

Effective Contributor Communication and Editorial Process Efficacy: Editorial, Volume 7, Part 1

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By publishing we mean simply the communication and broad dissemination of knowledge, a function that has become both more complex and more important with the introduction and rapid evolution of digital and networking technologies. There is a seeming limitless range of opportunities for a faculty member to distribute [their] work, from setting up a web page or blog, to posting an article to a working paper website or institutional repository, to including it in a peer reviewed journal or book. (Brown et al, 2007)

Introduction

Welcome to the portentous Thirteenth edition of *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, as we move towards our seventh year of continuous publication. This issue we are delighted once more to bring you a selection of new thinking and insights, drawn from emerging scholars from across the disciplinary spectrum.

Over recent months, I've had the pleasure of talking about *Exchanges* and the work we do, in relation to scholarly communication and researcher development, at various locations in the UK and abroad (**Johnson, 2019a & b**). Speaking with audiences of researchers, students and educators, I've been acutely reminded of how communication in many forms lies at the heart of the academic experience. We are as scholars engaged within an environment where formal and informal modes and modalities of communication, along with our abilities to dynamically adapt to changing priorities, continue to be crucial career skills (**Hope, 2013; Nicholas, 2018**). Notably, readers will discover that one of our articles this issue helpfully resonates with aspects of academic public communication. Interestingly many other realms of work, such as law, librarianship, public relations and politics may lay claims to being 'the' communicating profession; although, I'd support the axiom that our realm's veracity is greater than that suffusing much of the Global North's public sphere discourse.

Given my professional life and interests have long centred around regular performative acts of communication, I suppose it's unsurprising that these recent conversations have highlighted to me the variety, complexity and nuance of the communication channels deployed and employed by my editorial team to deliver on the promise of an interdisciplinary journal 'by and for early career researchers' (Johnson, 2019b). During their induction, and as part of our ongoing team discourse, all of our editors are reminded of the crucial central communication role each plays. Updating authors on editorial progress, negotiating with reviewers, while simultaneously encouraging prospective contributors are all part of the effective communicative mix (Morris et al., 2013).

The editorial counterpoint to this is 'when communication goes bad'. Over the past couple of years I've discovered to my mild horror that one of the single most challenging and frustrating elements of editing a journal like *Exchanges*, are when individuals seemingly drop off the planet and cease responding to emails. Admittedly, sometimes this can be the result of technical error. This can be a consequence of many peoples' and institutions' spam filters being a little 'extra' vigilant: meaning our messages requesting authorial revisions or requests for review updates can sometimes be slotted away in the same folder with those concerning special pills and unbelievable financial opportunities. My message to any contributors to *Exchanges*, or any other journal, is check your spam folder frequently, as you never know when some innocent, well-meaning communication may have become ensnared by the digital dragnet.

However, much as I might wish it though, the majority of the editorial communication problems are human mediated. Some are inadvertent and a particular artefact of running a journal 'for and by early career researchers'. Newly minted academics and post-graduate researchers alike are a highly motile species, and with peer review processes often progressing over a period of months there's a notable risk of their relocation to new employers, without updating their contact details. This can result in my team fruitlessly messaging moribund addresses, producing a morass of unfinished close to publication manuscripts, which without author input cannot be progressed any further. Over the past year there have been a few occasions where we've had to take the regrettable decision to decline perfectly good manuscripts because the author has ceased engaging with us for over six months. My further advice therefore to all contributors is make sure you keep your email address updated on your *Exchanges* profile. It only takes a moment and can make all the difference in progressing our publication efforts in a timely manner.

Conversely to technical errors or individual omissions, there are those journal contributors who *do* stop responding to emails, knowingly. If you're engaged with the scholarly publishing discourse you'll be aware there are many, not especially new, gripes about peer review being the biggest hobble to effective and speedy research communication (e.g. **Gowers, 2017; Hunter, 2012; Leslie, 2005**). Not all of these concerns centre on delays, and it must be acknowledged that a quality review of a manuscript is not a five minute task, especially alongside a myriad of competing priorities. Certainly, we remain deeply grateful to every reviewer who does contribute their time to conduct one.

