology	0	7	Politics/Public Policy	3	24
Engineering	4	7	History	3	5	Language/Arts	1	15	Psychology	1	5

Over 50 online role plays from the catalogue, across a range of disciplines, universities and design models, are in a searchable repository on the EnROLE website (Figure 3). Overseas examples are added as international interest in this project grows. There are some early role play designers who have not yet contributed to the repository because they are no longer using that role play. It is unfortunate that these designs are now lost to the community so further work needs to be done on understanding the parameters for sharing teaching practice so that sharing is legitimised as an academic practice, even sharing work-in-progress.

Building from the early research by Wills on mapping generations of role play designers, often tracking from the original Vincent and Shepherd idea, many of the catalogued role plays have been mapped according to their "lineage", tracking spheres of influence such as people, platforms and learning designs (see for example Figures 16 & 19).

Pushing the community of practice metaphor further, we have created **Family Trees** and are helping the offspring multiply (see for example Figure 5, 12 & 15).

Of the 128 role plays in the catalogue, over half have been spawned or supported directly by Project EnROLE.

**32 new role plays**  
**21 new role play partnerships**

The project team and the EnROLE community will continue to source new role play activities for inclusion in the catalogue and website repository. The existence of the website is making further collection easier as academics can now see the benefits themselves. A template for preparing role play descriptions is available on the EnROLE website to encourage role play designers to submit their activities to the repository.



## Role Play Definition

The design of this template and indeed the definition of “role play” preoccupied the EnROLE team for the first few months of the project in 2006. The definition was deliberately kept narrow in order to keep the project workload under control although we at the same time kept a broader term than role play in the sub-title of the project: “encouraging role based learning environments” in recognition that the definition was a contested area that we would probably need to revisit throughout the project lifetime.

### Online and blended role plays are:

- 😊 designed to increase understanding of real life human interaction and dynamics
- 😊 participants assume a role in someone else's shoes or in someone else's situation
- 😊 participants undertake authentic tasks in an authentic context
- 😊 task involves extensive in-role interaction with other roles for collaboration, negotiation, debate

At the end of the project we decided we were in a position to include in the repository broader examples and international examples. The project had always intended to have more international partnerships involving students at universities around the world participating in the same role play, as in the Vincent and Shepherd example of Middle Eastern Politics, however international examples had proven difficult to source. Work by Wills with several potential role play examples in the UK towards the end of Project EnROLE revealed that this was, in part, a definition issue.

Therefore she developed a triad framework to better position this emerging type of simulation, accounting for the myriad ways of designing role based learning environments that the project had catalogued.

The Simulation Triad (Figure 4) takes as its starting point that all simulations involve roles and rules and a problem (sometimes called situation or scenario). Most of EnROLE's catalogued role plays belong along the role-problem continuum and the examples that were previously excluded belong along the role-rules continuum. Developing a framework that recognises design decisions according to the amount of emphasis put on Roles versus Problem versus Rules means that other examples can now be accommodated without compromising the integrity of the role play design that has emerged in Australia following the Vincent and Shepherd model. Modifying the keyword index and adding the “slider metaphor” as a navigation interface are future projects.

## Role Play Description

Originally the project had anticipated using the Learning Design Visual Sequence developed in the AUTC Learning Designs Project (2000-2003) as our template for the repository however early in the project we decided the AUTC approach was too detailed and that for this stage of community development a shorter, more friendly, flexible approach might work better. All role play descriptions in the EnROLE repository are two pages including at least one graphic and in general cover the following headings as guidelines:

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 😊 Title       | 😊 Duration & Setting |
| 😊 Abstract    | 😊 Resources          |
| 😊 Keywords    | 😊 Assessment         |
| 😊 Contacts    | 😊 Role Play Process  |
| 😊 Description | 😊 Facilitator Issues |
| 😊 Group Size  | 😊 Reusability        |
| 😊 Objectives  | 😊 References & Links |

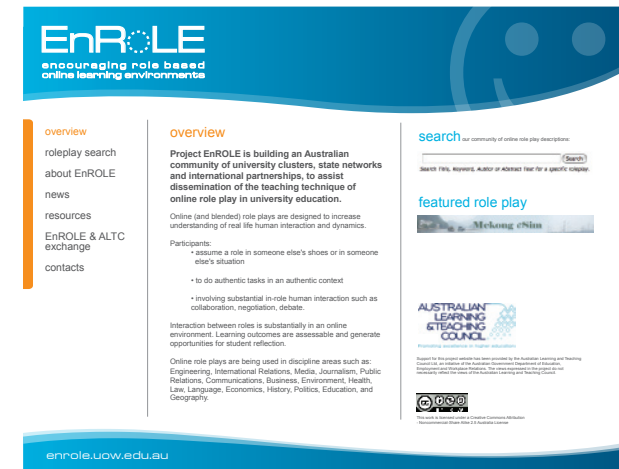


Figure 3: EnROLE Website menu (enrole.uow.edu.au) showing resources, news & searchable repository

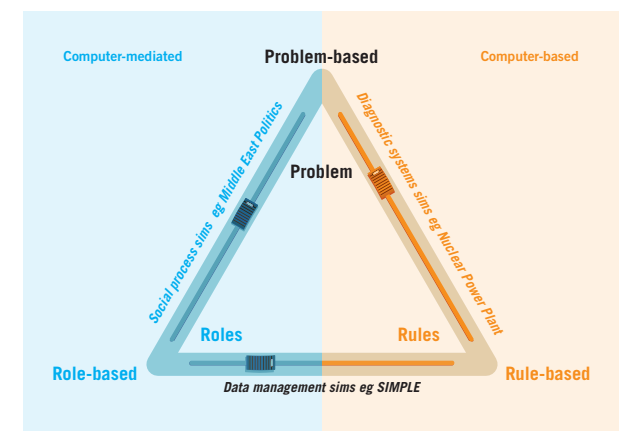


Figure 4: Simulation Triad: positioning role play within the field of simulation

# Building: 1 to 5

The template focuses on providing sufficient information about the learning design to enable the academic community to discover work they may be interested in finding out more about and encouraging them to make personal contact with the designer/s. We have not formally tested our approach to documenting good practice so this remains an item for further research.

The uploading of further descriptions will be managed by the Project Leader, Professor Sandra Wills, through the EnROLE email address:

[enrole.australia@gmail.com](mailto:enrole.australia@gmail.com)

Descriptions prepared for the EnROLE Repository will be added to the ALTC Exchange, searchable using the keyword “enrole” at:

[www.altcexchange.edu.au](http://www.altcexchange.edu.au)

Members of the EnROLE community are encouraged to profile their learning designs and record their experiences in online role play on the ALTC Exchange.

Rather than publishing downloadable learning objects, the repository aims to provide sufficient description to assist interested parties to make direct contact with relevant role play designers for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the unique components for success of the role play. Experience throughout the project suggests that, while the repository and website do assist discovery of like-minded professionals, personal contact via introductions from respected colleagues and professional events is also critical.

The process of cataloguing and profiling exemplars has provided reward and recognition for the work of online role play practitioners while, at the same time, creating opportunities for review and evaluation of their learning designs. Publishing descriptions of significant exemplars on EnROLE’s public website has assisted in the dissemination of work in the field by making it available to those beyond the immediate reach of the project. Inquiries arising from the public using the repository and website have ranged from cross-fertilisation between ALTC projects, research opportunities, role play partnerships and requests for assistance in professional development.

## External Evaluator:

*The role play repository is seen by active participants as useful and raising the status of online role play. In particular, the inclusion of contact details of role play designers for follow up contact was viewed very favourably.*

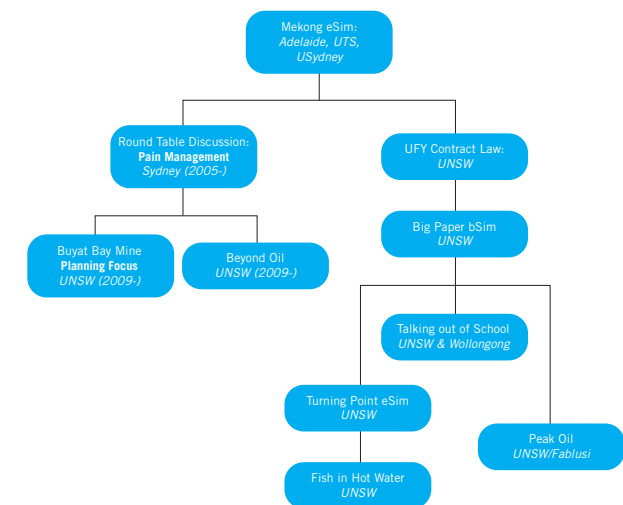


Figure 5: Sample Family Tree: Foundation Studies

# Table 5: Catalogue of Role Based Learning Activities by EnROLE Networks 1990-2009

## Part A: (n=10) Cross-university Collaboration

Australia				International
New South Wales	Victoria	South Australia	Other States	
Cuban Missile Crisis ( UNSW)				Cuban Missile Crisis (Montford, UK)
		Dental Amalgam eSim (Adelaide)		Dental Amalgam eSim (Shajah, UAE)
Mekong eSim (UTS, USydney)		Mekong eSim (Adelaide)		Mekong eSim (Singapore, Malaysia, Goethe Uni Frankfurt) Mekong e-Sim variant (Usyd hosted Yunnan Uni China, Chiang Mai Thailand)
Middle Eastern Politics (Macquarie, CSU, UNSW, UOW)	Middle Eastern Politics (Deakin)			Middle Eastern Politics (GeorgeTown and Texas, US; American Uni Cairo; Canterbury, NZ)
Peak Oil (Macquarie, UNSW)	Peak Oil (Fablusi)			
	Plagiarism eSim (La Trobe)	Plagiarism eSim (Adelaide)		Plagiarism eSim (ASCILITE 07)
Project Management (Macquarie, UNSW, UTS)				Project Management (Missouri)
RTD Pain Management (USydney)				RTD Pain Management (Edinburgh, California, Santo Tomas Philippines)
RTD Ethics of Pharmacology (USydney)				RTD Ethics of Pharmacology (Edinburgh, Santo Tomas Philippines)
XB Learning Organisations (UTS)				XB Learning Organisations (St Michael's Vermont US, Rolla Missouri, Suffolk Boston US. Uni of Central Missouri)

# Building: 1 to 5

Table 5 cont. Catalogue of Role Based Learning Activities by EnROLE Networks 1990-2009

