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Researching Computers and Learning: CALRG 30th Anniversary Issue

Kim Issroff

**The Open University
Institute of Educational Technology
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA**

Welcome to this special issue of JIME which resulted from the 30th Anniversary conference of the Computers and Learning Research Group (CALRG - <http://kn.open.ac.uk/calrg>) at the Open University. The CALRG was founded in 1979 by Tim O'Shea and Eileen Scanlon to carry out interdisciplinary research on the role of computers in teaching and learning. As a research group, it has welcomed people from a range of disciplines and developed its research interests during a time of massive technological innovation and huge changes to the education system. Many contemporary researchers in the area of Technology Enhanced Learning have either worked within the CALRG or were PhD students.

The research group holds an annual conference involving a mix of talks on current projects, PhD students' presentations and external speakers. To celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2009, we held a one-day conference with many external participants who had previous links to the group. The programme (<http://kn.open.ac.uk/public/workspace.cfm?wpid=9402>) for the day illustrates the breadth and depth of the influence of the CALRG on contemporary TEL research. After the conference, we asked participants if they would like to contribute to a special issue of JIME, and the papers presented here are a result of this.

Three of the papers by Ann Jones, Patrick McAndrew and Eileen Scanlon are from existing members of the group, whereas John Cook was a PhD student in the group and Andrew Ravenscroft has worked for the CALRG as a research fellow.

These papers represent over 120 person years of research and as such provide a fascinating insight into the ways in which our research area has

developed. The papers are not traditional research papers. Authors were asked to write an account of their own research history and therefore chart some of the ways in which research in this area has changed over this time period, as well as the ways in which methods and theories have developed.

John Cook examines some longitudinal research 'threads' which have emerged for him over the last two decades. In particular, he discusses an evolutionary design-based research approach, the powerful perspectives on learning and development put forward by Vygotsky, and notions surrounding the temporal nature of learning. He argues that some learning should be conceptualised as 'travelling without moving'.

Ann Jones' paper reflects on 30 years of research on affective factors and uses a range of project to illustrate the reasons for learners' use or lack of use of technologies for their learning, learners' attitudes towards using technology for learning and how technology might support socio-emotional development and expression in children.

Eileen Scanlon discusses her practice as an educational technologist with a particular interest in the learning of science. She illustrates methods of participatory design, design based research and socio-cultural approaches using case studies and reviews a number of working principles which have proved effective in her practice.

Patrick McAndrew discusses 40 years of openness and reflects on how the concept of an open university has changed over this period of rapid technological development. In particular, the release of free materials for students has led to a range of behaviours that cluster around content driven and social driven approaches to learning. He argues that we can bridge formal and informal learning by combining the original values of openness with the free Open Educational Resources (OER) developed over the last 10 years.

Andrew Ravenscroft describes a number of projects which focus on designing digital tools that stimulate and support dialogue rich learning. He introduces the notion of Deep Learning Design (DLD) which he uses to extend his work into the Web 2.0 landscape and beyond.

Together these papers represent just the tip of the iceberg of research that has been carried out within the CALRG or by researchers who have associations with the group. They illustrate why it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work within the group over the last 30 years.

Kim Issroff: Editor of JIME Special Edition for CALRG 30th Anniversary