

Reinvention: A Democratic Space for Academic Research

Hannah Duffus, Monash University

This time last year, Editor Peter Halat (2018) observed that the world of academic research is becoming increasingly specialised. As a result, many of the papers published in academic journals are inaccessible to an interdisciplinary or lay audience. His beautiful analogy is worth revisiting:

As researchers around the world enlarge the sphere of human knowledge, they spread out on the surface of the sphere, finding themselves further apart from other researchers and deeper into their own pockets of knowledge.

– (Halat, 2018)

Over the past six months, the *Reinvention* editorial team has focused on drawing connections between these ‘points on a sphere’. We have actively reflected upon the links between the seemingly disparate areas of research covered by the journal. As an interdisciplinary team, this act of reaching across subject areas forms part of everything we do. Watching each member become adept at thinking and communicating in a more objective and integrated way has been a continual source of inspiration throughout the production of this issue. My experiences as Editor have convinced me that, though very real, the challenges Peter described can be overcome.

In producing this edition of the journal, we have worked in ways big and small to make *Reinvention* a more democratic space of academic publishing. We are currently in the process of transitioning to the Open Journal System, developed by the Public Knowledge Project in 2014, in order to expand and improve access to academic research (Public Knowledge Project, 2014). *Reinvention* articles will soon be easier to locate and cite, increasing the potential impact of the research we publish. The journal will remain freely accessible and, as always, the rights to published articles will be retained by our authors.

On a smaller scale, the editorial team has directed its energies towards promoting accessible writing. This issue, we have requested that authors make a concerted effort to define key terms, refrain from the use of jargon and thoroughly explain the implications of their specialist work beyond their own academic community. For an outstanding example of accessible writing, see Stephen Enciso’s paper ‘Rancière and Hegel on Freedom and Self-Sufficiency’. I’m also proud to say that we have achieved gender parity in this issue of the journal.

Representation and visibility are essential to building a truly democratic culture of academic research, and we are constantly searching to amplify new voices through our work.

These measures may seem small, but they add up. They are the building blocks of a culture of academic research that benefits people beyond the privileged community of university students and professional academics. In my forthcoming guest editorial for the *Journal of Undergraduate Research in Natural Clinical Science and Technology*, I propose that undergraduate journals such as *Reinvention* and *URNCSST* can challenge the structure and practices of the larger academic community. Firstly, they provide a formal outlet for the expression of the unique and valuable ‘undergraduate perspective’; not yet fully indoctrinated into the practices of their field, undergraduate researchers are often more flexible and creative in their assessment of research problems. Secondly, these journals elevate the profile of undergraduate research, encouraging students to reconceptualise their coursework as research and to develop greater agency in their studies. Thirdly, they provide opportunities for scholars at different stages of their academic careers to connect and compare perspectives on common problems. Undergraduate research has a strong future in a world that demands comprehensive, interdisciplinary solutions.

Edition 12.1 of *Reinvention* brings to you six original research papers and two book reviews. When reading through this issue, I hope that our efforts at promoting accessibility will enable you to grasp something that would otherwise have remained out of reach.

Rachel Hart’s paper ‘Man Down: The Evolution of Masculinity and Mental Health Narratives in Rap Music’ is a fascinating account of British and American rap culture’s shifting engagement with men’s mental health. Hart demonstrates rigour and flair in her combined use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and makes a solid case for how her findings map on to our social world.

Naish Gawen's 'Conservative Censors, Banned Books: Reading the Reports of Australia's Commonwealth Literature Censorship Board' also explores the connections between popular culture and social life, this time in the context of controversial literature. Note this paper's strong narrative structure, which aids both readability and resonance.

Helena Wall's 'Perceptions of Professional Competence in the Context of an Office-Based Workplace' also holds a mirror up to our society, as she asks how we perceive and negotiate the meaning of 'competence' in the workplace. She demonstrates great aptitude for nuanced yet clear discussion of sophisticated methodological design, enhanced by her use of 'textual diagrams'.

Bastian Hagmaier also examines the meaning of professional competence, this time in the context of environmental activism. His paper, 'Sustainable Entrepreneurs as Change Agents: Relevant Key Competencies for Sustainability', makes impactful recommendations for improving higher education in this field, profiting from Hagmaier's dual position as student and researcher.

This brings us to our two stimulating philosophy papers of this issue. Kida Lin's 'Promise To Do Wrong' and Stephen Enciso's 'Rancière and Hegel on Freedom and Self-Sufficiency' both show great skill in 'opening up' an often inaccessible discipline. One way in which they do this is by prompting the reader's active engagement with the paper; Lin invites us to join him in solving a puzzle, while Enciso asks us to reflect critically on universal human concerns – 'what do they really mean?' Enciso is particularly attuned to the importance of his paper beyond his immediate discipline, and constantly reiterates the 'real life' implications of his work.

This issue also brings you two book reviews of Erin Tarver's *The I in Team: Sports Fandom and the Reproduction of Identity*. Ella Murphy, an Arts/Science undergraduate at Monash University, and Philip Gaydon, a graduate student at the University of Warwick, critically evaluate Tarver's 2017 study of sports fandom. Both reviewers discuss the text in light of *Reinvention's* distinct priorities, questioning the accessibility of a text that directly addresses sports fans. This book was selected by the editorial team for its rigorous analysis of an everyday aspect of human culture, which deserves attention from the academic community.

We are anticipating a bumper issue in October, when many papers currently in the final stages of review will be published. You can expect a thoroughly interdisciplinary edition featuring exciting work from a host of international authors.

Congratulations to all our authors published in April, and a huge thanks to our editorial team in Europe and Australia. We'd love your feedback on *Reinvention's* new platform and look, so please get in touch at reinventionjournal@warwick.ac.uk.

Happy reading!

References

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