



Exchanges: the Warwick Research Journal

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Editorial

Editorial: On Creative Approaches to Research

Introduction

Welcome to the second issue of *Exchanges: the Warwick Research Journal*, an online academic publishing platform for high quality articles and shorter critical reflections, from researchers at the University of Warwick, as well as researchers from the wider academic community.

The journal not only publishes interdisciplinary work, but also brings together early career researchers (all past or current fellows of the Institute of Advanced Study at Warwick) from a range of disciplines to work collaboratively on the editorial board. For this issue, the editorial board represents a wide range of disciplinary areas: philosophy, literature, psychology, history, theatre, and education. The diversity of interests and perspectives on the editorial board is important for the process of bringing research to a wider audience, which is a global university concern when demonstrating the value of the research we engage in. As editors who are all engaged in research that is socially engaged, it has been an interesting experience to produce something that is delivered exclusively online, which has a great potential to reach the wider academic community and beyond; to reach the people that form the focus of our research.

By putting this issue together, we have had a chance to consider what this collection of articles, critical reflections and conversations says about what is going on in the wider research community today and how this connects with what we have observed from our own disciplinary perspectives. Editing the submissions and engaging with authors has been an exciting process and we have seen some great examples of creativity and innovation in approaches to research. This issue reflects, to some degree, where we are today. Through the content of the articles and the way in which the author's have conducted their research, this issue speaks to those concerns and interests that we find ourselves preoccupied with in the modern day.

Exchange, debate, and dialogue

We are honoured to follow the words of Professor Randy Schekman (University of California at Berkeley), Nobel Prize Winner in 2013, who also became known for criticising the restrictive publishing policies of some top-tier journals¹. eLife (<http://elife.elifesciences.org/>) is an excellent example of the possibilities of open, online publishing, encouraging a global dialogue in new and important science research. The format of articles is also open, encouraging the inclusion of images, animations, and other media to enhance the dissemination.

This issue continues to promote research that engages the global research community, both in terms of being relevant to multiple disciplines and relevant to researchers from different places around the globe. We also continue to support different formats, such as our ‘Exchanges: Conversations With ...’ section, containing interviews with, and reflections on, influential figures in the academic community.

In ‘Conversations with ... Mona Siddiqui’, Angela Quartermaine engages in an insightful discussion with British-Muslim academic, Mona Siddiqui, who is Professor of Islamic and interreligious studies at the University of Edinburgh. Professor Siddiqui is well known for her insightful contributions to BBC Radio 4’s Thought for the Day, *The Times* and *the Guardian*, along with her research in classical Islamic Law and Christian-Muslim relations. In the article featured in this issue, Professor Siddiqui discusses globally significant themes of religion, terrorism and multiculturalism, relating this to contemporary ethical issues.

In ‘Conversations with ... Hannah Jones’, Amy Hinterberger talks with Hannah Jones about her innovative research in sociology, which focuses on multiculture, multiculturalism and immigration in Britain. Jones’ research draws together issues relevant to politics, local government policy and research methods. The themes of both ‘Conversations’ are of growing concern beyond the context of Britain, with issues relating to multiculturalism becoming a growing feature in our globalised world.

Another good example of such a global approach is found in the article ‘Global Environmental Liability: Multinational Corporations Under Scrutiny’ by Vidyaranya Namballa, which surveys the complex legal status of such organisations and the

¹<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/dec/09/nobel-winner-boycott-science-journals>

consequent difficulties faced by those who seek justice for the environmental harms that result from their activities. Reading this article brings to the fore the interconnected and complex nature of the world in which we live and alerts us to concerns that we share across the globe, of wanting to protect the environment in which we live.

This year: 2014

As we launch Issue Two in April 2014—450 years since the birth of Shakespeare—it seems apt that our featured section, *Sidelights on Shakespeare*, is devoted to this important cultural figure.

The articles featured were presented at an interdisciplinary series of seminars supported by the Humanities Research Centre (University of Warwick), *Sidelights on Shakespeare*, which has been running successfully since 2010. The brainchild of two doctoral students from the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies, Alice Leonard and Peter Kirwan, the aim of *Sidelights on Shakespeare* is to highlight the ways in which Shakespeare is seen through the prism of a range of academic disciplines and how, in turn, such approaches may feed back into the field of Shakespeare Study.

