Editorial

This year's ALT-C saw the start of a new initiative: the introduction of a dedicated strand for research papers, to complement the shorter presentations and posters that have formed the heart of the conference thus far. As part of this initiative, a separate publication containing the full research papers was produced alongside the book of abstracts. This was produced by John Cook (London Metropolitan University, UK) and David McConnell (Sheffield University, UK) and is available to order from the ALT website.

In previous years, authors have been invited to submit papers from the conference to a special issue of ALT-J. This year, we were unsure whether authors would feel the need to submit updated papers to ALT-J when a full version had already been published. In the end, the number of conference papers submitted was lower than in previous years; as a result this issue contains a mixture of these and other articles. We suspect that this will be the pattern for future years, too, and so have decided to suspend the annual conference issue of the journal. This means that ALT-J will now involve two regular issues and one themed issue per year, giving authors greater flexibility and making the editorial workload smoother. Authors of papers at ALT-C (from any strand) are still encouraged to submit their work to the journal, where their papers will be considered alongside our regular submissions.

Our last themed issue was the memorial edition for David Squires. This issue opens with another paper that we could not include in 10 (3) for reasons of space. Tosunoglu Blake *et al.* consider different approaches to evaluating learning technology. David Squires encouraged educational evaluators and Human Computer Interaction (HCI) specialists to learn from each other in order to advance their joint concern of improving education; reassuringly, they find some evidence to suggest that there is convergence between these approaches.

Our other articles address a number of important topics. Goodyear *et al.* examine the relationship between conceptions of learning, approaches to study and participation in

four networked learning courses; the lack of evidence they find for a relationship between these implies that all learners have the potential to benefit from such courses. Rowley considers ways of studying students' use of electronic information services, something which has formed a major focus for development work within the UK. This work represents an important step towards developing systematic conclusions about patterns of use and impact, rather than relying solely on informative but isolated case studies. Davies presents a study of computer-aided peer assessment that proves it is both possible and beneficial to support anonymized discussion of feedback.

The article selected as a discussion piece for this issue has been provided by Lisewski and Joyce. This piece concerns the way in which learning technology practitioners are using models (such as Gilly Salmon's five-stage e-moderating model), and argues that we need to be more cautious and thoughtful in how we use these if they are to enhance our academic legitimacy rather than leaving us beholden to managerial, commodifying influences on higher education. This is a thought-provoking and timely article, particularly given ALT's aspiration to act as a professional body – it raises important questions about what it means for us to have 'professional' expertise and highlights the difficult tension between drawing on simple but uncritical 'solutions' and losing sight of practice in thoughtful but abstract conceptions. A response to this article is currently being written; this, together with the rejoinder from Lisewski and Joyce, will appear in issue 11 (2).

Martin Oliver
Deputy Editor