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It gives us great pleasure to welcome you, our readers, to the Spring 2013 issue of the All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (AISHE-J), published by the All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE). Our goal is one of facilitating collegial interaction and mutual support among those concerned with advancing higher education in the island of Ireland, in its local and international context. One of the key characteristics of higher education is a focus on the written word. Libraries, traditionally at the heart of higher education institutions, are a physical embodiment of this orientation towards writing. Writing has changed across the history of higher education but it remains central. In the current issue, we present a selection of research articles, reports on practice, and reviews that offer a thoughtful, evidence based and practice oriented reflection on writing in the academic context. As we have chosen to present a thematic issue of the journal, on a topic that is quite specific, we thought it appropriate to offer the reader, if not a justification, an outline of the narrative that led to this decision. We have, therefore, written both an editorial and an introduction to the thematic issue.

The dialogue around writing in higher education in Ireland, in Europe, in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia, one might almost say globally, is vibrant and growing. The interdisciplinary nature of these conversations offers opportunities for writers from all backgrounds to engage and collaborate with a common urge to compose and to share. Nurturing these conversations is a responsibility to which AISHE-J, as a journal for those interested in advancing higher education, is pleased to contribute.

URL: <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/114>

The contributors to the issue reflect the wide geographic reach of the contemporary academic writing dialogue. Their contributions range across research papers and reflections to reports on practical strategies and a library resource, all designed to support academic writing among both students and staff in higher education.

Opening with an invited piece from Lawrence Cleary, writing consultant and researcher at the Regional Writing Centre, University of Limerick, entitled *Apologia for Undergraduate Peer-tutors in Writing*, the case for undergraduate peer-tutors is strongly made. A good part of their role is characterized as follows: “our tutors are not talking about the other student’s paper; they are asking questions that require the student-writer to talk about the paper they have come to talk about, that, for the student-writer, is the subject of the session” (Ebest, S.B., et al. (2005). The paper is instructive too, in relation to resistances to peer-tutoring and questions about who has the *locus standi* to talk about academic writing in contemporary higher education.

In *Self-efficacy in academic reading and writing, authorial identity and learning strategies in first-year students*, Moira Maguire, Ann Everitt Reynolds and Brid Delahunt examine the role that students’ beliefs, about themselves as writers, play in determining their approach to writing, in the critical transitional period of their first year in higher education. They examine the relationship between the students’ approach to writing and the broader learning strategies they adopt.

It is not only among first year students that we see this theme of interconnectedness arise. *Supporting academics to write for publication: A holistic approach*, contributed by Ciara O’Farrell, Trinity College Dublin, deals with the development of structured interventions to support writing among academic staff. It discusses the need for an holistic approach to academic writing support including the value of being part of an active community of academic writers and being supported in overcoming the emotional barriers to their writing.

In their paper entitled *Writing relationships: Collaboration in a faculty writing group* Cecile Badenhorst and her colleagues reflect on a faculty writing group in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada which began in 2009 and has grown into a successfully publishing community of practice. The paper is rich in practicality, combined with a useful theoretical framework. It is likely that the themes of support for research and writing and coping with academic cultures will find resonance in many contexts. Once again, the approach is holistic and the value of being part of a community is apparent throughout.

Orna O'Brien and Linda Dowling-Hetherington from the School of Business, University College Dublin have contributed a paper that discusses the three models of design and delivery of support for academic writing skills development, centred on a case study of such support on an undergraduate, part-time degree programme entitled *The 'Build-Up' Approach to Academic Writing Skills Development: The Case for a Discipline-Driven Collaborative Design* it is, as the authors, suggest likely to have significance in a wide range of academic contexts.

*Process and Product: Supporting Academic Writing in Higher Education*, by Alison Farrell and Sharon Tighe-Mooney, reviews an intervention in writing designed to help students to understand what was required with regards writing in university and to assist them to meet these requirements. Undertaken as a pilot/case study rather than as a research project, its implications were gauged by analysing the written feedback on the process provided by students. This paper reflects on the various aspects of the exercise and is oriented towards planning future activity in academic writing support for students.

The theme of helping students to understand what is expected is also present in Mary Rosner's contribution, which comes from an Engineering perspective and from the context of co-operative learning, with attendant challenges in terms of audiences and purposes.

In their paper entitled *Academic Publishing: Maximising Library Expertise, Resources and Services*, Helen Fallon, NUI Maynooth and Ellen Breen, DCU highlight useful resources, tools and services offered by libraries to writers in their scholarly publishing endeavours, with a particular focus on writing for academic journal.

Finally, Marian Fitzmaurice has reviewed a new book from Routledge written by Thompson and Kamler and entitled *Writing for Peer Reviewed Journals: Strategies for getting published*, which looks like a further useful resource in supporting scholarly writing.

Many of the papers in this thematic issue have demonstrated the value of collaborative work in achieving worthwhile outcomes in higher education. With this in mind, we propose two pathways for collaboration that AISHE-J can provide in support of our readers. The first concerns the theme of this issue. If readers have found books or other resources of particular benefit in their writing development, or that of their students, we would ask you to email the details. In co-operation with the authors, Fallon and Breen, we will endeavour to share the information.

The second pathway has a broader intent. We propose, in the next and subsequent issues of AISHE-J, to offer readers the opportunity to seek research collaborations through the journal. If there is sufficient interest, we will publish a list of researchers seeking such collaboration. A template for your expression of interest in collaborative research is included at the end of this issue. It is planned to have the first list in the May 2013 issue.

We would like to remind readers that the journal has a particular interest in fostering publication by new or early career researchers in teaching and learning, and the work of those who wish to share practical teaching and learning interventions. We would encourage readers who are engaged in teaching and learning in higher education to add their voices to the discussions. As the membership of AISHE encompasses colleagues from many and varied disciplines, and includes teachers, researchers, librarians and education developers from across the higher education sector, we plan to address a number of themes of interest in the coming issues. Examples include civic and community engagement, discipline specific teaching and learning practice, the role of the educational developer and management and leadership in higher education. We look forward to your contributions.

In keeping with recent practice, the current issue is edited jointly - on this occasion by Alison Farrell and Saranne Magennis: together we bring you AISHE-J 5:1.

Alison Farrell and Saranne Magennis, February 2013.