

Theory in Learning Technology

http://www.alt.ac.uk/callforpapers_altj_theory.html

This is the October 2010 call for papers for a Special Issue of [Research in Learning Technology, the Journal of the Association for Learning Technology](#) (Volume 19, Number 3).

Guest Editors

Laura Czerniewicz, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Chris Jones, Open University, UK

Deadlines

Abstracts can be submitted to either of the guest editors for informal feedback until **1 December 2010**.

Papers should be submitted via the Manuscript Central online submission system at

<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/calt> before **31 January 2011**.

The call

This call for papers on theoretical approaches in digitally-mediated environments aims to investigate and develop the conceptualisation of theory in the field of learning technology. Theory can be contrasted with practice and is often associated with the particular forms of research given value by higher education institutions. Technology is constantly changing and yet theory aims to stabilise and order change so that a degree of permanence is introduced into this sea of change.

In this special issue, we wish to attract papers which consider theory from a wide range of perspectives including the relationship of theory with practice, with empirical research, and with both traditional forms of scholarship and newer claims for digital scholarship. Questions for consideration include the following: How can practice inform theory? How can theory help to design, choose and use technology appropriately? How does empirical research inform theory? What is the role of theory in the development of empirical research? How is technology changing our relationship to knowledge? We are also interested in receiving papers that consider the ways in which changes in technology can drive an atheoretical chase for the novel and the new.

Research and scholarship in learning technology are most commonly served by the disciplines of psychology, sociology and philosophy. Psychology has had a central position because it has provided theories of learning and theorists who have proved important to the field (e.g. Piaget and Bruner). More recently, social theories of learning with roots in sociology and anthropology have provided an important challenge and complement to psychologically-based theories (e.g. Engeström, Lave and Wenger). Furthermore, alongside theoretical approaches to understanding learning, theory has also considered the roles of context, such as generational, societal, political and intercultural differences.

How well do current theories serve the field? Are existing theoretical approaches robust, even as the technology changes rapidly? How do new areas of research affect the work we do? We are interested both in papers that use existing theoretical approaches and those which develop new approaches from diverse fields to underpin and inform the study of learning technology.

The Boyer Commission suggested there are four types of scholarship: discovery, application, integration and teaching with the first being most closely aligned with traditional notions of research. In a field which has a practical and applied focus, what is the role of theory in the scholarships of application and integration, bearing in mind, that such forms of scholarship are not one way? The process of applying knowledge to specific problems gives rise to new understanding and can in itself define a research agenda. We are interested in papers which explore the relationship between theory and scholarship, including new forms of digital scholarship in our field. Indeed, the field of learning technology also needs to engage with new ways of conducting and sharing research.

The aim in this special issue is to bring together popular and less known theoretical approaches and assess their value to the study of learning technology. We see clearly articulated theoretical frameworks as essential to the study of learning technology and the further advancement of the field. We hope that this issue will

acknowledge and bring together researchers from diverse fields of specialization and guide their future research. In particular, the papers in this issue should demonstrate how a consideration of theory can contribute to a better understanding of the nature of the problems we face, deepen knowledge to be shared across contexts, contribute to methods of investigating emerging technology, and ultimately improve both policy and practice.

Types of papers

With these issues as a springboard, we welcome papers in a variety of formats including:

- considerations of the general role of theory in learning technology;
- considerations of particular theories and their contributions to learning technology;
- critiques of the role of theory in learning technology policy, practice or research; or
- case studies of innovative practice informed by a particular theoretical approach.

About the Guest Editors

Chris Jones is a Reader in the Institute of Educational Technology at the Open University (UK). He is co-editor of the books *Analysing Networked Learning Practices in Higher Education and Continuing Professional Development* and *Networked Learning: Perspectives and Issues*. He has recently completed a two-year research council funded project *The Net Generation encounter e-learning at university* and co-edited with Laura Czerniewicz a recent edition of the Journal of Computer Assisted Learning on the same subject.

Laura Czerniewicz is an Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Educational Technology at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. She has an interest in the epistemological nature of the field itself. For the past seven years she has lead a multi-phased project on digitally-mediated student practices, and has co-published widely on the project findings. Theoretically she has found Bourdieu, Bernstein and Archer useful to frame her research investigations.

Submission process and timetable

The submission of abstracts for informal feedback is encouraged. They can be sent directly to guest editors until **1 December 2010**.

Full papers must be submitted according to the journal's [Instructions for Authors](#).

Papers should be submitted via the Manuscript Central online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/calt> before **31 January 2011**.

Papers received will undergo peer review and authors will receive feedback and where appropriate, an opportunity to revise their paper. An additional round of reviewing is sometimes used to encourage authors to improve their paper, either for this special issue, or a subsequent issue of *Research in Learning Technology*.

For other queries and guidance relating to the call please contact the Special Issue Editors:

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