



Higgitt, David (2016) A mid-life report card. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 40 (1). pp. 1-8. ISSN 0309-8265

Access from the University of Nottingham repository:

<http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/47503/1/A%20mid%20life%20report%20card.pdf>

Copyright and reuse:

The Nottingham ePrints service makes this work by researchers of the University of Nottingham available open access under the following conditions.

This article is made available under the University of Nottingham End User licence and may be reused according to the conditions of the licence. For more details see:
http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/end_user_agreement.pdf

A note on versions:

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of record. If you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the repository url above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact eprints@nottingham.ac.uk

A mid-life report card

The National Health Service (NHS) in England offers a health check for adults reaching the age of 40. Billed as a free mid-life MOT for the body, it checks the function of important systems, can detect potential problems and assess the risk of developing various diseases. As the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* reaches its fortieth year of operation, it is timely to undertake a health check and to plan for a rewarding future. Walter Pitkin, a philosopher at Columbia University, popularized the phrase *Life Begins at Forty* with the eponymous self-help book (Pitkin, 1932), written at a time when life expectancy was rapidly increasing in the US and there was an emerging sense that reaching this landmark age was the start of a new phase rather than the culmination of an existence. In the popular culture, 40 remains a watershed, a metaphorical mid-way point, a time to reflect on achievements so far and to ponder on challenges ahead. During this year, the journal will dip into its past to consider contemporary and future challenges for teaching and learning of geography in higher education and the evolving institutional structures in which engagement takes place.

The NHS guidance suggests a few practical suggestions for maintaining health as one grows older. Applying this to the journal, it has to be admitted that during the last 10 years weight has been gained. A fourth issue was added to each volume and the page quota in each issue increased. Nevertheless, we have maintained a healthy and balanced diet, representing all the facets of geography with occasional themed feasts provided by the JGHE Symposia. Early career researchers have found voice in the journal, encouraged, or perhaps cajoled, by the evolution of professional qualifications in teaching in higher education. A key component of a healthy lifestyle is, of course to remain physically active. On that score, the journal has benefited from large quantities of fieldwork. As a signature pedagogy, fieldwork was featured prominently in the pages of this journal during its first 40 years of existence and will no doubt continue to foster debate, discussion, reflection and a modest amount of celebration for the foreseeable future. Issue 39(4) *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* featured a collection of papers on the practices and challenges of running international field courses, convened by Michael Glass, University of Pittsburgh (Glass, 2015). Despite the well-rehearsed arguments that fieldwork facilitates methods' training, emphasizes research design in "real-world settings", seamlessly enables active learning scenarios, develops transferable skills of group work, leadership, negotiation and time management, deepens experience with place, challenges cultural awareness and perceptions of environmental issues, the place of fieldwork in the curriculum is constantly under challenge. The scepticism of budget holders can be balanced by the possibility of overseas fieldwork helping the institution to meet mobility targets. The concerns that leaving campus is frivolous and unnecessary can be unpicked by the evidence of the power of fieldwork as a recruitment tool. The accusation of the fieldtrip being superfluous is counteracted by its ability to integrate the curriculum, help students make connections, while simultaneously delivering many bullet points on the employability and professional skills agenda. The headaches of safety and liability issues are dissipated by the invigoration that being in the field brings to staff and students alike.

The symposium on international fieldwork visits many different countries but, like many papers in the journal, the authors are based primarily within the Anglo-American axis. Over the past decade, the journal has made concerted efforts to encourage internationalization and diversify the range of national and institutional settings in which learning and teaching issues for geography in Higher Education are discussed. A short mid-life report card can demonstrate

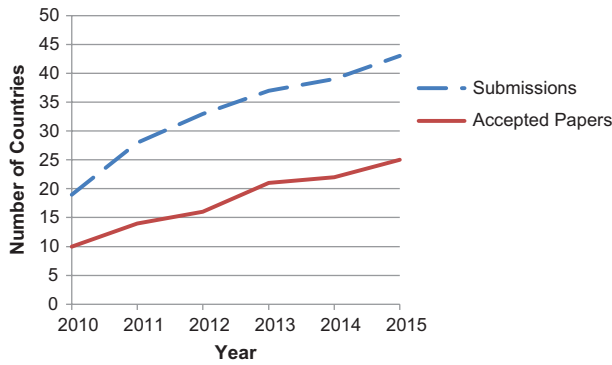


Figure 1. Cumulative number of different countries (defined by institutional base of corresponding author) represented by submissions and accepted papers from 1 January 2010 to 1 December 2015.