## Part B: (n=118) Intra-university roleplays (including some cross-disciplinary and cross-faculty activities)

Australia				International
New South Wales	Victoria	South Australia	Other States	
A Conversation Between Educationalists (UTS) Australian Politics (Mq) Banking Law (UOW) Beyond Oil (UNSW) Big Paper eSim (UNSW) Birds of Paradise (UOW) Buyat Bay Planning Meeting (UNSW) Campaign Journalism (Griffith) Conference Lunch (UOW) Contaminated Sites (UTS) Debate over Drugs (Newcastle) Environmental Decision-making (Mq) Equity in Education (UOW) First Fleet (UOW) Fish in Hot Water (UNSW) Global e-Sim (USyd) Halong Bay eSim (Mq) Idontgoto Uni (UOW) Interactive Whiteboards (Mq) Internet Gambling (UOW) Katalonia (UTS) LegSim (USyd) Pacifica (UNSW) Public Planning Enquiry (Mq) RFID: Airport Security (UOW) RiftRaft (UTS) Securities Market Regulation (UTS) Talking out of School (UNSW and UOW) The Buying Game (USyd) The Pitch (USyd) The Education of Gerry: Project Mgt (UOW) Transnational Crime Prevention (UOW) Turning Point eSim (UNSW) UFY Contract Law (UNSW) Working Man's Paradise (UOW)	A Different Lunch (UMelb) Allied Health (UMelb/St Vincent's Hospital) Asia Pacific International Relation (UMelb) Australian Foreign Relation (UMelb) Autism Education (Latrobe) Coffee Business (RMIT Vietnam) Delicate Dining (RMIT) DRALE (UMelb) Fibco (RMIT) Fire Services Simulation (Deakin) Foochow Road Shanghai (UMelb) Globalisation and the Law (UMelb) Global Politics (UMelb) Islam and Political Activism (UMelb) Keelbundoora (UMelb) Koori Health (UMelb) Legal Ethics (UMelb and Monash) Leadership Skills (La Trobe) Living History (Deakin) Managing Change (Fablusi) Mediation Fishbowl (RMIT) MOOing in Educational Practice (RMIT) Negotiation (student designed role plays, RMIT) PBL & Engineering Practice (Fablusi, VU) Power in International Relation (UMelb) Russian Politics (UMelb) Save Wallaby Forest (Deakin) The Campaign (UMelb) Virtual Tokyo Campus (RMIT) Virtual Print Room (RMIT) WeSell (RMIT) World Politics in Transition (UMelb)	AIT Xmas Party (TAFESA) At Risk (TAFESA) Avian Flu (UniSA) Battery Hen (Adelaide) proposed Contemporary Social Issues ...(under construction, TAFESA) CSI (TAFESA) Dental Amalgam eSim (Adel) Disaster Downunder (Adel) Fashion House (TAFESA) GEAP International Homestay (Adel) Gender Analysis (Flinders) Jatropha (Adelaide) Shenzen eSim (TAFESA) Transgenic Grapes (Adelaide) Tattoo Parlour (Flinders)	AUQA Audit (CQU) Bluewaters Project (UWA) German Cinema (UWA) Include a Dude (Canberra) NeedleStick (USQ) OHS in Mining (CQU) Star Academy Critique (UWA) UN Security Council (UWA) Werewolf (UWA)	Afghanistan Peacebuilding (Wichita, US & Carleton, Canada) Ardcolloch (Warwick & Strathclyde, UK) A Trip to Australia (Jaume I, Spain) Black Blizzard (Hedmark, Denmark) Construction Law (Bath, UK) Dental Amalgam eSim (Sharjah, UAE) Difficult Behaviours (SIAS, Canada) EcoLicense (Secondary schools, Denmark) Eighteenth Century Music (Chinese Uni Hong Kong) Ending Violence (Antwerp, Belgium) Expert Witness, (Portsmouth, UK) Holocaust (Caldwell CC, US) Justice in Rwanda (ISS, The Hague) No School Left Behind (Fablusi, Appalachian State Uni) Paklet (Postal Service, Denmark) Paediatric Patient Management (UGhent, Belgium) Perioperative Nursing (SIAS, Canada) Perspectives to Conflict Resolution (Fablusi, Tel Aviv Uni) Pharmaceutical Care (UGhent, Belgium) Scarlet Letter (Caldwell CC, US) Small Island States (Open Uni, UK) Task Force on Distance Learning (Fablusi, Appalachian Uni) US Senate (Maryland, US) Venezuela (Wales, UK) Ward Management (Glasgow NC, UK) War Supply Chain (US Army War College) Youtopia (Nanyang Tech)

# Achievement 3: Peer reviewed publications

The professional practice of writing for peer reviewed publications has become a routine element in academic activity. However scholarly writing about teaching and learning for academics outside the discipline of Education is not the norm. Even academics who are innovating in their teaching feel out of their comfort zone when asked to write about it. Achievement 3 is NOT to do with producing publications by the grant team about the grant: it is about the deliberate and planned support of discipline academics in publishing about their teaching and learning.

As quoted in the original grant application, in a case study of role play in the AUTC report on *Dissemination, Adoption and Adaptation of Project Innovations in Higher Education*, Alexander reported a number of issues for role play designers including **Recognition and reward**:

*'For some, adoption of the role-play simulations has been a career-limiting move, with at least two of those interviewed failing in bids for promotion or other recognition, attributed at least in part to a less than adequate research output...'*

One way of providing reward and recognition for teaching innovation is via the traditional route of peer reviewed publication. Project EnROLE adopted four strategies that successfully supported increased publication about role play:

- 😊 writing retreats
- 😊 writing for publication workshops
- 😊 writing partnerships
- 😊 publication avenues

The grant application proposed that we target existing conferences for publishing and work towards an edited volume entirely on role play. The annual conference for ascilite provided an important avenue for this proposal. Five role play papers were published in the ascilite 2006 proceedings. The following year Project EnROLE negotiated a role play symposium at ascilite 2007 in Singapore to showcase the innovative work of Australasian role play designers culminating in 10 refereed papers, 3 posters and a workshop. The 2008 conference was not specifically targeted as an EnROLE event but 1 refereed paper on online role play was facilitated by the EnROLE community.

Meanwhile, EnROLE's Fablusi Family facilitated 7 papers for a role play stream at the 2008 World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education, Chesapeake, Virginia, USA. They also facilitate contributions to the League of Worlds series of colloquiums about virtual worlds and simulations. A number of the presentations for the 2008 LOW are being prepared for Innovate Journal of Online Education in a Special Issue on Online Simulations, Role Playing and Virtual Worlds\*.

We have fostered the publication of at least 8 other papers about role play at other national and international conferences, in journals and handbooks, as well as a number of invited national and international presentations. Many more publications are in preparation.

\* [www.innovateonline.info](http://www.innovateonline.info)

**68 references in the bibliography  
50% facilitated by Project EnROLE**

*Feedback provided to External Evaluator:*

*It has given me a sense of community in terms of if I do have questions I know that there are people out there that I can ask, and I know them personally now, for ideas and for feedback... Also when other people have approached me about my role play or wanting to take one on board, I now have a framework. The program gave me a framework to be able to either help them myself or to put them in contact with others, so it's been a really good basis for passing on ideas to others. It's given me more confidence to write about and publish the role plays.*

*The literature (conference papers, book chapters) generated is a really good way of ensuring that future designers have an opportunity to have a theoretical framework.*



# Building: 1 to 5

## Achievement 4: Guide for Cluster & Network Leaders

### External Evaluation:

Active participants frequently mentioned during interviews and in open responses the importance of having a person who is identified as a leader, who has the ability to enthuse and organise activities. The communities of practice appear to be most successful in South Australia and New South Wales in terms of sustained engagement, participant satisfaction and breadth and depth of community activities. The features of both communities that seem to keep the community active include clear leadership with dedicated time allocated to be able to organise and facilitate events and activities.

### University Clusters

Building a community of practice within each partner university was proposed as a key strategy for capacity-building in online role play. The experiences of early adopters in establishing their local EnROLE Clusters were used to guide other Cluster Leaders (Figure 6).

In the early stages of the project many existing role play practitioners claimed that they were discouraged from continuing to innovate in their teaching due to a lack of recognition and support for their work. Consistent with this claim, it was often the case that traction in establishing a local university cluster was gained when achievements within the university were validated by academics from other universities.

As a result of these early observations more emphasis was placed on the early development of the clusters into a NSW State Network and in promoting opportunities for external validation through professional development workshops, conference presentations and papers.

### Cluster Leadership Guide

- ☺ preliminary research to identify academics and support personnel active in innovating teaching, especially through online role based learning
- ☺ shared leadership by cluster co-leaders helps to balance workload and strengthen the skill-base within the cluster
- ☺ adopt a personal approach to building supportive professional relationships within and between university clusters
- ☺ facilitate partnerships between Learning and Teaching units, academics and academic support personnel to hedge the chances of appropriate resourcing, wide exposure and deep impact
- ☺ conduct a launch event at which the work of local university academics is profiled and celebrated
- ☺ promote the educational and institutional benefits of engaging in innovative teaching practice such as online role play
- ☺ set priorities, goals and activities within the local university cluster to meet local needs
- ☺ promote dialogue and partnerships between experienced and novice role play designers
- ☺ provide opportunities for collaboration with other universities

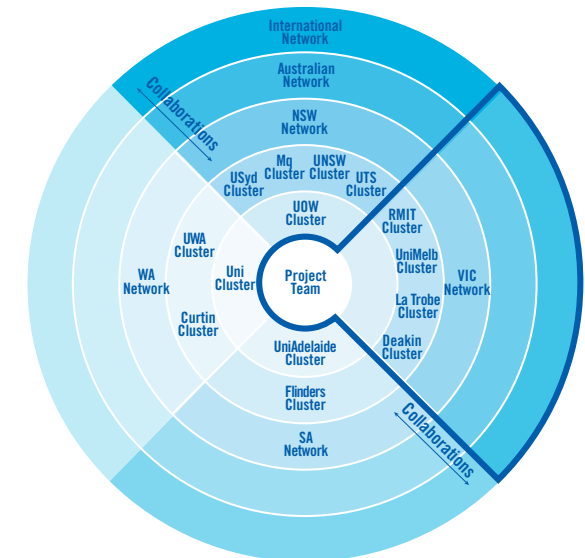


Figure 6: EnROLE Cluster Leadership Guide



## State Networks: Fellowships

As a result of feedback from cluster activities, in 2008 EnROLE instituted a Fellowship Program as a sustained approach to building capacity within universities for innovation in online learning and teaching. Specifically, the Fellowship aimed to increase opportunities and professional skill in collaborative design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of online role based learning initiatives. By providing ongoing practical support in the scholarship of teaching and learning in online role play, the EnROLE Fellowship assisted in building a community of practice for ongoing support, mentoring and partnerships in online role play within the university sector.

The EnROLE Fellowship was trialled in NSW with the intention that, if successful, it serves as a model for other states wishing to extend Project EnROLE in the future (Figure 7).

**Twenty two EnROLE Fellows** received mentoring and formal professional development opportunities. The Fellowship Program brought together academics, educational developers and technologists in dialogue between experienced and novice role play practitioners. In doing so, the EnROLE Fellowship helped to address the professional isolation which has acted as a barrier to the sustainability of online role play in universities.

The EnROLE Fellowship offered an opportunity for both experienced role play designers and newcomers to the field to increase their knowledge and skills in the field of educational online role play. Newcomers were mentored by experienced role players in the practical aspects of online role play via the 'Learning through role play' Workshop Series. The Fellowship Program also fostered cross-fertilisation between experienced online role play designers and facilitators who reported that the opportunity to re-examine their work from fresh perspectives prompted critical reflection on their established practice. Some early adopters who had moved away from the technique became actively re-engaged in online role play through their involvement in the Fellowship activities.

EnROLE's workshop on Writing and Communicating about Role-based Innovation in Teaching & Learning, facilitated by Dr. Christine Asmar (University of Sydney) provided further scope for both experienced and novice role play practitioners to reflect on their experiences and to disseminate lessons learnt to the wider university community.

One of the legacies of the EnROLE Fellowship Program is that many of the writing partnerships brokered by the project team as part of its mentoring process have sustained.

