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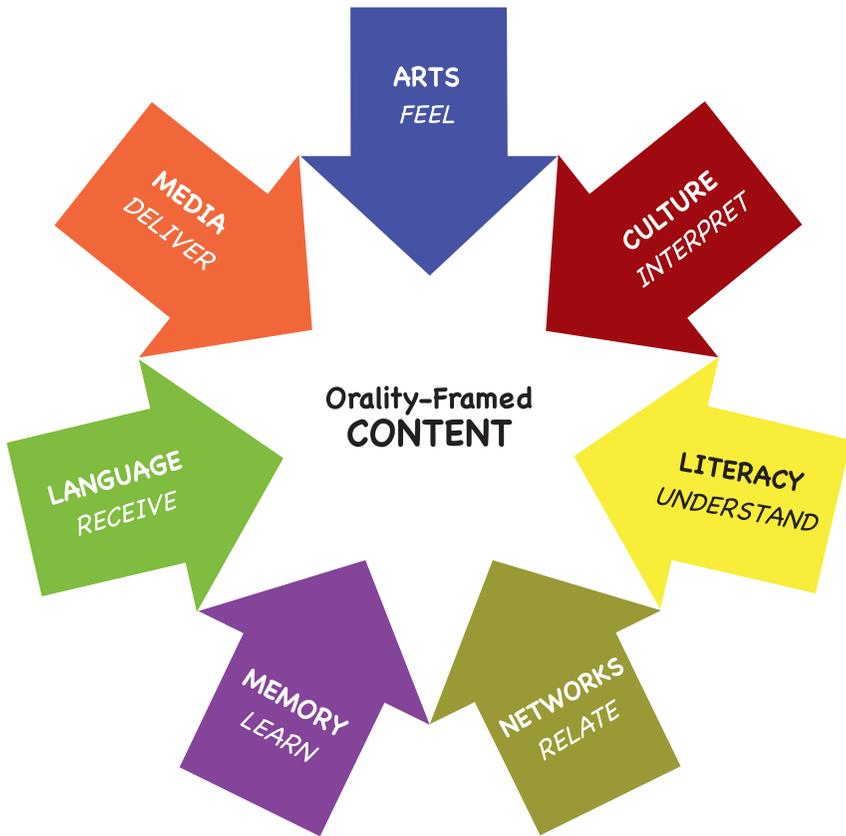
The Word Became Fresh



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.

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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)

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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[®].¹

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). 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), Uniskript² 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-feratural*. 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

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) 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) 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

- ¹ The developers of this system have filed patents globally.
- ² 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.

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



The Arts: Effectively Packaging the Gospel for Oral Audiences

Erica Logan

Erica Logan is the Managing Director for Heart Sounds International (Operation Mobilization) helping ignite culturally relevant and biblically appropriate worship especially in places where Christ followers are restricted, persecuted or unknown. As an ethnomusicologist, Erica serves as an arts consultant and workshop facilitator for contextualizing the Gospel through indigenous expression.

“To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world.”

—Salmon Rushdie

The lights go down. The hustle and bustle of the crowd begins to fade. Only the crinkling of candy wrappers remains when a blanket of hush falls on the room. Your sense of excitement and expectation rises, when suddenly your ears are flooded with the sound of a magnificent fanfare and your eyes are drawn forward to the bright colors exploding on the giant screen. A wave of relief washes over you and you settle in, relaxing your mind. You know that for the next two hours, you are free. Free to watch, enjoy, cry, or hold on to the edge of your seat, traversing the spectrum of emotions as the story unfolds, the actors, sets, and storyline engrossing your mind and heart at will.

Sound familiar? It is the cinema—the arts at work. If you are a westerner, this is a familiar experience—one with high

expectations and symbols of significance that alert your senses that something important is happening. It is something worthy of your attention. You’ve planned ahead to be there at a certain time. You’ve gone to a special location. You’re eating particular food—popcorn—a signifier of fun to you. Your eyes, ears, mouth, even your body (in padded reclined seating) are all involved in a total experience. Now compare that to sitting in a lecture hall. Which is more memorable?

Even in Western-style churches where lecture-style presentations are common, the arts are present. There are colorful banners and greenery on stage, windows bursting with color, and people dressed in suits. All of these are artistic expressions that communicate value to audiences and signify a message worth remembering.

The combination of familiar sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and touch—multiple stimuli happening in expected ways—penetrate deeper into long-term memory. In his article on the seven disciplines of orality, Dr. Charles Madinger says it like this, “The arts penetrate the deepest recesses of the mind, challenge or affirm the values of the heart, and promote behavior that might never be realized without the power of these emotive mediums.” (Madinger, 2010, 208—209).

There is, however, a crucial distinction to be made. The general power that creative expression has to connect emotion, intellect, and action is universal, but the power of a specific art form to communicate a specific message in varying communities is not (in this case, a community may be defined by age, urban development, race, or gender, as well as the nations and people groups of whom we typically think). Going to a movie theater might evoke excitement and wonderment in one cultural setting. It might even be a wonderful bridge for telling the story.