Nevertheless, authors and reviewers can choose to cease responding to our communications. Regrettably, some potential reviewers do not even reply to my editors' initial enquires about taking on a review. Even a brief 'no thanks' would be preferable to radio silence. Thankfully though it is only a minority of reviewers who are unable to deliver on time. Yet, all of this adds to delays in a manuscript's journey towards becoming an article. Which partly explains why over the coming months we'll be turning on a new feature for *Exchanges* called auto-reviewer-reminders. This will gently but effectively automatically remind our reviewers about their agreed deadline. Or, at least, prompt them to notify us where they're no longer able to complete a particular review, and allow us to seek an alternative scholar.

Naturally, effective academic communication is also reified within the pages of the research article itself, and reading around this subject is very much in the foreground of my current professional interests. However, that is a digression for another day. Let us turn instead to consider the articles which are appearing in this volume's pages.

Articles

This issue myself and the Editorial Board are delighted to bring you a number of original; research papers, and two of our very popular critical reflection and interview pieces. To open our issue, Ian Tan delves fascinatingly into James Joyce's *Ulysses* to explore the character Stephen's theories concerning Shakespeare's life and his work. By way of contrast, Tan argues that Girard's reading of Shakespeare in mimetic desire terms provides a far greater revelatory framework to comprehend both Joyce and Shakespeare's characters' motivations; especially as it relates to sexual desire ([1](#)).

Next, Victor Eze and Stellamaris Ejiofor present an empirical piece based within the Nigerian university system, examining issues around the acquisition of Chinese language by non-native speakers. Centred around the use of reading comprehension, the paper explores challenges for language learners in terms of adequate provision of support, staff and facilities. It also highlights the barrier learners' stress levels can provide to successfully learning this complex but increasingly globally important language (15).

Our next two articles originated from papers presented at the International Conference on Mechatronics Technology (ICMT, 2017). Firstly, Nguyen Huu Tho and colleagues take a detailed look at flexible manufacturing systems and the role biogeography-based optimisation can play in enhancing their processes. The paper also provides a detailed insight into the origins and principles of biogeography within the ecological field. Tho and colleagues progress this exploration by examining how this concept then came to be applied within engineering as a 'nature inspired algorithm', and moreover how it has been employed within their research (37).

Then, Mario Pisaturo and Adolfo Senatore take a look into electric motors and dry clutch control for mild-hybrid electric vehicles. Utilising some detailed simulation work, they examine two scenarios of vehicle launch manoeuvres and consider what lessons can be learned about restricting clutch overheating incidents for such vehicles (65).

Critical Reflection & Conversations

This issue closes with a pair of reflective articles. Firstly, and topically for everyone preparing for any major assessment of their research contribution, Isabelle Heyerick reflects on the relationships between academic public engagement and concepts of impact. She considers how recent practical workshop experiences with Flemish Sign Language interpreters directly impacted not only on the participants, but on her own research practice too. Heyerick draws some positive conclusions toward the bidirectionality of benefits from public engagement for the academy as well as the wider populace (82).

Finally, we are delighted to present another in our series of highly popular interviews with leading researchers about their careers, influences and thoughts on the wider scholastic landscape. This time it's Rebekah Vince and Hanna Teichler who are in conversation with Professor Bryan Chetty, from the University of Reading. The trio's engagingly wide-ranging discussion touches on various aspects which include: Bryan's perceptions on the relationship between Jewish studies and colonial

studies, the role memory studies has played in his research, alongside key questions of interdisciplinarity in his work ([94](#))

Corrections & Amendments

It has been brought to our attention in the article by Reed (**et al, 2017**) that the paper was published with a misspelling of contributing author's Rosina Borrelli's surname. Our apologies for this error, which has now been amended within the article's metadata and abstract. References to this work should likewise cite all authors by their correct names. Our thanks to Dr Borrelli for notifying us of the error.