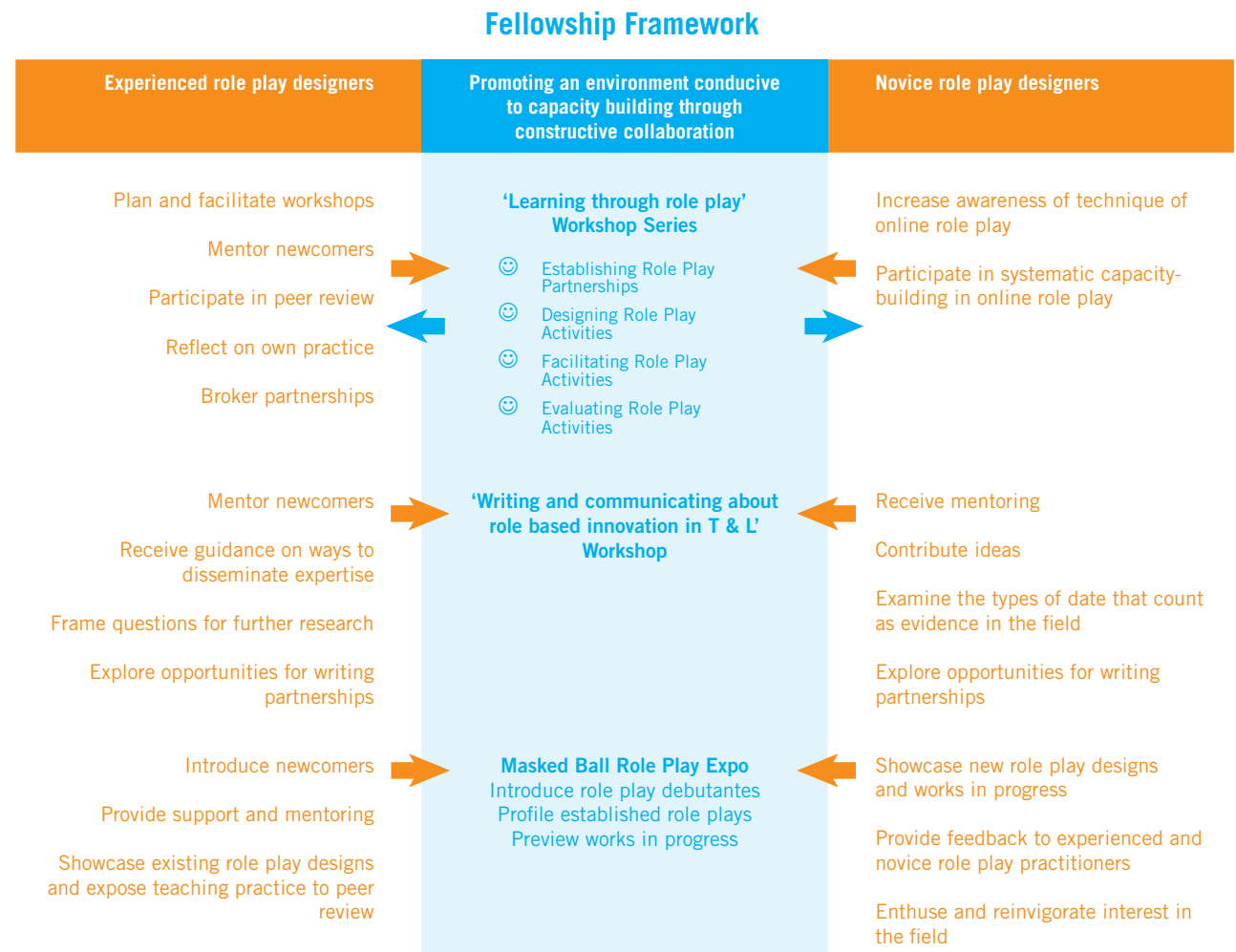


Figure 7: EnROLE Fellowship Framework

# Building: 1 to 5

*Luisa Janic, University of Wollongong:  
Being part of the EnROLE fellowship has been an invaluable preparation for entering the teaching profession. For me the opportunity to have the collective wisdom, experience and expertise so generously available has better prepared me to contribute in a more valuable and pedagogically sound way. The pearls of wisdom imported in such a personal and supportive environment makes me feel truly connected to this community of dedicated professionals. I feel excited and enthused to adopt an innovative approach to my teaching. My previous understandings of what "teaching" is have been challenged and broadened in the most fun and positive manner.*

*Tim Lever, University of Sydney:  
The masked ball was the most imaginatively designed workshop session that I have ever attended. It was a really effective and quick communicative format for research and development in teaching. It was more that a showcase. Other people could learn from this.*



L to R: Kate Collier (UTS) and Luisa Janic (UOW) at the Masked Ball



EnROLE Fellows at work: L to R Sandra Jones (RMIT); Roz Albon (Curtin); Adina Stan (UNSW); David McDonald (UOW); Chris Kilham (Canberra)



More EnROLE Fellowship activity: Claire Brooks (Latrobe); Lesley Knapp (UOW); Doug McKinnon (UOW); Elizabeth Rosser (UNSW)

*SCoPE TAFESA member:  
I am a regular visitor to the SCoPE website and value the updates and information available.*

## National Network

The final goal of the project was to cascade to another state in order to continue building the National Network, sustaining the project past the current funding. Project EnROLE has been able to do this not just with one state but two: events have been held in both South Australia and Victoria and the EnROLE State Network Leaders have actively participated in NSW events.

The South Australian cascade was particularly effective because simultaneously with the ALTC funding for Project EnROLE, the University of Adelaide awarded a 2007 Teaching and Learning grant to establish a Situational Learning Initiative based on Prof Holger Maier's pioneering work in online role play. SCoPE which was developed by the Project Manager (Ann Davenport) and Judi Baron (CLPD) has assisted in promoting EnROLE. It facilitated the collaboration of all 3 South Australian universities with TAFESA for a common purpose of advancing online role play simulations.

The strategic alliance between the University of Adelaide's SCoPE network and Project EnROLE was forged to capitalise on the coincidence in the goals of the two projects. Potential exists for expansion of the EnROLE Community of Practice into Western Australia and Queensland as well as for it to expand its dimensions beyond role based learning to other forms of active learning.

Regular contact between EnROLE Clusters resulting in cross-cluster fertilisation and collaboration across the range of partnership dimensions demonstrates the value of investing in developing professional networks around learning and teaching methodologies. State Network and Cluster Leaders have expressed a commitment to continuing collaboration in online role play and early evidence suggests sufficient motivation to realise this commitment.

*Quote from Network Leader:*

*The best thing about EnROLE for me has been the access to generous sharing of ideas and creativity of more experienced practitioners, and especially when those practitioners could so authoritatively articulate the pedagogical advantages of using online role play. This reinforced my own experiences, and re-enthused me when I felt overwhelmed by the lack of understanding of the importance of engaging teaching and learning experiences in the wider HE sector. I'm very grateful to have been given the opportunity to find out about the wonderful work others have done, and most appreciative of the help and advice of the project participants. I hope it can continue in some form... especially as my new ideas for online role plays begin to take shape.*



L to R: Irene Lee and Judi Baron, EnROLE Event at University of Adelaide



L to R: Chris Ainsworth, Emergency Services; Anu Mundkur, Flinders Uni and Deborah Jeanes, TAFESA, EnROLE Event at University of Adelaide

## Achievement 5: Guides for designing online role plays

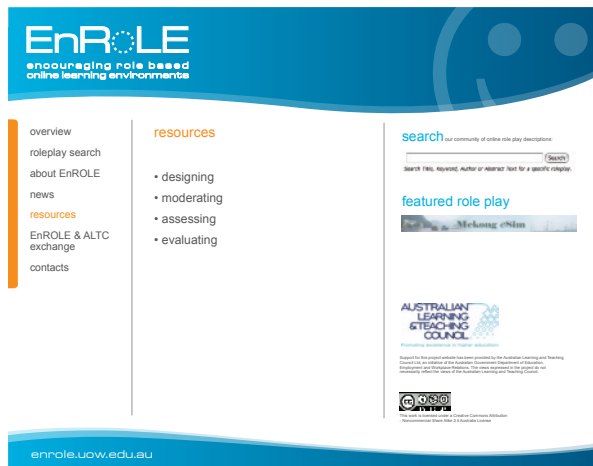


Figure 8: EnROLE Website Resources section: role play guides

Guides have been written by project members for the Resources section of the EnROLE website, some building on role play guides written for a preceding project, the AUTC Learning Designs project, 2000-2003 (Figures 8 & 9).

EnROLE team members (Wills, Leigh and Ip) have been invited to write a book in Routledge's international Connected with e-Learning series. It is currently titled *Role-based e-Learning: A guide to designing and moderating online role plays*.



Figure 9: Learning Designs Project: role play guides



# Linking: 6 to 8

## External Evaluator:

*Participants in the surveys and interviews consistently reported that the project was successful in reducing isolation and creating a supportive community of people engaged in innovative learning. Project EnROLE, in their opinion, facilitated the building of networks and making contacts with people who they might never have otherwise been in contact. Participants reported that they felt less isolated and felt more confident knowing that there were other people similar to them who had an interest in innovative learning.*

Project EnROLE involved **linking** both **within** and **outside** the project parameters. On an internal level, it facilitated the establishment of university-based, state, national and international communities of practice to support and further develop academics and professional staff engaged in the development of online role play technologies and pedagogies. This section of the report describes our external linking.

Links were made with the LAMS Community<sup>1</sup> who have developed role play sequences for use in LAMS. We initially investigated LAMS as the platform for the EnROLE Repository. However the development of ALTC Exchange, a hub for the exchange of ideas about teaching practice in the Australian higher education sector, commenced soon after Project EnROLE started. EnROLE team members established direct links with the Exchange project by providing input into the needs analysis and beta testing stages.

This involvement was driven by a desire to capitalise on and link into existing resources and supports, rather than reinventing the wheel. Having decided to align the project with this development, team members wanted to influence the structure and capacity of the Exchange to ensure it met the needs of the EnROLE community.

However, facilitation of a community of practice requires attention to the task of linking (individuals, interests, needs, expertise) demanding much more than a static website if connections are to be built and sustained over time. Community building needs people who are brokers and connectors. Not everyone is good at this: the professional networking skills of many academics may not be highly developed if their strengths lie elsewhere.

## External Evaluator:

*The basic premise of communities of practice is that the networking and brokerage afforded by communities of practice facilitates a sustained community which will become self-sufficient and embedded. However this approach requires a personal approach and working on a person-to-person basis. This approach makes the embedding slow and less obvious and highly dependent on individual champions and leaders.*



2009 Simulation and Technology for Training (SimTecT), Adelaide



2009 International Simulations and Gaming Association (ISAGA), Singapore



2009 League of Worlds (LOW), The Hague, Netherlands

<sup>1</sup> Learning Activity Management System [www.lamsinternational.com/](http://www.lamsinternational.com/) originates from Macquarie University

In *The Tipping Point* (2002), Gladwell looks at the factors that can make a difference in the diffusion of innovation including the importance of various types of people in spreading the word. The differing roles of people called 'connectors', 'mavens' and 'salesmen' are described. All are important and all have different ways of operating. The Project EnROLE team aimed to be connectors, mavens and salespeople in facilitating uptake of the role based learning designs in the repository. Our main strategy was brokering new partnerships in online role based learning activities. A **Partnerships Framework** (Figure 14 & Achievement 8) was developed to make the task more explicit to the future connectors and mavens who step forward to take up leadership in this community, or similar communities of practice.

A similar **linking** approach was evident in establishing a **Peer Review Framework** (Figure 11 & Achievement 7) for EnROLE. About the time of conceptualising this framework the project team became aware of another two ALTC projects investigating peer review of teaching<sup>2</sup>. The subsequent completion of these projects provides some additional resources and supports to incorporate into the EnROLE peer review process. The EnROLE team communicated their framework to the wider community via a poster presentation at an ALTC national colloquium organised by the Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education project (Devonshire et al. 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Peer Review of Teaching [www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/prot.html](http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/prot.html) and Peer Review of Online Courses [www.peerreview.unisa.edu.au](http://www.peerreview.unisa.edu.au)

A number of connections with external networks, such as SIMTECT, ASCILITE, HERDSA, ISAGA, ACCE and LOW were facilitated by members of the EnROLE community during the course of the project.

The aim was not to create a new organisation per se, but to build on existing forums to raise awareness about and interest in the value of encouraging role based learning environments. The EnROLE website regularly posts news of conferences relevant to role play such as League of Worlds (LOW), International Simulations and Gaming Association (ISAGA), Simulation and Technology for Training (SimTecT). However in order to facilitate writing of an edited book about role based learning, EnROLE is planning its own **invited international working conference** for that task (Achievement 6).

## Achievement 6: International working conference & edited book

An example of EnROLE's Partnership Framework in action is the work underway for an edited book about role based learning facilitated by a working conference. The numerous conference publications already fostered by the project are a rich source for a book solely on role play. However rather than a broadbrush call for contributions to the book, which would result in more of the case-study-type of papers that are already handled well in conference format, Elysabeth Leigh, as lead editor, has worked with the core EnROLE project team to identify areas for scholarly enquiry and is brokering writing partnerships for each key area.

A publisher for this edited book will be confirmed when work is completed on the co-authored book mentioned in Achievement 5.

Invitations to potential authors have been issued, but more importantly these invitations have involved brokering partnerships for evaluation as well as writing. The team feels that more will be learnt about the learning and teaching experience from comparative analysis than from continuing to publish singly authored descriptive case studies. This should lead to a more comprehensive coverage of the role play research agenda (see Achievement 11).

Another key objective for the book is the involvement of a mix of discipline academics, educational designers and, as yet untapped, drama educators, plus a relevant mix of Australian and international contributors. In June 2008 the book outline was drafted at a workshop with participants from NSW, Victoria, South Australia, ACT and Missouri Science and Technology University. Via EnROLE's Reference Group and international network we have sought examples of role plays internationally and, as described in Achievement 3, the momentum is building.

Supporting these writing partnerships through to publication is a two year project in itself. As part of the proposed support for this book the invited working conference will provide a structured platform for authors and co-authors to present draft chapters to the editors and other chapter authors for critique and reflection before finalising their work, whilst in retreat. The success of EnROLE's initial Writing Retreat in June 2007 underpins the concept of the Working Conference. This support process should contribute to the development of a more coherent and polished book covering a breadth of issues related to the use of online role play in university education.

