



Sir John Daniel
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Sir John Daniel, a world-renowned authority in open and distance learning, joined COL on 1 June 2004 as President and Chief Executive Officer. [News release...](#)

Sir John came to COL from UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) where he had been Assistant Director-General for Education and headed the global *Education for All* programme.

Knighthood by Queen Elizabeth for services to higher education in 1994, the honour recognised the leading role that he has played internationally, over three decades, in the development of distance learning in universities.

Sir John began his career in ancient universities, with an undergraduate degree from Oxford and a doctorate from the University of Paris, both in metallurgy. During his first academic appointment at the École Polytechnique of the University of Montreal he began part-time study for a Masters in Educational Technology. The programme required an internship and he spent the summer of 1972 at the brand new UK Open University where he had a conversion experience. Inspired by the idealism, the scale, the technology and the focus on students that he found at the Open University he decided to join the distance learning revolution.

He spent four years helping to establish Québec's Télé-université, moved west to Alberta as Vice-President of Athabasca University and then returned to Montreal as Vice-Rector of Concordia University. In 1984 he became President of Laurentian University, Ontario. He then moved to the UK as Vice-Chancellor of the Open University in 1990.

In 1988, Sir John chaired the Working Group that was appointed to "develop institutional arrangements for Commonwealth co-operation in distance education" and recommended the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning with headquarters in Vancouver. He subsequently served for two years as a founding member of COL's Board of Governors. In 2002, he was named an Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning, for his contribution to the development of open and distance education world-wide. [Honorary Fellow of COL citation...](#)

Sir John has been active as a scholar and student throughout his career. The success of his book, *Mega-Universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education* (Kogan Page, 1996), established his reputation in international university circles as a leading thinker about the role of technology in academic communities. In 1999 he registered as a student at the Open University in order to explore the world of web-based learning for himself.

Sir John has been awarded 25 honorary doctorates, fellowships and professorships from universities in 15 countries, is a past President of both the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) and the Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE), and served as Vice-President of the International Baccalaureate Organisation. He is a citizen of both Canada and the U.K.

His hobbies are walking and boating. As a Reader in the Anglican Church he became the first person to preach in Westminster Abbey from a laptop computer.

Further reference:

[Speeches and presentation \(COL\)](#)

Sir John's speeches prior to joining COL:

www.unesco.org/education/adg/speeches

www.open.ac.uk/johndanielspeeches/index.shtm

Development as Freedom: the Contribution of the Open Universities, presented at COL's second Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (Durban, South Africa), July 2002: www.col.org/0207_PCF2_Daniel.pdf (150 Kb Acrobat PDF download)

Distance Learning in the Era of Networks: What are the key technologies? (and reflections on ten years of the Commonwealth of Learning), presented at COL's first Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam), March 1999: www.col.org/forum/daniel.htm

Sir John's publications: www.col.org/Daniel_publications.pdf (260 Kb Acrobat PDF download)

Citation conferring Sir John as an Honorary Fellow of COL: www.col.org/ede2/ede2_citations.htm#john

Detailed curriculum vitae: www.col.org/Daniel_cv.pdf (164 Kb Acrobat PDF download)



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