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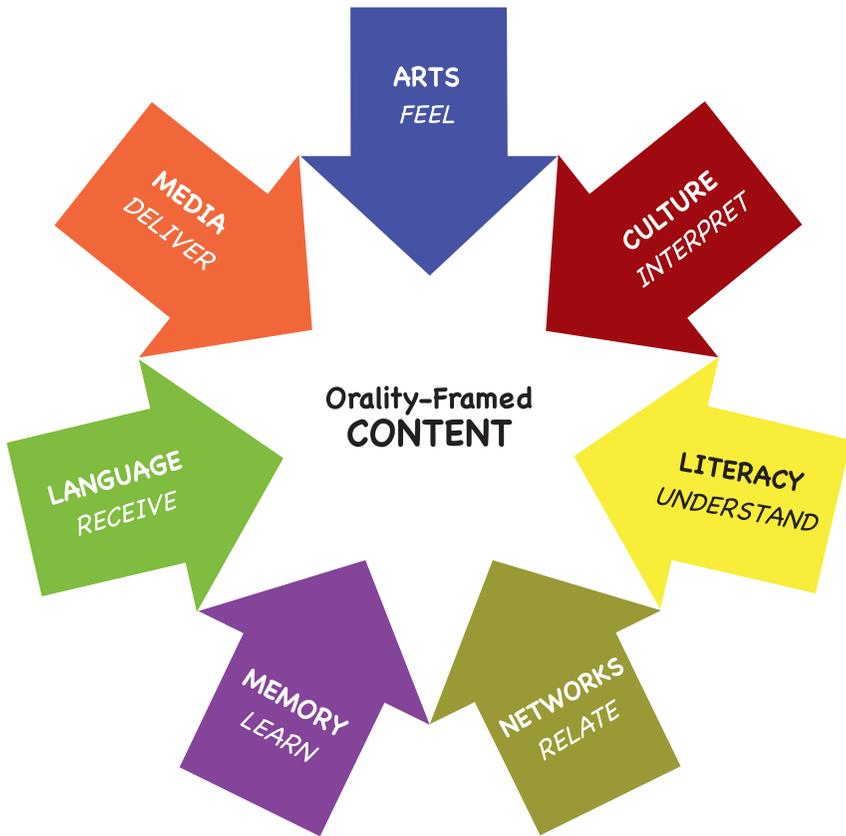
*The Word Became Fresh*



## The Seven Disciplines of Orality

Madinger • Snead • Gravelle • Moon • Getz  
Handley • Logan • Swarr • Koch • Williams • Rye

# SEVEN DISCIPLINES OF ORALITY: A Holistic Model



*Courtesy of Dr. Chuck Madinger who leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network's Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.*

# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

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## Cover Photo

Uniskript can be traced back to 1446 when King Sejong launched the Korean alphabet which triggered a literacy revolution in Korea. In 2002 Korean linguist Dr. Kim Cho shared her doctorate discoveries on the ancient alphabet at the University of the Nations. The basic idea was then further developed by a team of innovators from the University of the Nations. As a result, the letters were redefined and a technique created to generate new alphabets that are both attractive and relevant.

The art—visual and font creation—is all derived from within the culture, thus providing greater opportunities for natural embracement than an alphabet that might be imported from outside of one's culture.

As we watch the development of Uniskript, which had its roots in a phonic system from the mid-1400s, we are reminded just how much the digital era is mimicking and borrowing from the pre-Gutenberg era.

Among the gods there is none like you, Lord;  
no deeds can compare with yours.  
All the nations you have made  
will come and worship before you, Lord;  
they will bring glory to your name.  
For you are great and do marvelous deeds;  
you alone are God.

Psalm 86:8—10 (NIV)

# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement is welcomed.

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# Editor's Note

*Samuel E. Chiang*

## More Textual / Digital Possibilities Please

When my family moved to Canada as immigrants, I was in my early teens and I knew only the Roman alphabet and seven English phrases that my grandfather had taught me. On the UNESCO “illiteracy to literacy” continuum, I fitted nicely into the illiterate category as a young immigrant in Canada. On the orality continuum (see Lovejoy 2012), which includes learners from those who are exclusively oral to highly textual/digital, and who by necessity or by choice prefer to learn in an oral manner, I was and still am an oral preference learner.