# Linking: 6 to 8

## Achievement 7: Peer Review Framework

Reward and recognition via established academic procedures (i.e. peer review by publication) have been supplemented in this project via the development of a Peer Review Framework for learning designs and learning products. This level of granularity in terms of peer review has received little attention to date, despite a growing number of nationally funded projects specifically aimed at investigating the process of validating scholarship in university teaching (see Taylor and Richardson, 2001; Harris et al, 2009). A notable exception is the ALTC funded project, Peer Review of Online Teaching and Learning.

The project team determined the EnROLE peer review framework needed to encompass more than a formal reward and recognition agenda. It also needed to incorporate review processes to support and enable the dissemination and community building objectives of the project, and provide opportunities for evaluating and refining existing designs. Accordingly, the framework aimed to provide an avenue for:

- ☺ recognising sound pedagogical design
- ☺ initiating collegial discussions about teaching practice with critical friends
- ☺ establishing partnerships within/outside disciplinary or institutional boundaries
- ☺ encouraging reuse of learning designs within/outside disciplinary or institutional boundaries.

There were a number of questions guiding its conceptualisation:

- ☺ What is the purpose of the peer review?
- ☺ Who is the audience?
- ☺ What dimensions need consideration?
  - What needs to be assessed? Review object
  - What standards/measures? Content specifications
  - What expertise? Review providers
- ☺ What processes should be adopted?

In responding to these questions the project team was guided by existing processes embedded in online repositories, commissioned reports and projects (past and present) and published literature exploring the issue of peer review. Taylor and Richardson's (2001) work documenting a process for evaluating the scholarship associated with ICT-based teaching and learning resources was particularly influential.

Drawing on this information, and taking the project parameters into consideration, a briefing paper outlining key issues for consideration and a three-tiered model for review was developed and tabled (see Figure 10).

This staged model was aimed at balancing teacher investments alongside outcomes, while providing the possibility of different levels of engagement and/or emphasis with the peer review of teaching.

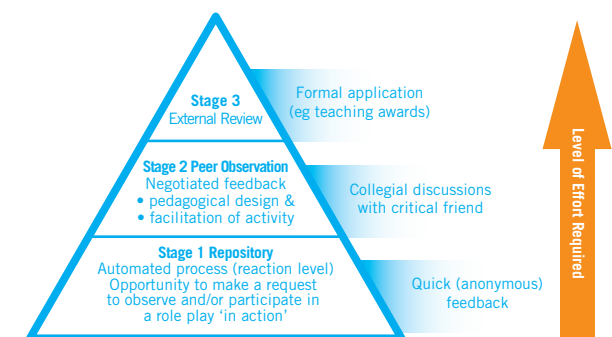


Figure 10: Draft Peer Review Framework



Stage 1 involved an automated peer review process within the EnROLE repository. The intention was to enable quick (anonymous) feedback to designers through teacher reactions and perceptions of the learning design descriptor, and to provide a mechanism for linking existing and/or new role play practitioners. Stage 2 involved a much greater investment both in terms of designer and teacher input and workload. It was focused on facilitating peer review (of learning design and/or role play moderation) via collegial discussions with a critical friend. Stage 3 involved formal peer review of teaching drawing on existing award mechanisms already established at professional organisational levels and beyond (eg ALTC, Commonwealth of Learning).

The EnROLE community was consulted about the validity of this framework, via the university clusters and a paper at the 2007 ascilite annual conference (Devonshire, 2007). Their engagement with this agenda confirmed the value and role of the staged model from the perspective of providing professional development, and the opportunity for reward and recognition. The incorporation of Stage 1 into the proposed EnROLE Repository was contingent on the ease of achieving this outcome within the existing parameters of the project. It was agreed that the peer review and feedback mechanisms envisaged for the ALTC Exchange (previously known as the Carrick Exchange) should be utilised for this purpose as this added value to the repository with little cost to the community.

Perhaps more significantly though was the 'buy in' from the EnROLE community in terms of realising the intention of Stage 2. A number of discussions ensued, some facilitated through the EnROLE Fellowship and others developed more organically through the emerging EnROLE community of practice. A small group of the community engaged in further discussion about the review agenda, an outcome of which was the development of an expanded framework for thinking about peer review. Essentially this framework aimed to link the review process more closely to the type of evidence that might be required at each stage of evaluation (see Figure 11 developed by Fran Everingham, University of Sydney). As such it provides a useful tool for establishing the collegial interactions associated with Stage 2 of the EnROLE peer review model.

The EnROLE peer review framework was useful in guiding the evaluation of several role plays during the second year of the project. For example, the designer of the role play 'Big Paper' (UNSW) asked another experienced role player (UTS) to conduct a peer observation, and subsequent modifications to the learning design were made following this review. The evaluation workshop conducted at Macquarie University also provided an avenue for implementing the peer review process. Documentation and support materials to guide the peer review process have been developed for the website. Unfortunately, the planned automated peer feedback on ALTC Exchange was not available in time for use by EnROLE. We hope that EnROLE's work, along with other ALTC projects on Peer Review, will inform the continuing development of the ALTC Exchange.

The project team determined that progression to Stage 3 formal peer review (often associated with career progression) was not within the scope of the project. The reasons for this were associated with emergent nature of the peer review agenda for teaching within higher education and the EnROLE Community of Practice. Nevertheless the work of this project offers insight into the benefits of implementing peer review practices in the design and facilitation of online role play activities and points to the importance of considering the process of learning design in the broader discussion about peer review.

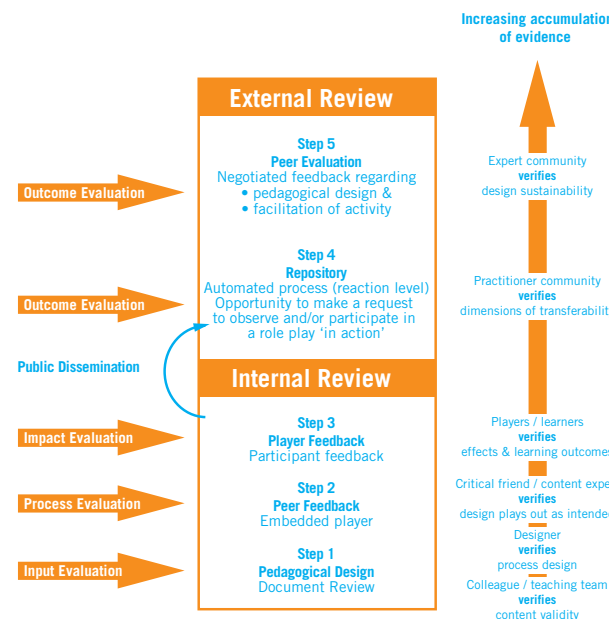


Figure 11: Expanded Peer Review Framework

# Linking: 6 to 8

## Achievement 8: Strategies for encouraging reuse of role based learning designs

Project EnROLE arose from a study (Wills and McDougall, 2006) that tracked the uptake of online role play in Australian universities over 16 years, looking at issues of reusability. It noted that of the 36 role plays developed during the period, 80% were reuse of another online role play and of these 60% **reused a role play learning design** rather than reusing an existing role play.

Project EnROLE was initiated to recognise the importance of facilitating reuse via learning design descriptions however it also aimed to overtly encourage the reuse of existing role plays.

The Wills and McDougall study noted only four role plays that have stood the test of time, been used by other teachers and/or have continued to be used even if the original designer is on leave or moves to another university: Middle Eastern Politics (Vincent and Shepherd, 1998); Mekong eSim (McLaughlan et al, 2001); Idontgoto Uni (Bell, 2002); Pain Management Roundtable (Devonshire, 2006). The study identified the following factors as contributing to sustainability of those four role plays: team approach to design and/or implementation; cross-institutional partners in implementation; departmental support as demonstrated by embedding the role play in the on-going course curriculum; recognition of the role play success by publication, award and/or promotion.

These factors have influenced the project's strategies. The four strategies described so far in this report are all important for encouraging reuse of role based learning:

- 😊 Community identity
- 😊 Repository of role play descriptions
- 😊 Events and resources
- 😊 Peer review

**Partnerships** are a key fifth strategy of the EnROLE dissemination framework, making it easier for teachers to reuse existing role plays or role play designs rather than having to innovate from scratch.

**Partnerships** not only pave the way for new role play designers, but also reduce the workload for existing role play designers. Partners using the same role play can take turns at leading or hosting it, rather than having to take full responsibility every time the subject is offered.

**Partnerships** provide opportunities for current role play designers to have their students participate in a national or international role play. Moving a role play from single institution to national or global collaboration adds value to the initial design in fulfilling the graduate attribute of internationalisation.

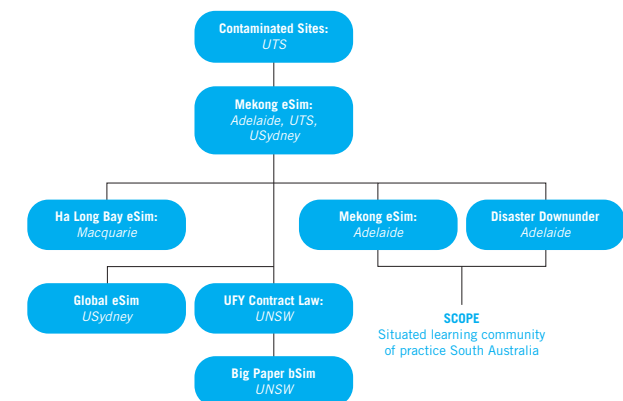


Figure 12: Mekong Family Tree

*Sally Totman, Deakin:*

*Most sim partnerships are built through personal connections. Partnership with Journalism at CSU and Government at UNSW added a professional element and gave students a taste of real-life. Playing with other universities adds a dimension of competition which spurs students to excel.*

A partnership approach also provides:

- 😊 complementary skills and experience
- 😊 increased richness through interaction
- 😊 multiple perspectives
- 😊 increased chance of reflection on practice.

EnROLE nurtured partnerships by building relationships with key online role play practitioners – through interviews, meetings, email correspondence, engaging them in decision making and strategic planning processes, and taking an active interest in their projects. The role of Connector/Network Manager was crucial to the success of the partnership strategy.

In addition to personal brokerage, EnROLE designed and implemented a Partnerships Workshop as a module in the Fellowship Series to:

- 😊 nurture new role play designers by establishing partnerships with existing role play designers
- 😊 help existing partnerships become more resilient into the future
- 😊 provide insights from experienced partners about obstacles and opportunities in collaborative design and delivery.

In terms of purposely designing for reuse the following protocols were stressed by workshop presenters:

- 😊 clarity up front about ownership and attribution with a commitment to revise these assumptions as the project moves forward
- 😊 branding of the role play so that it has identity outside the original developers eg Mekong eSim

In terms of adapting existing learning designs, in Figure 13 Devonshire (2006) outlines four dimensions for consideration before embarking on the repurposing exercise.

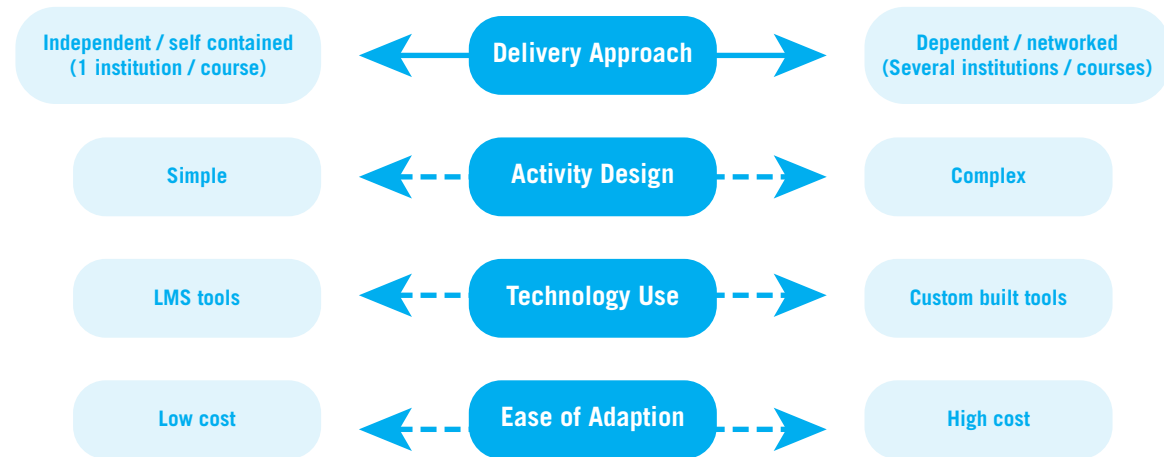


Figure 13: Repurposing role plays: four dimensions for consideration



L to R Albert Ip, Fablusi; John Shepherd, UNSW; Sally Totman, Deakin; Roni Linser, Fablusi (via Skype) united to present the 20 year history of the Middle Eastern Politics Simulation at the Partnerships workshop, UoW, June 2008



L to R Old partners and new in the Mekong eSim family tree, Holger Maier, Adelaide; Rob McLaughlan, UTS; Lois Meyer, UNSW; Elizabeth Rosser, UNSW; Sophie di Corpo, UNSW; Kate Lloyd, Macquarie

# Linking: 6 to 8

## Partnerships Framework

The EnROLE Partnerships Framework extends beyond EnROLE's initial plan for partnerships in running online role plays within or between universities enabling students to collaborate and compete across institutional, if not international, boundaries.