Falsehoods, Misinterpretations & Factual Divergence: Thematic Call for Papers:

Truth is female, since truth is beauty rather than handsomeness; this, Ridcully reflected as the council grumbled in, would certainly explain the saying that a lie could run around the world before Truth has got its, correction, her boots on, since she would have to choose which pair - the idea that any woman in a position to choose would have just one pair of boots being beyond rational belief. (Pratchett, Unseen Academicals)

We operate in an age where arguably verifying information or checking a fact is a swipe of a smartphone away almost anywhere on the planet. As scholars, we pride ourselves in the *veritas* embodied by our writing, research and learned discourse. Yet in the drive to achieve impact, recognition and career esteem we may find ourselves driven to publish 'positive' results, rather than less 'impactful' null outcomes. Are we as researchers as guilty as anyone else for skewing the potential conversations, counterpoints or controversial elements in our work, or even suppressing 'truth?' Given that political and public discourse seemingly besmirches the 'cult of expert', preferring to rely on hearsay, rumour and 'fake news', what are research literature and current thought telling us about the importance of avoiding fakery within our disciplines?

What kind of a world we'll have from now on, I don't know, I can't tell, but the world we know has been destroyed completely. Until now, every custom, every habit, every tiniest way of life has always taken a certain amount of privacy for granted, but that's all gone now. (Asimov, The Dead Past)

Yet, are there moments when a 'ripe falsehood' can yield beneficial outcomes? Does it benefit the public if certain truths are withheld by the academy's scholars, or at least, not fully disclosed? When does a distortion actually represent a necessary simplification and when does it become a

problematic divergence from the factual base? Does a half-truth always equate to whole lie, or can genuine societal or cultural benefits be gleaned from omissions, misrepresentations or even full-blown falsehoods? Must empirical research always represent a quest for an objective reality, or is misrepresentation of insights in some way advantageous or constructive? Moreover, this is before considering how emerging technologies, such as AI, may already be reshaping public discourse and even cultural memory.

Hence, for the issue of *Exchanges* **to be published Autumn 2020**, we are inviting authors to submit original, exciting, insightful peer-reviewed research-based articles or critical reflections addressing some aspect of ***falsehoods, misinterpretations and factual divergences***: however, your research, perceptions or epistemology might wish to conceptualise them.

Exchanges especially welcomes articles tackling this topic by multiple authors with contrasting positions or from disparate fields. The Editorial Board, and myself, are delighted to discuss article concepts or outline ideas further.

The submission deadline is **Friday 1st May 2020**

General Submissions: Open Call for Papers

Additionally, *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal* **welcomes submissions 365 days a year** on any subject, outside of the requirements of our themed calls. We therefore invite manuscript contributions from researchers or practitioners from any discipline, anywhere in the world, which fulfil our [standard article format](#) requirements. We are happy to receive traditional research or review articles, but we also especially welcome submissions of **interviews with key scholars** or **critical reflections** on important scholarly events, conferences or crucial new texts. More information on all of these article formats are available on our website. Likewise, Editorial Board members are also available to further explore article ideas.

As *Exchanges* has a mission to support the development and dissemination of research by early career and post-graduate researchers, we are particularly pleased to receive manuscripts from emerging scholars and first-time authors. Please note, as our readership has strong interests in work which encompasses or straddles disciplinary boundaries, prospective authors are strongly encouraged to consider how their manuscripts address a broader, interdisciplinary audience.