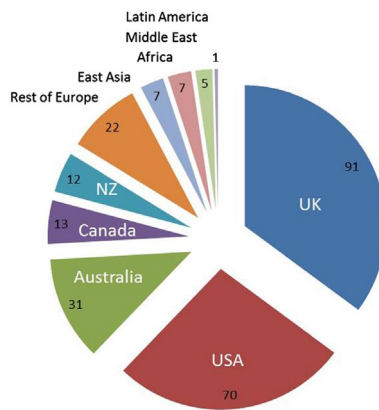


Figure 2. Distribution of accepted papers since 1 January 2010 by country/region. (Note that country is defined by the institutional base of the corresponding author and does not consider papers with authors from multiple countries).

that this ambition remains a work in progress. The data are derived from the online manuscript management system and refers to the period since 1 January 2010. Country of origin refers to the institutional base of the corresponding author and does not take into account situations where authors from multiple countries are collaborating. As the volume of electronic submissions increased, there has been a steady increase in the number of “new” countries submitting to the journal (new in this context referring to the period of the online submission system). There is a roughly parallel trend in the number of countries with accepted papers, which has now reached 26 (Figure 1). This trend is lagged because of the time from initial submission to eventual acceptance but also indicates that some of the submitting countries are not yet represented in print. The UK and the USA dominate the number of papers accepted since 2010, followed by Australia, Canada and New Zealand (Figure 2). This Anglo-American-Australasian axis supplied 75% of the submissions and accounted for 85% of the accepted papers. This perhaps reflects the strong standing of the discipline in these countries and the established tradition of pedagogic research which this journal has sought to spotlight. Nevertheless, work is needed to further encourage similar research activity from other countries.

The activities of the International Network of Learning and Teaching in Geography (INLT) have done a great deal to encourage cross-border interaction between those interested in

pedagogic research and reflection, leading to a series of symposia which have been published in this journal during the last 15 years. The latest INLT writing workshop event took place in Surrey, UK in August 2014 following the RGS-IBG Conference and papers initiated during that weekend are at various stages in the journey from review to production. In order to increase the currency of the papers, a decision has been made to publish papers from the latest INLT collection as and when they are ready, rather than waiting for final decisions on all papers. Like many other journals have noted, it is possible to now repackaging the papers as a virtual special issue with an appropriate synopsis from the guest editors when the process is completed. However, we will still continue to collate some symposia together in the print issue. A symposium on Teaching Energy Geographies features in this issue and looking ahead, there will be a collection on Graduate Attributes plus many others in the pipeline. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the teams that have worked hard to develop symposium ideas and then persevered to encourage authors to submit and subsequently revise papers. In many cases, ideas for a symposium begin with a session at an international geography conference but often develop and grow as other submissions are attracted. The editors would be pleased to discuss ideas for future symposia with interested parties and to offer advice on the process.

Since 2001, the journal has organized a biennial prize for promoting excellence in teaching and learning. The award acknowledges scholars who have contributed to this important research area. Nominations are not confined to the pages of this journal and indeed several past winners have been published elsewhere in both the discipline of geography and in educational research. Following a call for nominations, the following four papers were considered by members of the Editorial Advisory Panel, a group of eminent international scholars. The panel are asked to comment on appropriate research methodologies, originality and overall contribution to research in teaching and learning geography in higher education. For the period between 1 January 2012 and December 31 2013 the following four papers were shortlisted:

- Alderman, D.H., Kingsbury, P. and Dwyer, O. 2013. Examining the Montgomery Bus Boycott: Toward an empathetic pedagogy of the civil rights movement. *Professional Geographer* 65(1):171–186.
- Anderson, J. 2013. Evaluating student-generated film as a learning tool for qualitative methods: Geographical drifts and the city. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 37(1): 136–146.
- Fouberg, E.H. 2013. The world is no longer flat to me: Student perceptions of threshold concepts in world regional geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 37(1):65–75.
- Healey, R. 2012. The power of debate: Reflections on the potential of debates for engaging students in critical thinking about controversial geographical topics. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 36(2): 239–257.