### Types of Partnerships

- 😊 Partnerships for collaboration between students in the role play across institutions or disciplines
- 😊 Partnerships for teachers designing new role plays
- 😊 Partnerships in administering and moderating role play
- 😊 Partnerships for reuse of a role play or repurposing a learning design
- 😊 Partnerships for professional development, peer review and mentoring
- 😊 Partnerships for evaluation, research and scholarly publication

Figure 14: EnROLE Partnerships Framework

**EnROLE Family Trees demonstrate visually the outcomes of formal and informal partnerships.**

This framework was evidenced in various ways during the project lifespan.

A notable example is the repurposing of the **Round Table Discussion in Pain Management** (University of Sydney) for a joint project between the Schools of Mining Engineering and Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales. Through the development of the Buyat Bay Planning Focus Meeting, capacity in online role play has been built across three faculties at UNSW. The support and encouragement of Elizabeth Devonshire (USyd) in sharing her expertise with the design team has been central to the decision to incorporate online role play as a cross-faculty initiative in Mining Engineering and Public Health.

An international design partnership arose out of a shared desire for better approaches to the teaching of **Project Management** across disciplines and universities involved in EnROLE. This partnership was initiated through the EnROLE Fellowship Program and developed through the associated workshop series. Dr. Ray Leuchetefeld and Sara Lane, Missouri University of Science and Technology (Rolla, USA) took a leading role in developing the Project Management Role Play in collaboration with UNSW, UTS, Macquarie University, and Fablusi. This international partnership resulted in development of an online role play for project managers that will suit both engineering and business courses.

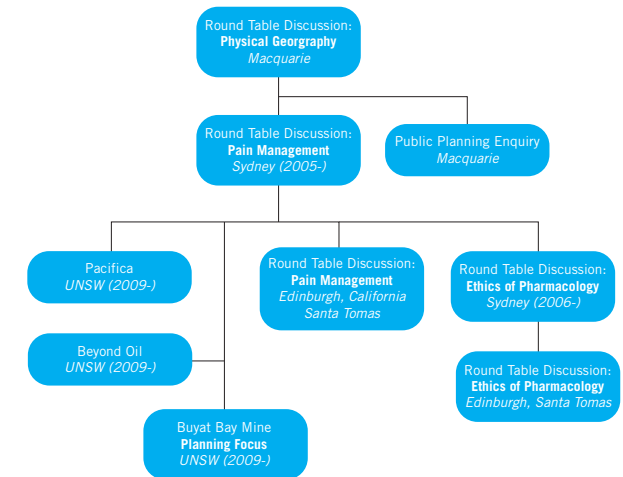


Figure 15: Roundtable Family Tree

A strategic professional development partnership between the University of Adelaide and La Trobe University, centred on the **Plagiarism e-Sim**, has assisted in deepening existing skill in online role play activities. The Plagiarism e-Sim has been successfully used for international workshops in design and development of online role play. The Plagiarism e-Sim has stimulated significant interest in online role play and has been subsequently used as a model for the design of other role based learning activities such as Include a Dude (Canberra).

*Quote from EnROLE Fellow:*

*In December 2007 I attended a workshop run by Ann Davenport and Judi Baron at the ascilite conference in Singapore, entitled Plagiarism eSim. I was hooked!*

The importance and power of a partnerships approach to facilitating online role play was demonstrated in the success of the cross-university and cross-disciplinary **Middle East Politics Simulation** coordinated by Dr Sally Totman through Deakin University using the UNSW Online Role Play Environment (ORE). New players in the field of online role play were thus mentored by experienced role play facilitators into the processes of running a successful role play. This role play was initiated in 1990 by Dr Andrew Vincent and Dr John Shepherd when at The University of Melbourne. It was run at The University of Melbourne for 10 years and has been also been run at Macquarie University for a decade. Through the efforts of Dr Sally Totman and Dr John Shepherd, the role play has now been introduced into courses at Charles Sturt University, UNSW and the University of Wollongong thus expanding the legacy of Dr Andrew Vincent's pioneering work in online educational role play.

Figure 16 indicates the impact of the Middle Eastern Politics Simulation on the generation of new online role plays within university education. Project EnROLE leveraged the knowledge base of early adopters involved in these role plays to build capacity in online role based learning.

In the spirit of the scholarship of learning and teaching, EnROLE actively encouraged partnerships in publication about experiences and outcomes of online role based learning. Through a writing retreat and workshops designed to increase awareness of the demands of writing for publication, several writing partnerships developed. Notably, writing partnerships between experienced and novice authors were fruitful in generating journal articles, conference papers, posters and workshops. Novice writers reported this to be a most valuable aspect of the EnROLE project.

The Generation Matrix (Figure 17) shows how the impact of online role play is strengthened through reuse and repurposing of role plays. EnROLE encouraged reuse partnerships as a way of mitigating risks inherent in initiating unfamiliar learning activities. This was a highly successful approach resulting in over 20 such cross-institutional partnerships.

*External Evaluator's Survey: The most common responses participants gave about the positive aspects of the project and its activities can be summarised under these themes: networking, shared practice, learning, and support.*

☺ *Networking: Participants stated that they were able to meet other people within the area of online role play, make new contacts, and engage in a community of practice.*

☺ *Shared practices: Participants also claimed that the project allowed sharing of ideas and sharing of practices within online role play and innovative teaching methods.*

☺ *Learning: The project was also an opportunity for participants to learn new techniques, learn more about other people's role plays.*

☺ *Support: The project team and members within the team were identified as being extremely supportive and important in sustaining people's persistence in this area.*

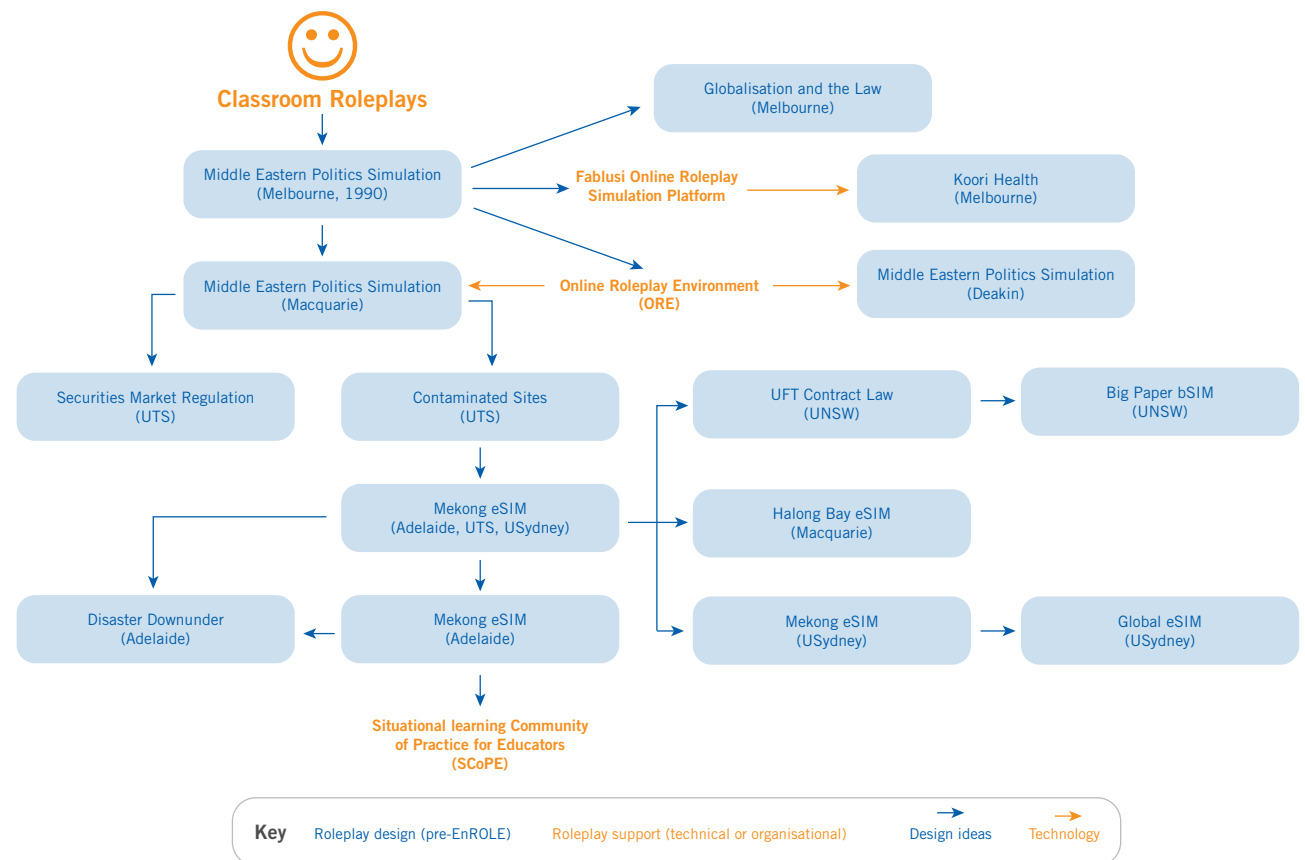


Figure 16: Impact of Middle Eastern Politics Simulation over 20 years



# Linking: 6 to 8

## Generation Matrix

	Australia						International			
Middle Eastern Politics Simulation	Generation 1: 1990 Email to central dispatch									
	UMelb (host)									
	Generation 2: 1991 – 1998 Email + chat with role aliases									
	UMelb (host)						UTexas	Georgetown	Canterbury NZ	American Uni Cairo
		Macquarie (host)					UTexas	Georgetown	Canterbury NZ	American Uni Cairo
	Generation 3: 1998 – 2007 Web interface									
	UTS		Macquarie (host)				UTexas	Georgetown		
		Macquarie (host)				UTexas	Georgetown			
	Generation 4: 2008 Modified interface for (politics + journalism) role-plays									
	Charles Sturt	UNSW	Deakin (host)							
	UOW		Deakin (host)							
	Charles Sturt	UNSW	Deakin (host)							
	Generation 5: under re-development for trial in Semester 2 2009									
	Charles Sturt	UNSW	Deakin (host)							
Idontgoto Uni	Generation 1: Idontgoto Uni									
	UOW w/gong									
	UOW w/gong		UOW regional				UOW Dubai			
	Generation 2: Conference Lunch									
	UOW w/gong		UOW regional							
	UOW		UNSW	Sydney	Adelaide	Macquarie	Melbourne			



	Australia				International			
Mekong e-Sim	Development stage							
	UNE	UTS (host)	Sydney	Adelaide				
	Generation 1: 2001 – 2002							
		UTS (host)	Sydney	Adelaide		Malaysia	Singapore	
	Generation 2: 2003							
		UTS (host)	Sydney Global eSim	Adelaide				
	Generation 3: 2004							
		UTS		Adelaide (host)		Malaysia		
	Generation 4: 2005 – 2009							
				Adelaide (host)				
			Adelaide (host)		JW Goethe Frankfurt			
Mekong variant 2007								
		Sydney (host)			Chiang Mai Thailand	Yunnan China		
Plagiarism eSim				Adelaide (host)	ASCILITE			
	TAFESA	LaTrobe	UniSA	Adelaide (host)				
Roundtable Discussion	Generation 1: 2001 Environmental Decision Making							
	Macquarie							
	Generation 2: 2002 Pain Management							
		Sydney			Edinburgh (licence)			
		Sydney			Edinburgh (licence)	Santo Tomas (licence)	California (licence)	
	Pain Management Variant - 2007: Ethics of Pharmacology							
	Sydney			Edinburgh (licence)				
				Edinburgh (licence)	Santo Tomas (licence)			
Dental Amalgam eSim				Adelaide (host)	Sharjah			
				Adelaide (host)	BbWorld, Las Vegas	e-Learn, Las Vegas		

Figure 17: Generation Matrix: Reuse and repurposing of selected online role plays in the EnROLE repository

# Understanding: 9

The insights gained through participation in Project EnROLE have been distilled through an iterative process of internal and external evaluations; literature (especially those related to online role play and communities of practice); feedback from those who participated in EnROLE activities and events; plus individual and team reflection (Figure 18).

