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Editorial: Taking Stock

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The familiar phrase, taking stock, often includes both inventory and evaluation. The Oxford English Dictionary records that the phrase was first used in 1736. According to the OED, to take stock means "to make an inventory of the merchandise, furniture, etc., present value, or to make a careful estimate of one's position with regard to resources, prospects, or the like." Educational technologists are likely most familiar with "taking stock" as a form of program evaluation that provides information to improve design, development and deployment of learning applications, objects and environments. In this editorial, I take stock of the 2004 publication year of CJLT and present highlights from the 30th volume of the journal that was the responsibility of former editor, Rick Kenny. An inventory and analysis of activities during the year enables us to assess accomplishments relative to prior years, to evaluate the journal's contribution to the academic community and to establish goals for future issues. In this editorial, I also take stock of the articles and book reviews in the present issue in order to summarize key themes that researchers have explored.

Volume 30

Editorial staff maintained a regular publication schedule for the journal and published three solid issues in 2004. In total, the three issues of Volume 30 contained 5 editorials, 15 articles, 5 book reviews, and 2 research reviews. The first issue, Volume 30.1 (Winter 2004), was an open issue and contained an editorial by Rick Kenny, the first French editorial by François Desjardins, four engaging articles on a variety of different topics in Educational Technology, 2 book reviews, and 1 research review. Volume 30.2 (Spring 2004) was also an open issue and consisted of an editorial by Rick Kenny, six very different and interesting articles, 2 book reviews and 1 research review. Volume 30.3 (Fall 2004) was a special issue on E-learning Standards—Looking Beyond Learning Objects edited by Solveig Norman and Elizabeth Childs. This theme issue contained an editorial by the guest editors, an editorial by Norm Friesen, 5 articles on this current topic, as well as a book review.

The 2004 calendar year saw the second full year of the publication of the journal as a dual media publication. The CJLT / RCAT web site (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 all articles has been placed on the web site with a one issue (4 month) delay and the abstracts of each current print issue have been provided at the time the issue was mailed out to AMTEC members and subscribers. The CJLT / RCAT web site continues to attract considerable attention. In the first 5 months of this year (January–May, 2005), the journal has received a total of 5333 visits and 10,314 pages accessed, with an average of 1066 visits / month and 2062 pages accessed / month.

Editor Kenny tracked the number of manuscript submissions to the journal and calculated the approximate acceptance / rejection rate for 2004. A total of 58 manuscripts were submitted in 2004, an increase from 46 in 2003. The steady increase in articles submitted to CJLT is one indicator that academics favour the journal as a publication venue for educational technology research. Of the 58 manuscripts, 9 were rejected at the editorial level (refused without peer review), and 2 were rejected after peer review. Most of the manuscripts that are rejected without peer review do not align with the goals of the journal or simply fail to conform to submission guidelines.

In 2004, the editorial team was able to publish 17 of 49 manuscripts submitted for an acceptance rate of 34.6%. A total of 7 manuscripts were in peer review and awaiting decision at the close of 2004. The CJLT acceptance rate alone can be interpreted as an indicator of academic quality. However, along with the request to resubmit rate, the acceptance rate also serves as a good indicator of the educational technology community's commitment to supporting fellow researchers in preparing their work for publication. Dozens of diverse educational technology scholars serve on the editorial board and as peer reviewers for CJLT. In 2004, 23 manuscripts (39.7%) were sent back to authors, often with extensive suggestions for revisions, with a request to resubmit. A request to resubmit represents a considerable amount of the editorial and peer review workload for the journal. In closing, the editorial team was successful in continuing to publish CJLT / RCAT on a regular basis in 2004 and ensured that it remains a high quality, scholarly journal.

The Present Issue

The five articles and two book reviews in this issue delve into a diverse range of topics in educational technology and learning. The first three articles present information about graduate and school-age learners. The fourth article summarizes a design-based approach to innovation evaluation, and the fifth expands upon educational modeling languages and instructional engineering methods. Two book reviews explore recent educational technology books on simulations, games and online learning.

The first two articles in this issue, present findings from qualitative research projects that explored help-seeking behaviour and the development of critical thinking by graduate students in distributed learning environments. In the first article, Help-Seeking Experiences of Health Care Learners in a WebCT Online Graduate Study Program, Melissa Shapiro and Lavallee present findings from a qualitative research project that explored health care students' activities related to seeking help within a masters program offered exclusively through a WebCT online environment.

In the second article, entitled Asynchronous CMC, Collaboration and the Development of Critical Thinking in a Graduate Seminar in Applied Linguistics, Abrams compares how graduate students enrolled in a qualitative research design course in applied linguistics utilized asynchronous computer-mediated communication (ACMC) and face-to-face interactions to critique field-specific research, to design and conduct their own research projects, and to engage in professional discourse in and out of class.

In the third article, Exploring Instructional Design Factors Prompting Reflective Thinking in Young Adolescents,
Song, Koszalka and Grabowski explore the methods that young students believe to best support their reflection: reflective learning environments, reflective teaching methods, and reflective scaffolding tools. The authors found that the most helpful factor was the reflective learning environment, with the most helpful elements being freedom and collaboration. Gender differences in students’ perceptions of concept-mapping and reflective-question prompts are presented along with recommendations for designing learning environments that prompt reflective thinking for all learners.

In the fourth article, Anderson argues the case for increased and more effective research and development in education and presents a discussion of design-based research as a methodological set of tools to address this need. In Design-based Research and its Application to a Call Center Innovation in Distance Education, four phases of design-based research are explicated and an example in which design-based methods were used is presented. Anderson presents design-based research as a strategy to address the need for innovation in educational contexts.

The fifth article, entitled Implementation and Deployment of the IMS Learning Design Specification, by Paquette, Marino, De la Teja, Lundgren-Cayrol, Léonard, and Contamines explores the use of educational modeling languages and instructional engineering methods to help decide how to aggregate learning objects in learning and knowledge management environments. The authors describe a set of tools under implementation, such as a graphic Learning Design Editor and a delivery system, using learning object repositories to create IMS-LD online environments. The authors also propose a strategy for the deployment of learning design tools and methods in learning organizations.

At this time, I want to officially welcome Dr. Jennifer Lock, University of Calgary, to the Editorial Staff as Book Review Editor. In this issue, we present two book reviews. In the first review invited by Jennifer Lock, doctoral student Katrin Becker examines the key ideas proposed by Clark Aldrich in his 2005 book, Learning by Doing, A Comprehensive Guide to Simulations, Computer Games, and Pedagogy in e-Learning and other Educational Experiences. In the second review, shepherded through the editorial process by former book review editor, Diane Janes, graduate student David Francis evaluates Online Collaborative Learning: Theory and Practice, a 2004 book by Tim Roberts.

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