After lengthy deliberation, the JGHE Award for Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning has been awarded to Erin Fouberg for the paper “The world is no longer flat to me: student perceptions of threshold concepts in world regional geography”. Our distinguished Editorial Advisory Board found the paper outstanding for its emphasis on learning, not just teaching. The paper presents the literature on threshold concepts clearly and represents student thinking and learning processes well. As one panel member commented, “it offered something different from what many other papers typically offer. When others often present strategies to use in the classroom, this paper invites us to reflect on how students learn, and in that sense, is much more fundamental.” In keeping with tradition, the winner has been invited to respond and Erin Fouberg’s reflective piece follows in this issue (Fouberg, 2016). On behalf of the Editorial Board, I congratulate all the nominees. I also give hearty thanks to Sarah Bednarz who oversees the whole process on behalf of the Editorial Board

As spring follows winter so the conclusion and announcement of the prize winner signals the call for nominations for the next award period. Nominated papers must have been published between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2015. Papers published online during this timeframe ahead of hard copy publication (e.g. in early view systems) will also be accepted.

- Papers must have been peer-reviewed prior to publication.
- Papers from any appropriate journal can be nominated, subject to the peer review requirement listed above.
- The subject matter should focus on geography or closely allied subjects.
- Papers should focus on teaching and learning contexts in higher education.
- Both papers reporting the results of original research and papers reviewing a body of existing material to gain new insight or suggesting improved practice or policy are encouraged.
- Self-nomination is not permitted.

As noted earlier, the journal has been especially keen to promote internationalization in recent years and has actively sought to encourage submissions and peer reviewers from outside the Anglo-American-Australasian axis. We, therefore, welcome nominations from outside the traditional core. Papers which were originally published in languages other than English can be nominated, but a translation of the paper will be required. The adjudicating panels will be guided by similar considerations to the criteria on which submissions to the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* are assessed. The nominated paper should, therefore, demonstrate the following:

- Relevance to enhancing student learning with evidence from appropriate student evaluation (“the student voice”).
- Relevance to innovation and enhancing teaching excellence in geography in higher education.
- Relevance to an international audience of geography educators.
- Ability to convey ideas clearly without abundant jargon.
- Sensitivity to equal opportunities.

Nominations should be submitted to Professor Sarah Bednarz, Department of Geography, Texas A&M University. Email: s-bednarz@tamu.edu. The deadline for nominations is 30 June 2016.

The *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* is a peer reviewed journal and its production requires the input of many academics willing to read and comment on manuscripts. At one stage, the journal had internal editorial board panels scrutinizing each submission as well as external reviewers. This process has been streamlined to some extent, but typically, papers will receive three reviews including one editorial board member and two external reviewers. It seems to be increasingly difficult to find eager reviewers but the handling editors have performed well to keep the vast majority of submissions on track in the review process. There are some occasional hiccups that delay the review process for which we apologize but it is important to note that the process could not be maintained without the selfless work of external referees. The names of referees during the last two years are listed below.

Referees (2014 and 2015)

James Aber, Emporia State University, USA
Peter Adey, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
Casey Allen, University of Colorado, Denver, USA
Jon Anderson, Cardiff University, UK
Tom Argles, Open University, UK