## Understanding through external evaluation

An external evaluator worked with Project EnROLE to facilitate the project team's reflections on progress through a negotiated evaluation framework. This framework had as key principles the use of qualitative and quantitative data for all aspects of the evaluation and the use of formative evaluation methodologies to ensure that the results of the evaluation are fed back into the project in a timely manner. Quantitative measures included statistical analysis of participation in project events, publications, repository contributions and university involvement. Further insights were obtained from face-to-face and phone interviews with EnROLE community members, web surveys and focus group meetings.

### *External Evaluator:*

*Project participants who had participated in some capacity by November 2008 were identified by the following mechanisms: identified as participants in the NSW cluster workshops; listed as contributors in the embryonic repository; listed in the initial project proposal; identified as members of the EnROLE online groups on ALTC Exchange; or listed by cluster leaders as people within their cluster. The total list of people identified through the process described above numbered 131. From this group, 110 people who were contactable and still actively involved in online role play in some capacity were selected. This group was further divided into 2 groups: "active participants" i.e. those involved in one or more of the activities such as conferences, workshops and discussion for a; and "interested observers", i.e. those who had indicated their interest at some point during the life of the project. The 85 participants that were identified as "active participants" were contacted and invited to provide feedback. Of the 85 active participants, a total of 37 individuals engaged in the online survey and/or interview process of the EnROLE project, providing a 44% response rate.*

The project team valued the opportunity this provided to respond to preliminary observations and feedback to inform and shape the direction, processes and purposes of the project. The project evaluation aimed to track the project team's sphere of influence and potential for sustainability beyond the life of the project.

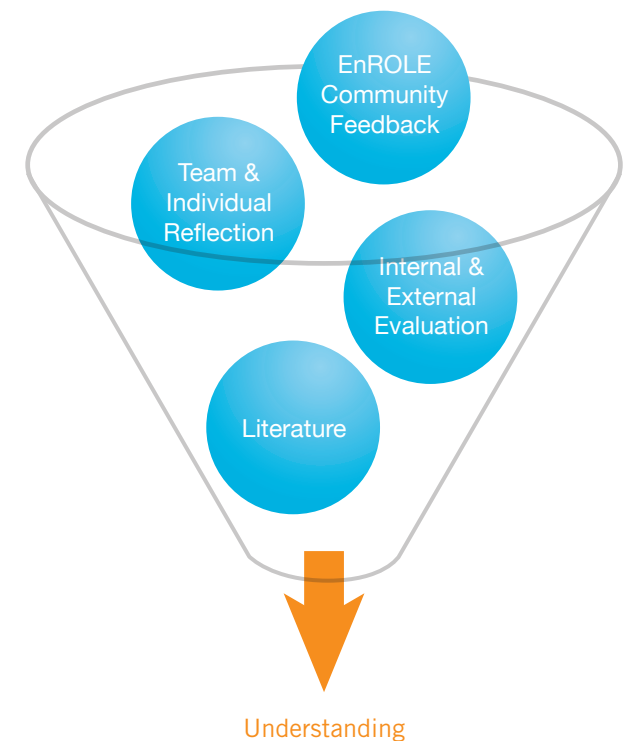


Figure 18: Understanding about project processes for encouraging online role play

On the surface it appeared that the high level of involvement and commitment from core project team was a strength of the project. However, in the interim report the external evaluator, Deanne Gannaway, noted that:

*It has been observed by the evaluator in team meetings and meetings with potential cluster leaders that the momentum of the project is firmly tied to the personality of the project manager and members of the project team. The nature of this project and the activities within the project appear highly dependent on developing and nurturing professional relations. To ensure upscaling and embedding of online role plays past the life of the project, the project team needs to develop strategies to build the capacity in others to maintain these relationships in the longer term and also to ensure that the momentum continues when members of the project team are not or no longer available. [I recommend that] The project team members build capacity across the project team and in cluster leaders. [and] The project team develop a communication strategy that allows for developing and developed cluster groups to communicate with each other across all clusters to help develop a mega-community of practice that could also share possible process related strategies.*

Attempts were made to address this by dispersing part of the project funding earlier than the original project plan directly to partner universities and interstate participant universities for their use in developing local clusters. It was thought that this would stimulate initiative and empower each university cluster to forge local identity. This autonomy was accompanied by a responsibility to report back to the wider EnROLE network about initiatives and findings thereby encouraging a culture of knowledge sharing and connection. While this did seem to have positive impact on the development of local clusters, it was not wholly effective as noted in the final report:

*The decision to follow an informal approach to communities of practice may have implications for tracking future cascading...*

*Active participants frequently did not identify themselves as being a member of a cluster...*

*The evaluation team initially anticipated that other state networks such as Victoria would each have had their own sets of workshops/seminars/meetings, mimicking the NSW process. In Victoria, the community appeared to be more about linking people together either through emailing or telephoning people who could facilitate these links rather than it being about organised activities where people in the area met together to engage in a workshop, writing group, etc. This made it difficult to estimate the precise representation of role play developers in the project as their level of involvement differed between academics. For example, one EnROLE participant had only ever engaged in one workshop, whereas others were more involved.*

*...Many of the people within the clusters were involved only at certain times or for certain activities and their engagement with the project was not necessarily continuous. Over the life of the evaluation, the estimate of role play developers actively involved in the project fluctuated, rather than represent a steady growth. For example, some academics previously involved in the project might have dropped out of the project for career-related reasons, but this does not preclude them returning to a community at some point.*

The sense of achievement experienced by project team members has the capacity to sustain and extend the work done thus far. However, time will be the measure of the extent to which the project, the team and its focus are all able to remain connected.

## Understanding through team reflection

Project EnROLE has enabled deeper understanding of:

- ☺ online role play as an educative tool in the context of university education
- ☺ how historical and contemporary academic culture impacts on learning/teaching innovation
- ☺ the process of managing a complex dissemination project.

As noted elsewhere in this report eleven deliverables were envisaged for the project. Perhaps a twelfth could have been stated as enabling a loosely-coupled and diverse group of academics and learning designers to learn more about:

- ☺ the tools they are promoting
- ☺ the joys and difficulties of working collaboratively
- ☺ the value of professional networks during personal and professional transitions
- ☺ keeping a major project on track as it grew into its goals and then grew beyond them.

The area of online role play is an emergent area of learning/teaching practice which, at the outset of this project, was not yet recognised as a legitimate field in its own right. Thus, one of the contributions made by Project EnROLE was to identify and name online role play as a separate and legitimate form of online collaborative learning. This has laid the foundation for the development of a community of practice to support the expansion of this dynamic field. We need to be mindful however to maintain openness to and connection with other related fields such as drama education, computer-based simulations and problem-based learning so that the fields inform each other's practice and exploit synergies.

# Understanding: 9

Online role play has the potential to become increasingly relevant in the context of university education as information and social networking technology expands in capability and reach. The capacity of online role based learning to leverage technology to overcome barriers of time, space and corporeal stereotyping frees students to explore their world from a variety of different perspectives. This capacity positions it as an important technique for advancing university graduate attributes. Therefore recognising and encouraging innovators in the field is especially important at this point in time.

Through identifying and documenting the learning designs and implementation advice of academics experienced in delivering role play online, Project EnROLE has provided a legacy to assist future development in the field. During the lifespan of Project EnROLE two veteran online role play practitioners passed away and were lost from the field. Dr. Andrew Vincent (Macquarie) and Marie Jasinski (TAFESA) had both contributed significantly to the development of the technique of online role play. While much of their knowledge base is now lost, some of their insight has been preserved through artefacts such as interviews, meeting notes and role play descriptions on the EnROLE repository. As an active member of the EnROLE project team, Dr. Andrew Vincent mentored newcomers in the art of creating and running an effective online role play and, through this the influence of his work has been extended to the next generation of role play practitioners.

Therefore, Project EnROLE has begun the important work of preserving experience through archiving artefacts pertinent to the story of the development of online role play as an educational technique.

The field also stood to lose the skills of other early adopters. For some early adopters, online role play has been an interesting part of their journey but, through circumstances such as promotion, research focus or retirement, it has become peripheral to their present practice. Participation in Project EnROLE has provided encouragement for some academics to re-engage with the field, and in doing so, reduce potential losses of expertise which could have occurred without this intervention.

*Dr. John Shepherd, UNSW Cluster Co-leader:  
My work in supporting online role play is neither central nor rewarded in terms of my career as a Computer Science academic. My initial motivation for becoming involved in online role play was to help a respected colleague, Andrew Vincent, to get more out of a face-to-face role play he was running in Middle Eastern Politics. I keep doing it because I think it's a cool teaching technique that could be used to good effect in many more places and contexts than currently. Through EnROLE, I now think I can contribute in helping other people to get into it; open up the role play engine for others to use; and contribute by keeping the Middle East role-plays running.*



EnROLers, Andrew Vincent, Sandra Wills & Elizabeth Rosser (centre), planning the Macquarie Cluster with the T & L Centre staff, Maree Gosper & Stephen Marshall (sides)



Developing the EnROLE network in SA with staff of Centre for Learning and Professional Development at University of Adelaide, L to R Ursula McGowan Kogi Naidoo, Elizabeth Rosser (EnROLE National Manager), Marilyn Purdy, Judi Baron (EnROLE SA Leader), John Willison, Dayle Hall



## Understanding through interaction with EnROLE community

Cataloguing and creating a repository of online role play designs, while useful, is not enough on its own to bring about a sustainable community of practice. It was interesting to note that the small group of innovative educators active in the field of online role play in Australian universities is typically technology-savvy, or at least, technologically aware but, despite this, they did not respond favourably to online communication using social networking technology as a means of professional exchange within Project EnROLE. Push technologies such as email had a greater response rate associated with them than web-based networking sites trialled during the project. The greatest impact was achieved through face-to-face activities and phone calls. It seems that personal interactions are still highly valued by the community of role play academics.

### *External Evaluation:*

*The most common methods of communication used by participants were face-to-face contact, email, telephone contact, and through face-to-face workshops. Participants rated face-to-face contact and email as being the most important modes of communication.*

Academic professional networking skills appear to be currently focussed around research linkages and conference participation. They are not as well developed in the learning/teaching domains or through web-based communities. Consequently the role of network managers acting as a connectors is seen as critically important in bringing people into contact with each other and in brokering strategic partnerships to support work in the field.

### *External Evaluation:*

*Of the participants who indicated that they had communicated or collaborated with other academics, the majority indicated that these communications/collaborations were mostly or entirely facilitated by the EnROLE project.*

The quality of university education is influenced by the quality of the educational developers, technologists, discipline experts, support personnel and institutional policy makers who shape the university priorities and processes. These contribute towards the quality of learning experiences provided for students and to the professional reward for innovation. Institutional support in terms of risk management, integration into the mainstream curriculum, recognition and reward all impact on the uptake of online role based learning.

### *External Evaluation:*

*Although most participants indicated that there were no formal strategies put in place at their universities, they did state that their institutions had been supportive on an informal basis. For example, some of the participants responded that:*

- ☺ *Within the teaching and learning part of the institution there was a lot of support and assistance.*
- ☺ *Within some departments, there is support from director/bosses/heads of school to promote the use of online role plays with students.*
- ☺ *The student's demand for online role plays actually sustains the use of them.*
- ☺ *They have received grants to continue their work in online learning environments.*

The success of educational online role play is often enhanced by a team approach to design, implementation and evaluation. Working in a team adds a dimension to delivering teaching which requires additional skills of collaboration. An investment in team approaches to learning/teaching innovation is productive and a key factor in sustainability of teaching innovation. Drawing on a range of expertise available within a university and the EnROLE community at large to inform and support practice may improve the depth and relevance of learning activities. Careful attention to proper attribution of the various aspects of online role play can help to facilitate team approaches to learning/teaching innovation. The role of all contributors should be documented and acknowledged both for professional courtesy and to enable others to identify appropriate professional expertise required when designing new activities.

