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## Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology

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#### Editorial: Taking stock and looking forward

Michele Jacobsen

The Spring 2006 issue is the fifth to be published by the present editorial team. It would be very difficult to serve as editor of a peer-reviewed journal without the ongoing support and scholarly contribution of an active editorial board. It is my privilege to work with the present CJLT Editorial Board, whose membership includes almost 60 international scholars. Service on the editorial board involves blind review of several manuscripts per year using a 4 to 6 week timeframe, and providing input and feedback on editorial team decisions and recommendations throughout the year. I extend my sincere thank-you to several long-time editorial board members, who have decided to move on to other challenges, for past service to CJLT. At this time I also welcome and sincerely thank several new members who have agreed to become active members of the current CJLT Editorial Board and to work with me to publish high quality and interesting research in educational technology and learning.

In keeping with tradition, the first part of this Spring editorial takes stock of CJLT's 2005 publishing year by reporting on the specific submission, acceptance and rejection rates, editorial and peer review feedback, and journal activity. In the second part of this editorial I introduce you to the seven articles that are published in the Spring 2006 issue. In the final part of this editorial, I continue to reflect on factors that impact the academic publishing process, with specific attention to practices that currently guide the work at CJLT.

##### Looking Back at 2005

I am pleased to report that 2005 was another successful year for CJLT – three issues of the journal, comprised of a total of 22 scholarly articles and book reviews, were published and shared with the academic community. The journal received 67 new manuscript submissions in 2005 (please note: I incorrectly cited 50 submissions in my Winter 2006 Editorial) and welcomed several new members to the Editorial Board. I am grateful to the authors, who have entrusted us with their academic writing.

In the past year, the editorial team was able to maintain a regular publication and distribution schedule for the journal and published three solid issues. In total, the three issues of Volume 31 contain 3 editorials, 19 articles and 3 book reviews. Authors who contributed their work to Volume 31 in 2005 hail from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. The first issue, **Volume 31.1** (Winter 2005), is an open issue and contains two editorials and six engaging articles, including one in French, on a variety of different topics in educational technology and learning. Authors in this issue hail from a variety of academic and public institutions across Canada. **Volume 31.2** (Spring 2005) is another open issue and consists of an editorial, five very different and interesting articles and 2 book reviews. Authors in this issue hail from academic and public institutions across Canada and the United States. The Spring 2005 issue contained Terry Anderson's article, "Design-based Research and its Application to a Call Centre Innovation in Distance Education," which received the 2006 CJLT Editor's Award. **Volume 31.3** (Fall 2005) is a special issue on Electronic Portfolios, edited by Philip Abrami, Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. This theme issue contains an introductory article by Phil Abrami and Helen Barrett, and seven articles on this very current topic (one in French), as well as a book review. Authors in this issue hail from academic institutions in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The 2005 calendar year saw the third full year of the publication of the journal as a dual media publication. The CJLT / RCAT website ([www.cjlt.ca](http://www.cjlt.ca)) was launched in February, 2003. The online version continues to be hosted at Athabasca University under the auspices of the International Consortium for the Advancement of Academic Publishing (ICAAP). The full text of articles is placed on the website with a one issue (4 month) delay. The titles, authors and abstracts of each current print issue are provided at the time the issue is mailed out to AMTEC members and subscribers. The CJLT / RCAT website continues to attract considerable attention. In the first 12 days of May 2006, we received 3202 visits with 6334 pages visited. Compared with the figures from January – May, 2005, in which we received a total of 5333 visits and 10314 pages accessed, we appear to be well ahead of the five month average of 1066 visits / month and 2062 pages accessed / month.

In the past three years, the level of author interest in the Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology as a place to submit their research has steadily increased while our acceptance rate has remained stable at approximately 34%. Journal activity has been tracked in order to generate the numbers used to calculate the approximate acceptance / rejection rate for 2005. A total of 67 manuscripts were submitted in 2005 (which includes 50 English, 7 French and 10 special issue papers), an increase from the 58 submissions recorded in 2004 (16% increase), the 46 submissions in 2003 (a 26% increase), and the 28 articles submitted in 2002 (64% increase).

