

Editorial: Volume 31 Issue 4

In this editorial we report on a workshop of editors of educational technology and open and distance education journals held in Barcelona, Spain in June of this year, attended by Barney Dalgarno on behalf of the AJET editorial team. The one day workshop was scheduled ahead of the European Distance Education Network (EDEN) conference in Barcelona. It included a closed session for journal editors and an open session where selected editors gave presentations and facilitated a wider discussion on research publication.

The workshop was co-chaired by Josep Maria Duart and Rosalind James of *RUSC, Universities and Knowledge Society Journal* with Don Olcott of Charles Sturt University participating as a Senior Academic Advisor. Aside from AJET, well know journals and editors were represented including the *Journal of Interactive Media in Education* (Martin Weller), *Online Learning* (Peter Shea), the *British Journal of Educational Technology* (Nick Rushby), the *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* (Rory McGreal and Terry Anderson), *Open Learning* (Gill Kirkup), the *Journal of Educational Technology and Society* (Demetrios Sampson) and the *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-learning* (Ulrich Bernath).

Some of the key issues discussed during the workshop included editorial processes, author services, sustainability of business models, and emerging impact metrics. Individual editors were asked to lead the discussion on specific issues but the round table discussion allowed a range of perspectives and contrasting journal practices to be described. This was valuable in positioning AJET's processes, services and business model in the context of those of other journals. Some of the key aspects of the discussion and the implications for AJET are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The discussion about editorial processes (including quality assurance) was led by Nick Rushby of the British Journal of Education Technology (BJET). Nick outlined a number of the unique practices of BJET, including the process whereby reviewers nominate the articles they wish to review, and the use of single blind review, where reviewers know the identity of the authors. Other editors argued for the value of double-blind review which is still the prevailing practice of most journals including AJET. However, a number of editors confirmed our own observation that increasing volume of submissions to quality journals is creating a heavy burden in finding sufficient quality reviewers. Editors agreed that the use of editorial review as an initial step prior to peer review is important in reducing the number of articles for which peer reviewers are needed. Recognition and reward for peer reviewers was also discussed with some journals offering subscriptions, publishing reviewer lists and providing certificates. Mechanisms for supporting new or inexperienced reviewers were also discussed, with detailed reviewer guidelines, reviewer development or mentoring programmes, and provision of examples of previous reviewer feedback reports and the associated editorial decisions, approaches reported by some editors.

Gill Kirkup of Open Learning led a discussion about services for authors. Most noteworthy within this discussion was the way in which commercial publishers such as Taylor and Francis, Wiley, Elsevier and Routledge have begun to draw on their wider commercial publishing operations in identifying new kinds of services for authors (and also reviewers). For example the provision of personalised portals for tracking publications and citations, plagiarism checking, citation validation and marketing of published papers are services that a number of publishers now provide. An important question for AJET is whether such services are sufficiently valued by authors that it may lead them to choose journals published by commercial publishers over AJET as an outlet for their work. We are hopeful that the wider reach provided by a free open access journal will continue to make AJET a popular choice for authors.

AJET Lead Editor Barney Dalgarno led a discussion about journal and article quality metrics, beginning with an overview of established metrics and then considering a number of emerging metrics. There was a general consensus that traditional metrics based on the number of citations each article attracts, such as the Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports, the Scopus Source Normalized Impact per Paper, and most recently the Google Scholar h-index are still the ones most authors and research readers look to for evidence of a journal's quality and reach. Article download statistics and acceptance rates were also

agreed to be important when the data is available. Editors expressed interest but some caution in relation to the new social media enabled metrics or Altmetrics. It was generally agreed that such metrics are more susceptible to “gaming” than traditional metrics and so can’t be relied upon yet as a measure of quality of either an article or a journal. The discussion concluded with an exploration of strategies an editor could employ for improving citation rates. Consideration of the ways in which the different measures are calculated was agreed to be important because some measures favour journals with high publication volumes while others favour journals with more consistent quality and penalise journals which publish large numbers of article of only moderate quality and reader interest.

