Celebrating Six Years of *JoCI*

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After six years of publishing the *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, it is time to reflect on the past, report on the present, and look to the future. As a new editorial team, we have spent time this year learning about *JoCI*'s inception and original vision, while simultaneously reviewing policy and procedures and assembling articles and reviews for this issue. Beginning this spring, we are implementing innovations that we hope will keep *JoCI* fresh and relevant. Here, we share a brief history of *JoCI* and its growth over the last six years as we celebrate its original mission to provide free quality research and practitioner articles for higher education faculty, PreK-12 teachers, graduate students in education, pre-service teacher education candidates, school administrators, and educational policymakers.

2004 - 2007 *JoCI* is Born

The *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction* began with an idea that evolved into a reality. In 2004, Drs. Terry Atkinson, Sue Steinweg, and Katherine O'Connor, three professors in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at East Carolina University (ECU), had a vision to publish an electronic peer-reviewed journal that would be available to teachers and teacher educators who might not otherwise have access to peer-reviewed professional literature about PreK-12 education. They were encouraged by their chair to explore the possibilities – the need, the support, and the logistics – for launching such a journal.

The three founders first investigated resources on the ECU campus and identified what was being published locally and what server resources might be available to them. Because nothing was available on campus, they approached the Office of Academic Outreach, a unit that has pioneered many technology innovations at ECU. They found the Public Knowledge Project, an organization that was developing open source software programs that are available free of charge and can be edited to meet the design needs of the users. Open Journal

Systems (OJS) was selected as the program that best fit the original goal to produce a free journal. Housing the journal on a local server provided for customization of the appearance and features of an online journal. Every phase of the process including submission, peer-reviewing, and publication is electronic. In 2007, the editors registered with the Library of Congress for an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). Later, the application for a Digital Object Identifier (doi) was obtained to store metadata of the articles in the digital environment.

The original editorial team made decisions concerning all aspects of the editorial process, including the submission and publication timeline and sections and type of articles they wished to include. They determined that issues would be published twice a year in pdf and audio (mp3) formats, and they identified a series of special topics and invited experts for each. They planned for rotating editorship with one new editor joining and one current editor leaving the team each semester.

The inaugural issue of the electronic open-access *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction* was launched in July 2007. It included three peer-reviewed sections, Research Forum, Practitioner's Platform, and Perspective. It also contained one invited article from a national leader in the themed area and an introductory piece by a guest editor that provided an overview of the issue and each article. In the fall of 2007, an executive editor (first author) was added as a permanent member of every team. She provides constancy and bridges the editorial board with the management of OJS and technical assistance.

2008 – 2012 *JoCI* Comes of Age

The original format of the journal and the editorial board configuration continued over the next five years with few changes. Beginning in 2009, the ECU team was joined by editors from sister universities, including the University of Tennessee, St. John's University, and Western Carolina University. To see a list of members from each editorial team over the past six years, go to http://www.joci.ecu.edu/index.php/JoCI/about/editorialTeam

In 2010, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) selected *JoCI*'s editorial team as the recipient of the prestigious Edward C. Pomeroy Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teacher Education. The award recognizes distinguished service to the teacher education community for the development and promotion of outstanding practices in teacher education at the collegiate, state, or national level.

Currently, production of the journal involves the executive editor and three co-editors, two graduate assistants, reviewers and proofreaders, and resource support from the Department of Literacy Studies, English Education, and History

Education (formerly one of the programs in Curriculum and Instruction), the Dean of the College of Education, and the Provost of the University.

Publication Acceptance Rate and Themes

During these six years and 11 issues, 337 manuscripts have been submitted to *JoCI* for blind-review. Forty-seven were accepted for publication, with an overall acceptance rate of 14%. Three issues have been open topic. Special theme issues have included

- Literacy: Best Practices in an Age of High-Stakes Assessment
- Social Studies Teaching & Learning: Preparing Citizens for a Global Society
- Addressing the Needs of All Learners
- Using Action Research to Improve Educational Practice
- Transformative Leadership
- Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in High-Need Content and Geographic Areas
- Preparing Students with 21st Century ICT Literacy in Math and Science Education
- Diversity and Global Learning

Readership

Between June 2007 and December 2012, readers of the journal have come from 169 countries around the world. Outside the US, the highest number of visits have come from Indonesia, Malaysia, Canada, the Philippines, Romania, and the United Kingdom.

