***Management Learning* in a time of crisis and opportunity**

**By Todd Bridgman and Martyna Śliwa**

2020 was a year like no other and we expect we are not alone in being glad to have seen the end of it. The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged us in so many ways. Established norms in the life of academics, like heading to the office and giving face-to-face lectures were disrupted almost overnight, testing our students’ and our own resilience. We have missed the opportunity to connect with friends and colleagues at conferences and other academic events, although we have also appreciated not having to engage in international and intercontinental travel.

Sadly, 2020 was a year when we lost our former Editor-in-Chief Mark Easterby-Smith after a long battle with Parkinson’s disease. Mark, an Emeritus Professor at the University of Lancaster, was a leader in the field of organizational learning and pivotal in the development and success of *Management Learning*. One of Mark’s legacies to our field is the many scholars in our community who he supervised, mentored and supported. In 2020 Mark was made a Distinguished Fellow of *Management Learning*, an initiative to honour scholars who have made a sustained contribution to the journal.

Notwithstanding the challenges and losses brought by last year, the past 12 months have also been an exciting and special time for *Management Learning*, as we celebrated our 50th Anniversary. A highlight was our anniversary-themed special issue ‘Historical reflections at the intersection of past and future’. We also took advantage of the anniversary to showcase influential papers published during the past 50 years. These were chosen by members of our editorial team and accompanied with their reflection on ‘What Management Learning Means to Me’. You can access the collection from the journal website.

2020 was also a successful year for the journal as reflected by a significant increase in our two-year impact factor to 2.180. Whilst retaining our distinctiveness of publishing critical, reflexive scholarship on learning and organization will always be more important than the impact factor, it demonstrates that *Management Learning* papers are getting cited more than ever before, which is something we can all be proud of. We also recognize that measures such as the impact factor and international rankings are a consideration for many potential submitters, so we remain conscious of them whilst continuing to deliver on the journal’s mission.

The last year was one of transition for the journal, with Emma Bell completing her five-year term as Co-Editor-in-Chief. Emma joined the editorial team in 2013 as Associate Editor and leaves an indelible imprint. As well as being an outstanding scholar, Emma has been a dedicated curator of the journal, seeing curatorship as “a process that involves collectively attending to and taking care of articles-as-objects that are read, shared and cited by others” (Bell & Bridgman, 2019: 147-151). Emma has embraced and enhanced ‘quirkiness’ –questioning and breaching taken-for-granted, formulaic norms of academic publishing (Bell & Bridgman, 2018) – as a defining feature of scholarship published in *Management Learning*. Nowhere was this better reflected than in the Writing Differently special issue published in 2019 that Emma was instrumental in commissioning. A number of papers from that special issue are accruing citations rapidly, and Ruth Weatherall’s (2018) challenge to ‘write the doctoral thesis differently’ has been shared widely amongst the doctoral student community on social media. Emma is handing the Co-Editor-in-Chief’s role over to Martyna Śliwa (University of Essex, UK) who has previously served as an Associate Editor. Martyna is hoping to continue with curating *Management Learning*, guided by the same ethos of ‘quirkiness’ and publishing critical, reflexive scholarship that has been central to Emma’s approach. We thank Emma for her outstanding service to the journal over so many years, look forward to drawing on her wisdom in her role as Editor Emerita and wish her all the best for her next challenge.

Other changes to the editorial team include an expansion of the Associate Editor roles in response to a significant increase in the number of submissions. During the year we welcomed Gabrielle Durepos (Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada) who led the recent 50th anniversary special issue, David Jones (Northumbria University, UK) who led last year’s much anticipated special issue on ‘The performative university’ and Amy Way (Villanova University, US). Amy specializes in organizational communication, a research community that has been a strong supporter of *Management Learning* over many years. Starting soon will be François-Xavier de Vaujany (Université Paris-Dauphine, France), whose research focuses on new organizational forms in the digital era.

As well as welcoming new members to the team, we bid farewell to Associate Editors Steve Kempster (Lancaster University, UK), James McDonald (University of Texas at San Antonio, US) and Arne Carlsen (BI Norwegian Business School, Norway). Deborah Brewis (University of Bath, UK) has moved out of the social media role to become our inaugural Provocation Essays Editor. Cara Reed (Cardiff University, UK) has joined our team, replacing Deborah as the Social Media Editor. Deborah and Emma have written an overview of the provocation essay section (available on the journal website) which we highly recommend to anyone considering making a submission. In this year of change it was reassuring that some things remained the same. The journal’s administrator, Lisa Burns, continues to provide outstanding support for the editorial team, special issue editors and submitters, and for that we are truly grateful.

2021 promises to be another exciting year for the journal, especially regarding special issues. We will continue to publish two special issues each year, an initiative to diversify and grow the journal’s readership. The pandemic has devastated societies and economies, but it has also been affirming to see new forms of care, community and solidarity emerge. Time will tell the ways and extent to which work and organization will be changed by Covid-19, but we do know there has been tremendous innovation and improvisation in response to the crisis. This will be explored in our forthcoming Covid-19 themed special issue ‘Improvising as the new normal’. Submissions close on March 1, 2021; the call for papers is available on the journal website. We also have an open call for submissions on ‘The hidden curriculum of responsibility (un)learning at business schools’. And this year we will publish special issues on ‘The unsettled humanities’ and ‘Identities and learning (not) to be different’.

We wish you all the best for a happy, healthy and inspiring 2021, and look forward to working with the *Management Learning* community to deliver the very best scholarship on organization and learning.

**References**

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