Editorial – CJLT: Changes in the World of Academic Publishing

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An open issue of a journal is like a well-stocked and themed smorgesbord – there is a unique and pleasing range of high quality dishes on display, and everybody can find something that appeals, even to a highly discriminating palate. On board this Fall 2009 issue of CJLT are eight rich articles that offer readers a tempting choice of diverse research methods, questions, stances and ideas in a range of educational technology study and practice areas. Twenty Canadian and American authors, including several talented graduate students, have contributed their research and critical perspectives to this intellectual buffet. Whether one prefers to sample a bit of everything or load a plate with one favourite item, I am confident readers will find a study or idea to suit their taste.

Two papers present research conducted in elementary school settings. In research on second-language classrooms, Murphy breaks new ground by studying online learning in an intensive French program in elementary school settings in both rural and urban Newfoundland. In this design experiment, data was collected from 92 Grade 6 students and four teachers using online observation, teachers' blogs and a discussion forum, teacher planning and reflection meetings, and interviews with all participants. Key benefits, challenges and solutions are presented in categories of improved linguistic outcomes, i.e., positive affect and student-centered learning. Implications for teacher training and social networking are summarized. In research on educational games and literacy development, Lotherington and Sinitskaya Ronda, studied Grade 4 students creating and playing online board games based on geography content. While the two public schools in the greater Toronto area shared similar positive orientations to technologically focused learning and good technological resources, the schools had different institutional histories of implementing computers in curricular learning. Pedagogical practices and learning experiences differed, traditional literacy learning was limited to improved logical sentence structure, and game development was linked with improved digital literacy skills. This project enabled participating teachers to imagine how to incorporate online board game production in broad-based curricular learning.

Two research articles in this issue are written and presented in French, and focus on school and campus learning environments. In a study of asynchronous written interaction patterns among networked classrooms, Allaire and Laferrière investigated how learners in geographically distant classrooms interacted on Knowledge Forum®, a web-based collaborative space, over a two year period. The study was conducted in the context of the Remote Networked Schools (RNS) initiative that aims to enrich Quebec's rural schools learning environment. Using descriptive quantitative analyses, the researchers demonstrate the viability of the RNS model for student-to-student interaction in a way as to increase the idea pool. Study results also revealed that network collaboration self-organizes at different levels of complexity, ones that vary according to the school-year schedule. In Click, Slide, Type Or Select In A Pop-Up Menu, Sarma, Weinberg and Peters present findings on the preferences of French-as-a second-language university students towards different manipulations used in computerized grammar activities. Students indicated preferences for four manipulations offered (click,

scroll-down menu, drag-and-drop, keyboard entry) while doing multiple-choice activities. Study results, backed up by student comments, demonstrate that student preferences reflect the traits of the "spoiled child" who prefers activities that are fun, easy and fast and that will have a direct impact on grades.

Two papers present research conducted in online secondary school settings. In a design-based study of the use of videoconferencing for rural and urban secondary students, Li, Dyjur, Nicolson and Moorman summarize the effects of an inquiry-based learning environment on mathematics and science learning. Urban Grade 9 and rural Grade 8 students were connected with mathematicians/ scientists as e-mentors using videoconferencing. Benefits were found for student learning, interest and confidence in math and science, along with significant gains in achievement, increased interest and heightened confidence. Guidelines for the development of inquiry-based learning environments supported with videoconferencing are presented. Philpott, Sharpe and Neville carried out a longitudinal study of the effectiveness of web-delivered learning with aboriginal students in coastal Labrador. The rural nature of many communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, coupled with declining enrollment, has expanded the use of e-learning as a means to provide quality high school curriculum. A Community University Research Alliance partnered with stakeholders to explore the success of e-learning in the province. Within this alliance, the authors examined the success of e-learning for aboriginal students from the perspective of the students, parents and educators. Student performance was examined in comparison to provincial peers. This study provides insights into factors that support and hinder e-learning in coastal areas and also informs educators about the diverse learning characteristics and needs of aboriginal students. As Canadian educators are increasingly challenged to address achievement issues that continue to characterize aboriginal populations, this study offers important data on the viability of e-learning as a mode of curriculum delivery.

