Editorial

Do we assume too much?

I'm sure you've had this experience. You are passing through a crowded room. You don't know any of the other people there and so are somehow blind to them as individuals; they are a faceless sea. If, however, a friend is coming the other way, they stand out – you greet them and have a chat. A colleague walking with you hadn't previously met your friend and was subconsciously ignoring them, right up until the point where you make introductions.

The same phenomenon is experienced in other aspects of our lives, including our learning in the biosciences. It is the role of an educator to be alert to the fact that students may not share our prior knowledge on a topic and to move them on form the "passing but not seeing" phase by providing the necessary introductions. If we have failed to provide those bridges, can we criticise them, let alone penalise them, for their ignorance?

It is not only in regard to subject content that we need to help students make the appropriate connections. In the present volume of Bioscience Education, Dawson and Overfield discuss students' understanding about plagiarism. As academics, we have been increasingly attuned to the issue of plagiarism and have a sense of the nuances separating appropriate and inappropriate use of other people's work, but students need help in recognising those distinctions. Similarly, we can have unrealistic expectations of final year students' abilities to plan out their laboratory work. MacKenzie and Ruxton share insights drawn from their introduction of a module on experimental design.

Elsewhere in this volume, two papers look into different aspects of computer-assisted learning. Bax *et al* report on the use of formative online assessments, whilst Cann *et al* offer evidence-based advice for maximising the learning potential of online discussion groups. Finally, Hollingsworth and Markham share the outcomes of a survey of Pharmacology graduates concerning their initial employment.

We are currently making a number of technical developments at the journal. Firstly, you will shortly be able to sign up to receive RSS feeds to alert you whenever a new article is published in Bioscience Education. The efficiency, and popularity, of this dynamic alerts system has been increasing rapidly over the last eighteen months and with the incorporation of a feed reader into the latest version of Internet Explorer can be considered to have gone 'mainstream'. Follow the link at the foot of the index page for instructions on how to keep informed of new articles via 'favourites' in your web browser.

Secondly, each Bioscience Education article will now be assigned a Digital Object Identifier (DOI). Having a DOI provides a means to reference an article, or information about it, in an international register used by publishers and libraries around the world. Amongst a number of advantages, the DOI is a

persistent identifier that will link to the article even if, for whatever reason, the actual URL is altered. The likelihood of broken links should therefore be reduced. The DOI information is syndicated to enable libraries to and find the article, hopefully making it more visible in the academic search space on the internet. See http://www.doi.org/ for full information.

Finally, this represents the final volume produced during my current stint as Editor of Bioscience Education. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank authors, reviewers, editorial board members and staff at the Centre for Bioscience for all their hard work in the production of the journal. I believe that Bioscience Education continues to be a valuable conduit for sharing road-tested developments in teaching and learning – may it go from strength to strength.

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