

Editorial

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'Tis an issue to make all jolly – with this Special Conference Edition we are officially saying goodbye to 2020! Despite all the challenges this year has thrown at us, the Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education is ending it on a high note. We are delighted to announce that three exceptional new editors joined our Editorial Board: Dr Nicola Grayson from the University of Manchester, Dr Jim Donohue, from Manchester Metropolitan University, and Dr Jennifer Hillman, from Open University. We could not be more thrilled to welcome them to our team and we look forward to working together towards new goals next year. At the same time, we would like to thank our long-term member, Dr Christina Howell-Richardson, for her five years of service on the Board – we will remember her with warm thoughts, and wish her the best of luck in her future endeavours.

Issue 19 brings together a range of fascinating writings that resulted from the 2020 Annual Conference of the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education, which this year took place online, in the form of LD@3 webinars. In addition to papers, case studies, an opinion piece, and a book review, it also includes a special article written by four of our

editors, Eleanor Loughlin, Alicja Syska, Gita Sedghi and Christina Howell-Richardson, which is dedicated to the peer review process. The article explores the ways publishing protocols can be fine-tuned in order to not only increase efficiency in the journal but also energise the entire community. While probing how reviewers, authors, and editors can work together in the most productive and rewarding way, we also outline new *JLDHE* initiatives for supporting reviewers' vital work, to be introduced next year. If our readers would like to gain insight into how our peer reviewing process works and why it works this way, this is just the article to read.

Emily Forster's paper 'Power and paragraphs' addresses the important role emotions play in academic writing. Using the stories of two students – both from widening participation backgrounds and both with dyslexia – the author demonstrates how in addition to the usual, technical challenges involved in writing, students also experience emotional challenges, which often go unacknowledged. The fact that writing shapes student identity, however, may help us understand students' emotional responses to writing. Indeed, Forster argues that, as learning developers, we are uniquely positioned to support students in developing positive emotions related to academic writing, which can lead to widening the space for growth and developing positive learner identities. Shortly, acknowledging emotions in writing may result in transformational learning.

Group work is both increasingly popular as a means of assessment and a perennial source of unhappiness when groups do not gel. While the skills of working effectively in a group have clear relevance to the world of work and are highly valued by employers, there is less clarity about how best to support development of this skillset. In this innovative case study authors Helena Beeson and Richard Byles from the University of Northampton problematised issues of group work and engaged students in groups to provide their own answers to these challenges. They did this through establishing a context where the students would work together in groups to create video advice for junior students, combining a digital literacies element with a genuine reason to collaborate and work effectively as a group. Drawing on feedback from staff and students they synthesise some of the lessons learned and identify other contexts for application.

The case study 'How improvisation techniques can support researchers with the development of public speaking skills' grew out of another captivating presentation at LD@3. Nicola Grayson and Jessica Naphthine-Hodgkinson begin by explaining that researcher development support for presentation skills is traditionally focused on

structuring work effectively, practising the presentation and projecting the voice. Through the delivery of a workshop they designed, however, improvisational techniques can disrupt the seriousness of researcher development training to release stress and provide a cathartic space for researchers to develop skills. Researchers support one another in a space where the freedom to fail offers them a cathartic release from the pressures of perfection to develop public speaking skills in a way that is innovative, fun and enjoyable. As a result, the authors show, researchers can reframe their worries into opportunities to connect with one another and grow, which empowers them to build confidence in their ability to engage with others in a dialogue about their research.

Rachael Hunter discusses the inception and continued delivery of ten-minute micro research skills sessions within two entrepreneurship modules at Coventry University London. The rationale of the study was underpinned by both established, current bite-sized learning research, and established psychological and neural evidence. The case study describes how these practices are used in the workplace to promote continuous professional development and disseminate company information for training purposes. Discussing both the delivery and skills content, it explains the methods used by the Information and Skills Development Specialist in each ten-minute session, how this practice has been adopted by students and how the skills have been embedded to enhance their final business pitches at the end of their modules. Furthermore, the inclusion of this microlearning project within other modules establishes the project's flexible and tailored design.

Laurence Morris and Lindsey McDermott's case study explores the process and impact of introducing a centrally managed booking system for academic skills appointment. They emphasise the importance of setting clear aims and establishing a project group as the basis for ensuring success. The resulting booking system clearly strikes a balance between standardising processes while still recognising the importance of human judgment, essential to ensuring student needs are best met. Although the new system resulted in an increase in administration, this was outweighed by increased capacity to support students and the creation of a bank of information that enables the team to respond to both student and institutional needs. It has further provided greater flexibility to respond to the challenges arising from Covid-19 in enabling a smoother transition to online support.

In their opinion piece, Karen Sobel and Lorraine Evans provide a timely discussion of changes in the ways emotional labour manifests among instruction librarians in this time of pandemic. They explore how the challenges faced by instruction librarians have shifted from establishing good working relationships with faculty and gaining recognition, to adapting to providing distance support and concerns around the safety of returning to campus. They further note that the current situation has resulted in some positive changes, including realisation that librarians can be productive while working remotely and the development of better relationships with departments who are reaching out to libraries for assistance and support. The authors wonder whether this will continue beyond the pandemic and hope that as we emerge from the current situation, there is re-examination of workplace norms.

Finally, Claire Saunders reviews the book *Writing about Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Creating and Contributing to Scholarly Conversations across a Range of Genres* by Mick Healey, Kelly Matthews, and Alison Cook-Sather. The book unpacks the process of writing for publication in a wide variety of genres while recognising that the boundaries between these genres are overlapping and provisional. This is seen as a strength, not a problem, since working within and across genres may encourage new ways of engaging, analysing, and sharing understandings that can, in turn, legitimate this wider range of ways of writing about learning and teaching.

We hope that in this collection of articles, our subscribers and readers will find thought-provoking and stimulating material.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful reviewers whose critical reading of submissions and thoughtful feedback and recommendations have made invaluable contributions to the quality of articles we publish.

Our heartfelt appreciation for the time, expertise, and work it took to review papers in this issue goes to the following reviewers:

Mahmoud Altal, UK

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John Weston, Finland

With very best wishes for a joyful holiday season,

The *JLDHE* Editorial Board