The articles featured in the journal demonstrate the continued interest in Shakespeare and his works over four centuries. The authors do not just take a historical-cultural or literary perspective on Shakespeare's works but relate this to where we find ourselves today, using social media such as Twitter and how his words are used for our modern-day purposes and political contexts. The article by John Curtis, a practising barrister, explores the role of Shakespeare in the context of a modern law case, which uses the example of *King Lear* as a rhetorical device. Gary Watt responds by taking a sceptical position as to the value of quoting such literary works in cases. He argues that using such texts may get in the way of the deductive reasoning required to pass judgement and effectively communicate these reasons to others.

The other two articles in the *Sidelights on Shakespeare* section explore how historical practices of interpretation and appropriation have led to the playwright and his work being given a number of rich and varied 'after lives.' In 'Fiona, Phyllida, and 'F'-Word,' Stephanie Tillotson examines the issue of cross-gender casting in Shakespearean drama, arguing for a more nuanced approach to examining this phenomena, that might take into

account the specific intentions, politics and experiences of practitioners and audiences alike. Catherine Alexander in 'Shakespeare and War' provides a detailed survey of how Shakespeare's personal autobiography, as well as his plays and his status as cultural icon, have been ascribed differing degrees of prominence in relation to the motives of those who have cited him in times of war. She effectively demonstrates how Shakespeare has been 'written' into public memory in ways that exemplify a great deal of inventiveness, as much as also revealing the need for a sense of collective cultural imagination.

Sidelights on Shakespeare continues to attract eminent speakers from a variety of fields. For instance, alongside those included in this special feature for *Exchanges*, the series has featured the Guardian Theatre Editor, Andrew Dickson, and will include future visits by Jami Rogers of the British Black and Asian Shakespeare initiative, IAS Visiting Fellow, Professor Angus Fletcher as well as a return visit from Dr Paul Prescott of the English Department at Warwick.

Creative Research

In working on the current issue, we have reflected on what it is to be 'creative' in academia and how we can adopt creative approaches and methods in our own work. Our thoughts have been prompted by the 'Creative Research Methods' dialogue, which captures the thoughts of a number of researchers working in different disciplines. This article came about from an online exchange of ideas, which focused on a core set of questions. As a result, they develop ideas about what 'creative' means, effective use of technology, how space can encourage creativity and what this means for the role of the researcher. This article provides our readers with the opportunity to reflect on their own research methods and to think about what creativity would mean for them in their work.

We see creativity as trying something out that is concerned with the process, not a fixed set of results; it is necessarily open-ended. 'Creative' refers to innovative ideas or ways of thinking that go beyond standard practices, or which amalgamates methodology or theory in a new way. Crucially, it is the diversifying of information and material. To speak of creativity in research is to attempt to approach knowledge production differently. In some cases, this means rethinking assumptions about what knowledge is,

how and why it is valued, and what it can do. Creative approaches to research often attempt to re-evaluate what has been taken for granted, to unsettle static ideas and to find unexpected ways of answering old or persistent questions.

It is this idea of creativity that we think is exemplified in a number of the articles in this issue. Our Critical Reflections have demonstrated how we can take a creative approach by bringing together researchers from different disciplines to focus on a common theme. Grace Huxford's discussion of the interdisciplinary conference united researchers on the topic of 'Representing Prisoner of War Experience' in order to reflect on the growth of prisoner of war studies over the last decade. Huxford's article illustrates the ways in which scholars have taken up the challenge of 'representing' the prisoner of war in different and creative ways. For example, Huxford describes how the archaeological approach of Gilly Carr considers material objects—from cigarette packets to an artificial spleen—presents a significant new way to investigate the lives of the captive.

Claire Sewell and Jennifer Crane's reflections on their conference, "'Made Up People': A Conference on an Interdisciplinary Approach to Labelling' demonstrate that the concept of 'labelling theory'—first outlined by philosopher Ian Hacking nearly thirty years ago—remains a useful tool in the study of categorisation and identity formation. Sewell and Crane demonstrate a creative approach to 'labelling theory' in exploring the relevance of the concept in contemporary interdisciplinary research, whilst also seeking to historicise Hacking's work in the context of 1980s scholarship.