CJLT published 19 articles in 2005 for an approximate acceptance rate of 34%, which is similar to the acceptance rates recorded in 2004 (34%) and 2003 (34.8%) and 2002 (46.4%). Please see Table 1 for a breakdown of journal activity in the past four years.

An honest attempt has been made to report accurate submission, publication and rejection rates. However, it must be acknowledged that some articles published in 2005 (V31.1) were submitted and reviewed in 2004. Any manuscript submitted later in the year (October to December) is more likely to appear, if accepted, in the next year's issue (and thus would be reflected in that year's acceptance rate). For example, 10 manuscripts were in peer review and awaiting decision at the close of 2005 and may appear in a 2006 issue.

Of the 67 manuscripts submitted in 2005, **19 were rejected** [approx. 15 at the Editorial level (refused without peer review) and 4 after peer review] for a **28.4% rejection rate**. At the end of 2005, 29 articles (43.3%) remained in a category labelled, "ongoing consideration". Included in this category are articles still in peer review from 2005 (n=10) and the 19 manuscripts (28.4%) which were sent back to authors with suggestions for revisions and an invitation to resubmit.

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The current issue of CJLT contains four research papers and three position papers that summarize various approaches to educational technology research and teaching. Authors use mixed methods, qualitative and descriptive approaches to research key questions in our field. Authors have used logical argumentation and literature review to frame and explore key issues and problems of interest in educational technology. The authors in this issue hail from Australia, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The first six articles in this issue share a general focus on the design and delivery of experiences for distributed teachers and learners, while the specific foci and research methods used in each paper are diverse. Rounding out this issue is a position paper on knowledge management, which explores the complexities involved with meaningful information gathering and data mining in service of developing a deep and shared understanding of teaching and learning in schools.

In the first position paper, *Off With Their Heads! Copyright Infringement in the Canadian Online Higher Educational Environment*, Edmonds argues that the campus community must take care to consider how digital materials are used, created and disseminated online in light of the underdeveloped state of present copyright law. Edmonds has prepared current descriptions of intellectual property, copyright laws, infringements, and plagiarism in a Canadian context with a view on the creation, use and dissemination of digital works. She explores the impact of copyright infringement on teachers and learners in higher education and offers some practical suggestions for protecting one's interests.

In the first research paper, *Design models as emergent features: An empirical study in communication and shared mental models in instructional design*, Botturi reports the results of an empirical study that investigated the instructional design process of three teams involved in the development of an e-learning unit. While each team reported using the same fast-prototyping design and development model, results indicate that the model informs the activities of the group, but that it is interpreted and adapted by the team for the specific project. Thus, in actual practice, the ID model of each team is an emergent feature. Botturi's information gathering and inquiry, using social network analysis and concept mapping, yields fresh insights with regard to team communication, shared understanding, individual perspectives and the implementation of prescriptive instructional design models.

In the second research paper, *Un environnement 3D qui favorise le sentiment d'appartenance en situation de formation à distance / A computerized 3D environment fostering a sense of belonging in a distance education context*, IsaBelle, Vézina and Fournier explore whether participation in online 3D learning environments impact a learner's sense of belonging and retention. The Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML) supports the digital representation of 3D environments, realistic worlds in which learners can interact with others using an avatar. Analysis of feedback from three different surveys of forty learners revealed that those in the 3D environment developed a greater sense of belonging than those using a traditional online platform.

In the third research paper, *Profiling individual discussants' behaviours in online asynchronous discussions*, Murphy and Rodriguez Manzanares supply an illustrative example of a newer approach to creating and reporting individual profiles of engagement in online asynchronous discussions (OAD). For this paper, Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares focus on individual behaviours associated with Problem Formulation and Resolution (PFR) in a one-month long OAD with seven graduate students. They argue that their analysis of individual OAD transcripts provide useful insights different from those gained from aggregate measures of group behaviours. Seven transcripts were analyzed using a previously designed instrument and individual profiles were created. The paper describes how the analysis for patterns of PFR behaviours facilitates identification and comparison of individual weaknesses and strengths. An argument is made for the utility of individual profiles in professional development and instructional contexts for formative or summative assessment purposes.