As an eager immigrant, I sought to learn English with gusto. But the Roman alphabet for the English language seemed arbitrary to me, and spelling of words did not always make logical sense. It was bad enough that I could not exercise intuition in the language acquisition effort, but I was lost because logic could not be readily applied to make words and sentences. I wished there was some way in which I could see the link between sound, symbols, and the writing system, so that I could progress along the UNESCO literacy continuum a little quicker.

Decades later, I believe there is now an in-between system which will move people more quickly into textual and language acquisition. The developers of this innovative system call this Uniskript<sup>®</sup>.<sup>1</sup>

While working on her doctoral studies in linguistics, Ms. Sek Yen Kim-Cho discovered the applicability of the Korean *Hangeul* alphabet system (see <http://sejong-nurigle.com/>). This system was developed by King Sejong (1397-1450), and put into place in 1446 for the Korean people (see page 3 of [http://sejong-nurigle.com/uploads/14\\_Nurigle\\_Project\\_Proposal.pdf](http://sejong-nurigle.com/uploads/14_Nurigle_Project_Proposal.pdf)). Innovators used the principles of the *Hangeul* system and developed Uniskript.

Uniskript is developed from a set of proto-symbols: a rectangle representing the lips; a triangle representing the tip of the tongue; one to three lines representing how wide the mouth opens for the generation of vowel sounds, and so on. Whereas the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA,

<http://www.langsci.ucl.ac.uk/ipa/>) covers all phones (the sounds possible within human language), Uniskript<sup>2</sup> is fitted to each language as it is developed, only covering the relevant phonemes (sounds possible within a *specific* language).

The difference between the Roman alphabet and Uniskript may be comparable to that of varying symbols used on public restrooms. Consider two washroom doors, the symbol ♂ on one and ♀ on the other. Most people will consider it common knowledge that the first symbol signals male gender and the second signals female gender, but these signs are completely arbitrary and perhaps difficult to remember. In fact, these symbols are created based on a high acquisition of literacy skills. On the other hand, one door with the icon of a man and another door with the icon of a woman in a skirt would be more intuitive (across *most* cultures), because the symbol corresponds directly to what it represents.

Uniskript is not meant to replace any already-existing alphabet; it is simply meant to introduce literacy in a variety of settings.

### **What Are the Applications of Uniskript, and Where Is It Going?**

The innovators are already launching test trials, academic experiments, and scalable study groups to implement Uniskript into different domains. Consider the following.

**Reading.** Uniskript can be used as an introduction to reading, because it helps people see the correlation between symbol and sound. Uniskript teaches symbols (icons) that correspond to symbols (phones) in a way that makes sense. This process is called *iconophonological* or *icono-featural*. Uniskript is unique in that a visual translates directly to sound. Furthermore, the art—visual and font creation—is all derived from within the culture, thus providing greater opportunities for natural embracement than an alphabet that might be imported from outside of one’s culture. The implications for oral preference learners are huge, including those who are highly textual/digital.

**Children.** Children sometimes have difficulty learning to read because the Roman alphabet is arbitrary, providing no intuitive connection between sound and symbol. Uniskript can accelerate the reading process by making

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a clear visual representation of how and where sounds are made. Children then understand how an alphabet represents sounds. Can we dream of what might be possible with biblical literacy?

**Dyslexia.** Current focus group studies and trials in the English language, it is already demonstrating that the deployment of Uniskript as a tool to introduce the concept of an alphabet to a child produces different outcomes. The alphabet avoids any mirror images that might create confusion as to what sound is meant to be produced. More scalable studies are now underway to see how individuals with dyslexia will function better with Uniskript.

**Apraxia.** Speech therapists handling cases of children apraxia (difficulties in handling motor movements involving facial muscles) and adult apraxia due to trauma are teaching patients how to speak through Uniskript.

