

## EDITORIAL

### **Learning Design: framing for an Eclectic Community**

This issue presents six papers that share a concern for the development of teaching excellence through the employment of supportive technologies. While they are distinct, in terms of their contextual origins and research foci, the theme of community is commented upon in each. The notion that a well developed and supportive community, of practitioners, of academics, of learners provides a capacity to promote enhanced outcomes is not a new idea. For the past fifty years or more, the social dimension for learning and teaching has been acknowledged as fundamental for knowledge transactions and development. However, design for learning has often considered social framing as supplementary to the main game; that of the individual's learning. Websites have been constructed to lighten cognitive load, to sequence concepts, to provide measured feedback, progress charts, achievement profiles and to basically engage the individual. The papers in this issue variously show us that social context can be effectively used to launch the learner within a community of practice.

The first paper by Doherty examines the use of online modules to engage Health academics in Professional Development to improve their teaching. His teaching performance rubric (page 3) considers peer connections through mentoring and peer review as key elements of teaching excellence, and the Scholarly Teaching (page 4) steps lead readers to understand the place of peer work in the teaching and learning connection. Doherty describes the introduction of an online and modular development system to prompt maturation as a teaching scholar aligned to an ePortfolio enabling academics to demonstrate their journey to themselves and colleagues.

Owen and Davis, our second paper, discuss the benefits of cross-institutional collaboration. They report the impact of collaborative planning by a community of 30 Australian Law Schools to achieve specified Graduate Attributes. The national law graduate attributes professional learning process is described as being at the "starter" phase, yet Owen and Davis show comfortably that collaboration is a feature of success at all levels of learning design.

The third paper, Schuetze, considers the benefits of carefully designing interactive software to reflect the needs of students in German language learning. The "spiral learning" concept drove the design architecture, where students regularly met high frequency words and where some recycling of words and phrases occurred as the students explored more difficult levels. Interestingly, the participants in this study were brought together rather than engaged through distance learning formats. Schuetze, made a conscious decision to gather the students together (page 29) even though this was an individual reading course, which was provided for by a self paced software package. While community aspect was backgrounded in this study, but there must have been a sense of shared endeavour framing the student's engagement with the package and which impacted upon the success of the innovation.

## *Editorial*

Duff, Carter, Spangenburg and Miller, have provided the fourth paper in this issue. This paper continues the exploration of learning design to support language learning. In this case, they have presented an innovation for the development of grammatical understandings. The Grammar Gang application is collaborative at the academic level and also at the student level, bringing together researchers, academics and students from three universities of two different continents. Students were effectively marshalled to a global community of learners. The social software assisted them to build a community that breached individual, institutional and global divides. It was this community building that strengthened their learning through asserting the relevance and application of their knowledge within the global community. By designing learning around the broad collaborative affordance of Grammar Gang, Duff et al have brought to their students an active understanding of grammar.

Our fifth paper by Maybury and Farah, reports the effectiveness of Virtual Microscopy (VM) as a component of a Blended Learning approach in health sciences. The paper begins by acknowledging the place of collaborative learning in their course design. However, Maybury and Farah focus on the acceptance of VM as compared to light microscopy, by learners. This brief paper provides convincing support for the notion that contemporary students are engaged by technologies that enable flexibility yet comprehensiveness in their study routine.

Finally, the paper by Saiki brings full attention to the place of interaction in designing for learning, with particular consideration of online resources for Museum education. Saiki identifies the type and frequency of content provision and interactive devices on over 150 museum websites. Her study acknowledges the role of community but places the site of community actually at the museum, rather than on the enticing and predominantly information transmissive websites. This is an interesting place to finish for this issue, as we are reminded that design for learning draws on many resources and contexts, each relevant in different ways depending on the concepts to be learnt and the stage of learning. The community is clearly an element that cannot be removed across the learning journey, and must be consciously designed into the learner's total experience.

As a final note, we have been delighted to include authors from New Zealand, Canada, from across the United States of America, and from across Australia, strengthening our view that the Journal of Learning Design continues to bring together a vibrant international academic community concerned with excellence in teaching and learning.

Nan Bahr  
Marg Lloyd  
Stephanie Beames  
*Queensland University of Technology, Australia*