Colin Arrowsmith, RMIT, Australia
Gisele Arruda, Oxford Brookes University, UK
Cecile Badenhorst, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada
Thomas Baerwald, National Science Fund, USA
Annie Bartos, University of Auckland, New Zealand
Pablo Bose, University of Vermont, USA
Forest Bowlick, Texas A&M University, USA
Christopher Boyko, Lancaster University, UK
Alan Boyle, University of Liverpool, USA
Anthony Brazel, Arizona State University
Gregory Breetzke, University of South Africa, South Africa
Nina Brendel, University of Muenster, Germany
Angela Brew, Macquarie University, Australia
Pete Bunting, Aberystwyth University, UK
Monika Buscher, Lancaster University, UK
Herculano Cachinho, University of Lisbon, Portugal
Jennifer Carter, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia
Simon Catling, Oxford Brookes University, UK
Eugene Ch'ng, University of Nottingham Ningbo China
Brian Chalkley, University of Plymouth, UK
Chang Chew Hung, National Institute of Education, Singapore
Kalyani Chatterjea, National Institute of Education, Singapore
Gordon Clark, Lancaster University, UK
Sharon Cobb, University of North Florida, USA
Neil Conner, University of Tennessee Knoxville, USA
Kristen Conway-Gomez, Cal Poly Pomona, USA
Michael Corbett, University of Tasmania, Australia
Mairead de Roiste, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
Michael DeMers, University of New Mexico, USA
Ali Demirci, Fatih Üniversitesi, Turkey
David DiBiase, ESRI, USA
Klaus Dodds, Royal Holloway University of London, UK
James Doerner, University of Northern Colorado, USA
Karl Donert, Liverpool Hope University, UK
Ronald Dorn, Arizona State University, USA
Trevor Dummer, IWK Health Care, Canada
Claire Dwyer, University College London, UK
Owen Dwyer, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, USA
Gary Elbow, Texas Tech University, USA
Stuart Elden, Warwick University, UK
Kim England, University of Washington, USA
Martin Evans, University of Chester, UK
Clifton Evers, University of Nottingham Ningbo China
Feeney, Alison Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, USA
Jaume Feliu, University of Girona, Spain
Dirk Felzmann, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany
Damien Field, University of Sydney, Australia
Erin Fouberg, Northern State University, USA
Doug Gamble, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, USA
Bradley Garrett, University of Southampton, UK

Phil Gersmehl, University of Minnesota, USA
Franklin Ginn, University of Edinburgh, UK
Michael Glass, University of Pittsburg, USA
Daniel Goldberg, Texas A&M University, USA
Paul Goldschagg, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
Aubrey Golightly, North-West University, South Africa
Ian Green, University of Adelaide, Australia
Amy Griffin, Australian Defence Force Academy, Australia
Godfrey Hampwaye, University of Zambia, Zambia
Anne Hardy, University of Tasmania, Australia
John Harrington, Kansas State University
Tim Harris, Staffordshire University, UK
Timothy Hawthorne, Georgia State University, USA
Iain Hay, Flinders University, Australia
James Hayes-Bohanan, Bridgewater State University, USA
Martin Hess, Manchester University, UK
Greg Hill, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia
Timm Hoffman, University of Cape Town, South Africa
Verónica Hollman, National University of Central Buenos Aires, Argentina
Jung Eun Hong, University of West Georgia, USA
Max Hope, University of Ulster, UK
Chris Houser, Texas A&M University, USA
Alice Hovorka, University of Guelph, Canada
Tom Huber, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, USA
Chuck Huff, St Olaf College, USA
Annie Hughes, Kingston University, UK
Sungsoon Hwang, DePaul University, USA
Joshua Inwood, University of Tennessee Knoxville, USA
Michael Jarvinen, Emmanuel College, USA
Claire Jarvis, University of Leicester, UK
Alan Jenkins, Oxford Brookes University, UK
Martin Jenkins, Coventry University, UK
Wendy Jepson, Texas A&M University, USA
Bob Jickling, Lakehead University, Canada
Jennifer Johns, University of Liverpool, UK
Karen Joyce, Charles Darwin University, Australia
Mizuki Kawabata, University of Tokyo, Japan
James Keese, California Polytechnic State University
Justine Kemp, Griffith University, Australia
Joseph Kerski, ESRI, USA
Julie Kesby, Australian Defence Force Academy, Australia
Minsung Kim, Seoul National University, Korea
Mary Kimsey, James Madison University, USA
Brian King, Pennsylvania State University, USA
Andrew Klein, Texas A&M University, USA
Phil Klein, University of Northern Colorado, USA
Janelle Knox-Hayes, Georgia Tech, USA
Nilüfer Koşker, Kırıkkale University, Turkey
David Lambert, Institute of Education, UK
Lisa Law, James Cook University, Australia