But in a different cultural community, it might end up being an oddity that is difficult to replicate. It might be that the enduring things are shared in

the village square with dancing, singing, elaborate costumes, and roasted meat. A holistic message is better understood when it seamlessly connects the heart, mind, and body simultaneously in familiar ways. We listen more closely, think more deeply, and allow the familiar heart expressions of communication, native to our culture, to tell us how to be.

The arts are a vital form of communication, particularly between humanity and God. Every person, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender should have a clear path toward not only hearing about God but communing with him. Ron Man and other worship theologians speak of worship as a cycle of revelation and response: all that we are, responding to all that God is.

Biblical worship is not a time, a place, or a particular form, but a matter of the heart. It is when the praise in our hearts journey outward through our hands, our mouth, or our feet, that it then takes on a form. Everyone’s forms exist within a culture that shapes and guides it. It is this package of expression, containing within it the precious cargo of our deepest reasons for living, that is the arts—the singing-dancing-

wailing-storytelling-painting-carving-cooking-beading-weaving-hennaing package of expression from God's people. These expressions give worshipers a voice to speak.

Wycliffe missionaries Jack and Jo Popjes spent 22 years studying the Canela language in Brazil and translating the scriptures into the Canela language, but they were having difficulty understanding the Canela music. SIL ethnomusicologist Tom Avery came to help make sense of the complicated music system. After the idea of scripture songs was introduced to the Canela Christians, they began improving and making additions to Tom's suggestions.

In time, the Canela were using over half of their Bible study times to sing the new Canela hymns. With tears in his eyes, one Canela man told Jack, "You gave us the book in which God speaks to us, but your friend Tom gave us songs in which we speak to Him" (Popjes 2006, 148). Amazingly, until that point in time, the Canela Christians felt they were only having a one-way conversation with God. The Canela songs gave them a voice to talk back to him. By respecting and empowering these symbolic

expressions, we are paving the way for biblical *koinonia*—intimate participation with the fellowship of Christ.

In a recent article, Dr. Solomon Aryeetey, founder of Pioneers Africa, boldly pleads with the Western Church to allow the Majority World to co-create with them. He says:

Contrary to what is widely believed in many evangelical circles, and even in many great centers of theological and missiological thought, the end result of all missionary work is not the planting of churches. Neither is it even the establishment of church-planting movements.

The final product is a Bride for a Bridegroom. A Bride without spot or wrinkle, a Bride which is an amalgamation of every identifiable segment of the worldwide Body of Believers in the Lord Jesus. Each segment is given the space and the opportunity to bring its God-ordained unique contribution to the table. And every segment, out of a deep sense of the beauty and ingenuity of our God, wholeheartedly celebrates and embraces this wonderful diversity. (170)

He boldly goes on to say:

God is supremely glorified when we [the Majority world] too celebrate what he has done in us! It is not yours [the Western Church] to dictate what product we bring to the table. That remains a sacred transaction between God and us....

The Holy Spirit has been cultivating eternity in our hearts long before your missionaries came to us. And God knows we are eternally grateful to these gallant heroes, many of whom literally laid down their lives for Jesus and for his gospel.... We owe them a debt of gratitude that only eternity can repay! These men died not so that the Western mindset may prevail over the globe. They died so that Christ may receive glory out of the tribes and nations of the earth, as each brings out of their own treasure stores their unique praise and their particular brand of worship. This is at the heart of the principle called *koinonia*. (2012, 172)

Bryant Myers speaks along similar lines in his book on transformational development among the poor, saying, “When we usurp their story, we add to

their poverty” (1999, 112). Many well-meaning individuals have used missional strategies that unwittingly disrespect the receivers and contribute to their spiritual poverty by leaving buried the rich treasure stores of unique and skillful talents embedded within the fabric of a culture. They are never unearthed, examined, and brought into God’s light as new, redeemed creations. Instead, a reliance upon the missionary to dictate new creations is perpetuated, leaving a wake of half-hearted Christian expressions because the forms are only half understood and unable to penetrate into the social fabric of everyday life.

To use storytelling as an example, Dr. Hartnell was having little success using literacy-based materials with the Digo in Kenya, so his team developed an entire series of Bible stories based on a well-known chronological approach. The stories helped, but the Digo audience continued to have difficulty remembering the storylines. So Dr. Hartnell began to follow the traditional Digo stories to find out what the significant features were that made them so popular. He found differences in length, repetition through song, and other various linguistic features.

Eventually, he teamed a traditional Digo storyteller with a local pastor, and together they produced the story of Noah using the traditional features. After an extensive survey comparing the two story styles with local groups, he was overwhelmed with the positive responses to the contextualized story style and is now redoing all of the Bible stories they originally produced 20 years ago into the traditional Digo storytelling style.

I will admit, this process feels risky and can take a lot more time. Honoring fellow believers in their journey with God means taking the control out of our hands and placing it in theirs. It then requires us to step back and trust the Holy Spirit to speak and commune with his disciples.