- 73,985 visits with 319,177 page views
  - 50,168 visits from the US
  - 1,452 visits from the UK
  - 21,365 visits from 167 other countries and territories
- 1,221 visits via mobile devices
- 54,182 (73.23%) new visitors; 19,803 (26.77%) returning visitors
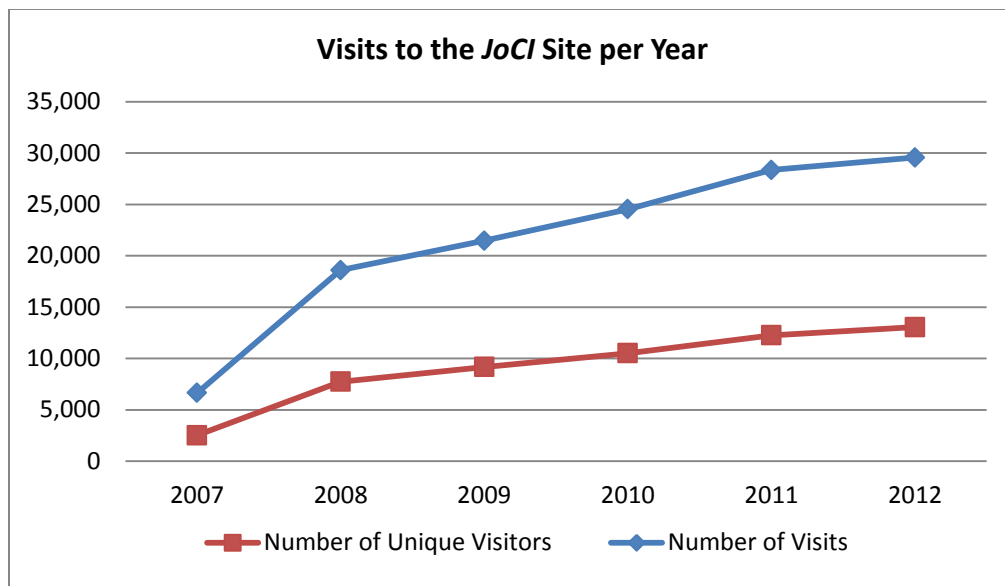- 1,231 registered subscribers

Figure 1: Site visits to *JoCI* from data recorded by Google Analytics.

In This Issue

In "What knowledge is of most worth: Divergent content knowledge filters in social studies education," Thomas Misco (2013) identifies the complex and broad nature of the field of social studies education and explores the impact that such complexity and lack of specificity have upon program area students, who may be called upon after graduation to teach classes of history, geography, political science, economics, sociology, and more. In this study of one program's undergraduate and graduate students, Misco examined teacher education students' perceptions of their coursework to identify which courses students believed better prepared them to take the Praxis II exam and/or to teach middle and high school courses. The results of the study suggest that students found fault with all types of courses. They viewed their content coursework as lacking the depth they needed for effective lesson planning and teaching and identified their upper level courses, which focused on specific time periods or topics, as being too narrow to effectively prepare them for the Praxis II. Further, they complained that education courses needed to be more responsive to the realities of middle and high school settings. The author concludes with suggestions of how to refocus and reconfigure social studies programs to more effectively address the needs of future social studies educators.

In her study, "Preaching what we practice: A study of revision," Shelbie Witte (2013) explores the disparity between the revision practices that teachers employ in their own writing and those that they teach to their classroom students.

Over the course of three years, Witte conducted a multi-tiered study of 181 National Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute participants with data including pre- and post-surveys, focus groups, follow-up questions, and analysis of writing samples. Her results identify eight themes that collectively highlight both challenges and possibilities, including a recognition that prior to the NWP professional development and associated involvement with the NWP's Electronic Anthology, study participants identified revision as a critical skill in their own writing, yet as a group and individually, they offered inconsistent definitions of revision and revision strategies. Further, only 30% of participants spent more than two hours per month on revision in their classrooms, and most failed to incorporate the strategies that they normally used when revising their own work. After the teachers participated in the NWP professional development, however, their practices reflected significant shifts: a greater alignment between teachers' personal revision strategies and the revisions strategies they incorporated into their writing instruction, a greater likelihood that they would provide students opportunities to access digital writing environments in the classroom, and a greater emphasis on the importance of authentic audiences.

