



EDITORIAL

Volume 8 No. 3

The 10 Year Discussion

The *Journal of Learning Design* published its first issue, Vol 1 No 1, in 2005¹. This issue, Vol 8 No 3, the last of 2015, has been set aside as a Special 10th Anniversary Issue to mark the journal's first decade of what we believe has been lively and wide-ranging discussion about learning design.

This Anniversary issue will mark this occasion much in the same vein as Martin Scorsese's (2014) celebration of the *New York Review of Books* was marked through a documentary entitled, *The 50 Year Argument*. The title of this editorial mimics this by being entitled, *The 10 Year Discussion*.

We began our planning for this issue by sourcing the PDF downloads of individual articles in the Journal and identifying those with the highest downloads. We then asked the lead authors of the dozen or so most-downloaded articles for their permission to reprint their articles and if they would revisit their work to write a reflection for our anniversary issue. We suggested that they might:

- Revisit the original motivation to write the article.
- Update any ideas expressed in the original article.
- Confirm the conclusions with more recent findings or observations.
- Refute or challenge the conclusions in the light of later thinking.
- Speak of the impact of the article on the authors – perhaps on their construction of knowledge.
- Describe if/how the ideas or approaches outlined/investigated in the article have continued to be implemented.
- Ponder why the article has reached so many readers.

We explained to these authors that, despite our commitment to Open Access Publishing and our publication according to Creative Commons Licence, we would only republish with the authors' explicit permission to do so. Similarly, where the original text of the articles was edited for this issue, the authors have approved any and all changes made. These were typically related to APA 6.0 referencing or to layout changes, such as the altered pagination and the consecutive numbering of figures and graphs wrought by the addition of the reflections.

¹ This issue was republished in 2012 at <https://www.jld.edu.au/issue/view/2>

What you will see in this issue are effectively new publications with new titles indicative of the reflective and analytical processes at work. Not all of those contacted responded or were able to send their reflection in the allotted time. So this issue is a selection of the most-downloaded articles rather than a definitive “top downloads” list. This, fortuitously, ended up as 10 articles – an homage to the Journal’s ten years of publication.

It must be said – as a further caveat to our selection process - that the journal moved “home” through its decade, an action which has arguably made its download information unreliable. The current OJS we use began with Vol 5 No 1 in 2012. All previously published articles (2005-2011) were moved from the old to the new systems losing their statistical data along the way.

The final list, despite the questionable validity of the methodology, represents an interesting range of papers from: 4 from 2006 (Vol 1); 3 from 2012 (Vol 5); 2 from 2013 (Vol 6); and 1 from 2014 (Vol 7). Interestingly, four of the ten papers published in this issue predate the journal’s move to the OJS in 2012 and the current domain/URL. This is a particular testament to the value of those articles.

A particular affordance of online publications is that readers have different ways of accessing published work. We had briefly pondered re-publishing the articles which were mostly viewed/read online but opted for PDF downloads as this perhaps better represented how readers formally interact with academic texts. In most instances, around a third of abstract views led to a PDF download. We could not know if an article downloaded in this way was printed or remained as a digital document. This might well be a decision grounded in 2015 and be an irrelevance for our second such issue in 2025, *The Twenty Year Discussion*.

This issue

The articles in this anniversary issue are (re)presented in chronological order. Where articles are from the same issue, they are ordered alphabetically.

The first reflection in this issue, by **Burton**, now based at the University of the Sunshine Coast (Australia) is entitled *A reflection on designing criterion-referenced assessment in 2015*. Here she builds on her original work concerned with criterion-referenced assessment (Burton, 2006) which appeared in Vol 1 No 2. The span in time between the original and the revisited version might well be a marker of the time it has taken for criterion-referenced assessment to become the default mode for assessment practice in Australian universities, a phenomenon warmly welcomed by Burton. That the original paper has been so frequently downloaded might speak to the need for academics to come to terms with criterion-referenced assessment and to compare and contrast it with the more familiar mode of norm-referenced assessment. It can be contended that Burton’s thoroughly crafted 2006 paper brought rigour and grounded research to the field of criterion-referenced assessment, and, in so doing, provided a convincing argument for its implementation. The original article was contextualised in a Faculty of Law but its content, as with other papers in this issue and through the Journal’s decade of discussion, has relevance for all other tertiary teaching disciplines.

Our second paper, by **Griffiths**, revisits her 2006 paper entitled, *Personal coaching: A model for effective learning* which appeared in Vol 1, No 2 (2006). It is concerned with “personal coaching” and is based on the premise that learning is at the heart of coaching. Her original 2006 model, the *coaching-learning model*, was influenced by established learning theories: adult and lifelong learning, transformational learning, experiential learning and mentoring

theory. It was further founded on a belief that personal coaching models see learning as a means to an end, rather than an end in and of itself.

