

Editorial

You spoke, we listened. We carried out an online survey of ALT Journal readers from April–July, receiving responses from 77 individuals across all Faculties, including both academic and support staff and management.

Fortunately, we found that the quality of the Journal was highly rated, with 33% regarding it as ‘excellent’ and 47% ‘good’. Most of you had found the Journal useful professionally, and almost half of respondents had tried out a new teaching or assessment method as a result of something they had read in the Journal. We were pleased to note that just over half of respondents had already contributed to the Journal and the majority stated that they would like to submit an article: we hope that intention will translate into offers of interesting papers for forthcoming issues.

Although the majority of you (69%) preferred receiving a printed copy of the Journal, some of you asked for a greener and more cost-effective electronic version, as well as a central annotated repository and searchable database, with email alerts to new articles – both options that we have already been thinking about and will be exploring in 2011.

Thanks to all who responded for a wealth of suggestions for themes and content for future issues, which we will be following up next year. A full report on the survey results is on the ALT website at www.leedsmet.ac.uk/publications

One of the suggestions for improvement was for a wider pool of contributors. In this issue there are papers from three external authors, including one from **Víctor López-Pastor** and colleagues at the University of Valladolid, Spain, which arose from a collaboration with **Graham Webb**, another contributor to this issue; and one from **Gemma Hall**, a teacher at our partner, Skipton Girls’ High School. Gemma is one of several authors addressing an important theme in this issue: how social networking tools and new technologies can be harnessed to increase student engagement.

Jane Shelton and Graham Webb describe the innovative use of voice discussion boards to enable language students in four countries to experience authentic colloquial language before embarking on their study abroad period. Similarly, the potential of a social network to smooth the transition to university for prospective Nursing students, and subsequently to offer ongoing professional and academic support, is examined by **Rob Shaw and Janine Lee**, while **Jon Curwin** assesses the use of digital storytelling to engage Business students with learning and assessment.

One of the most important priorities in teaching this year has been peer observation, and a group of **Teacher Fellows** have drawn on their experiences to show how tackling the more difficult aspects of peer observation of teaching can either be a trap for the unwary or a valuable key to unlock reflective practice.

The challenges of groupwork and how to assess it fairly are considered by several authors.

Sam Zulu, Melanie Smith and Ian Douglas reflect on the use of peer assessment in a student group project, concluding that students are capable of fairly assessing each other’s contribution to groupwork. **Víctor López-Pastor** and colleagues evaluate their experience of combining project-oriented learning and formative assessment to improve their students’ development of professional competences.

Information literacy is explored by **Catherine Parkin and Liz Lanfear**, who write on an information literacy clinic delivered by librarians using a ‘prescription pad’ technique, and by **Jennifer Wilson**, whose paper on ‘Information Smoothies’ reports on a collaborative project between Library and lecturing staff to embed information literacy skills in module workbooks.

In the first of a pair of linked articles, **Nick Sutcliffe** reviews the evolution of the research degree in the UK; his second paper (to follow in a future issue) will consider the implications of these developments for supervisors.

Finally, we have a couple of reflections:

Karli Wilkinson writes on her experience of managing ‘Learn with Leeds Met’, a project to deliver educational taster sessions to adults in rugby stadia. And you probably won’t have read about connections between Polynesian tattooing and reflective practice elsewhere.

We’ll be making some changes to the Journal in 2011 in response to your comments in the survey. The next issue, to be published in the autumn, will focus on Employability, guest edited by Laura Dean. Meanwhile, if you have any further suggestions or would like to discuss an idea for a paper, I should be delighted to hear from you.

Andrea L. T. Rayner
Editor-in-Chief
Publications Manager
Assessment, Learning and Teaching
A.L.Rayner@leedsmet.ac.uk