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EDITORIAL

## Editorial

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This issue of the 28<sup>th</sup> volume of *Literacy and Numeracy Studies: An international journal in the education and training of adults* will be the Journal's final issue. While we never planned to, and will not, indulge in an issue by issue reminiscence of the Journal, it seemed fitting for Rosie Wickert, one of the founding editors of the Journal, and Keiko Yasukawa, the last remaining editor of the Journal, to jointly write this final and reflective Editorial.

*Literacy and Numeracy Studies* was already seven years old when it was born in 1997; it was launched to continue the work of the journal *Open Letter: Australian Journal for Adult Literacy Research and Policy* which had been publishing since 1990 as part of the national project of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy. *Open Letter* was ably edited during that time by Ian Reid and Lesley Farrell and was a significant acknowledgement that adult literacy had earned recognition as a field of professional and academic study - it was indeed a 'milestone' (Simpson 1990: 1). When the funding support for *Open Letter* ceased, literacy and numeracy educators at the University of Technology Sydney made a commitment to continue the journal as an internationally refereed journal 'concerned with the ways that language, literacy and numeracy are implicated in all aspects of adult life' (Wickert 1996: 6). Like *Open Letter*, *Literacy and Numeracy Studies* was envisaged to support and publish the work of new writers as well as the work of more established academics and practitioners - a vision which we believe we have fulfilled, and which is reflected in the current issue with the first article from Roslyn Appleby, a well established researcher in applied linguistics, and the second article by Alison Abraham, whose article draws from her recent doctoral research.

Without aiming to systematically review all of the past issues of the Journal we begin with a reflection of what this Journal set out to achieve, and what we believe it has achieved. One of the most noticeable changes in the breadth of the Journal's scope compared to its predecessor's

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was the inclusion of ‘numeracy’ in the name, and consequently, the number of articles that have been published with that focus. These articles advanced socio-cultural or socio-material practice theorisations of numeracy, and include conceptual, methodological and pedagogical papers as well as case studies of numeracy practices (Baker 1998, Baynham & Johnston 1998, Beeli-Zimmermann 2011, Evans 2002, Fitzsimons 2003, Tomlin 2002).

During the life of the Journal, an interest in adult literacy and numeracy as context-dependent social practices blossomed in the research field; however, policy interest – internationally as well as nationally – has been increasingly influenced by a human capital perspective treating literacy and numeracy primarily as resources for economic growth and productivity. This policy setting generated a number of articles in the Journal critiquing that trend and advocating alternative policy futures (Black & Yasukawa, 2010, Castleton, Sanguinetti & Falk 2001, Limage 2009, Lo Bianco 1997, Osmond 2016, Reder 2009).

The human capital focused policy has influenced employers’ perspectives on the role of literacy and numeracy in workplaces and in turn workplace literacy and numeracy programs. How literacy ‘works’ in workplaces and critical analysis of, as well as innovations in, workplace programs have been reported in a number of the articles (Alkema 2019, Jackson 2000, Scheeres 2007, Searle, 2001). Related to these studies are critical studies of literacy and numeracy as the panacea for unemployment (Black 2004, Bynner 2004, Jacobson 2016).

The impact of narrowing the scope of policy and increasing the accountabilities attached to adult literacy and numeracy programs has been the subject of some of the articles documenting the changing work and identities of teachers (Smith 2009, Tusting 2009). However, none of the official policy initiatives that narrow the scope and meaning of adult literacy and numeracy have narrowed the diversity of contexts in which adult literacy and numeracy needs are felt. In addition to featuring continued work in literacy and numeracy for vocational and academic purposes (Chapman 1998, Hood, Rose & De Silva Joyce 2008, Martin, LaCroix & Fownes 2006), the journal has continued to publish studies undertaken in a range of community-based and family-focused programs (Boughton, Ah Chee, Beetson, Durnan & Leblanch 2013, Chodkiewicz, Johnston & Yasukawa 2005, Choi & Najjar 2017, Furness 2013, Smythe & Isserlis 2004). Health literacy and numeracy is another area that defies a narrow conceptualisation of literacy and numeracy, and an emerging interest in understanding what it means to be health literate and numerate and how people develop these literacies and numeracies has been discussed in a number of articles (Archer, Frith & Prince 2002, Green, Lo Bianco & Wyn 2007, Hunter & Franken 2012, Nutbeam 1999, Papen 2009).

By browsing the issues of *Literacy and Numeracy Studies* readers can gain a critical perspective on the dominant policy trends both internationally and nationally but also see that no policy effort has been able to suppress researchers’ interest nor practitioners’ commitment to making positive interventions in the lived literacy and numeracy experiences of adults. Studies that show the transformative impacts of literacy and numeracy on individuals’ lives and identities and the ways in which literacy and numeracy practices themselves are fluid and changeable in response to changes in people’s lives and their socio-political environment attest to the futility of any narrow framing of adult literacy and numeracy (Campbell 1998, Hamilton 2009, Kubascikova, Evans & Khan 2018, Marston & Johnson-Abdelmalik 2015, Swain 2005).

As editors we firmly believe that *Literacy and Numeracy Studies* has contributed in significant ways to opening up and promoting debates, informing practice and supporting research in adult literacy and numeracy. The decision to discontinue the journal has not been easy. Since starting to publish as a free, open access journal through UTS ePress, the Journal has been more easily accessible to a wider readership, particularly practitioners not affiliated with a university. We are confident, however, that both the academic research community, practitioners and others interested in adult literacy and numeracy will continue to be well-served with research in the field through the new open access online journal *Adult Literacy Education: The international journal of adult language, literacy and numeracy* published by the ProLiteracy group in

the USA (<https://www.proliteracy.org/ale-journal>) and the open access online journal *Adults Learning Mathematics: An international journal* published by the Adults Learning Mathematics group <https://alm-online.net/alm-publications/alm-journal/>.

Keeping the Journal going for 23 years has not been without its challenges, and we are grateful for the support of many people. We want to acknowledge the work of all of the other past editors Mike Baynham, Alison Lee, Hermine Scheeres, Jean Searle, Stephen Black, Katherine Gordon, Diana Coben and Nicola McCartney; editorial and administrative assistants Sue Anderson, Renata Atkin and Emma Davidson; the team at Printing Services at the University of Technology Sydney who printed the Journal when it was produced in hardcopy, and the UTS ePress team who has been publishing our journal in its recent online platform. We also want to thank the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney which has provided a home for the Journal over its entire life. Finally and importantly, we want to express our sincere thanks to all those who have written for the Journal, and all the readers; it is your support that has kept the journal going.

We now leave you with the final two articles of this Journal. The first article by Roslyn Appleby introduces us to the ideas of ‘nature-deficit disorders’ and ‘entangled pedagogies’ to help us think about the potential of focusing on human-animal relationships in literacy teaching. The second article by Alison Abraham is based on an action-research study on the impact of drawing on the teacher’s and their students’ shared local socio-cultural knowledge in an academic literacy program. We hope you enjoy this last issue.

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