In the perspective piece, "The use of game dynamics to enhance curriculum and instruction: What teachers can learn from the design of video games," Curtis Chandler (2013) discusses the possibility of using specific aspects of game design to plan academic instruction at the secondary level. He endorses the belief that students are hard-wired to learn and to play, and he describes how implementing the tools of game design may tap into both. First, he reviews research findings of the benefits of using video games in classroom instruction, exploration, and practice. These include increased levels of motivation and engagement and improved visual and spatial skills, mathematic achievement, problem-solving, and higher order thinking. Next, Chandler identifies five game dynamics that will help teachers *think like game designers* as they plan lessons and activities. Each design element – narrative context, explicit interconnectedness, well-ordered problems, control and choice, and customization and co-design – is defined. Classroom examples in language arts, science, and social studies are offered to illustrate how the design elements can be incorporated into an enhanced learning experience for students. Chandler also includes cautions for educators who are willing to consider using game dynamics in curriculum planning. He calls for further research and collaboration between game designers and educators to develop more effective and engaging educational experiences for students.

This issue marks the return of book reviews to *JoCI,* and two are included here. In *Knowing and Writing School History: The Language of Students' Expository Writing and Teachers' Expectations* (2011)*,* Luciana C. de Oliveira explores writing and the components that signal successful composition in high school and middle grades history classes. The author offers novice and

experienced teachers new ways to consider their students' writing, and through systemic-functional linguistics, she makes a valuable contribution to disciplinary literacy. The book review is by Sarah Drake Brown.

In *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (2012), Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman offer a detailed, logical, and clearly structured exploration of the new Common Core State Standards and how they might be implemented. The authors divide the text into strand-specific chapters, an approach that allows readers to easily find sections that relate to their specific questions or interests. While the authors acknowledge that questions and concerns about the CCSS linger, they highlight that this effort has the potential to promote significant positive change within education. The book review is by Sharilyn C. Steadman.

Looking Forward

As we look to the future of *JoCI*, we continue the pursuit of providing free online access of the journal to readers across the globe. To this end, we encourage readers to consider *JoCI* as an outlet for their scholarship. We accept submissions of empirically-based manuscripts related to teaching and learning from researchers and practitioners from PreK-12 schools, colleges, and universities. Manuscripts will be evaluated on innovation, quality of scholarship, and contribution to the field of curriculum and instruction. The original three peer-reviewed sections include:

- **Research Forum** – Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research studies. Literature reviews are current and focused on research questions. Methods sections include detailed descriptions of participants, instruments, and procedures. Discussions draw conclusions from extant literature and research findings and state implications for future research or practice.

- **Practitioner's Platform** – Descriptions of action research and professional practice supported by research-based literature and implemented in academic setting.

- **Perspective –** Commentaries, position papers, and policy analyses based on current empirical research. Manuscripts provide an empirically-based point of view on topics that may include current issues in curriculum and instruction.

Two new peer-reviewed sections are being added to *JoCI.*

- **International Investigations** – Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research studies with an international focus. Literature reviews are current and focused on research questions. Methods sections include detailed descriptions of participants, instruments, and procedures. Discussions draw conclusions from extant literature and research findings and state implications that may focus on specific geographic locations, but that contain an element of generalizability for future research or practice.

- **Book Review** – Book reviews for theme and open topic issues will be considered. Reviewers are requested to submit a proposal that includes the book title, author, relevance to *JoCI* readership, and a brief (100-word) overview of the book.

Upcoming Issues

We are currently accepting manuscripts for two future issues, **Performance Assessment of Pre-Service and In-Service Educators** (deadline October 15, 2013) and **Open Topic** (deadline March 15, 2014). The Performance issue will focus on high-stakes performance assessment of practitioners at both pre-service and in-service levels. Suggested topics for research studies and practitioner articles include how, when, and why teacher performance assessments are initiated and implemented; the relationship of performance assessment and practice; the impact of teacher performance assessment on teaching communities; issues of validity and reliability; the role of non-teaching stakeholders in performance assessments; and ways to address confounding factors, such as regional and cultural differences.

Final Thoughts

Please join us in celebrating *JoCI*'s sixth birthday. As we continue the mission of the original editorial team to provide a free open-access journal focused on disseminating quality innovative research, practice, and issues relevant to teaching and learning, we look forward to many more years of publication. We readily recognize the solid foundation that has been set for us by earlier editors, and we acknowledge that *JoCI* can only maintain the quality of the past six years through the skills, efforts, dedication, and imagination of our contributors. We thank all our readers for their loyalty, our writers and researchers for sharing their work, and our peer-reviewers for their professional expertise and support.

Here's to the next six years!

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