In the second position paper, *The rainbow bridge metaphor as a tool for developing accessible e-learning practices in higher education*, Seale explores whether existing accessibility metaphors help to develop current conceptualizations of accessible e-learning practice in higher education. Based on this analysis, Seale proposes the rainbow bridge metaphor for accessible e-learning practice. She argues that this metaphor is useful for representing different but related views of accessibility. Two objectives inherent in Seale's metaphor are to challenge dominant discourse about what goals are achievable or not and to increase awareness of what is required to develop accessible e-learning practice in higher education.

In the final research paper in this issue, *Breaking the Ice: Supporting collaboration and the development of community online*, Dixon, Crooks and Henry explore Moore's (1993) concept of *transactional distance*, which relates to the distance that exists in all learning relationships and can be more evident and potentially problematic in online learning environments. The authors investigate an instructional intervention with the goal of reducing the perceived distance and to help learners develop social presence in support of collaborative relationships and the development of community in online learning environments. Two author-developed icebreakers, fun activities that help people get to know each other, were used in a preliminary study involving university undergraduates and instructors in online environments. Learners encountered an icebreaker at the start and at the mid-point of a semester after which they completed a questionnaire. Early results about the perceived value of icebreakers were positive and have resulted in recommendations for practice.

In the final position paper in this issue, *Can Schools Realize the Learning Potential of Knowledge Management?*, Bain and Parkes present reservations regarding the potential of knowledge management (KM) as it is currently applied to the learning and teaching activity of schools. They argue that effective KM is contingent upon the explication of a deep and shared understanding of the learning and teaching process, and that the most important transactions in schools, those related to learning and teaching, are frequently the least explicated. Further, where such explication does occur, it is rarely specific enough to generate the kind of meaningful data required to make timely improvements in the learning experience of individual students. Bain and Parkes inject a cautionary note regarding current conceptualizations of KM in education and focus on potentially more valid applications of KM in school settings. Strategies and examples are described that can be employed to address the reservations described herein as well as build the kind of professional culture of practice in schools that is more conducive to effective KM.

#### **Publishing in an Academic Journal**

The specific information that prospective authors tend to want and often need in order to ready their work for submission to a journal often goes beyond general author guidelines. I tend to receive several inquiries per month from prospective authors who want to align their work to the specific publishing practices of this journal. In this section, I offer some recommendations, in the form of answers to questions I have received as editor, to authors who aim to publish in an academic journal. Author information is provided on the CJLT web site [[www.cjlt.ca](http://www.cjlt.ca)] and at the back of every issue of the journal. I always advise authors to become familiar with the specific submission guidelines of the journal to which they send their work.

Who reviews your manuscript? The editor, or designate from the editorial team or board, conducts the initial editorial review. When a submission is judged suitable for peer review, the editor selects 2 – 3 peer reviewers who will receive the blinded manuscript for review. The CJLT relies on a pool of approximately eighty peer reviewers,

including the editorial board, who represent a broad range of research expertise and experience in educational technology. A manuscript is always sent to at least one scholar from the editorial board. Occasionally, I invite a peer review from a scholar who is cited in the manuscript's reference list. I recommend that authors become familiar with who is on the editorial team and editorial board, and to be sure to cite all academic work correctly and in context. Although the peer review process is strictly anonymous, for both the authors and peer reviewers, the range of scholars who may receive a paper for peer review include members of the editorial board, other educational technology researchers with specific expertise in the areas addressed in the manuscript, and those scholars whose work is cited in the manuscript.

