

# Empowering Academic Reading: strategies for student engagement in the digital age

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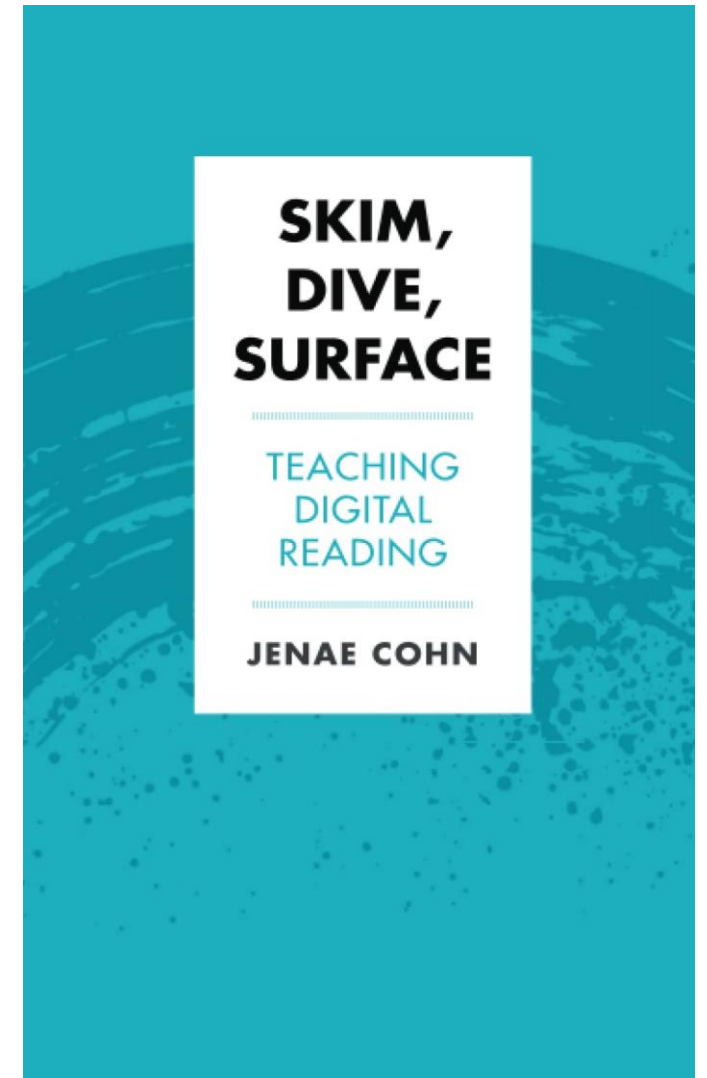


# Reading in the digital age

“We cannot assume that print-based literacy always gives us the best tools with which to read; in many ways, what digital reading allows us to do is rethink, reconsider, and expand upon the reading practices that we may have taken for granted.”

Cohn, J. (2021) *Skim, dive, surface: Teaching digital reading*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/herts/detail.action?docID=6551350>



