

Editorial introduction

The Ys, the Web and the Wherefores: Ongoing change within contemporary higher education

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That higher education is a field that is experiencing ongoing change has become accepted as a truism. This means that those who commit themselves to learning and teaching in this field do so in an environment in which adherence to enduring values and accepted standards can seem to matter less than does adaptation and flexibility in the face of ongoing change in such fundamental areas as: the cultural backgrounds, attributes and educational experience of students, educational technology, the experience of campus life and higher education governance.

One particularly significant area shaping the contemporary university environment involves the influence of the changed engagement with education evident in the so-called Generation Y. Another important challenge relates to Web 2.0 technologies, which have facilitated the incorporation of blogs into teaching programs, and led to some university courses being offered through the virtual domain of Second Life. A further challenge relates to uncertainty about where such changes are leading higher education. This edition of *SLEID* explores the experience of ongoing change in the new university environment within the context of challenges posed by the Ys, the Web and the Wherefores.

The rationale for this themed edition is to bring together theoretical conceptions of, and practical responses to, the challenges of ongoing change within contemporary higher education environments. As such, it engages with issues of current moment and concern. In particular, the emergence of Generation Y as a learning cohort and the development of Web 2.0 technologies are particular contemporary challenges to scholars and learning and teaching practitioners across a range of fields. The authors in this issue have examined these issues from several different perspectives. Both Oliver and Pace focus on the experience of the student. Oliver examines new students' real and perceived skills in searching the Net to find electronic resources for academic purposes while Pace looks at the value of role models as a motivator for students to aspire to careers in digital media and plan their studies accordingly.

Kinash and Hughes turn their attention to teachers and interrogate the changing identity of university educators. Wells and Brook continue this theme by discussing the implications of adopting Web 2.0 technologies for teachers in their role as knowledge gatekeepers. Huijser examines the use of social networking sites in an

educational context and asks whether they can provide meaningful learning experiences.

Finally Catterall examines the impact of institutional factors on attempts to bring a scholarly approach to teaching innovations. This issue also includes a review of a book that examines these issues of the impact of online learning on scholarly teaching. Taken together, these articles and review contribute to an ongoing discussion about how university teachers and students respond to, engage with and sometimes resist ongoing changes in their learning and teaching practices.