How long does it take to get your work in print? This can be a tricky question to answer because a number of factors impact the review, revision, copyediting and publishing process. For example, for CJLT, we aim to complete the review process for a manuscript in **two months**. It often takes two weeks for editorial review, and then a minimum of four to six weeks for peer review. The factors that can impact this target are: editor workload, manuscript quality and reviewer turnaround time. Well written and interesting manuscripts tend to get out for review and are peer reviewed more quickly than weaker manuscripts. Depending upon the time of year, the editorial team and peer reviewers may take more or less than the recommended time to complete a review.

Peer reviewers are asked to provide feedback in 4 – 6 weeks. However, depending on the time of year (i.e., beginning, middle or end of semester), the quality of the manuscript, and the reviewer's academic workload, the peer review might take more or less than 4 – 6 weeks. If an article is submitted and sent for review during high academic workload seasons, which can be September to April, then a peer reviewer may require more time to provide feedback. I have found that a high quality manuscript elicits a very quick turnaround from peer reviewers, while the reverse is true for a poorer quality manuscript. For example, an excellent manuscript that was recently published in CJLT was peer reviewed within 2 weeks and published within 3 months. Several other manuscripts were in peer review for more than 3 months and were ultimately rejected. The difference? The published manuscript was well organized and spotlessly copyedited upon submission; key points were introduced, elaborated upon and summarized in the discussion; research methods and results were thoroughly described, defended and detailed; the conclusions followed logically from the analysis and research questions. The rejected articles tend to lack clarity, suffer from poor organization and sloppy editing and do not effectively communicate key findings. A weaker manuscript can be a burden for reviewers to read and provide meaningful feedback on, and thus tend to take longer to make it through the peer review process.

Once a paper is accepted for publication, additional revisions and changes may be required, which we aim to have completed in **four to eight weeks**. Two factors that impact this timeline are author turnaround time and editorial review. Depending upon the extent of revisions requested, authors may require more or less time to complete the changes. Given the cyclical nature of the publishing process, there is higher workload closer to a publication deadline, and therefore other editorial tasks may be deprioritized until an issue goes to print. The copyediting and layout process takes approximately **four to six weeks**. Factors that impact this process are quality of graphics and tables, length and language of articles, proofing by authors, and minor revisions and turnaround time by authors. The printer requires **two weeks** to publish the journal from the time they receive the final proof. So, all factors considered, when the publishing process is working smoothly, it often takes an average of **six months** to get from initial submission to print. For example, the articles published in the Spring 2006 issue took an **average of 6 months** to be published. However, a number of factors can impact the time it takes to get an article in print. Therefore, the average rate for the present issue actually reflects a **range of six and fifteen months** from initial submission to publication for the seven articles that are included in this issue.

How can I increase the chances that my work will get published? This is a good question that can be answered a number of ways. Aside from the obvious, such as conducting interesting and timely research that makes a contribution to the discipline, seeking a match between the type of research and the particular journal, and submitting several well-written articles for publication per year, it is important that authors are *persistent* in the publishing process and *confident* in the value of their work.

Perseverance and ego strength can pay off. In 2005, CJLT received 67 submissions and published 19 articles, rejected 19 articles, and sent 19 back to authors with an invitation to resubmit. Of the articles that authors resubmitted for another review, most were eventually published. However, approximately 75% of the invitations to resubmit an article are ignored. There are a number of possible reasons why an author might choose not to resubmit, such as selecting a different journal, lacking time to make revisions, disagreement with the editorial decision or recommendations, and embarrassment. I recommend that authors always resubmit when invited to do so. Both parties have already invested a great deal of time in the review process. I urge authors to consider an invitation to resubmit as a serious indication of the journal's interest in the manuscript. Every effort is made to provide helpful, thoughtful and tactful feedback when an article is sent back for revision. However, it can be disconcerting to receive a critique of one's work, no matter how thoughtful and well intended the editor and reviewers are with their comments. An author may be embarrassed that their work received critical feedback from reviewers. I credit my colleague, Bryan Hiebert, with the term "ego strength", which I interpret to mean an ability to turn feedback on one's writing into a helpful learning experience. Authors with ego strength have the determination and confidence to revise and resubmit their manuscript. It is worth repeating that in most cases, when a paper is revised according to the reviewer and editor recommendations, and resubmitted, it gets published. My recommendation is to take editorial and reviewer feedback seriously, but not personally, incorporate the requested revisions, and resubmit your manuscript as quickly as possible. When you do resubmit your article after revisions, please list those changes that you have made and provide good reasons for the changes that you refused to make. If you choose not to resubmit, please let the editor know of your intentions so that they can close the file on your paper.