# 5 Cs Framework

to promote deep  
reading practices



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1. Curation

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2. Connection

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3. Creativity

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4. Contextualisation

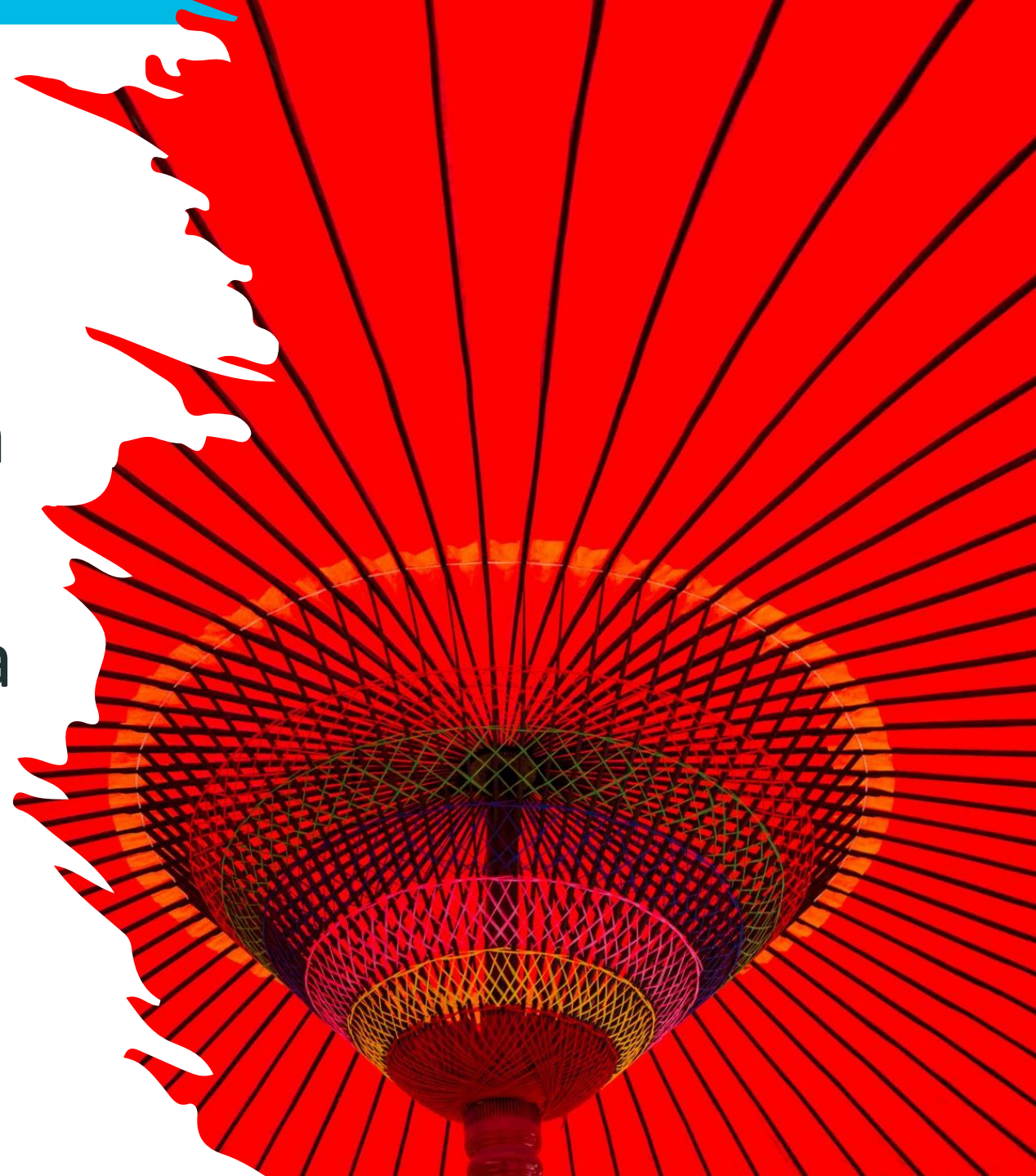
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5. Contemplation

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# Creativity

“Creativity refers to a reader’s ability to apply an idea from a reading and create something new as a result.” p.132



# Introducing the activity to students: annotation activity

Frame the activity with discussion of what social annotation is, why it may be useful, their previous experience, and establish respectful etiquette.

Show an example – marginalia in a book, annotated pdf

Ask students to complete a certain number of notes within the shared annotation platform

Questions to guide and prompt their annotations may include:

- Which parts of the reading were the most interesting to you? Write an annotation based on the parts that stood out the most.
- Which section of the reading did you have a question about or not understand? Note the section either with a pointed question or simply a statement (e.g., “I’m not sure what this section means exactly.”)
- Which part of the reading surprised you? Where did you learn something new? Why did it surprise you?
- Which part of the reading connected with something you learned in class or earlier in the term?
- How did that section reinforce or advance what you had learned in class?

View all annotations to notice patterns, differences in understanding or interest etc.

# Example of social annotation: Talis Elevate

## Parliamentary Report on Environmental Impact of Microplastics

House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee. Fourth Report of Session 2016-17



means their influence in that process will be significantly reduced. Nonetheless, we recommend that the Government bring forward its own legislative ban, and align it as closely as possible with international measures.