While working with the Urarina in Peru, I was faced with the potential reality of a culture that had no music and little creative expression. At least that is what they said. We were stumped. My team was sorely tempted to step in with suggestions for new art forms for their worship, but we decided to encourage them to pray and seek God for what they could offer to him from their culture.

They weren't happy with this at first. They even said, "Just tell us what to do." But within a week's time, the Urarina Christians had not only a song to offer, but dancing, beading, weaving, and symbolic cultural stories. My team's original ideas were similar, but instead of the ideas coming from our mouths, they came from the Urarina's own conversations with God and contained within them unique cultural symbolism rich with meaning. The process empowered the Urarina with the understanding that they were fully capable of developing the life of the church in their community. It is imperative that we approach new believers with a servant's heart and create space for them to respond to him in their own ways.

So how do we do it? What if we don't understand the artistic culture of the community? What about syncretism? How do we begin to sort these issues? Yes, there are dangers and pitfalls to be avoided and the process takes careful consideration and time. But we do not need to be an arts specialist to be an advocate for *koinonia*. It starts with genuine interest in the expressions within a community and why they do them. In essence, it starts with questions.

- Ask your friends and neighbors about their creativity. How and why do they do what they do?
 - Engage a local artisan by taking lessons. Local artisans are often a repository of culture and history in the community.
 - Encourage a Bible study on the biblical meaning of worship. It can set the foundation within a church community to look beyond the prescribed ways they may have adopted in their worship.
 - Above all, empower the local leaders (both in and out of the church, both official and unofficial) to think through their communities' issues and how local arts might address some of them naturally. If they are Christians, encourage them to pray and seek God for specific ideas.
 - Every new creation needs to be evaluated in a naturally gracious way for accurate representation of scripture and acceptance by the community.
- This takes time and patience. But the results can be reproducible, deeply impacting, and eternal. A wonderful and in-depth resource available to inspire and guide us through the process is James Krabill's *Worship and Mission for the Global Church* and its companion, *Creating Local Arts Together*.
- Taking all of these concepts into consideration, it now becomes possible to imagine Mark 12:30-31: a *koinonia* community where "all cultures are using all of their gifts to worship, obey, and enjoy God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Schrag 2013, xv). Praise be to God.

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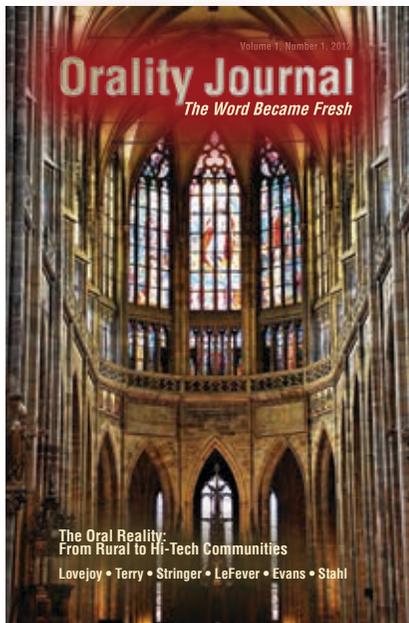
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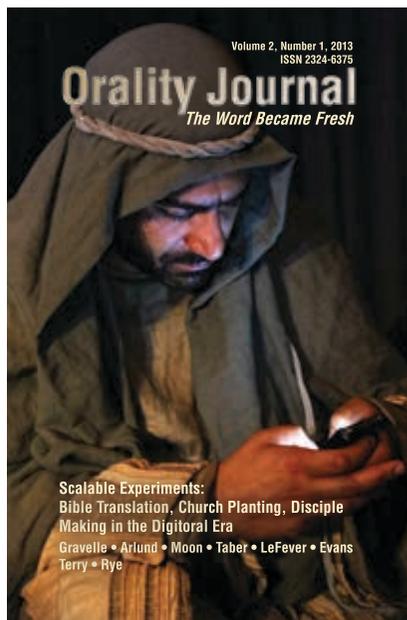
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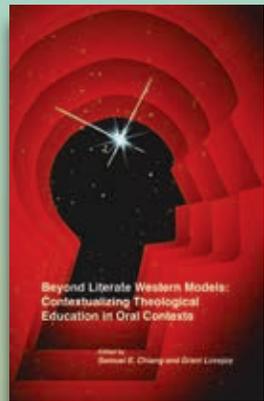
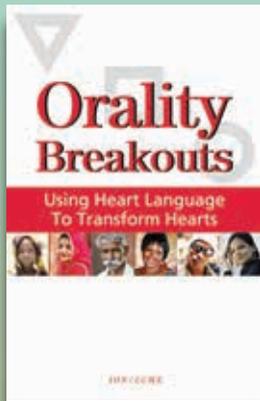
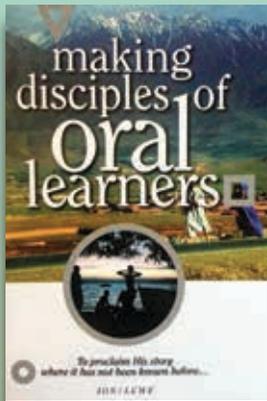


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