



Exchanges: the Warwick Research Journal

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Editorial

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Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Exchanges: the Warwick Research Journal*. We are delighted to constitute the first Editorial Board of this new peer-reviewed online journal, dedicated to the publication of high-quality work by researchers in all disciplines, including early career researchers and those combining research with academic teaching or other professional employment. We are keen to welcome articles from all academic disciplines and subjects, including interdisciplinary research and co-authored papers, in order to encourage intellectual exchange and debate across research communities. The journal is open to all and in this first issue, we feature articles by Warwick-based researchers, but also by those in other institutions in the UK and internationally.

Although ‘interdisciplinarity’ is a word frequently associated with contemporary research, it is not new as it was explored and promoted by behavioural and social scientists before the mid-20th Century. Here at Warwick, researchers are encouraged to forge links with others to build a community of interdisciplinary research in their field and help to strengthen theirs and other fields by bringing new perspectives to them. We are already seeing the possibilities for collaborative work created through the Global Research Priority networks and other research fora, such as the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning, the Centre for the History of Medicine, the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies, and the Physical and Life Sciences interface, MOAC. The Institute of Advanced Study, collaborating with the Library, has been a driving force for the journal and all members of the initial Editorial Board are past or present IAS Fellows undertaking interdisciplinary research. In a research community that increasingly promotes impact and public engagement, open access journals are especially important to us in achieving the wider dissemination of thorough and robust interdisciplinary work both across research communities and to policy makers and the public.

What do we mean by interdisciplinarity? We see it as being two things: methodological and conceptual. Interdisciplinarity is the coming together of two or more disciplines to formulate a research question and an innovative method of finding an answer to that question. The research question might arise from the relationship between these

disciplines or from the problematic boundary where the research from two or more disciplines intersects, providing a new direction to explore. The combination of divergent considerations from these disciplines often creates a new way of thinking about a problem. Methodological considerations of interdisciplinarity naturally arise when a combination of methods is used to approach a problem or when the method from one discipline is used to assist in finding a solution to a problem from another.

What represents notable achievements in the realm of interdisciplinarity? This coalescence of approaches to form a unified perspective is evident in Kelly Freebody's 'Talking drama into being: types of talk in drama classrooms', which brings together important themes in education, philosophy and theatre studies. Through two distinct modes of language analysis, Freebody explores how the particular combination of the classroom and the process of drama facilitates a meaningful shared moral reasoning between the teacher and students that extends beyond the institutional setting. Orlando Prestidge also offers an excellent example of the potential for interdisciplinary research with his insightful article 'Foret de Guerre: Natural Remembrances of the Great War', exploring memory, environment, war and culture in France. Prestidge uses these different approaches to form a singular new perspective in addressing how the physical legacy of the Great War on the landscape of France acts to represent conflict and serves as a social zygamorph for remembrance.

Forging interdisciplinary networks is the key to producing interdisciplinary work and constitutes a central purpose for this journal. Another aim is to highlight opportunities and to inspire and encourage researchers to realize their full potential by deploying interdisciplinary links to enhance the way they approach their own research or how they could support other research groups working on other problems. In our 'Critical Reflections' section, we offer Adam Gallimore's thoughts on the 'Watching Politics' Symposium, organised in conjunction with Film and Television Studies, where discussion topics moved from politicians such as Tony Blair or Gordon Brown to films like *Olympus Has Fallen* (2013) and *White House Down* (2013); and from the impact of visual cultures in politics to media and film spectacle. The Environmental Studies Research Network's reflection on its Sustainability conference also reveals the inter-connections between Arts and Sciences, discussing international philosophical approaches to living, eco-poetry, and even racing cars.

Interdisciplinarity lends itself well to an international research agenda. Accordingly, the journal aims to connect a wide audience of researchers and practitioners working in three areas: those within the world community of universities; other interdisciplinary research centres and networks often associated with the Third Sector; and diverse research communities focused on policy and practice. ‘Exploring the Potential for Student Leadership to Contribute to School Transformation’, by Malcolm Groves, steps out of the classroom and away from other current concerns about examinations and curriculum syllabi. Groves explores another important feature of education: how student leadership, and in particular ‘student voice’, manifests within three secondary schools in the UK. Charles Tante is a former PhD candidate from Warwick who is now lecturing and training teachers in Cameroon. His short reflection, ‘Teachers’ Approaches to Language Classroom Assessment in Cameroon Primary Schools’ presents a summary of a small-scale survey on modes of assessment used by local primary teachers in the region, in the context of his own concerns as a teacher-educator.

Commencing a new online journal comes with many new prospects and challenges. Amongst these was the decision to trial new software for dealing with submissions and feedback. Over the course of the next few issues we will be exploring new ways of integrating innovative pathways for sharing research. This includes links to podcasts and embedding animations of data that can effectively show the progression of analysis and developing ideas to specialists and a wider audience. Warwick is frequently at the forefront of pioneering new approaches, including the implementation of regular ‘Sandpit’ events with the Wolfson Research Exchange, where researchers from across the University apply to take part in a 2-day ‘Dragon’s Den’-type experience and generate interdisciplinary research proposals in order to bid for external funding. We see the preliminary results of one of these projects in the co-authored article ‘Modelling social mobilisation – an interdisciplinary exploration of twitter as a mediating tool for social acts and information networks’.

A pressing concern for all universities is the effective support for the researchers of the future. The phrase ‘publish or perish’ is synonymous with modern academia and may strike fear into the hearts of those at the dawn of an academic career. We feel that publishing should be positively encouraged as the dissemination of ideas and knowledge and it should be something we can enjoy as researchers, both in writing and reading.

With the changes in Open Access policy, the presence of this journal – free of fees for both readers and authors – is a welcome addition to the University’s publishing portfolio.

A strong feature of our research community is our close association with leading academics, made possible by IAS Visiting Fellowships and the Distinguished Lecture Series. In this first issue, we are delighted to share articles on two such high profile thinkers in our opening section: ‘Exchanges’ – Conversations with... Earlier this year, Oliver Sacks and Luce Irigaray were welcomed to the University, delivering high-profile lectures, and engaging with research staff and students in vibrant and diverse dialogues. We are very grateful for their generosity in speaking with our two authors, Julie Walsh and Katharina Karcher, and for supporting the exciting new venture represented by ‘Exchanges’.

The Editors – October 2013

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