Despite the commitment by a section of the cosmetics industry to phase out microbeads we found a reluctance to talk publicly about the issue from large cosmetics manufacturers, and we found a lack of consistency in their approach. Therefore, we call on the Government to ban microbeads in the cosmetics industry, we believe this will level the playing field, and urge the Government to move swiftly towards implementation.

Microbeads are part of the wider issue of microplastic pollution. The small size of microplastics means that they can be ingested by marine life and have the potential to transfer chemicals to and from the marine environment. There is evidence of ecological damage resulting from this. If someone eats six oysters, it is likely they will have eaten 50 particles of microplastics. This is still a relatively new research area and subject to uncertainties. Relatively little research has been done so far either on potential impacts to human health or the marine economy. We recommend that the Government draw up a research strategy to assessing and mitigating microplastic pollution for the next round of research funding. Human health impacts should be a priority subject for research, along with examining ways to reduce microplastic pollution from consumer goods, such as synthetic fibres and tyres, and industrial processes, such as sandblasting.

### Class comments

### Personal notes

↑ 3 COMMENTS

- P Paul White**  
New 3 days ago  
I think this is so relevant. Before i began my BSc, i was quite unaware of the impact that many of the products i used has on the environment. I would always opt for companies that were against animal...  
[Show more](#)
- M Merle Anderson**  
New 3 days ago  
This is the important part, as it is only volutary at the time this was written, the cosmetics companies are not guaranteed to actually follow through, legislation banning their use is the only way to...  
[Show more](#)
- A Ana Corral**  
New 3 days ago  
I agree. I truly believe that policies should be our aim. Even though individual consumer behaviour counts, policies just work on a way bigger scale and also, it focuses the attention on the big pictu...  
[Show more](#)
- A Ana Corral**  
New 3 days ago  
Not everyone cares about biodiversity, but we do tend to care about our own health. I believe that besides exposing the consequences for biodiversity, linking the problem to human health gives a good ...  
[Show more](#)

# Case study – Creativity (Social Annotation activity)

## What did I do?

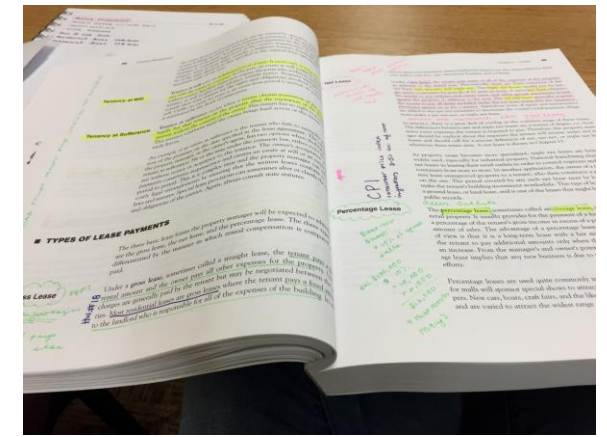
- Embedded **Talis Elevate for specific reading** (and other module content including recorded lecture) on L6 criminology module (War Crimes)
- Access to an [‘on-boarding’ videos](#) and created a practice activity for students to learn how to use the tool effectively
- Added a question or comment within reading for students to respond to
- Encouraged students to make their own notes within the tool

## What was the impact?

Works well as synchronous or asynchronous activity to be fully inclusive and give all students opportunity to engage, provokes curiosity.