**Deafness.** The advancement of technology is so great that hearing devices implemented into the ears can now help people who are born deaf to “hear”—but how do they pronounce words after years of inactivity in the muscle formation of sounds and words? Uniskript is deployed to help formerly deaf people to recognize facial muscle formation and how sounds can be made and words can form.

Lack of space precludes me from discussing the Uniskript digital input system, and ultimately, the Uniskript contribution to shell books ([www.shellbooks.org](http://www.shellbooks.org)) through crowd-sourcing.

This fledging system will need to be reviewed by many others (an intensive process which has already begun), and if proven fruitful, will take time to gain acceptance. If this happens, it may present a fresh hope for the 1.6 billion adults who are excluded from the opportunity of reading scripture for themselves.

As I watch the development of Uniskript, which had its roots in a phonic system from the mid-1400s, I am reminded just how much the digital era is mimicking and borrowing from the pre-Gutenberg era.

This issue of the Orality Journal is a special one; not only do we celebrate our one-year anniversary, but also the articles are keyed off from the anchor

piece by Chuck Madinger. He provides both scale and scope of coverage in “A Literate’s Guide to the Oral Galaxy.” Then, we include an aspect of each of the disciplines of orality—culture (Snead), language (Gravelle), literacy (Moon), memory (Getz), networks (Handley), arts (Logan), and media (Swarr, Koch, and the ION Audio Scripture Engagement team). Keith Williams was gracious to provide digital and mobile interests and implications for oral-preference learners. Tara Rye provided reviews on two excellent books that are now being translated into multiple languages.

As promised in the last issue, the labs on adaptive changes are here—in print, it is covered by Joe Handley (covering network and participatory learning in leaders development), and online, the blog ([www.oralicity.net/blog](http://www.oralicity.net/blog)) by Jennifer Giezendanner (describing the acceptance process of Bible storying in a cross-cultural organizational environment).

Finally, we are in for a special treat, as each of the writers of the “Seven Disciplines of Orality” are also the presenters at this year’s ION conference. What they have written is also mediated audibly into what they shall say and what we shall hear.

On the Journey Together,

Samuel E. Chiang  
From Johannesburg, South Africa

- <sup>1</sup> The developers of this system have filed patents globally.
- <sup>2</sup> A simplified description of the process for developing Uniskript for a language involves a few steps: 1.) First, the phonemes of a language must be determined; if certain phonemes do not exist within a language, there is no need to develop extra symbols for it. 2.) A team is sent to collaborate with indigenous speakers of the language in order to determine how the proto-symbols may be adapted in a way that is relevant to their culture and art—sometimes images and shapes that are significant within a culture may be incorporated into the Uniskript alphabet. This creates a connection between the people and this new alphabet as well as the shape of the symbol and the mouth. 3.) Once symbols are decided on, an artist finalizes them, ensuring their aesthetics. 4.) A font is developed.

## Reference

Lovejoy, Grant. 2012. "The Extent of Orality." *Orality Journal* 1(1): 11-39.



## Media: The Mortar that Holds It Together

### The ION Audio Scripture Engagement Task Force<sup>1</sup>

*David Swarr and Lori Koch<sup>2</sup>*

As one of the seven disciplines of orality recognized by Dr. Charles Madinger’s holistic model, media plays a significant role in both encompassing the truths of the other recognized disciplines—culture, language, literacy, social networks, memory, and the arts—and delivering the message to those waiting to hear it. Media forms that are thoughtfully and intentionally produced and distributed can enhance and ensure quality scripture exposure, learning, and engagement by capitalizing on these strengths: accuracy and completeness, reproducibility, scalability, accessibility, and sustainability.

In 2011, the International Orality Network endorsed “A Declaration on Making Disciples of the World’s Oral Learners through Audio Scripture Engagement” (with “audio” encompassing audio-visual forms of scripture as well). The Declaration states,

We believe that the foundation of discipleship is the shaping by, and obedience to, the Word of God. We believe it is the inalienable right and privilege of every person, including every

oral learner, to have access to the Word of God in their own heart language and in a media format they understand.