Fees, Access & Author Rights

Exchanges is a diamond open access (Fuchs & Sandoval, 2013), scholar-led journal, which means there are no author fees or reader subscription charges. Authors also retain copyright over their work but grant the journal first rights of publication as a submission requirement. Contact any member of the Editorial Board or see our online guidelines for more information about submitting to *Exchanges*.

exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/about/submissions

Forthcoming Issues

The next regular issue of *Exchanges* is scheduled for April 2020, however, I strongly suspect there will be an additional issue of the journal published before then. Regular readers of this title, and our social media presence, will be aware of the work underway on two special issues. We anticipate the first of these, inspired by the 2018 *Bites Here and There* conference (Warwick, 2018), to be published early in the new year. Work is already well advanced on preparing this volume, with the help of my dedicated and hard-working associate editors: Giulia Champion, Fiona Farnsworth, Sophie Shorland, Freya Verlander, Nora Castle, Amulya Gyawali and Lorenzo Serini. My particular thanks to Giulia for her invaluable logistical support and unfailing enthusiasm for this exciting project.

Needless to say, as Editor-in-Chief, I'm always happy to discuss the potential for further special issues originating from within the post-graduate, early career researcher and interdisciplinary communities. Speaking of which, we still have an open call through to the **end of November 2019** for the subsequent special issue, this time derived from themes at the Utopian Studies Society conference this summer on *Utopia, Dystopia and Climate Change* (USS, 2019). We're looking for articles, reviews, interviews or critical reflections on this theme, within our normal author guidelines and for a multidisciplinary audience from scholars globally. You don't have to have attended the conference, if you've got something you would like us to consider including in the issue, please do consider submitting to what is likely to be a very exciting and highly topical volume. Full details for the call can be found here:

exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/announcement/view/17

In the meantime, the April 2020 normal issue of *Exchanges* will hopefully include contributions to a section dedicated to papers submitted on the theme of 'in-between spaces', along with our regular selection of other scholarly delights.

Acknowledgements

As always, my thanks to our authors and reviewers for their vital intellectual labour contributions towards creating this issue. Without you, the ability to produce a quality-assured, peer-reviewed, scholar-led publication would quite simply not be possible. Thanks also to our reader community, who play a key role in developing the debates and insights raised in each issue. I hope you find this issue as valuable and informative as previous volumes.

My particular thanks to the Editorial Board, for their input and comments, along with their dedication, focus and commitment they each bring to producing this interdisciplinary research organ. I'd like to welcome too the two recent editors to join us from Monash University, Sun Yee Yip and Quynh Ve, with whom the team are very much looking forward to working. I'd also like to acknowledge the former members of the Board, Dr Jane Connory and Dr Andrew Stones, who have departed for exciting new academic roles. We wish them well, although hope they remember their time with *Exchanges* fondly.

Practically, my thanks to Rob Talbot and Julie Robinson at the Warwick University Library, and Fiona O'Brien of the *Reinvention* journal for their continued guidance, technical insights and stimulating conversations.

Finally, my grateful thanks to our publisher, the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Warwick for their continued financial and strategic backing for *Exchanges*.

Continuing the Conversation

In the meantime, don't forget to visit the [editorial blog](#), follow our [Twitter account](#) or join our [Linked.In group](#) to keep up-to-date with *Exchanges'* latest news, developments and calls for papers. Please do join in the conversation, as we value hearing the thoughts of our author and readership communities. Alternatively, as editor-in-chief, I'm always delighted to discuss potential publications, collaborative opportunities or invites to talk publicly about *Exchanges*. Contact me via the email at the start of this article.

Editorial Blog: blogs.warwick.ac.uk/exchangesias/

Twitter: [@ExchangesIAS](https://twitter.com/ExchangesIAS)

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Gareth has been the Editor-in-Chief of *Exchanges* for two years, with a doctorate in cultural academic publishing practices (Nottingham Trent). He also holds various degrees in biomedical technology (Sheffield Hallam), information management (Sheffield) and research practice (NTU). His varied career includes extensive experience in academic libraries, project management and applied research roles. Currently, he also executive manages the Mercian Collaboration library consortium. His professional and research interests focus on power-relationships within and evolution of scholarly academic publication practice, viewed from within social theory and political economic frameworks. He is an outspoken proponent for greater academic agency through scholar-led publishing, and an expert in distributed team management and effective communication practice.



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