Working with the large number of role play designers in this project, Achievement 9 (page 33) has been compiled as EnROLE's recommendations for assuring the quality of the learning experience and its sustainability in the curriculum beyond the initial innovation. The field of online role play was started by innovators. For these innovations to become mainstream the following checklist needs attention.



L to R EnROLE Project Team Elysabeth Leigh; Elizabeth Rosser; Sandra Wills; from behind Carol Russell; Elizabeth Devonshire; John Shepherd



# Understanding: 9

## Achievement 9: Recommendations for quality assurance and sustainability of online role play

### Recommendations for design & development teams

- ☺ Clarify issues of ownership and attribution early in the design process and revisit these periodically to address emerging issues
- ☺ 'Brand' the activity such that its identity is extendable beyond its initial development (eg Mekong eSim has several iterations with different names which distinguish each eSim)
- ☺ Gain copyright permission for resources ensuring that the status of items is confirmed: support for this is often available within universities through the library or legal services
- ☺ Align graduate attributes, role play outcomes, assessment tasks and marking and feedback within the role play activity
- ☺ Aim for authenticity of role play environment and processes
- ☺ Be aware of and provide for institutional IT policies, for example, if the role play uses fictional names and requires students to log in using those names liaise early with IT staff to ensure there is a means of making this happen
- ☺ Attend to reliability and security of platform used

### Recommendations for role play administrators

- ☺ Plan for appropriate back up to accommodate known leave arrangements of team members and unexpected events
- ☺ Ensure adequate training and support for moderators/facilitators/tutors
- ☺ Provides guidelines for facilitators in regard to the learning outcomes and processes
- ☺ Clarify expectations about staff and student behaviour within the role play (Rules of Engagement)
- ☺ Develop and maintain clear documentation of assessment procedures and an accurate description of the role play activity in course outlines
- ☺ Anticipate the organisational hurdles for cross-institutional and cross-faculty role plays such as timetabling and sign-in/guest access procedures
- ☺ Consult with university and community stakeholders who might be impacted by the conduct of the role play: consider the outcomes of unanticipated "leakage" of the role play action into the real world

### Recommendations for universities & departments

- ☺ Provide adequate infrastructure support for staff by way of access to technical knowledge, time allowances, learning design knowledge, and professional development
- ☺ Ensure appropriate and sustained acknowledgement of the emotional investment required for academics prepared to take the risk of doing things differently and doing different things
- ☺ Integrate use of online role play approaches into the curriculum development cycle - such that teaching staff are enabled to use them routinely where deemed appropriate
- ☺ Construct institutional assessment policies that incorporate provisions for student work online
- ☺ Encourage staff to seek out existing role play designs and repurpose those that are available and relevant to their own teaching practices
- ☺ Seek feedback from staff and students about the impact of the approach on their overall teaching/learning performance
- ☺ Evaluate and document, on a regular basis, changes in levels of student independence and interdependence as learners
- ☺ Provide support for peer review of role plays and role play learning designs as a mainstream academic practice
- ☺ Recognise and reward innovative exemplars of online role play, for instance, through promotion criteria, teaching awards and teaching grants

## Project EnROLE success factors

- ☺ The explicit intention to build a network from the 'inside out' - beginning with what was known and accessible, and building out from there - allowed the team to grow with the size of the project and ensured a steady growth in the number of role plays via 'discovery', reuse or development of new designs.
- ☺ Similarly, using a 'network-centric' development strategy enabled and sustained an environment within which individuals could act as part of a coordinated network (Kearns<sup>3</sup>). Figure 19 demonstrates the capacity of university, state and national networking to facilitate uptake of online role based learning.

- ☺ Establishing and maintaining a focus on both practice and research ensured that those coming in touch with the project through its life were connected to support in relation to their particular needs and concerns.
- ☺ Taking the time to 'build the team' was crucial as noted above. For some team members this was quite a different experience, as there is a tendency for academic activity to be compartmentalised and separated rather than dealt with holistically.

<sup>3</sup> [www.activist.blogs.com/networkcentricadvocacypaper.pdf](http://www.activist.blogs.com/networkcentricadvocacypaper.pdf)

## Factors impeding success

- ☺ Reluctance on the part of some academics to get involved in anything too different from familiar routines was – and remains – an inhibiting factor. Perceptions about the time required and possible risks involved were often not matched by the real experiences of those involved in the project and were not easily remedied in the time available.
- ☺ Putting the focus on online role play environments as a developmental and learner-focused tool did not allow sufficient time to lobby for course and program level interest ie we addressed the use of role play as a specific tool for learning within and across disciplines and did not make much headway in having it accepted as a factor for incorporation into consideration of program-level design activity. A future project to take up this focus could, with care, draw more attention to the educational principles and philosophy that informs online role play. Support for its incorporation as an embedded methodology - to be used somewhere in each academic program - needs to be linked as an element of espoused goals of engaging learners directly in their learning experience.
- ☺ Where focus on department level integration was achieved, for example in the Globalisation and the Law, Beyond Oil and Buyat Bay role plays, there has not been sufficient time to collect data for sound conclusions about the impact of this. Further reflection on these role plays in terms of their uptake, successful implementation, acceptance and sustainability is recommended.
- ☺ Accidents and incidents involving the personal lives of project team members may seem outside the scope of project planning. However our experience was that they affected the project in every dimension. We were indeed fortunate that, in the face of adversity, the project operated in a supportive environment that could sustain progress.

### External Evaluation:

Participants expressed that the team was very supportive and collegial and provided members with an important resource.

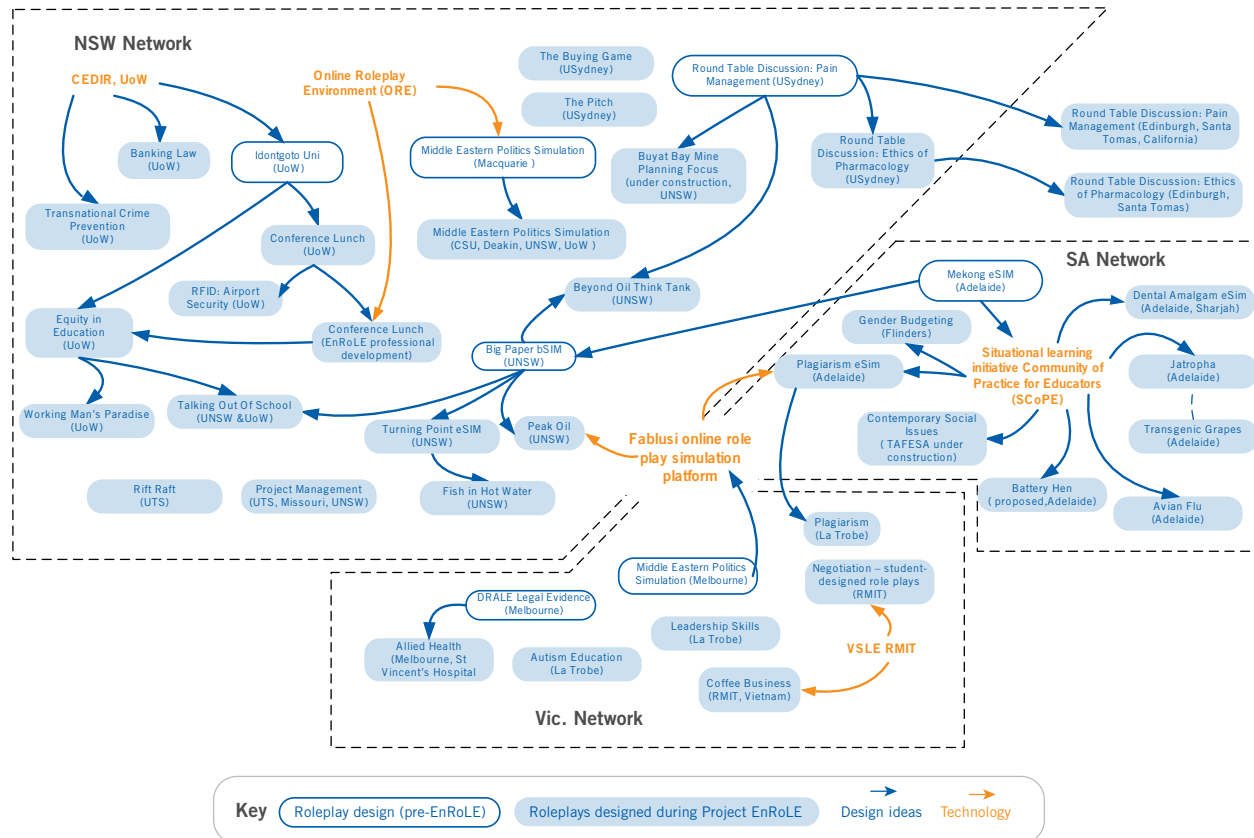


Figure 19: Influences on role plays developed during EnROLE

Note: This diagram is intended as an illustration of the nature of influences and not as a comprehensive map of all the work that has taken place in the field of online roleplay.

# Extending: 10 to 11

Project EnROLE has achieved what it set out to do, that is, build a self-sustaining community of practice around online role based learning. In this context sustainability means:

- 😊 the extent to which the use of online role play practices builds and grows past the endpoint of the project
- 😊 the manner in which individual designs are embraced and implemented by academics who were not members of the project team
- 😊 growth in the community of practice of academics committing to take up and/or support the use of online role play.

In the grant proposal it was flagged that the EnROLE model of dissemination via cascading clusters and networks, if successful for role based learning, may be developed as an Uptake Model that can be **extended** to other Learning Designs (Achievement 10).

Despite our success, there is still more that can be done. Inevitably in trying to answer the questions raised in our original grant application, some questions remain unanswered and new questions arise that warrant further attention. In bringing the formal project to conclusion, the team has provided a **Research Agenda** (Achievement 11) that may inform flow-on projects or future ALTC grants and fellowships.

## External Evaluator:

*Recommend the project team suggests a strategy for capitalizing on the marketing and branding already established beyond the life of the project to ensure that the work continues. This strategy could advise ALTC fellowships or second generation grants.*

## Achievement 10: Model for uptake of other learning designs

Achievement 2 covered the project's work on refining, defining and scoping the newly emerging area of role based learning designs. EnROLE's Simulation Triad (repeated as Figure 20) visually positioned role based learning in relation to simulations in order to better explain what role play is, with its emphasis on student interaction between roles, in role. However it also serves to position it in relation to problem based learning. This broader definition provides scope for other learning designs to be added to the repository by showing us how to broaden the keyword index. The repository could therefore include learning designs variously described as:

- 😊 Role Based Learning
- 😊 Problem Based Learning
- 😊 Case Based Learning
- 😊 Scenario Based Learning
- 😊 Situational Learning
- 😊 Collaborative Learning
- 😊 Computer simulations
- 😊 Scientific modelling.

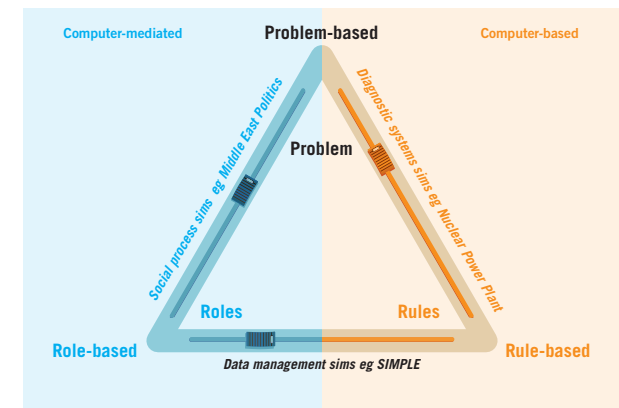


Figure 20: Positioning role based learning in relationship to PBL and simulations

Developing a taxonomy of learning designs was an issue grappled with in the previously-funded AUTC Learning Designs Project and a number of UK projects such as DialogPlus<sup>4</sup>, Phoebe Pedagogic Planner<sup>5</sup>, Compendium LD<sup>6</sup>, London Pedagogy Planner<sup>7</sup>. EnROLE is a contribution to this research, however the main message of Project EnROLE is that repositories are difficult to develop without also fostering a community of practice. This message was reinforced by Tom Carey from MERLOT at ascilite 2007:

*...our thinking about repository structure and function can be enriched by expanding our perspective from a repository-centred view to a community-centred view. In the title of this paper this shift is expressed as From Repositories Supported by Communities to Communities Supported by Repositories (Carey, 2007).*

It is the Uptake Model constructed by Project EnROLE that may be of most use to other learning designs. The model involves five strategies (Figures 21 & 24) beginning with building a cascading, linked community of practice as represented visually with “keyhole” designs (Figures 22 & 23). In reality, the boundaries between clusters, states and national networks became somewhat blurred in the implementation but the distinction was useful in forging tight bonds in the chunks of the bigger community rather than trying to bite off the whole world at once.