The two remaining papers bring the reader full circle to online learning in Faculties of Education and second language learning; one paper offers insight into the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing web-based learning in higher education, and the other reviews the use of social software to address literacy and identity issues in second language learning. Surry, Grubb, Ensminger, and Ouimette studied the barriers and enablers to the implementation of web-based learning in colleges of education. Over 220 faculty members responded to a survey; close to half of the faculty had never taught a web-based course while more than half had taught online. Faculty report an overall neutral position about the readiness of colleges of education to implement web-based learning; financial resources, infrastructure, and support were seen as barriers to implementation while organizational culture, policies, a commitment to learning, and evaluation were seen as enablers to implementation. Open-ended responses reveal interesting differences about perceived lack of time and lack of social interaction between faculty who have taught online and those who have not. Jill Hutchinson presents a textured view and a clear position on the trend of using social software technology to address second language (L2) learner needs through authentic social interaction and scaffolding processes. Hutchinson explores how social software tools, through the lens of socio-constructivist theory, can support literacy development and improve linguistic power relationships, build self-esteem and encourage positive educational and identity experiences for L2 learners. Social software can connect education with real-life learning and interests and thus engage and motivate students. Social software can facilitate learning environments that are more learner-centred, informal and collaborative. Still, culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms and uneven access to technology reveal educational inequalities for English Language Learners. Recommendations for ongoing research on social software use focusing on issues of appropriateness and responsible use for L2 learners, acceptance of social tools and technology accessibility, are presented.

Academic Publishing in a Participatory Digital World

In a recent blogpost, a colleague started an online conversation with the question, 'do we need academic journals anymore?' (Bates, 2010). As the soon-to-be former editor of CJLT, my answer to this question is yes. I believe the educational technology community continues to need and value peer-reviewed journal content. The Canadian educational technology community needs to create, use, manage and critically evaluate bilingual and media enhanced peer-reviewed and open source forums for our research and scholarship; further, the international educational technology community needs to become multi-lingual and multi-cultural in the expanding online knowledge base.

As editor of CJLT, I have written about the value and necessity of peer-reviewed forums for the sharing and dissemination of academic research and scholarship in educational technology. I have tried to uncover the hidden tasks undertaken by the community of educational technology scholars in support of a peer-reviewed journal. For example, Jacobsen and Desjardins (2007) wrote:

A great deal of hidden volunteer effort supports the scholarly review process of an academic journal. After a paper has been reviewed by the editorial team, it is blinded and sent to three expert peers for their assessment of the manuscript's quality and potential contribution to the field. Peer reviewers submit comments and a recommendation to the editorial team to aid in the publication decision-making process. At least 21 peer reviewers contributed their feedback and expertise to the review of the seven manuscripts in this issue. Peer review, by its very nature and, some would argue, by necessity, is anonymous. A journal maintains its scholarly integrity by employing a valid and reliable peer review process. (p. 6-7)

In a subsequent editorial, I argued that we need to argue, debate and critically analyze the current state of our knowledge and practice in educational technology, and that academic journals offer a medium in which we can undertake part of this scholarly work.

Academic journals disseminate both new research and the critique of existing research as an important part of the inquiry and knowledge sharing process. Scholars rely on academic, peer-reviewed journals for research on which they can build their own investigations and scholarship. ... Good academic journals tend to publish competing and even contrasting articles about a particular research field, question or topic – this approach to academic debate, combined with disciplined inquiry, is believed to characterize a vigorous, growing and dynamic body of knowledge and reliable research in a discipline. Canadian academics believe it is a right and a responsibility to analyze, synthesize and critically evaluate the current knowledge base and to identify inaccuracies, faulty arguments and claims that are not well supported with evidence. (Jacobsen, 2008, i)

Active, critical and informed debate helps educational technology researchers to grow and expand the field, to replace findings and to understand bleeding edge trends. Academic researchers, teaching scholars, graduate supervisors and graduate students in educational technology, campus and classroom teachers who create and use media and technology, journalists and citizens who aim to understand the latest technology trends and learning achievements in education, will continue to need reliable, trustworthy and credible peer-reviewed research on which to build ongoing scholarly, teaching and living efforts. The current academic journal publishing and peer review models have served and continue to serve the educational technology community well. That said, academic publishing also has to change and evolve in order to remain relevant, to be more responsive and timely, and to serve the global community well.