Griffiths now acknowledges that her thinking of a decade ago, proposing personal coaching as a model for active, collaborative, authentic and engaging learning, was founded in “the idealism of youth” (*this issue*, p. 14). Revisiting her original article leaves the reader in no doubt to her passion and commitment for coaching and the value she placed (and continues to place) in the role of coaching to scaffold learning. She admits, that through research and further experience in the field, she now has identified more achievable and pragmatic goals. Her reflection, interestingly, offers a redrafting of her 2006 model. The new version, called a combined coaching-learning model, which is, as before, built on students’ personal goals but which now divides the process into three major stages: discovery, application and integration.

In the third paper in this issue, **Sims**, Director of Knowledgecraft, offers a challenging synthesis of his thinking and observations of what learning design might and should be. His 2015 reflection, *Revisiting ‘Beyond Instructional Design’* is a clear extension of the original text entitled *Beyond instructional design: Making learning design a reality* (Sims, 2006). In both the new and original texts, accepted wisdom on learning design and instructional design is challenged. Iterative and learner-centred models are presented and explained. That the original is amongst the top downloads from the Journal of Learning Design could be explained by its complex mix of practical metrics (to frame our understandings of students’ interaction with self-paced and collaborative online environments) and its profound questioning of online learning through the conditional argument that:

if instruction represents a form of delivery, and

if we are beyond delivery, then

we have reached a stage where we are “beyond” instruction.

The original (Sims, 2006) represents a tipping point in the development of online learning where emerging technologies allowed greater interaction between learners, learner and learning, and learner and teacher. The salient differences between the learning design of 2006 and 2015 are encapsulated in the diagrammatic mapping of “design for learning” (see Figure 4, Sims, *this issue*) and “design alchemy practice” (see Figure 1, Sims, *this issue*). The former shows the complex interaction between learning design components such as strategy, content, delivery, interaction and interface. In short, it adds nuance to the notion of delivery and fixes it within a learning environment but still regards each as a standalone process. The latter, more recent, design is an evolutionary change to where the delivery is subsumed further into the learning. The latter embeds a process which iteratively evaluates learning outcomes. While the former illustration resonates with an engineering metaphor - nodes connected through structural beams almost like the scaffolding supporting a building - the latter, still industrially structured, has become something much more organic and fluid. The addition of verbal descriptors to curved progression arrows show how one process morphs into another. Over time, and in the face of changing technologies and deeper thinking about learning, the instructional designer has become a design alchemist.

Fourth, Campbell revisits her 2006 co-authored paper, “Conversation as inquiry: A conversation with instructional designers” (Campbell, Schwier, & Kenny, 2006). The original

article appeared in Vol 1, No 3 and its findings, woven through the idea of moral action, were based on stories collected from learning designers based in Canadian universities. As with the reflections of Latham and Carr (*this issue*), Campbell considers learning design in active human and philosophical ways. For Campbell and her co-authors, instructional design is a plurivocal conversation-based practice. Their view is unconventional and adopts the meme of conversation to describe learning as well as the development of learning environments.

The inherent challenge of Campbell's reflection is in its redefinition of instructional design with instructional designers acting alternatively as a "social agent, as subverted, as feminist, as curator, as coach, as cultural exemplar" (*this issue*, p. 43) and that relationships, rather than content, are at the centre of instructional design. She goes further to ponder:

... I have reflected for several years that instructional designers might just be good academic leaders because: we know how to reverse-engineer; how to practise in relational ways in our overlapping communities of practice; how to tell the university's story to the community; and, vice versa, how to creatively problem-solve and how to project manage.

(Campbell, *this issue*, p. 44)

Campbell's provocative reflection concludes with an observation of change over the last decade, particularly, that: "a new discourse [is] emerging, one that uses more of the language of autonomy, authenticity, accessibility, conversation and, especially, higher education's moral obligations to the communities of which they are a part" (Campbell, *this issue*, p. 45). The span in time between the original publication and the current reflection has led Campbell to more deeply understand the social agency and the moral dimension of learning design. These revolutionary views, which Campbell admitted led to an initial resistance from publishers, have become entrenched as the lived experience of designers and academics in contemporary higher education. That the original paper has been so frequently downloaded is perhaps due to the resonance its conversations hold for academics and designers and the support needed by both as they move to an understanding that it is relationships rather than content which matters most in learning design.