Rory McGreal of the International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning led a discussion about journal publishing business models. It became clear that the journals represented at the workshop, which are published by at least four different types of publishers (commercial publishers, university presses, open access publishers and associations or societies) operate under a range of different implicit business models. The editors discussed the sustainability of commercial journal publishing models and the question of whether large scale moves to free open access publishing are feasible. Rory argued that the sheer cost to universities of journal subscriptions is making the current models unsustainable and gave examples of large universities such as Harvard substantially reducing the number of journals they subscribe to. The question of whether it would be feasible for all universities to collaborate to provide funding support for non-commercial open access journals rather than commercial publishers was discussed, with a range of perspectives emerging in the discussion. The discussion highlighted the way in which AJET’s status as a free open access journal with the support of ascilite positions it well within the changing journal publishing landscape.

Overall the workshop was a valuable opportunity to compare the processes used by AJET with those used by other journals as well as an opportunity to network with other editors. An online network of participating editors has now been established and a commitment has been made to come together for similar events in the future.

In this issue

This issue represents a wide range of research in educational technology. Two of the papers focus on shaping the technology practices of pre-service teachers. In the first, Teo and Milutinovic apply the technology acceptance model (TAM) with structural equation modelling to find that pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards computers continue to be the most direct influence on their intention to use technology in their teaching. It seems that an implication is that if we seek to change intent, we need to address attitudes. This reinforces what we have already understood with regards to technology adoption: it involves a lot more than simply telling or showing. The second paper appears to address this concern: Kafyulilo, Fisser, Pieters and Voogt use the framework of Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) and conclude that the development of pre-service teachers’ knowledge and skills of integrating technology could be supported by actively designing, teaching, evaluating and re-designing lessons.

The third paper in the issue focuses on the web-based problem-solving performance of school children. In a recent policy shift AJET decided to only accept papers focusing on professional or higher education. However, this paper is one of the few that remained within the review process. This paper by Gwo-Jen Hwang and K Fan-Ray Kuo used structural equation modelling to analyse the antecedents for effective problem-solving and found that the task-technology fit could be the major factor. Problem-solving and related issues such as creativity, independence, and resilience continue to be issues professional and higher education need to address. This paper may give insight not only into school education, but also considerations for how we may approach understanding similar issues in other contexts.

The fourth, fifth and eighth papers in this issue deal with student conceptualisation of technologies and its relationship to research and learning. Markauskaite and Wardak report on a phenomenographic study that investigated postgraduate students’ conceptions of digital technologies in research. They point to the way in which research students’ understanding of the role of such technologies changes over time, and is closely tied to their practical experiences rather than abstract understanding of the digital technology

‘potentiality’. In contrast, Pow and Li focus on undergraduate students, utilising structural equation modelling to identify a number of ‘information quality’ dimensions that are significant in predicting students’ use of Internet information in their academic work. The final paper in this issue takes a different approach to the similar broad concern. Chiu, Tsai and Liang also used structural equation modelling but this time to investigate Internet-specific epistemic beliefs which have been shown to influence learning practices.

The sixth and seventh papers focus on how educational technologies may be applied to improve learning. Howitt and Pegrum investigate the flipped (or inverted) classroom model in postgraduate studies. While some of their findings confirm other work around flipped classrooms, they also offer new insights. Of particular interest is the finding that with the increased expectations on learners to be more active in class, there is also a pressure on teachers to learn to listen. In a remarkably different context of museums, Wang, Chen and Zhang report on a study that integrated context awareness and ontological technology to design a context-aware knowledge map to improve learning efficiency.

The papers in this issue span sectors, methodologies and analytical lens. It is interesting to see so many of the papers use a structural equation modelling approach to demonstrate connections between the digital technology and the educational focus. However, the phenomenological and case study approaches are also represented and offer a counterpoint in the nature of the claims that can be made.

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