In closing, I offer the following advice to prospective authors who want to increase the chances of getting their work published. These points are a combination of restatements from my Winter 2006 editorial and new information discussed in this editorial.

First, read and follow the specific submission guidelines on suitable topics and manuscript categories and specifically incorporate these in your paper. When in doubt, contact the editor with specific questions related to your paper and the journal's author guidelines prior to submission.

Second, invite a critical colleague to review the quality and organization of your manuscript prior to submission. You can impact, and usually shorten, the time it takes for a journal to review your work by conducting an initial peer review yourself. Authors should select a reliable colleague, preferably an expert in the topic, who will read the manuscript carefully and offer meaningful, thorough and useful feedback. It is not helpful to select a friend who may hesitate to give you anything but positive feedback.

Third, make a good first impression with clean referencing, spelling, grammar and punctuation. You can increase the chance that your work will be sent for immediate peer review by doing a thorough and ruthless copyedit of the manuscript prior to submission. It is obvious when an author has failed to take the time to copyedit and fine-tune a manuscript. In most cases, the decision to reject a manuscript prior to peer review is based on a lack of clarity or

logic in argumentation, vagueness about the manuscript category, or lack of adherence to our length and APA style guidelines (i.e., too short, too long, sloppy referencing, poor grammar and structure, unsubstantiated claims).

Fourth, become familiar with the editorial team and editorial board membership, and be sure to cite all academic work correctly and in context. While the peer review is anonymous, the range of scholars who may review a manuscript include members of the editorial board, other educational technology researchers with specific expertise in the areas addressed in the manuscript, and those scholars whose work is cited in the manuscript.

Fifth, resubmit your revised manuscript when invited to do so, and do it quickly. Persevere in the publishing process and be confident in the value of your research. Consider an invitation to resubmit your manuscript as a serious statement of interest in your work. Adopt a positive versus a personal approach to critical feedback, and use the review as an opportunity to revise and improve your manuscript. The majority of articles that are revised according to recommendations and then resubmitted get published. Authors who ignore an invitation to resubmit are missing a good chance to get their work published. Be persistent, develop a thick skin and keep revising and resubmitting your work until it gets published.

My final recommendation to authors is be patient, be polite and be considerate. The review process involved in bringing a manuscript to print is done by academics who generously donate their time and expertise. Please resist contacting the journal every week to ask about the status of your manuscript. A quality review process does take time and can be impacted by several factors beyond the editor's control. Please resist being rude to the editor or the peer reviewers who have taken the time to examine and comment on your paper. It is appropriate to thank your fellow scholars for reviewing your paper and for making recommendations on how to improve the manuscript. If your article is rejected, it is appropriate to defend your work in the spirit of academic discourse and debate, but please swallow your pride and resist sending a blistering note to the editor about how you and your work were misunderstood and unfairly treated. Instead, attempt to learn from whatever feedback you receive and avoid burning any bridges with a journal or editor.

The upcoming Fall 2006 issue (V 32.3) will be a special issue on Knowledge Building, edited by Dr. William J. Egnatoff, Queen's University, and Dr. Marlene Scardamalia, OISE/University of Toronto. This special issue of CJLT examines critical issues in knowledge building theories, pedagogies, and environments in school and workplace settings. Papers will address four themes: (1) Theoretical models for knowledge creation; (2) Educational dynamics for knowledge building; (3) Globally networked knowledge building communities; (4) Knowledge building environments. The issue reflects the need for increased collective responsibility for knowledge innovation of benefit to society.

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