The Declaration issues an urgent call to make “the entire Word of God available to every person who can hear.”

This Declaration, combined with what has been learned and proven about the value of different media forms and approaches, should be thought through when considering how to effectively minister to oral peoples. Let’s consider the following five topics.

#### 1. Accuracy and completeness.

Much of the Christian media content currently available is a verbatim reproduction or careful restating of scripture or Bible stories translated by well-trained and highly-committed individuals. Once the message is captured accurately in a media form, it can become as authoritative a source for truth as a print Bible over centuries of use. When the media content is a full New Testament or full Bible, it becomes an accurate and complete presentation of biblical truth for

the oral learner. An additional advantage is that it becomes an unchangeable and exhaustive source for oral learners to refer back to time and time again.

In southwest Ethiopia, a storytelling methodology was employed to communicate the gospel to an unreached people group. During the following decades, some 26,000 people became Christians. Once the Gospels had been translated, recorded, and distributed among these believers using an intentional engagement strategy, the feedback was astounding. With a more complete understanding of scripture, the people discovered deeper truths about the Christian walk. For example, they had been unaware that having multiple sexual partners was inconsistent with scripture. Armed with this knowledge, they changed their behavior accordingly and built on the foundation of the truth they understood.

2. **Reproducibility.** Once the message is crafted and produced, copies can be disseminated via a wide array of devices and digital means, independent of the skills, training, and giftedness of the individuals conveying the message. An

elderly woman in a Quechua village high in the Peruvian Andes received an audio New Testament in her language. She had never been to school and could not read, and although a long-time churchgoer, she never felt confident in her ability to tell others about Jesus. With the audio Bible, she gained the confidence to approach people and invite them to listen. She now describes herself as an evangelist, learning more about the gospel each time she listens.

3. **Scalability.** Any number of people can be equipped with an appropriate media device and content. Certainly, experience has shown that the best engagement of the scripture content happens in a context of intentionality, accountability, and group interaction. Often, this process can benefit from appropriate training from an external source. But whether or not such training is available, there exists an enormous missionary task force of non-reading believers who can be equipped with a media tool and empowered to go out and become effective evangelists and missionaries among their own people. Although seemingly simple, it's effective and it works.

4. **Accessibility.** With mobile phones increasingly ubiquitous and the digital footprint ever expanding, it is becoming easier and less costly to provide both devices and media content to a wide audience, even those in remote locations. A ministry engaged in providing audio scripture on physical formats alone estimates to have reached some 50 million individuals worldwide over the course of 37 years of outreach. Yet within just three years of digital delivery, the same organization can count more than 100 million unique users of audio-visual scripture content through an array of digital outlets, including web streaming, download, smartphone apps, podcast, and Internet radio. Even more strikingly, this digital content is being accessed from rural areas of China, as well as from cities and remote areas within the Middle East, regions where it can be risky for mission workers to reach into and perilous for the locals who may be seen with them.

Just as the network of Roman roads served as a means for spreading the gospel in the first century AD, the Internet serves as a modern-day “Roman

Road” for delivering the gospel message almost instantly to nearly every country on earth.

5. **Sustainability.** When the apostles first set out on foot to spread the news of Jesus Christ, the speed and breadth at which the message could be disseminated were limited by human, financial, and technological resources. Early scribes of the printed scripture could not have imagined the Gutenberg Press and what a revolution this would represent for spreading the gospel. Gutenberg himself could not have imagined the vast array of media and delivery systems we enjoy today to deliver the same message efficiently and inexpensively. Even with these advances, few involved in modern missions would dispute the tremendous value of one-on-one, face-to-face evangelization and discipleship.

