Welcome to the podcast for Learning, Media and Technology (LMT). I’m Martin Oliver.

My name’s Neil Selwyn.

And I’m Rebecca Eynon.

We’ve got a series of questions that we’ve been asked to think about for the podcast so we’re just going to run through these. The first is ‘how do we describe LMT and what are its aims and scope?’

LMT is a Journal which derives from two or three different journals in the past, one of which was the Journal of Education Media – another one was called Education, Communication and Information – and I think that gives you a flavour of what we’re looking at. We’re interested in the application of different digital technologies and media to learning and education in its widest sense, so we’re interested in school settings, university settings but also informal settings, adult education, everything. As long as it’s an interesting social science paper and it looks at some aspect of the application of media and technology to education then we’re interested.

One of the things that is distinctive about the Journal is that social sciences / humanities perspective on the topic. It’s something which a lot of other journals in the area don’t do – they’re more focused on a purely educational perspective or a psychology perspective – and although we’ll take papers which cover those remits we do have that tradition of work which is quite distinctive.

This is not a technology Journal: I think the most important word is in fact ‘learning’ and all of the social things which are attached to it.

So the next question is ‘what do we look for when considering articles or submissions?’

I think we look for a range of different things; one of the key issues is the added value the paper offers us and what is it really telling us that adds to the debate about learning technology, media and education. We also look for articles that are very well written, that have a very strong sense of where they’re located in the literature, that know how they contribute theoretically and academically to the topic. We also look for articles that have a very strong set of data that people can use very effectively to contribute to the area and extend the current thinking on a particular topic.

I also think it’s important that articles speak to all of the different readerships that our Journal covers, both in terms of discipline and in terms of location. We’re a very international Journal, so when we’re looking at articles we want to know ‘how does this actually speak to a reader in Singapore or the United States or Australia?’ But we’re also – because we’re such an interdisciplinary Journal – ‘how does your article really speak to a media educator, for example, or a design technologist or someone working in higher education?’ We’re looking for papers that start off very, very broad and tell a story which is actually useful to all of the people who might be actually reading the Journal.
I think the other thing to emphasise with this is that the majority of our papers are empirical papers but we do also take things which are literature based – we’ll take position pieces. If we’re having submissions of that kind, the important thing is to have a clear sense of the audience and the purpose so that it’s actually giving a message to a particular group.

I think the main thing about any papers we accept is ‘so what?’: ‘what are you actually trying to say?’; ‘what’s the big story?’; ‘why should people be interested?’ If you can have that in mind when you’re writing a paper for the Journal then you stand a much better chance of actually getting to referee and taking it forward.

What are our aspirations for the future of the Journal?

I think one of our aspirations is to broaden out our readership and broaden out the people who write for the Journal so it’s not just people within the educational technology field – although that’s incredibly important – I think we need to connect far more with the wider social science disciplines, to think much more about internet studies generally as a field and how that could contribute to our thinking and writing on this topic.

I agree. I think this is such an important area of education and learning that we’re really looking to broaden out our readership and indeed the authors from all different disciplines: philosophy; geography; history; economics. I think we need to move beyond the bubble of ed-tech research and I think that’s actually what makes the Journal quite distinctive. Unlike other titles in this area we’re not just focused on learning technology and education technology – we’re a much broader church then that.

What are the most important or controversial subjects in contemporary debates?

I think one of the weaknesses of this field is the use or the misuse of theory and I think there is a need for having much clearer theoretical foundations to the fields that we’re working in, so I think one of the most controversial areas is the use of learning theory. For example, why are we applying twentieth century theory to twenty-first century problems and really problematizing the link between the theory and empirical work? In many ways these are lots and lots of issues that people don’t normally address and we’re trying to encourage people to have this debate through the Journal.

I think one of the key issues here really is the fact that because often academics aren’t very good at getting their message out there then we have a lot of kind of ‘pop ideas’ and popular ideas that really aren’t based on any kind of empirical evidence or theoretical thinking and I think that’s one of the things that we – as a Journal – have as a role, to influence that debate and change that discourse so it’s much more empirically focussed or thought through theoretically.

Moving beyond the hype of Twitter and Facebook and the cloud and the semantic web and all these things that we’re told are going to be the future of education and learning. We need to actually have a much more nuanced academic debate about these things – make them controversies.

And also much more of a sense of history; one of the problems that often comes up in the field is that you see an article where none of the references are more than five years old as if the field just came out of nowhere at that point, whereas actually we’ve got a tradition dating back fifty/sixty years. That sense of where this has come from and importantly the issues that recur throughout that period rather than just discovering it for the
first time with Facebook or whatever – that’s something which I think is one of the things which we aspire to
with the Journal as a whole, one of the things we encourage authors to do.

NS
Don’t just look forward. We’re interested in people that actually look backwards and actually consider the
present as well. Too much of this field only looks at the near future. What’s happening in the present?
What’s the state of the actual as opposed to the state of the art? What can we learn from history?

MO
LMT publishes special issues. How do we feel these fit into the Journal’s ethos of variety and internationality
and how do you go about proposing one?

MO
We try and have at least one special issue every year – we have had two in some years – and we see these as
an essential part of our publishing strategy. Typically, special issues are very timely pieces which draw
together important work on a new field or offer a fresh perspective on something that’s established. For
example, recently we’ve had a spate of issues across a number of journals on topics like virtual worlds or social
media: we’ve tried to look at special issues which take a particular stance in relation to those issues so not just,
you know, ‘hear it is, is it a good thing or not?’, but ‘how does this tie in to some these more historical
problems?’ and ‘what does this say about those ongoing issues that we face?’

NS
I think the special issues are often the most important part of the Journal inasmuch as we get some really,
really interesting themed issues which actually turn out to be the most popular and the most widely read of all
the things that we publish. We encourage proposals - we’ve been trying to make it a competitive process and
indeed what we’re doing at the moment is every year we’ll have ‘calls for proposals for special issues’ which
will then be judged by the Editorial Board, and we’ll look to have one or two of the best each year. I think if
they’re done properly special issues can be a really valuable resource that the Journal’s keen to keep using for
forthcoming years.

NS
I think the whole field of education media and education technology is going to get more and more important
over the next few years and it’s a really interesting area in which to publish, but it’s also becoming more
competitive, so while we’ll encourage you to submit your articles we’ll also warn you that actually we’re
getting so many new submissions now that it’s incredibly difficult to actually get through to publication. By all
means put things forward but we’d also encourage authors who are just beginning to think about publishing in
this area to also consider the book reviews section, for example, or the viewpoints section, and get in involved
with the Journal as a reviewer. There are many other things you can do as well as just publishing full articles
and we encourage people to actually get in involved in these other areas as well.

MO
The viewpoint articles are short pieces where people have the chance to explain an idea or a position or raise
questions about a body of work. They’re quite important as part of an ongoing conversation about work in the
area but they give you a chance to make a point without needing a full study or an extensive review.

NS
They give you a chance to express a particularly focussed argument or a particular topic or even just present
emerging research data without the need of having to write a 6,000 word paper, and often these can be a very
useful way of actually getting your research across. Feel free to submit a viewpoint article. Feel free to get
involved in the book reviews and feel free to also submit full articles.