We can also see the emergence of the idea of collective creativity, which is the key theme in Hind and Gekker's 'Outsmarting Traffic, Together,' which looks at the rise of 'social navigation' in the automotive world. Focusing their discussion on a new driving application called Waze, they argue that by understating how 'play' is configured as part of everyday activity, it might be possible to appreciate the social politics implicated in new navigation platforms and driving practices.

Creativity can be very hard to achieve and so it is great to see so many wonderful examples of researchers taking new approaches, taking risks and producing exciting and insightful research as a result. Taking a creative approach may lead to original, insightful research but it has a high risk of not succeeding—the very nature of it being creative suggests that it has not been tried before. But don't we also learn something

when it doesn't work? It seems that there is value in discovering that something does not work. The important thing, as is well-demonstrated by the 'Creative Research Methods' article, is to have the conversation and see where that leads us.

There are many other challenges to taking a creative approach. It can be difficult to convince others of the merit of such an approach, to get others to take the risk with you, or to find somewhere to share your results. We have noticed some great examples of such creative practice at the University of Warwick. The University is very good at diversifying itself and being creative. One example of this is working with external widening participation organisations, for example The Brilliant Club, in which the university engages PhD students with local schools in order to increase school student's uptake at top universities. This is a very innovative way of using the academic and research based skills of PhD students and applying these niche skills and experience to a new domain of secondary school education.

This year, Warwick hosts the International Federation of Theatre Research's World Congress in July/August, an event that will foreground the ways in which performing arts scholars and practitioners are not only employing interdisciplinary techniques in their research, but also redefining the role of creative practices in society at large. This year, the theme for IFTR is 'Stratification,' which indicates an attention to the underlying structures that define our knowledge of the world and its production, as well as a willingness to explore alternative, undiscovered, and often subversive strategies for problematising and improving it.

Furthermore, we considered the idea of creative approaches in relation to the journal itself: we want the journal to be a place where researchers can start conversations with the wider academic community. One of the aims of this journal is to actively facilitate discussion across disciplines and encourage researchers to engage with the articles in each issue. We want to encourage readers to engage and participate in the published articles by using our new discussion feature, which we hope will provide the chance for the authors to discuss their work with the wider community and develop insightful lines of enquiry from the conversations that result.

We have ambitions that this journal can help researchers break the mould of traditional formats of presenting research. In fostering creativity and innovation in academia,

Exchanges is open to publishing in different formats and unusual collaborations. We also want to encourage researchers through the critical reflections to share their work at earlier stages of research, which will help keep the research community vibrant by sharing and discussing work that is continuing to evolve, giving an opportunity to influence and develop current research. In the current issue, this is exemplified by Emma Parfitt's 'Storytelling as a Trigger for Sharing Conversations', which focuses on storytelling as an important tool for encouraging young people to share their experiences and emotional responses with one another. We hope that this will encourage people to engage with Parfitt's research project at this early stage, to offer other disciplinary perspectives. Publishing this article gives us the opportunity to track the research process as it happens and see where her project takes her next.

This approach to publishing developing research is especially significant in interdisciplinary research—by publishing at an early stage enables researchers to connect with those working on similar projects in other disciplines. Such connections can be incredibly fruitful and enhance the research of all those involved. This ambition is also reflected in our approach to publishing in that we aim to publish work within three months of acceptance, ensuring that the end product is timely and relevant.

Thanks

We hope you find this issue as stimulating as we have and that the connections that emerge, not just between the articles but also with your own research, will lead to exciting avenues for the future of our disciplines. We want to invite you to consider our reflections on the articles in this issue and use our new *Disqus* function to join us in talking about the interesting connections that emerge from these articles.

Finally, we want to thank Professor Schekman for his thought-provoking foreword, Professor Siddiqui for her contribution and to all of the peer reviewers who volunteered their time to read each of our submissions carefully and provide helpful, constructive comments for our authors. We also want to thank Yvonne Budden, Academic Support Manager (Research), University of Warwick Library, for her continued support and assistance with the development of the journal.

We look forward to the next issue, which is due to be published October 2014.

The Editors

Lauren Bellaera/Psychology

Awelani Moyo/Theatre Studies

Karen Simecek/Philosophy and Literature

Rebecca Williams/Centre for the History of Medicine