

Major Researchers in Self-directed Learning
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Self-directed learning (SDL) is a specific line of inquiry within the field of adult and community education. Knowles (1975) defined self-directed learning as “a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (p. 18). The field of self-directed learning was generated by the research of Cyril Houle at the University of Chicago in the 1960s. Today’s theories, research and practice briefs continue to be shared through the International Society for Self-directed Learning’s annual symposium and on-line journal. A group of seven doctoral students explored the leaders of the field through reviewing documents and articles and, where possible, interviewing the leading researchers. This poster session presents profiles of the major researchers in the field of self-directed learning including (a) early researchers in the field (Houle, Tough and Knowles); (b) recipients of the Malcolm Knowles Award for significant contribution to the study of self-directed learning (Brockett, Lucy and Paul Guglielmino, Hiemstra and Long); and (c) inaugural presenters at the historic first International Symposium for Self-directed Learning in 1986 (Brookfield, Caffarella, Danis, Gross, Kasworm, Penland, Smith, Spear and Tremblay). The seventeen profiles include major contributions to SDL research and practice; major publications; current research; opinions; and biographical information. Students found a wide range of approaches to research (descriptive, quantitative and qualitative), models for conceptualizing SDL (linear, interactive and instructional), and professional orientations (adult education, business, and library science). The field of SDL has a rich history and a vibrant future as the world’s demographics, technology and global economics require more self-directed learning both in formal educational settings, vocational training and business training and development as well as personal and social learning projects.