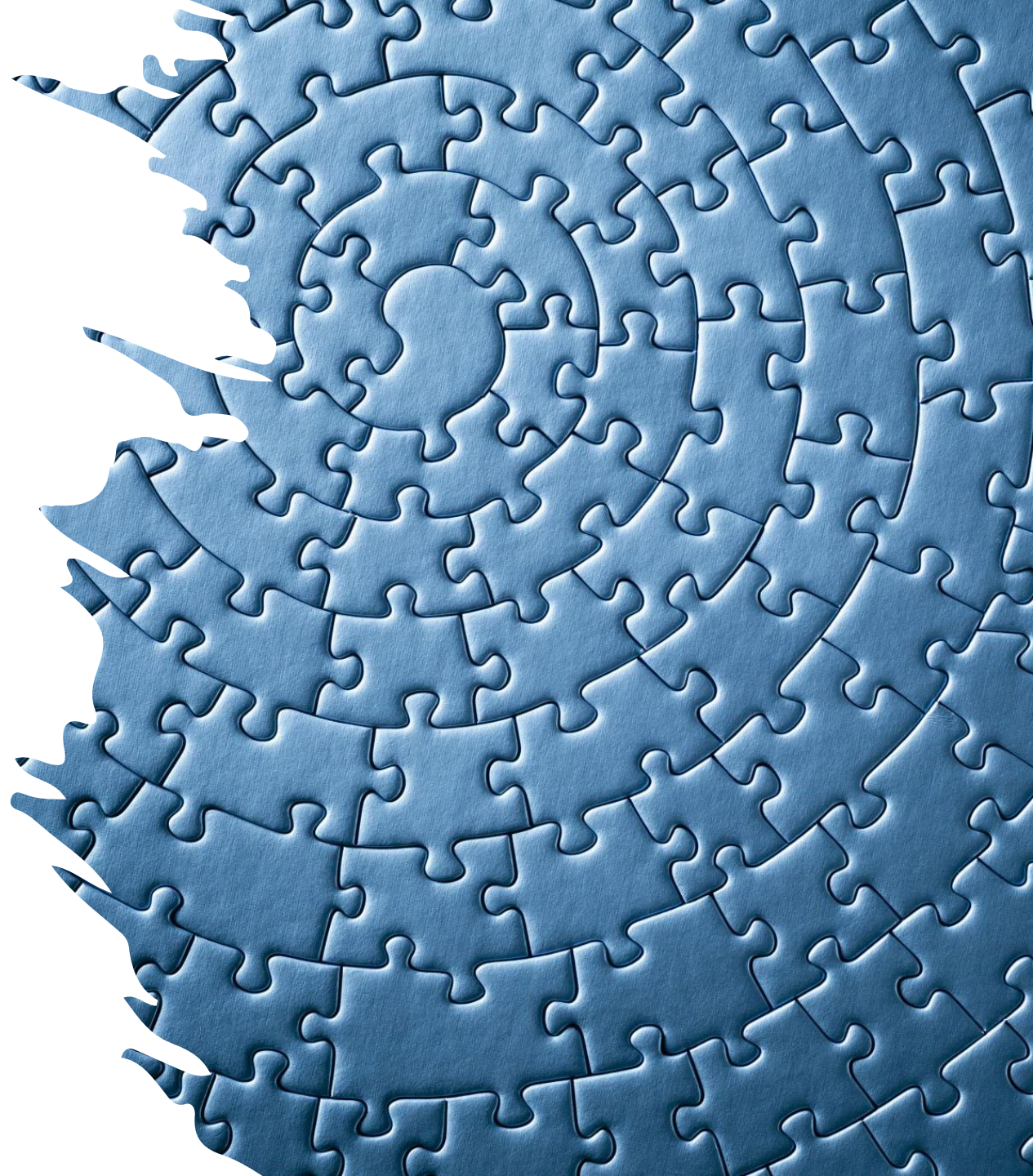
Students gain a sense of collaboration and creating a discussion, in curating and collecting ideas.

Students can share their own life/work experiences in context of the reading – diverse voice.



# Contemplation

“Contemplation refers both to readers’ abilities to allocate attentional resources appropriately and to articulate a clear vision for why they are reading in the first place.” p.134





# Introducing the activity to students: 3-2-1

Revisit your reading for week/ unit...

Identify in your reading:

- 3 interesting moments – submit these quotes into a document/ discussion board and record why these were interesting to you
- 2 confusing moments – what was challenging in this part of the text? What confused you?
- 1 open question – imagine you can ask the author to expand on a relevant point. What would you ask? What do you want to know more about?

Share your question with the person next to you / on a Padlet / discussion board

# Case study – Contemplation using 3-2-1 activity

**3 interesting moments**

**Becky's interesting moments from the webinar**

1. People don't treat the concepts of failure and success in the same way. Success is not an absolute term.
2. Success and failure on a spectrum and always co-exist.
3. Everybody wants someone else to be the first to acknowledge failure. It is not an easy thing to do. It takes trust and humility.