But Jesus himself recognized there is a great harvest, just few workers to bring it all in. Media plays an important role in providing an increasingly sustainable model for delivering the gospel message (whether combined with or separate from intentional human

interaction) in the appropriate languages and formats to reach oral learners. Today's economic reality is making it more necessary and affordable for people living in even the remotest and economically disadvantaged corners of the world to own some type of mobile phone or device. Cell phone manufacturers are producing affordable, solar-powered feature phones for use in these contexts. An estimated 5.5 billion people worldwide are mobile phone users. An intentional focus on providing biblical content compatible with today's mobile devices is a sustainable model for today and for the future.

Madinger cites three choices of media delivery: mass, collective, and small. While each choice has its advantages, the ideal choice is likely a mix of these three, with each complementing the other to increase kingdom impact. Below are strategies to demonstrate how the strengths of each can be deployed for maximum effectiveness.

1. **Mass media.** The mass media are an integral part of our lives and society, influencing and shaping our opinions and values. Even remote oral societies tend to have

access to modern mass media such as radio and television, and with the advancement of technology, others will become increasingly ubiquitous. Christians need to leverage all possible avenues at our disposal. Personal experience is the most powerful motivator for change. Mass media, through the use of realistic, vibrant, concrete, and credible stories, exert extraordinary influence because they transport people into the role of participant. The viewer/listener lowers his or her defenses and allows the program/story to work on his or her thoughts in much the same way as he or she might experience the world for him or herself.

This method, called "vicarious modeling," is the primary technique driving large-scale change efforts around the world. Scientific studies have shown that exposing people to believable models affects not only their thoughts and emotions, but also their behavior. For example, in 1993, Radio Tanzania aired a radio drama aimed to educate listeners on HIV/AIDS transmission. The show described the escapades of a flamboyant truck driver who engaged in risky behavior. As a

result of this program, 25% of the people in the broadcast area reported having modified their behavior to avoid HIV infection.

2. **Collective media.** Using media to educate and influence groups in a more focused and intentional way can be an effective way to deliver the message. For example, JESUS film showings are a well-known and proven method for presenting the gospel to large groups. Adding to the effectiveness of such a methodology would be the addition of small media to follow up such a presentation.

In Peru, an indigenous mission worker was teaching a workshop among his own people. Afterward, he showed the attendees a video about alcoholism. One of the children in the group started to cry, saying “That’s my dad! That’s my dad!” He explained his father was exactly like the man in the movie. And like the family in the movie, his family cried and suffered as a result of the father’s actions. With his alcoholism exposed, the boy’s father cried and repented, now having understood the effect of his behavior on his son. This family’s vicarious

experience through watching the video was the catalyst for repentance and change.

3. **Small media.** Life is done in a group, and this is especially true among oral learners. Small group interaction remains the gold standard for impactful scripture engagement and life transformation. Along with audio-visual scripture tools, good results have been observed using an obedience-based discipleship method which essentially seeks to answer this question: *What does this passage/story/teaching from scripture ask or require of me as a follower of Jesus?*

For example, Samuel Buya has never read a book, but he leads a Bible study of more than 60 people in his East African rural village. A farmer by trade, Samuel received an audio Bible in his language and now gathers with his neighbors to hear God’s word almost every evening. Samuel himself has listened through the Gospel accounts several times and now understands his life is a gift from Jesus. He says others are learning the same as they listen. The people of his village had a reputation for violence, even to

the point of killing, but Samuel and his neighbors have seen a difference since they started listening to scripture two years ago. They have learned to live in peace with their neighbors and family.

There is no one-size-fits-all media approach for maximum effectiveness. An intentional combination of human interaction, appropriate content, and media methods should be considered for the particular context. In northern India, such a combination of content and methods was used to great effect to minister to eight unreached people groups in the area. Pastors and leaders were first trained in storying methodology. Story sets were crafted in the eight languages and then recorded. The heart language story sets were placed on an audio listening device along with an audio New Testament in the language of wider communication.

Then, the pastors and leaders began using a combination of their own training as storytellers, as well as the recorded content on the players, to minister in their communities and the surrounding areas. It is worth noting that most of the people were non-literate and generally unfamiliar with Christianity due to their geographical remoteness. They would usually start with the story

sets, whether recorded or presented themselves, and eventually present the audio New Testament when appropriate. Whether this was done in churches or small groups, the pastors reported a very favorable response, with many baptisms and conversions.

