

## Editor's introduction

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For this issue the *LTHE* editorial team has said 'thank you and farewell' to Dr. Marion Engin, who had served as our Reflections Editor since 2013; and welcomes as her replacement Dr. Christina Gitsaki of Zayed University's Center for Educational Innovation (in addition to Dr. Valerie Goby who continues as Reviews Editor).

The first paper in this issue, by Al-Ali and Ahmed, examines students' responses to iPad-based e-textbooks in their early courses at college. They review some potential advantages of e-textbooks, as well as barriers which can prevent the realization of this potential; and present data from college students regarding how they perceive the e-books they have been using. They found that students, although generally favouring the use of e-textbooks, were aware of features which they currently lack in comparison with print textbooks. The next paper, by Brandt and Dimmitt, focuses on the work of Writing Centers (an important area of learning support discussed by McHarg in the previous issue of *LTHE*). They investigate the work of peer tutors, and examine how these more able students draw on their past learning experience, as well as their more recent training, to advise fellow students who are writing an assignment. Brandt and Dimmitt find that the peer tutors tend to use methods familiar to them from their own pre-university learning experience, and could benefit from training to use more learner-centred approaches.

The following three papers in this issue involve participants reflecting on a range of courses or other learning experiences for undergraduate students. Hickey et al. discuss a growing area in higher education both in the Gulf and worldwide: undergraduate research. This can involve students in roles quite different from those in a regular course; and it can be challenging to support students in these roles while allowing them to develop their independent skills. Hickey and his research team used concepts of situated learning and learning community to help facilitate students' participation in a research project; they enabled students to make a significant contribution to the project and also built research capacity among the students involved. The paper presents some of the methods they used within this approach, as well as evidence of learning and development by the students. Tanko's paper builds on his previous paper in *LTHE* 11/1, discussing a course inspired by Mathematics for Social Justice. He presents the rationale and learning goals for such a course, in the context of an early-tertiary course for female Gulf national students, emphasizing that the aim is both to develop mathematical skills and also to enable students to understand ('read') and help to shape ('write') the world in which they live. He describes the processes of reasoning, reflection, investigation and action whereby students explored mathematical aspects of a real-world topic and gained the confidence to initiate discussion of their findings with authoritative figures in their local context. Finally, Al Rawahi and Al-Mekhlafi discuss the effect of online collaborative project-based learning on students with no previous experience of such a methodology. They compare students who experience this approach with others learning with a more traditional approach, and reflect critically on ways in which learners benefited in the two approaches.

As always, I would like to thank the peer reviewers whose feedback on submissions to *LTHE* has helped to sharpen the focus and content of the papers mentioned above. Reviewers for this issue include

Ahmad Alhaqbani, Cheri MacLeod, Fairlie Atkinson, Fayez Sayed, Hind Zantout, Kenneth Zuercher, Lavius Daniels, Magdalena Karolak, Marion Engin, Paul Carroll, Susan Jones, and Zeina Hojeij.

We also thank the two contributors who have authored book reviews published in this issue. Jerry Spring discusses a new collection *Critical perspectives on technology and education*, which questions assumptions about technology as inevitably 'educational', and examines how technology fits in with learning, teaching and variables such as gender, in a range of social contexts. Eddia Solas reviews a collection of *Recipes for remarkable research*, covering aspects including teamwork, documentation and inspiration. Both of these books seem likely to provide valuable insights for those reflecting on and researching learning and teaching in higher education contexts.

If you wish to submit a paper to LTHE, please review the information in the ABOUT section of our website <http://lthe.zu.ac.ae> to understand the scope and policies of the journal, then register as an author, log in and select *New submission*. As noted in our previous issue, *LTHE* also informs readers and Twitter followers about events related to the scope of the journal; if you would like to circulate information about such an event (or raise any other matter), please contact us using the email link on our website or via Twitter ([@LTHEgulf](https://twitter.com/LTHEgulf)).