The same issues around failure can exist in healthcare. But in healthcare, there are systems in place to learn from failures. Healthcare professionals have a moral duty. We also have a moral duty as librarians if we wish to have a fairer society.

**Jane's interesting moment from the article**

1. Introducing new services as a pilot or trial is a less risky way of being innovative. If they are not successful (and fail) they can be withdrawn more easily. I have often viewed a 'pilot' as non-commitment from the organisation.
2. Honesty box even in 'safe' space didn't receive acknowledgement of failures.
3. Absence of narrative of failure provides incomplete narrative of the success. Usually after our skills sessions we know what might have failed and adapt sessions for next time, but how often do we critically reflect and review our wider collaborative work?

**Haylee's interesting moments from the article**

1. People don't acknowledge they see their own success.
2. Highlighting success and failure on a spectrum reflecting on the min mark and ending.

**Wui's interesting moments from the webinar**

1. Failure/success is tied in with one's identity and narrative of one self. People need this narrative to justify their existence on different levels.
2. Failure is a term that is used...

**2 confusing moments**

**Becky's moments**

I acknowledge my failure to be confused. I did not feel confused during the webinar or the reading. Perhaps I failed to choose a challenging enough reading for the webinar club? I instead present two moments of contemplation.

1. Our society seems unforgiving of mistakes (blame/ cancel culture). Social media makes the world feel very binary. I'm thinking about IFLA and how uncomfortable I felt to voice an opinion about it being hosted in Dubai.
2. I learn best when I do make mistakes or learn from others' mistakes. I think Jane and I need to acknowledge at BEST the lack of contact from staff about these activities and therefore not knowing even if they have even tried to implement them. Our current approach to obtain feedback is failing.

**Jane's moments**

Following Becky in considering contemplative moments rather than confusing ones:

**Haylee's confusing moments**

1. When success is tied to funding and payment, people...

**Louise's moments**

1. Why is it that some projects are seen more valuable than others? Within UH it is hard to...

**1 open question**

**Becky's question**

What practical actions can library leaders take to create a climate for failure to be acknowledged? Or better still embraced?

**Jane's question**

At UH we often address 'failures' in terms of 'what could have worked better'. Would it be more effective to name them as failures, encouraging the more positive aspect of failing? To quote Thomas Edison "I have not failed 10,000 times - I've successfully found 10,000 ways that will not work" (Corrado, 2022)

**Haylee's question**

Following up on my confusing moment #2, if things can shift depending on the perspective, how can we account for that? How can we possibly acknowledge every single perspective and identity?

**Louise's question**

Do we need to protect 'empty' time in our working week for reflection and planning? Or should it at least be encouraged?

I try to leave space for this, but it often gets eaten into by last minute meetings, appointments or teaching sessions. Is it ok to push back? It could be seen as a failure to do so, I'm not providing a service or expertise at a point of need. But it could also be a success in that in order to provide valuable information - I need that time to breathe, to think and reflect on my own practices and learn about newer more relevant ways of doing things. Bringing it back to my first comment under 'interesting moments', in order for libraries to move on we must remain relevant - this requires time.

# Challenges

- Positive staff engagement during sessions, reflected in feedback forms:
  - “This was a very useful session, particularly as I was able to discuss some of the strategies openly and in a convivial, safe space. I will be recommending this session to colleagues.”
  - “It was brilliant and should really help people develop their approach to designing not just their reading lists, but also the overall curriculum.”
- Difficulty in obtaining real-world case studies
- Misalignment of terminology and selected readings

# Key takeaway

We can strengthen student engagement with academic reading through purposeful learning strategies.



# References for further reading

Cohn, J. (2021) *Skim, dive, surface: Teaching digital reading*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/herts/detail.action?docID=6551350>

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Miller, K. & Merdian, H. (2020) "It's not a waste of time!" Academics' views on the role and function of academic reading: A thematic analysis', *Journal of university teaching & learning practice*, 17(2), pp. 20–35. <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.17.2.3>