In my original comment on Bates' (2010) blog, I touched on several challenges and opportunities that face academic journals in a digital world. Here is the comment in full:

You are asking a few good questions here, Tony. I believe that our academic journal publishing models DO need to evolve and change, and that the type and magnitude of change needed will take no small courage and a great deal of effort on the part of academics, faculties and institutions. As editor, I advocated for CJLT to become fully open-source and online in order to make present and past educational technology research freely and widely available. Going open-source and online is only the first small step for academic journals. Across disciplines, there is an enduring and widespread snobbery about "online" versus "serious, top-tier publishing in a paper journal" - going for tenure or promotion, anyone? I agree with my colleagues, Mark Bullen and Ryan Tracey, that there is a strong need for good academic research, and with Sean Lancaster, that the blind peer review process is vital for credible and trustworthy academic publishing. Peer reviewed academic journals also need to incorporate interactive and participatory social networking models in support of developing active academic research communities online. Key challenges that academic journals face include, but are not limited to: variable institutional support and academic merit for journal editors, heavy workload, quality and quantity of peer review, an enduring culture of snobbery and entitlement, and sustainable funding. Does academia have the appetite to change the status quo in academic journal publishing? We can always hope... (Jacobsen, 2010)

When CJLT was both a print and an online journal, the editorial team was constrained by what it could publish in fixed time periods; we were limited by publication, printing and distribution costs. Open-source and online offer the "perfect storm of opportunity" for learning, as argued by Seely-Brown and Adler (2008), and also offer refreshing opportunities for academic publishing. The transformation of CJLT into an open source, online academic journal has removed most barriers and has opened up new temporal, media and participatory opportunities for the educational technology community.

A blog post by the Speculative Scotsman offers a relevant and timely message, along with a funny bit about a grumpy old man, that I believe can be applied to academic publishing: "Publishing is assuredly not, as Keillor would have it, dying. It is only changing - as all things do. That it is not what it once was, that the industry has had to adapt to new technology, new media, new modes of communication, is symptomatic not of the end - woe betide us all - but of evolution" (Alexander, 2010).

Academic publishing is evolving, must evolve, and will continue to evolve as Web 3.0 spaces continue to disrupt old boundaries and remove constraints. The changes that a participatory digital world bring to academic publishing will be both liberating and painful – economic models will change, content will grow to include more media mashups and participatory models, merit and promotion decisions need to adapt, a growing community of scholars need to engage in peer review and editing, variable and differentiated workloads need to reflect the "hidden" work behind academic journals, and submission-to-publication cycles will become more responsive and flexible. In the coming decades, I look forward to engaging in this ongoing evolution in academic publishing as a researcher, peer reviewer, editorial board member, blogger and commentator, and perhaps one day, again as a journal editor.

How to Become a Former Editor of CJLT

The Fall 2009 issue of CJLT is the last one I will prepare with the present editorial team. In the past five years, Francois Desjardins, Jennifer Lock, Bruce Clark and I have worked together to publish 15 issues of the Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology, 12 of these in dual media. When I began as editor of CJLT in Winter 2005, I was an assistant professor with a toddler and pregnant with my second child. Rick Kenny and Francois Desjardins provided excellent guidance as the new editor worked with a set of reviewed and copyedited manuscripts that were ready to print. The Winter 2005 issue was a whirlwind of engaging a Calgary-based printer, designing the new journal cover with a graduate student, working on layout with Maureen, writing an editorial, managing subscription lists, receiving new manuscripts and sending them for review, and communicating with authors and reviewers. I still remember the editorial team's excitement when we opened the first boxes of freshly printed journals and bagged them for distribution.

CJLT has grown and changed in the last five years, from the vibrant dual medium academic journal that Rick Kenny and Mary Kennedy cultivated from 2002 – 2005 (print and online), to the fully online, open-access educational technology journal that CJLT is today (Jacobsen, 2009). Readers can now take a historical journey through 14 volumes of Canadian Journal of Educational Communications [CJEC], the jounal that preceded CJLT (Jacobsen, 2009). Specifically 40 back issues of CJEC from V. 15 in 1986 – V. 27 in 2001 were added to the CJLT archive in 2008 – access these on the www.cjlt.ca

website.