Jeff Lee, Texas Tech University, USA
Kelly Lemmons, Tarleton State University, USA
Robert Lemon, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Joseph Leydon, University of Toronto, Canada
Kenneth Lim, National Institute of Education, Singapore
Melissa Low, National University of Singapore
Antoni Luna, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain
Andres Luque-Ayala, Durham University, UK
Kenneth Lynch, University of Gloucestershire, UK
Sarah Mager, University of Otago, New Zealand
Susan Mains, University of Dundee, UK
Godfrey Marais, University of the Free State, South Africa
Alan Marvell, University of Gloucestershire, UK
Alaric Maude, Flinders University, Australia
Derek McDougall, University of Worcester, UK
Mark McGuinness, Bath Spa University, UK
Joshua McKeown, State University of New York at Oswego, USA
Chris McMorran, National University of Singapore
Tony Mellor, Northumbria University, UK
Christiane Meyer, Leibniz Univesrität Hannover, Germany
Gill Miller, University of Chester, UK
Serval Miller, University of Chester, UK
Amy Mills, University of South Carolina, USA
Peggy Minnis, Pace University, USA
Niamh Moore-Cherry, University College Dublin, Ireland
Thomas Mueller, California University of Pennsylvania, USA
Jo-Beth Mullens, Keene State College, USA
Catherine Muller, University of Birmingham, UK
Alexander Murphy, University of Oregon, USA
Harvey Neo, National University of Singapore
Curt Nielsen, University of Northern Iowa, USA
Melissa Nursey-Bray, University of Adelaide, Australia
Jan Nyssen, Ghent University, Belgium
Jennifer O'Brien, Manchester University, UK
Ann Oberhauser, West Virginia University, USA
Gabriele Obermaier, Universität Bayreuth, Germany
Joseph Palis, North Carolina State University, USA
Marcela Palomino-Schalscha, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
Richard Perkins, London School of Economics, UK
Emma Pharo, University of Tasmania, Australia
Jeff Popke, East Carolina University, USA
Waverly Ray, San Diego Community College District, USA
Peter Rees, University of Delaware, USA
Kathy Reilly, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland
Sonja Rewhorn, University of Chester, UK
Chris Ribchester, University of Chester, UK
Murray Rice, University of North Texas, USA
Zoe Robinson, Keele University, UK
Stephen Royle, Queens University of Belfast, UK
Rickie Sanders, Temple University, USA

Angharad Saunders, University of South Wales, UK
John Savery, University of Akron, USA
Marybeth Schlemper, University of Toledo, USA
Rich Schultz, Elmhurst College, USA
Uwe Schulze, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany
Kerry Shepherd, University of Otago, New Zealand
David Simm, Bath Spa University, UK
Jan Smith, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania
Mike Smith, Kingston University, UK
Janet Speake, Liverpool Hope University, UK
Sanjeev Srivastava, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia
Ian Stimpson, Keele University, UK
Alison Stokes, Plymouth University, UK
Glenn Strachan, University of Gloucestershire, UK
John Strait, Sam Houston State University, USA
Josef Strobl, Universität Salzburg, Austria
Michael Sublett, Illinois State University, USA
Kristin Sziarto, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
Francisco Tapiador, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Spain
Simon Tate, Newcastle University, UK
Mary Thornbush, University of Birmingham, UK
Jonathan Tomkin, University of Illinois, USA
Ebru Ustundag, Brock University, Canada
Joaquin Villanueva, Gustavus Adolphus College, USA
Brandon Vogt, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, USA
Peter Vujakovic, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK
Jacqueline Waite, National Council for Geographic Education, USA
Kelly Wakefield, University of Southampton, UK
Richard Waller, Keele University, UK
Barney Warf, University of Kansas, USA
Katharine Welsh, University of Chester, UK
W. Brian Whalley, University of Sheffield, UK
Keith Wilkinson, University of Winchester, UK
Di Wilmot, Rhodes University, South Africa
Jennie Winter, Plymouth University, UK
Ewan Woodley, University of Exeter, UK
Paul Wright, Southampton Solent University, UK
Dirk Wundram, University of Bonn, Germany

References

- Fouberg, E. H. (2016). Reflecting on threshold concepts in world regional geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 40(1).
- Glass, M. R. (2015). International geography field courses: Practices and challenges. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 39(4), 485–490.
- Pitkin, W. B. (1932). *Life begins at forty*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

David Higgitt
Faculty of Science and Engineering, School of Geographical Sciences,
University of Nottingham Ningbo China, Ningbo, China