



Editor-in-Chief: A Brief Reflection and a New Home

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Abstract

The emergence of artificial intelligence in the higher education publishing context has led to scholars seeking opportunities to leverage the new technological affordances offered by the tool. Yet, there have been questions emerging about the extent to which artificial intelligence should prompt scholars towards certain outcomes. In this commentary, we examine the need for human flourishing to sit at the forefront of decisions around academic publishing alongside the pursuit of fair and innovative knowledge creation and dissemination. We advocate an evidence-based position against artificial intelligence as a peer reviewer, recognising that parroting knowledge is insufficient to be critical and comprehensive in the review process. There are significant limitations to the current artificial intelligence tools from bias to current corpus limitations that restrict its usefulness as a gatekeeper of knowledge, a key role a reviewer takes on board. We offer suggestions for places where artificial intelligence tools may be quite useful and offer some future directions for artificial intelligence in publishing processes.

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Introduction

The Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice (JUTLP) has had quite the adventure since it began in 2004. Percy and colleagues (2021) discuss this history before 2019 in much more detail than I do here. 2019 was the year that I joined as a then-Associate Editor, and it was a different journal then too. I attended an informal meeting on 28 May 2019 with the two Senior Editors to discuss my interest in joining as an Associate Editor. It was likely my interest in quantitative research – an area of expertise lacking at the time – combined with a team ready for a transition.

The then-editorial board structure was heavily reliant on the hours and generosity of the Senior Editors – who made all manuscript decisions outside of selecting and inviting peer reviewers. This model likely supported strong and consistent quality at the cost of effort concentrated in a few Senior Editors (typically two to three), with a whole-of-editor monthly meeting by Skype. I handled a few manuscripts in this role and was invited to become a Senior Editor (Quantitative Research) a year later – 3 June 2020. That timing for beginning a new Senior Editor posting was tumultuous – the pandemic had hit full swing, with pre-pandemic freedoms a distant memory from the dining room office.

During that time, the Senior Editor team had an informally recognised chair, Dr Alisa Percy, who had been preparing to transition out of the role over the course of 2020. The Senior Editor team later formally instituted an Editor-in-Chief role and established the first four sections of our journal in August 2020: *Pedagogy*, *Academic Development*, *Innovation*, and *Student Experience*. Each section was led by their own Senior Editor, supported by three Associate Editors. A/Prof Kerryn Butler-Henderson joined the Senior Editor team in the same month, bringing expertise in Innovation. The sections then evolved to their final names: Theory and Practice, Student Experience, Developing Teaching Practice, and Educational Technology (see Crawford et al., 2020). The vision was to better organise our current portfolio of papers.

In 2022 we began to ask not just what topic areas were covered by the current papers we publish, but what other areas should we be creating space for (see Crawford, 2023). The start of 2023 saw us introduce *Educational Psychology* and *Educational Leadership and Management* sections, which started as a merged section in 2023, but will separate in July 2024. We established these sections with recognition that educational psychology journals tend to be focused on secondary school-level rather than adult and university learning environments, and that the management and leadership of universities varies significantly from primary and secondary schooling. At the same time, we saw Theory and Practice more aptly named *Curriculum and Assessment* to reflect that all sections should house a connection between theory and practice.

2021 and 2022 were a series of fascinating trials and errors. We saw another handful of short-term Senior and Associate Editors as we tried to develop a strong editorial board. Our team was primarily Australian based (with one Associate Editor from New Zealand). We began public expressions of interest for new roles and broadened our community beyond Australia and New Zealand with 41 percent of our current editorial team now residing outside these two countries. We engaged in editorial activism in response to COVID-19, with a special issue dedicated to helping emerging scholars from different countries to connect and collaborate. In this, we invited

academics to propose topics and the kinds of methods they would like to deploy, and the nature of the team they were hoping to form. We did our best to merge close to 100 academics that applied, and they collectively made connections and produced papers with data from each of their countries. This was an important contribution we offered to early career researchers who lost their ability to meet collaborators at face-to-face conferences.

Over 2021, we focused on clarifying our role and values, and began to publish positions on these. Our editorials ceased to be based on summarising current content, and instead – inspired by Roy Suddaby’s (2010) commentary in *Academy of Management Review* – focused on providing feedforward advice to authors about the kinds of papers we consider and reject.