In the past five years, Educational Technology researchers from around the world have joined CJLT's editorial board, while many others have moved on to new and different academic challenges and opportunities. An evolving team of talented graduate students in educational technology have been involved in the editorial, peer review and publication processes. While they were graduate students, and continuing on into new demanding careers; Maureen Washington has given yeoman service as CJLT's talented copyeditor and project manager, and Krista Francis-Poscente has served as managing editor and online journal system expert. Dozens of doctoral students have carried out individual and group peer reviews of manuscripts.

A quick review of the accomplishments of this editorial team in the past five years reveals that CJLT published 18 editorials / commentaries, 105 Articles (12 in French), and 10 book reviews in Volumes 31-35, from 2005 to 2009. CJLT's publication rate between 34-39 % masks the enormous task of conducting and managing 600-800 individual peer reviews on over 325 submitted manuscripts to generate the information needed by the editorial team to bring over 100 articles to print. Over the years, CJLT has become known for the quality of its peer review process. Academic journals tend to peer-review a much larger number of manuscripts than can be published. About one-third of the manuscripts reviewed by CJLT are sent back to authors with extensive comments and

recommendations for improvements – this "hidden service" of editorial and peer-review has been acknowledged by authors as very helpful in strengthening manuscripts for resubmission, either to CJLT or to another journal. Many CJLT authors, even those that we have been unable to publish, have expressed appreciation for the extensive and helpful advice provided by CJLT's peer reviewers.

As Editor of CJLT, I have enjoyed the academic and professional challenge of stewarding a peer-reviewed, educational technology journal for five years. It has been both an honour, and a valued learning experience, to work with diverse educational technology scholars from across Canada and around the world, both as authors and as peer reviewers. It has been rewarding to work within the extensive, international community of educational technology researchers who contribute to and support CJLT, and be a part of the synergy of mentoring graduate students into the various aspects of academic publishing and peer review. I will continue to enjoy engaging and contributing to the academic community that supports CJLT as a member of the Editorial Board.

The Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology

is unique in the international field of educational technology in that it is open source and online, and manuscripts are accepted and published in either English or in French. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to work closely with Dr.

Francois Desjardins, CJLT's French Editor, who has served the journal extremely well for over nine years. I originally signed to edit CJLT for three years; I continued on in this role until a new editor and team could be found because I believe in the value and importance of a Canadian research and academic literature in educational technology.

It has been a privilege to work with educational technology scholars from across Canada to find a new editor for CJLT. Thank you to Mark Bullen, Katy Campbell, Bruce Clark, Francois Desjardins, Rick Kenny, and Rick Schwier for their wise counsel. Thank you to the CNIE President, Maureen Baron, and the current board, for unanimously approving the recommendations this journal committee brought forward for Editor in Chief and Associate Editor of CJLT during the February 2010 CNIE Board Meeting.

Welcome to Dr. Heather Kanuka, University of Alberta, who has agreed to take on the role of English Editor in Chief of CJLT. Dr. Kanuka is well known for her research strengths and leadership contributions in educational technology. Dr. Martha Burkle, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), has agreed to serve as the new Associate Editor, and brings depth and diversity to this role. Two new Associate Editors (French) have joined the CJLT Editorial Team: Anne Boerger and Donald Ipperciel, Faculty St. Jean, University of Alberta. Dr. Jennifer Lock, University of Calgary, continues in her role as Book Review Editor.

The transition from one editorial team to another began several months ago to ensure minimal disruption to the editorial review, peer review and publication cycle during the change. Drs. Kanuka and Burkle formally start their three-year term with the publication of the Winter 2010 issue of CJLT. I look forward to the energy, research strengths and innovative ideas that Heather and Martha and the new editorial team bring to CJLT, and wish them well. Our field of Educational Technology is going to be well served by this new Editorial Team for CJLT. The new email address for CJLT is: cjlt@ualberta.ca . The website remains the same: http://www.cjlt.ca/

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