<sup>4</sup> [www.nettle.soton.ac.uk/toolkit](http://www.nettle.soton.ac.uk/toolkit)

<sup>5</sup> [www.phoebe.ox.ac.uk](http://www.phoebe.ox.ac.uk)

<sup>6</sup> [www.kn.open.ac.uk/public/workspace.cfm?wpid=8690](http://www.kn.open.ac.uk/public/workspace.cfm?wpid=8690)

<sup>7</sup> [www.wle.org.uk/d41](http://www.wle.org.uk/d41)

## EnROLE Uptake Model

### 1 Identity

Build the community by

- ☺ defining and naming the area/s of practice
- ☺ starting with clusters small enough to meet in person
- ☺ linking clusters into cascading networks

### 2 Repository

Represent the work of the community by

- ☺ collecting and cataloguing learning design descriptions

### 3 Events and Resources

Support new and existing learning designs via

- ☺ workshops, guides and mentors for design and evaluation

### 4 Peer Review

Address reward and recognition issues by

- ☺ facilitating peer reviewed publications
- ☺ providing peer review of learning designs

### 5 Partnerships

Assist with workload and sustainability issues by

- ☺ brokering national and international partnerships

Figure 21: EnROLE Uptake Model description

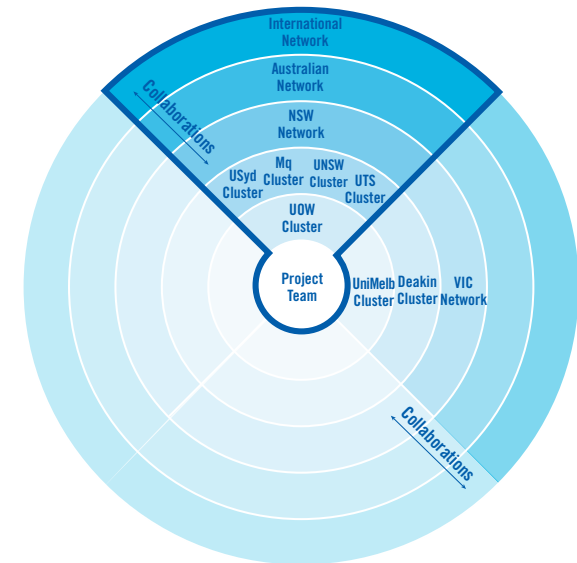


Figure 22: EnROLE Cascading Communities: Stage 1

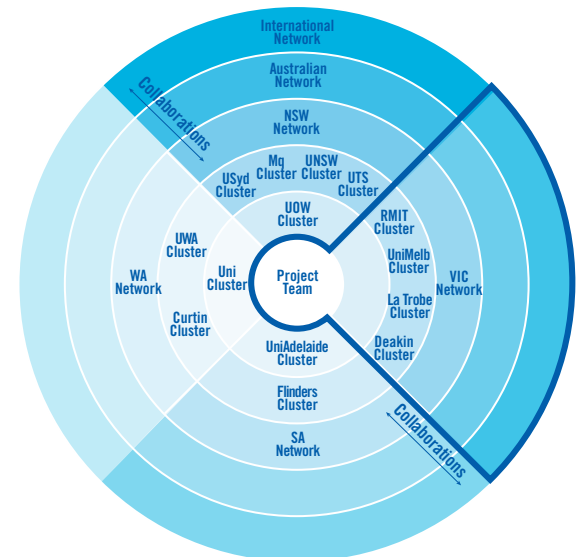


Figure 23: EnROLE Cascading Communities: Stage 2

# Extending: 10 to 11

The final message of the EnROLE model: it is highly unlikely that this fledgling community could have been developed by volunteers. Although the cluster activity was in fact substantially volunteer, it could not have happened without the funding provided by ALTC to employ a senior person as National Manager half-time for two years. Of course, funding for full-time would have been better. In South Australia, the Situational Learning project manager was employed full-time for a year however one year seemed not enough time to capitalise on all the projects that were inspired by the initiative. This message is reinforced by Carey (2007) in his description of the model now adopted by the MERLOT<sup>8</sup> project where 15 discipline leaders are employed to foster academic exchange in each discipline.

*The 15 discipline communities in MERLOT have become communities of purpose whose aim is to advance teaching and learning in their disciplines through the exchange, re-use and adaptation of exemplary learning resources and shared teaching expertise. These communities function as Editorial Boards for their discipline portals within MERLOT, a shared purpose which is manifested in the development of collaborative artifacts: a repository of open educational resources which they organise and manage (including triage of outdated resources) and to which they contribute resource recommendations, and pedagogical content knowledge such as peer reviews...*

Likewise the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in the UK are fully funded discipline centres. However Project EnROLE was not discipline-related and had to begin with building identity and definition. The task, whilst smaller because focussed on one learning design, was larger because it was cross-disciplinary.

We recommend that the EnROLE Uptake Model (Figures 21 & 24) be considered by ALTC for informing future work around the ALTC Exchange and Learning Networks. The model for building a community of practice was proposed in the grant application and has been validated throughout the two year experience of Project EnROLE.



Figure 24: EnROLE Uptake Model diagram

<sup>8</sup> [www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm](http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm)



# Achievement 11: Agenda for further research

In any project there is a tension between the excitement of active engagement with the practice and the importance of measured attention to the task of researching that practice. Throughout each stage of the project we used both active engagement and reflective analysis to bring to a wider audience an enhanced awareness of how online role play assists in engaging students with the experience of learning. This approach of combining practice with research has been effective in extending the audience for role play and in contributing greater depth to the available research materials on its impact on learning. However we remain aware that much more needs to be done. Issues deserving of further research include the following nine points or areas:

## Sharing Issues

*How to encourage academics to contribute towards repositories of learning designs*

EnROLE's rich repository of role play learning designs provides a useful contribution to the current debate about the template approach to building repositories of good practice and the support required to assist academics prepare descriptions of their teaching practice - see Oliver's ALTC Associate Fellowship<sup>9</sup>, Cloudworks Project at the UK Open University<sup>10</sup>, Learning Design Support Environment at London Knowledge Lab<sup>11</sup>. Building on this debate, the approach that was adopted in this project to the process of documenting good practice deserves further research.

<sup>9</sup> [www.aragon.scca.ecu.edu.au/tsldb](http://www.aragon.scca.ecu.edu.au/tsldb)  
<sup>10</sup> [www.cloudworks.open.ac.uk](http://www.cloudworks.open.ac.uk)  
<sup>11</sup> [www.lkl.ac.uk/cms](http://www.lkl.ac.uk/cms)

## Finding Issues

*Improving accessibility of repository information*

On the other side of the finding/sharing equation, evaluation and modification of the keyword index would foster a broader range of role based learning activities and possibly other active learning designs such as simulations. The "slider metaphor" developed to position role based learning activities in the field of simulation has been proposed as a navigation interface on top of this repository, and others, and this would need research and development.

In order to provide contributors with information about uptake and assure protection of intellectual property, it is recommended that digital rights tracking systems be added to repositories. All uptake and sphere of influence diagrams for EnROLE were done manually, a laborious task which tracking systems could have assisted.

## Workload Issues

*Research into means of encouraging academics to allocate time to the task of innovation in teaching and learning*

Academics are employed because of their professional and discipline knowledge. They are also required to teach this knowledge to others. Project EnROLE found many academics who were interested to consider the use of online role play, yet who were reluctant to allocate time to the activities that precede its use due to personal and professional commitments and/or organisational priorities.

## Peer Review Issues

*Evaluating Peer Review Frameworks and evaluating uptake*

The implementation of the Peer Review Framework for Project EnROLE demands further research. The role of this framework also needs consideration alongside other relevant ALTC peer review projects. Collectively this work provides an interesting spectrum of approaches to and outcomes of the peer review of teaching practices.



L to R John Shepherd (UNSW); Elyssebeth Leigh (UTS, EnROLE Publications Coordinator); Chris Daly (UNSW); Sara Lane (Missouri); Carol Russell (UNSW)

# Extending: 10 to 11

## Usage Issues

*Factors underlying the comparatively low level of use of active learning such as online role play in tertiary contexts*

While many academics expressed interest, fewer actually took up the opportunity to trial relevant designs in their discipline. Why this was so deserves more attention if students about to enter tertiary settings are to have environments suiting their changing approaches to learning and meeting their future professional/workplace needs.

## Cross-disciplinary Issues

*Supporting cross-disciplinary research towards development, trial and implementation of online role plays to enhance learning experiences*

Online role play involves expert knowledge of both the subject matter and design principles to turn that content into interactive experiences. Project EnROLE demonstrated that this often requires cross-disciplinary knowledge to ensure the creation of an effective learning environment. A cross-disciplinary link with drama educators is a particular example that might yield useful insights. Research on how best to set up, support and sustain such activity is essential to the future of active learning environments including online role play.

## Community of Practice Issues

*Understanding more about communities of interest becoming communities of purpose*

Isolated innovators are not sustainable. Project EnROLE, and experience elsewhere, confirms that to establish and spread use of new learning designs, there has to be a viable community of existing practitioners that can attract and support new adopters. Eraut (2002) notes that the ideal self-organising community of practice is rare, and suggests that only a few of its characteristics are necessary to build a learning community. If this is so, it allows more scope for national and institutional initiatives that mix formal and informal support. Further research could examine which characteristics of the communities supported by Project EnROLE and similar initiatives have contributed most to the adoption and spread of new learning designs. This would show how future funding for educational design initiatives might be best directed.

## Design Issues

*Developing design capabilities and improving academics' awareness of the design factors implicit in creating engaging and informative learning environments*

The discipline of 'design' has a long standing tradition with respect to creating more tactile and physical items. In regard to online role play it is an emerging factor which this project has shown to require far more research and attention.

## Technology Issues

*Improving platforms for role based learning environments*

The requirement to deal with new information technologies can be a significant inhibitor to the adoption of online role play in mainstream university education. Research is needed on the development of new, easy-to-use environments for conducting role play online to address concerns of academics that some aspects of technology may detract from learning and teaching outcomes. While Project EnROLE has generated some knowledge of criteria for selecting online role play environments and tools (Shepherd and Russell, in preparation), there is a need for more work on assessing the potential of newer tools and environments, such as Web 2.0 tools and virtual worlds. Further investigation into the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating role play technologies into enterprise-level learning management systems is also warranted.

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# Presentations, workshops & media

## Invited Presentations

Devonshire, D. Establishing the Peer Review Framework for Project EnROLE: Encouraging critical reflection on online role play practice. ALTC Peer Review Forum, Magill Campus, University of South Australia, Jun 2009

Devonshire, E., Rosser, E., Everingham, F., Lever, T. & Wills, S. Encouraging critical reflection on online role play practice: An Emerging Framework for Peer Review. Poster presented at the Colloquium, Peer Review of University Teaching: Capitalising on Collegial Expertise & Feedback. The University of Melbourne, Nov 2008

Rosser, E. & Wills, S. Project EnROLE Poster at METTLE Forum, The University of Melbourne, Jul 2007

Wills, S. Carrick Distance Education Forum, University of Southern Queensland, Nov 2006

Wills, S. Keynote Address, Excellence Online Forum, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Oct 2007

Wills, S. Seminar, Kings College London, UK, Apr 2009

Wills, S. Seminar, Open University, UK, Apr 2009

## Conference Workshops

Baron, J. & Davenport, A. Plagiarism eSim Workshop, ascilite Workshop, Dec 2007, Singapore

Davenport, A. & Hall, D. Plagiarism eSim Workshop, eDays Conference, Nov 2008, Adelaide

Hall, D. & Naismith, A. Designing Online Role Play Workshop, BbWorld Conference, Aug 2008, Las Vegas

## Media

*UniKen*, UNSW, Jul 2009

*Illawarra Mercury* "Hiding their true identity", May 5 2009

University of Wollongong website. Retrieved from <http://media.uow.edu.au/news/UOW058509.html>, Apr 27 2009

*Australian Financial Review*, "Mission to promote role play", Oct 20 2008

*Campus Review*, "In someone else's shoes", Jul 3 2007

*The Australian*, "Schools' terrorist role play banned", Nov 29 2006



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