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## TOPR Turns 10! Celebrating 10 Years Of Curating UCF'S Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository

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# TOPR TURNS 10! CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF CURATING UCF'S TEACHING ONLINE PEDAGOGICAL REPOSITORY

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## **Abstract**

In this paper, the editors of the Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository (TOPR) will share global insights derived from the last ten years of pedagogical entries. What technologies and techniques of online teaching and learning were “hot” a decade ago, and what is currently trending? What are the most visited entries? TOPR’s value in relation to the COVID-19 crisis will be explored, as many educators were forced to teach in remote and online learning environments for the first time. Finally, readers will learn about the process of submitting their own strategies to TOPR, along with an update on the peer-review process for submissions in Spring 2021.

## Introduction

### What is TOPR?

Established in 2010, the Teaching Online Pedagogical Repository (TOPR) is an openly-licensed resource written by and intended for faculty and instructional designers who are interested in online and blended teaching strategies. Entries are categorized into three broad categories (Course Content, Interaction, and Assessment) and are tagged with relevant keywords. Each entry (1) describes a strategy drawn from the pedagogical practice of online/blended teaching faculty, (2) depicts this strategy with artifacts from actual courses, and (3) aligns with findings from the research literature. In this way, entries go beyond personal anecdotes, highlighting evidence-based practices while providing enough detail for readers to be able to replicate the practice.

### Trends

In a review of the nearly 250 entries contained in TOPR, we found that most of the topics featured from 2010-2015 were not unlike the topics mentioned from 2016-2020; however, the more recent items are a bit more specific in nature. For instance, over forty entries are tagged with the term “online discussions.” While the earlier entries were more broad and foundational (Discussion Prompts, Discussion Facilitation), the more recent ones have been on particular techniques such as debates and role play. Blogs, wikis, and badges were tools featured in earlier entries, while more recent entries tend to highlight videos and adaptive elements, which are becoming much more available and accessible. One theme that has remained steady is how to cultivate a connection with students. Orienting students to the course and providing solid feedback have been consistently mentioned over the last ten years.

Table 1 features the TOPR entries that have been most frequently visited over the last year. 3 of the 5 most visited entries relate to online discussions. Rubrics and Prompts are more general, while Debates is a more specific technique. “Send a Welcome Message” talks about sending a message before class begins, to establish teaching persona as well as establishing a comfortable classroom environment. Gallery Walks centers on student feedback and engagement. Looking at these five popular entries, it appears that readers are searching for ways to interact with students more effectively.

Table 1. The most visited entries from September 2019-September 2020.

Entry Title	Page Views	% of all Visits
<a href="#">Create Discussion Rubrics</a>	77,000	27%
<a href="#">Send a Welcome Message</a>	23,626	8.3%

Create Discussion Prompts	12,316	4.3%
Digitalizing Gallery Walks	11,779	4.1%
Incorporate Online Debates	8,812	3%

## TOPR's Value in Relation to the COVID-19 Crisis

Visitors to TOPR have increased steadily over the years, but traffic has dramatically increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Around 38,000 users visited from September 1, 2018 to September 1, 2019; the following year, that number had grown to 115,000 users. While 23,000 users visited between September 1, 2019 and March 1, 2020, over 105,000 users visited from March 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020 alone.

The resources available in TOPR are useful to all faculty moving from face-to-face to teaching online, whether it be a planned transition or a crisis situation with immediate resources needed. Providing TOPR as a resource to faculty can create faculty independence while providing creative approaches for online implementation of course content delivery, activities, and assessment. TOPR entries provide just-in-time training, resources, and often additional faculty created artifacts for use. Examples of, but not limited to, the following resources:

- Online discussions
- Rubrics
- Student/Teacher communication (emails/social media)
- STEM online
- Sample course files
- Large class administrative strategies

## Submitting a Strategy to TOPR

Each year, TOPR's editorial board releases its Call for Submissions, presenting faculty and instructional designers with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to quality online teaching and learning. Submissions to TOPR, from single authors or co-authors, can be useful evidence when applying for awards or other promotional opportunities. Table 2 features the structure of a strong TOPR entry.

In 2020, the TOPR editorial team announced the addition of peer review for new submissions to the repository. The University of Central Florida's Showcase of Text, Archives, Research, and Scholarship (STARS) system has been adopted to facilitate the new peer review process as well

as the overall submission process. STARS offers a robust and scholarly format to process and accept TOPR submissions.

Typically, this Call for Submissions occurs in July, with proposals accepted through the middle of September. Authors receive peer-reviewed feedback on their submissions by the end of October. Some entries are accepted without revision while others may benefit from minor or major revisions. Authors are asked to resubmit their revised TOPR entries by the end of November. The TOPR board announces new entries in December, followed by a press release in the New Year. This annual press release curates these newest entries and identifies common themes or trends. For example, a recent common theme was a focus on student collaboration and formation of class community. Other themes have included adaptive learning courseware, digital badges, course announcements, hashtags, and Google Docs.

Table 2. Structure of a Strong TOPR Entry.

Strategy Element	Description of Strategy Element
Title	Offers sufficient details about practice/strategy
Description	Explains how strategy is impactful, replicable, anchored to professional literature and/or is connected to other practices
Utility	Identifies the usefulness of the strategy
Application	Provides details and background about the strategy can be applied
Artifacts or Examples	Includes examples or artifacts from actual courses
Scholarly References	Provides references that support the strategy (theoretical and/or pedagogical)

## Conclusion

TOPR's 10th anniversary has inspired a new appreciation of its powerful legacy of faculty excellence in online teaching as well as a renewed commitment to TOPR's growth and international impact. The repository's status as an open resource means that it can be used, shared, or adapted without copyright infringement. While the power of TOPR resides in its individual entries, TOPR also reveals changing pedagogical practice across time. For example, an early focus on blogs, wikis, and badges gave way to new emphases on video content and adaptive technologies and pedagogy. TOPR also served as an online pedagogical life preserver during the COVID-19 crisis, demonstrated by sharp spikes in online traffic. The TOPR editorial board encourages submissions from faculty who design, develop, and use innovative online pedagogical content in diverse disciplines around the world. Strategies developed by a single

author as well as collaborative entries are encouraged; TOPR submissions are peer reviewed and can be included in promotion dossiers and award applications. Finally, TOPR's next ten years promise to be as exciting and innovative as its first ten, and we can't wait to see what happens next!