In 2022, we focused more on normalising our new processes and culture, and some of the statistics reflect this. This included the manual submission of retrospectively assigning DOIs through Crossref to the JUTLP corpus of ~700 articles. This was an important step towards a professional and consistent experience for authors publishing with us.

2023 was a year of consistent turbulence for JUTLP, with the University of Wollongong articulating their plans to decommission the Journal’s support in late 2022. This meant that the Journal Senior Editors had – by an undisclosed amount of time – to exit the BePress platform with thousands of historical submissions in the system. The Journal team established the *Open Access Publishing Association* (see www.open-publishing.org/journals) to fund and provide a hosting platform, and transferred the content and historical insights to an instance of the Open Journals System that was owned by members, rather than an institution.

The purpose of this Editorial is to serve as a notice for our readers, authors, and community of our new home, but also to provide stock of the achievements and records of the Journal in years gone by to accompany the notes made by Percy and colleagues (2021). We remain excited about our future, and of the possibilities a new home affords. We encourage you to remain part of our journey in promoting and engaging with practice-led research in the university sector; an area that seems to be incredibly important for future university decision-making.

The Numbers

The numbers below reflect some of the narrative I have briefly commented on, our landscape has changed a lot – and our practices have moved to reflect this. We have aspired to be more effective at supporting scholars with open access and free publication, and for readers to be able to engage with our content without cost. The proposition has been increasingly difficult for the journal to effectively engage with, despite its importance. As our quality improves, so too does the number of submissions that we consider and process.

Submissions

Table 1 sets out the data for general articles submitted for inclusion in standard issues. These issues – three a year until 2020, and quarterly thereafter – have been popular, and given our recent gains in impact factors is not likely to abate. Since 2019, our acceptance rate has sat below 14 percent despite a significant increase in the number of publication places available in 2023 to 94 (four articles per section per year). We expect to stabilise acceptance at up to 94 articles per year.

Table 1.*Submissions, rejections, and acceptance in standard issues*

	Total submissions	Rejected	Accepted	Acceptance Rate
2023	647	578	69	11%
2022	604	570	34	6%
2021	448	402	46	10%
2020	239	209	30	13%
2019	184	159	25	14%
2018	150	126	24	16%
2017	74	56	18	24%
2016	94	62	32	34%
2015	84	64	20	24%
2014	61	49	12	20%
2013	93	74	19	20%
2012	108	97	11	10%
2011	77	60	17	22%
2010	112	105	7	6%
2009	35	26	9	26%
2008	-	-	-	-

2008 was the first year listed in the new system and includes papers from its archive up to and including 2008, and a meaningful acceptance rate could not be calculated. Special Issues prior to 2021 were not submitted into the BePress system until they were accepted, so all Special Issues are excluded to minimise bias.

Corrin et al. (2023) writes of the *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* submissions between 2021-2023 declining slightly from 767 to 695, but likely being generally stable over the period despite a declining acceptance rate. It is likely that JUTLP will experience similar rates in 2024. AJET sits alongside JUTLP, *Journal of Learning Analytics*, *Student Success*, and *Issues in Educational Research* as only five Australian-based open access educational journals that are indexed in both Web of Science and Scopus.

Impact

The Journal has experienced significant growth in its readership, as it continues to focus on a balance of timely articles for practice alongside longer-tail and deeper research (Table 2). In 2019, the journal experienced for the first time, a slight decline in full-text downloads. This could be a point of alarm given that we would expect growth annually to reflect a larger corpus available. We

do expect a decline in 2024 in views with a change of platform, as the older content is re-indexed in line with our current indexing partners.

Table 2.

Downloads and views per year (and YoY change)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Abstract views	18,353 (22.8%)	29,769 (62.2%)	59,101 (98.5%)	85,841 (45.2%)	137,134 (60.0%)
Full-text article downloads	66,001 (-2.5%)	81,993 (24.2%)	103,151 (25.8%)	112,495 (9.1%)	150,980 (34.2%)

The key area of growth for the journal has been in its impact, with 2021 and 2022 having almost identical short- and long-term citation levels (Table 3). This overlap indicates that the more recent content is experiencing as strong a citation level as those older articles – despite that older articles have had greater time to generate cites. In Web of Science’s Journal Citation Report, JUTLP has steadily moved up in the education rank from 2020, with the jumps representing around 10 percentage points per annum. The Journal team had not been collecting historical Google Scholar performance levels, and as such these are not recorded here. It is promising to see that the indicative Scopus CiteScore for 2023 (as of 5 January 2024) sits well above the 2022 level at 3.4.