Access to and engagement with scripture is critical in Christian ministry among all peoples, including oral learners. Whether in the form of Bible storying, a scripture-based video, or an audio recording of formally-translated scripture, effective ministry to oral people groups is not a question of either/or but of both/several. Quality, biblically-based approaches provide the building blocks for coming to faith in Christ in oral cultures. But, like building blocks stacked without mortar, you cannot go very high without them becoming unstable.

A solid oral strategy includes a presentation mindful of all seven of the disciplines cited by Madinger, captured in appropriate media formats to promote accuracy, reproducibility, scalability, accessibility, and sustainability. In this way, media can provide the stability needed to build a long-lasting, growing body of believers in oral cultures.

<sup>1</sup>Rev. Theodore Asare, President, Theovision International

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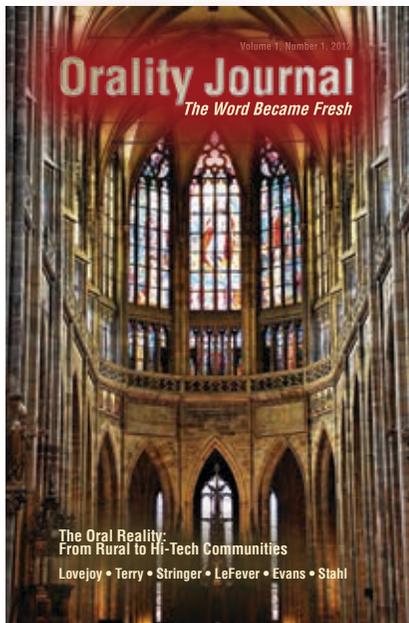
Rick McArthur, Vice President, Viña Association

Dr. David Swarr, President and CEO, Davar Partners International

<sup>2</sup>David Swarr and Lori Koch are listed as they co-chaired this paper



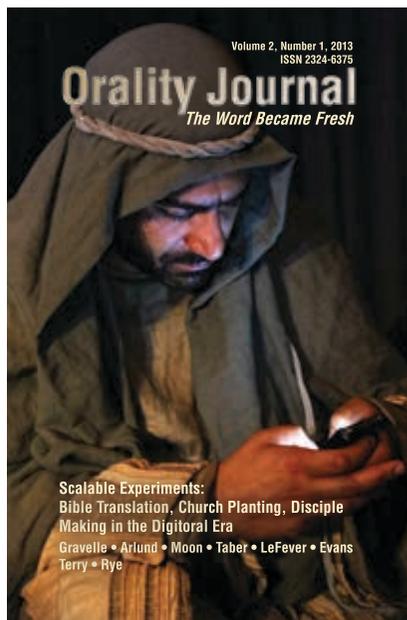
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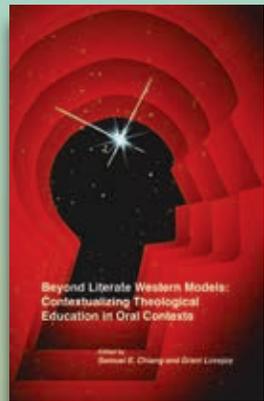
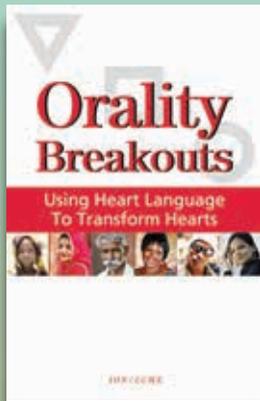
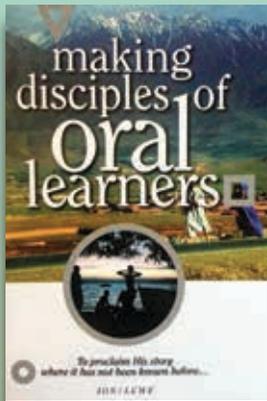


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