The fifth paper in this issue, by **Latham and Carr**, is a reflection on their paper entitled, *Authentic learning for pre-service teachers in a technology-rich environment* (Latham & Carr, 2012). It is an intriguing paper which can be read almost as an autobiographical professional portrait of the authors and how they enact their beliefs about their students and the technologies they use to enhance their learning.

Latham and Carr are teacher educators who begin their reflection by talking about educational mysteries and how, over time, they have progressively shifted the locus of control from themselves to their students. Their notion of "learning design" is thus bound up in the designing of mysteries for students. They also speak about educational technology, and, although only a short period of time since the initial publication of their paper, they speak of the rapid obsolescence of technology and the need to remain at the forefront.

It is immediately apparent that these authors are perpetually reflective teachers. Asking them to revisit their 2012 paper seems, in fact, to be a usual part of their practice. They give a sense of their teaching being very much an enactment of a philosophy of open-endedness and risk-

taking. They are teaching teachers and so it seems that, in the teaching they have described, they embody context, content and concept. Into this mix is a discussion of educational technologies and the role they play in scaffolding and shaping student learning.

Rossi, van Rensburg, Harreveld, Beer, Clark, and Danaher, in our sixth paper, revisit their 2012 paper entitled *Exploring a cross-institutional research collaboration and innovation: Deploying social software and Web 2.0 technologies to investigate online learning designs and interactions in two Australian Universities*. It first appeared in Vol 5, No 2, a special issue based on the theme of *Classrooms without walls/Borderless classrooms*. The article and reflection focus on the notion of online learning as a classroom without walls and emphasise this through frequent use of this phrase. The authors also return to the evocative metaphor of a dirigible which poetically combine the ideas of the volatility of the online medium and the contrasting affordances of being “tethered” in the real world while offering opportunities to “connect to other worldly knowledges” (Rossi, et al., 2013, p. 149). The authors are, interestingly, from different universities and different disciplines yet they share a common interest in teaching online. As with Gray and Howard (*this issue*), the authors have, singly and in differing research collaborations, investigated online learning with an emphasis on social media. Their reflection for this anniversary issue has “reaffirmed the increasing relevance of social software and Web 2.0 technologies underpinning online education” (Rossi, et al., *this issue*, p. 80). The subtext of their article and reflection is also that these technologies also afford the opportunities for research collaboration and the opportunity for academics to share their learning designs.

In the seventh paper in this issue, **Davidson**, from the Business School, University of Adelaide, tells of an evolving pedagogical process. Her use of wikis to increase student communication and collaboration has continued but in substantively different ways to the original experimentation reported in 2012. Hers is an intriguing story for a number of reasons. Firstly, she notes a lessening resistance by students to move into a virtual space through the simple effect of what she dubs “the student grapevine.” Her students know, anecdotally from peers, what will be expected of them and, as with visiting a foreign country, adopt the different culture with curiosity and a willingness to take part. This observation led us as editors to contemplate notions of socially mediated familiarity drawn loosely from Vygotskian notions on the zone of proximal development. Secondly, her changing the human elements around the task over time rather than the chosen technology indicates that the technology (a wiki) was the “right” tool in the first place and that it provided the affordances for communication and collaboration initially sought to enhance student learning. For us, this emphasised the inherent power of a well-selected technology. Thirdly, Davidson’s reflection as with that of Latham and Carr (*this issue*) is an autobiography of an effective and thoughtful teacher – one who continues to evaluate the affect and effect of their teaching and to make adjustments to how their teaching is delivered or explained to students. Fourthly, and finally, the real intent of Davidson’s experimentation in learning design is part of an emerging interest in student employability, particularly through how this can be enhanced through graduate attributes. Davidson opines that her 2012 paper has received such attention because others are also interested in how technology can enhance learning. We agree but would suggest that what has been of most interest in the original paper was its melding of technology with communication, collaboration and motivation and its offering of ways to effectively engage students in group work, so frequently as source of angst amongst students. Davidson’s story – a personal recount of an individual instance of effective learning design – in many ways represents the whole story

of C21st tertiary pedagogy, that is, the deceptively simple task of how to select and use technology to achieve pedagogical goals.

The eighth paper, by **Kennedy-Clark**, presents a reflection on her earlier paper entitled *Research by Design: Design-Based Research and the Higher Degree Research student* (Kennedy-Clark, 2013). Kennedy-Clark here addresses an often-overlooked area of learning and teaching, that is, of higher degree research supervision. She has offered her perspectives from her own doctoral studies with much broader ramifications. For example, it could be conjectured that the design-based research Kennedy-Clark describes is what the authors in this issue – and in all issues of the *Journal of Learning Design* - have engaged in over time. This is evident in her theory-based definition of design-based research as “an approach that supports the exploration of educational problems and refining theory and practice by defining a pedagogical outcome and then focusing on how to create a learning environment that supports the outcome” (Kennedy-Clark, *this issue*, p. 109). More specifically, she explains that “design-based research is a methodological approach that supports an investigation of a learning design” (p. 109).