Table 3.

Citations per year

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
Scopus					
CiteScore	1.2 (Q3)	1.1 (Q3)	1.8 (Q2)	2.7 (Q2)	3.4
2-year impact	.82	1.01	1.95	2.03	
3-year impact	1.02	.96	1.93	2.16	
4-year impact	1.02	1.19	1.92	2.04	
Scimago					
Journal Rank	.32	.26	.38	.49	
Web of Science					
JCR Impact Factor	-	-	-	1.6	
Journal Citation Indicator	.53	.55	.71	.87	
Total Citations	-	386	539	631	
Education Rank	429/723	428/723	351/743	238/759	
JCI Percentile	40.73	40.95	52.83	62.78	

Google Scholar					
h5-index	-	-	-	-	29
h5-median	-	-	-	-	42

**Indexes tend to keep calculating until May or June of the following year, so the 2023 scores will likely be higher than reported here. Scopus is the only system that provides monthly updates.*

In considering the role of the hero paper of the year, many journals have a small number of papers that represent a large portion of unadjusted impact factors. In Table 4, I consider how the top paper contributes to the journal. The obvious exception is 2023, where we see two artificial intelligence papers that have outperformed the entire journal platform. Generally, our goal has been to ensure a level of diversity such that the top paper might hold no more than around 10 percent of the total citations attracted in that year.

Table 4.

Top paper per year (as per Scopus citations, 1 February 2024)

Authors	Scopus citation per year (total)	Scopus %*	Scopus FWCI*	Google Scholar per year (total)	Altmetric Score	Total downloads
Perkins (2023)	76	35.35	92.65	189	94	9,206
Al-Maqbali and Hussain (2022)	8.00 (16)	9.64	5.77	16.5 (33)	-	2,368
Tice et al. (2021)	18.67 (56)	9.72	10.62	35 (105)	40	2,658
Wilson et al. (2020)	8.75 (35)	9.09	4.43	15 (60)	-	1,255
Munoz and Mackey (2019)	5.80 (29)	6.95	3.49	8.40 (42)	-	989
Bandaranaike (2018)	4.50 (27)	9.71	2.04	10.33 (62)	-	3,970
Inouye and McAlpine (2017)	6.83 (41)	24.26	1.28	10.43 (73)	1	1,698
Harvey et al. (2016)	8.57 (60)	15.19	2.99	21.38 (171)	-	2,291

** Portion of the total cites for the year's publication represented by the top manuscript | Field Weighted Citation Index.*

On balance, we can see a strong improvement in the JUTLP impact, particularly in 2021 and 2023 submissions. The goal of the editorial board is to consolidate over coming years to ensure that as we continue to distribute decision-making across the team, that consistent quality is maintained and improved.

What the next five might be

The Journal editors have a lot to express gratitude for. Our submission to acceptance timelines has been gradually shrinking, although a team of volunteers does lead to variability at the most organised of times. The team of editors I have been fortunate enough to have worked with have added incredible value into various elements of the Journal, and of its practice. And now, we usher in the next chapter for JUTLP.

Our transition to ownership by the Open Access Publishing Association and its members will have an influence on our ability to resource the digital platforms and access to resources like copyediting, DOI assignment, and archiving. Indeed, the goal of OAPA and JUTLP is to ensure that the Journal arm can function without any incoming funding directly tied to publication. OAPA is developing revenue streams that are independent of the knowledge review and dissemination practices of the Journal. This is increasingly crucial to limit the possible influence a single institution may have, alongside minimising the impact of changes in either senior executives at an institution or their budgets changing priorities.

The aspiration of the Journal is to continue to support the publication of strong and influential learning and teaching practices, and to further encourage scholars to be ambitious in their evaluations of existing – and often outdated – practices for quality learning and teaching. By sitting independent of an institutional environment, the authors that submit can be assured of the independent nature of the Journal and of the primary focus of assessing and improving quality against its aims and scope.

Conflict of Interest

The author discloses that they have no actual or perceived conflicts of interest. The author discloses that they have not received any funding for this manuscript beyond resourcing for academic time at their respective university. The editorial was solely generated by the author without artificial intelligence support.

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