
Editorial

One of the things that makes *ALT-J* distinctive is its diverse readership. There are people who consider themselves to be practitioners pure and simple; others who only research this area; a fair number who do both.

Because of this, there is a tension between timeliness and the need for deliberation in the articles that are printed. *ALT-N* already provides a forum for articles where timeliness is the greatest priority; *ALT-J*, therefore, must concentrate on articles where the emphasis is on identifying the wider context, providing considered debate or giving longer-term analyses. However, in a field as fast-moving as learning technology, there always remains the need to ensure that current issues are addressed.

Fortunately, the submissions for this issue have provided a good mix of timely discussion and consideration of long-term concerns. We have, for example, Plewes and Issroff's review paper, which will be particularly relevant to the UK-based projects soon to be funded under the JISC's Exchange for Learning call; Pearson and Koppi's analysis of inclusion and accessibility online, which is particularly timely for UK universities facing changes to the Disability Discrimination Act; and Waycott's article on the use of the increasingly popular Personal Digital Assistants.

At the same time, we have articles which address longstanding areas of concern, such as Singh and Dron's study of cross-cultural interaction, or Holt *et al.*'s questioning of assumptions about the benefits of online learning. Alsop and Tompsett offer a piece that is as much about methodology as about findings. It is to be hoped that their concern for methodology will prompt other researchers in this area to adopt a similarly thoughtful and honest approach.

This leads well into mention of an aspiration for future issues. *ALT-J*'s diversity is important to maintain, but as noted earlier, not at the expense of scholarship. Indeed, this is an area that we are actively seeking to develop. To achieve this, we have begun to tighten

up the submission and review process. In future, our handling of submissions should be smoother and swifter; at the same time, reviews of papers will become more focused. All authors will be expected to locate their paper within a wider research context, and a more consistent format will be adopted for articles, giving more importance to discussion of methodology and the paper's structure.

Finally, readers will notice that our 'experiment' from the last issue is featured again here. The feedback we have received has been universally positive, so we are planning to continue these discussions as a regular part of the journal. This issue sees Gwyneth Hughes replying to Gunn, French, MacLeod, McSporran and Conole's article on gender issues. We hope that this is merely the start of the debate – on this topic, and on the others that we plan to feature.

Martin Oliver
Deputy Editor