Kennedy-Clark’s original paper raised the intriguing notion of how learning, here through the development of a research dissertation, is focused on outcomes rather than on process. Design-based research could, she argued, be a solution to this approach and a way to allow higher degree students to analyse their method as well as reporting their findings. It also, as reiterated in the 2015 reflection, offers a strategy for researchers to “revisit and to iteratively build upon their study” (p. 107). This is novel in that most research, particularly higher degree research, is a closed one-off process which relates a single metanarrative despite the limitations of “insufficient participants or inconclusive or incomplete data” (p. 107). This paper and reflection offers a fractal-like view of the researcher and their research processes. It has perhaps drawn attention because of this original approach which focuses on learners and learning in this context.

In the ninth paper in this issue, **Fleischmann** revisits her 2013 paper, Big Bang technology: What’s next in design education, radical innovation or incremental change? (Fleischmann, 2013). Fleischmann begins her reflection by regretfully noting that the POOL model, the multidisciplinary collaborative approach to teaching media design she described in her 2013 paper (Fleischmann, 2013), has been discontinued at her institution after five years of successful implementation. The reason is an all too familiar one, that is where changes in staff mean that the champions of a particular approach are no longer part of the process and the process itself is unable to continue. We have all seen similar problems where good ideas evaporate when project funding ceases. The impetus for innovation continues to come from individuals. Fleischmann’s research is moving into the sustainability of new learning designs (see, for example, Fleischmann, 2015).

But Fleischmann does not seek sympathy nor does she offer a criticism of the academic who has found themselves unable to sustain the model. She rather takes a pragmatic view that no technology stands still and there may now be better ways to achieve the same outcome. She speaks, for instance, of how MOOCs might be used to facilitate collaboration in design education. Hers is an interesting realisation that, in contemporary learning design, there is really no certainties and no established truths.

The tenth and final paper, **Gray and Howard's** *Designerly Talk in Non-Pedagogical Social Spaces* is the most recent reprint in our anniversary issue, being published in Vol 7, No 1 in March 2014. It cannot be certain how or why such a recent paper – one with its digital ink still wet – surprisingly made its way into our list of top downloads. We need, of course, to remember that the archive of JLD has only been in an OJS platform since 2012, so there was a relatively level playing field and perhaps some of the older articles were disadvantaged in a simple count of downloads.

What we are certain of is the currency of the original paper contemporary tertiary education (Gray & Howard, 2014). We are clearly at a point where we need to know, in more systematic and empirical ways, what the evidence of our eyes are telling us in how students can move between physical and virtual modes of communication and how formal and informal learning have become blurred. Gray and Howard have done just this. What appears to be a simple addition of a technology is anything but simple. They have, intriguingly, for example, considered the nuance of difference between computer-mediated communities created by students and those constructed by academics. The simple entry of students and academics into a mediated space is a curious blend of formal and informal language, enthusiasm and resistance, activity and silence, hidden and overt curriculum. There is much to be learnt about how teaching and learning really happens in online spaces and what roles the main actors take.

From their introductory reflection (*this issue*), Gray and Howard share how they have continued to pursue the complexity of online communication and how 'designerly talk' fits into this space. They have been busy in this space – as both sole and joint authors - and perhaps readers of newer works have followed a trail to our publication of their work in 2014. Perhaps readers are simply fascinated by their investigation and how it is building to a unique body of knowledge around how changes in the immediacy and our familiarity with technology is impacting on critical pedagogy and collaborative learning.

The last word

As editors, we were struck by the speed of authors' replies and their collective delight at knowing their work had reached so many readers. All who responded were intrigued by the opportunity to revisit their original vision. When academic work is published, it is often a waving goodbye and authors rarely receive any feedback on their ideas after they have gone out into the world.

We were also struck by the passion and ongoing curiosity in the author reflections which paralleled a similar sense in the original texts. One said that the theme of the original publication "continue[d] to be my quintessential research interest" (Burton, *this issue*, p. 1).

It is a genuine pleasure to present/re-present these papers along with their authors' contemporary reflections. For us, they cumulatively present a memoir of what you have been talking and thinking about over the last decade through the online pages of the *Journal of Learning Design*: a decade of discussion.

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