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Spark: UAL Creative Teaching and Learning Journal

Editorial

Catherine Smith, Teaching Excellence and Enhancement Coordinator, Teaching and Learning Exchange

Welcome to the second issue of *Spark*. When this journal was conceived, one of its key aims was to broaden the demographic of who enters into published discussions about teaching and learning. We are extremely proud to declare that issue 2 includes contributions from Technicians, Course Leaders, Senior Lecturers, Associate Lecturers, an Enterprise and Employability Coordinator, an Associate Dean, Graduate Teaching Assistants, the Head of Digital Learning, current students and a recent graduate. In compiling this issue, it has been interesting to note that despite the multiple roles represented, the contributions have much in common. Beyond a perhaps obvious shared belief in the value of articulating teaching practice, there is a clear and lively drive to experiment with teaching, to invent new methods, to borrow from disciplinary theory and practice whilst doing so, and all the while engage participants in conversations about how they are experiencing it.

Until she left UAL recently to pursue work as a fulltime artist, Clare Sams was a CSM Technician. Her research paper is drawn from her MA dissertation study, which investigated how technicians view their role. For her methodology she draws upon Wang's 'photovoice' technique (1999), asking her technician research participants to take photographs of something meaningful to them within their resource areas and then annotate them. The resulting commentary distinguishes between various aspects of a complex role in evolution.

Our second Technician authored contribution is from Kavita Kumari at LCF, whose article focuses on employability from the perspective of someone whose role it is to deliver technical, skills-based training in print techniques. The research cleverly triangulates perspectives from teaching staff, students and employers, providing a rounded argument for practical ways to deliver Print education. Sticking with the employability theme, Ellen Hanceri's work focuses on strategies for developing professional identity within the curriculum. She outlines a unit that supports students to develop relationships with industry professionals in their career field of choice, in order to grow confidence and understand the power of networking through experiential learning.

Valerie Mace's article on the importance of primary research in Spatial Design developed from her contribution at the annual Learning and Teaching Day (held at LCF in January 2016). She describes how methodological outcomes from her own disciplinary research have been used by her students to help them design and test their own primary research tools – thus providing a wonderful example of the teaching-research nexus (Neumann, 1992).

Silke Lange, Richard Reynolds and David White's provocation also builds on a workshop they specifically designed for the Learning and Teaching day. They discuss the role of psychogeography (Debord, 1955) in shaping how learners and educators operate within a given teaching space. They illustrate this with observations of how participants behaved and then reflected on this behaviour within their workshop. They conclude by challenging readers

to consider how to reconfigure traditional spatial set-ups in teaching spaces (tutor at front of room / students at back of room) to disrupt power dynamics and integrate digital in more truly blended ways.

As if in direct response, Elliott Burns, Jen MacLachlan and Jake Charles Rees investigate the potential of Instagram as a teaching tool. Their teaching experiment 'Everybody Phones Out' subverts the traditional notion that the mobile phones in classroom are detrimental to learning, and provides a detailed case study of how social media might be ingeniously utilised, particularly for referencing. They conclude their case study by helpfully drawing out a series of recommendations and a glossary for the benefit of the less digitally-literate among us.

It's wonderful to see *Spark* drawing threads together between colleges and events, and it is even healthier to see it start to propagate its own debates. Picking up the gauntlet thrown down in Keiron Devlin's provocation to use the personal pronoun in academic writing in *Spark Vol.1, No.1* (Devlin, 2016), Susan Flynn provides a case study of how critical, reflective and creative practice can be usefully merged to enable students to create narratives that are meaningful to their individual contexts. This theme is continued in Suzanne Rankin-Dia's article, whose 'Global Citizenship' project provides a second rich example of how cultural capital can be harnessed to support international student transition into UK HE. By mixing academic skills development with socialization, reflective practice and external visits, her students develop self-initiated outcomes that simultaneously surface intelligent insights into global cultures and allow them to form strong and supportive study relationships with their peers.

Vlastimir Sudar's interview study examines the 'latecomer' position of Cultural and Historical Studies within arts degrees. He calls for 'alternative contexts of encounter' for the subject in the first year undergraduate experience, that more closely mirror the craft-based activity found in the studio. Our main student contribution offers a brilliant example of how a well-designed theory-practice marriage can work. George Quentin's undergraduate thesis formed the basis of his article exploring the potential of Ed-Tech (education technology), which utilises the skills of games design to accelerate learning. He draws an insightful picture of the possibilities of gamification, using his own *Global-E* Business and Economics prototype game as a case in point.

Áinne Burke and Neus Torres Tamarit are practicing artists with educational experience, currently studying on the MA Art and Science course at CSM. They were invited by their tutor to design workshops for 'What if...? Why not? Creative Risk-taking in Art, Design and Performance', a symposium held at CSM as part of the Teaching Platform series of events. Having run workshops for teaching staff from UAL and beyond, they then went on to review the event for *Spark* from their hybrid position as both workshop facilitators and students. In line with our call for alternative formats, they chose to write their review in the style of a conversation. The resulting article provides a fascinating student perspective on what happens when tutors come together to discuss teaching.

There is much contemporary higher education discussion about working with students as change partners, to simultaneously deepen engagement and cultivate enhancement. For example, Peter Carey called for 'a true co-production model' (2013, p.258), imagining an engagement culture that pervades all aspects of institutional life, not just in strategies and procedures but also inside the curriculum. Graham Gibbs usefully outlined multiple ways in which student engagement manifests itself, suggesting that 'if you can engage students outside the curriculum, they will also be more engaged within the curriculum' (2014). The 3

student or graduate authored contributions to this issue of *Spark* demonstrate that UAL students are deeply engaged in debates about teaching and learning – and it is our pleasure to provide a platform for some of this dialogue to be shared.

In closing, on behalf of the Editorial Committee, I'd like to sincerely thank our departing editor, Dr Saranne Weller, for her sterling contribution to establishing *Spark* and all her hard work on putting the first draft of this issue together. Future issues will be guest edited by a range of UAL teaching staff. The next issue (Vol. 2, No. 1) will be out in January 2017. In the meantime we encourage our readers to help us source interesting UAL teaching and learning material for *Spark*, by following us on Twitter: @ualspark

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Biography

Catherine Smith is Associate Editor on *Spark*, and works in the Teaching and Learning Exchange as Teaching Excellence and Enhancement Coordinator. Previously she taught for 12 years across the undergraduate programme in the School of Design at LCC, most latterly as Course Leader for FdA and BA (Hons) Design for Graphic Communication. Her research interests include co-production, student engagement and design writing. Catherine is a founder member of the [Graphic Design Educators' Network](#), the UK's national subject association for graphic design.