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Introduction to the special issue: “Digital technologies and educational integrity”

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When Roger Silverstone (1999, p.10) asked “what is new about new media?” more than a decade ago at the launch of the first edition of the journal *New Media and Society*, he framed the question as an inquiry about the relationship between continuity and change. To address the issues relating to the interest and reliance on technologies in educational contexts - whether we are talking about web 2.0, digital media, social media, new media, or even *next* media - requires us to consider what is most important about the standards, traditions and practices that we hold as crucial to teaching, learning and research, as well as their relationship to change.

This special issue broaches these issues to consider how changes in technologies used by teachers and learners – both in and out of educational contexts – has impacted on our understandings of educational integrity. To do this, we have had to ask questions about the integrity of the educational enterprise itself: just as the expanding research and writing capacities of digital media have complicated notions of authorship, so too does the increasing reliance on technologies in educational settings complicate expectations about the open or gated nature of educational institutions. However, it is not so much the digital technologies themselves, but how they are used, regarded, implemented and positioned by institutions, that offer a new twist to our interpretation of education as both ‘borderless’ and ‘gatekeeping’.

New media technology, with its potential to make knowledge both unstable and widely available, can be seen to undercut the traditional authority of teachers. Glyn Davis (2010) recently pointed out that, just as new humanities academics rose in the sixteenth century to challenge the scholastic institution, so new forms of learning confronts the received wisdom about what a university is, what it does, and how it works. Davis terms what has emerged as a new “republic of learning”, a tense global universe of educational institutions, providers and workers with competing products and educational philosophies. The older standards of prestige and authority that positioned universities as gatekeepers of knowledge are called into question by this new republic.

Conversely, the utopian ideals of ‘borderless’ education afforded by digital technologies can also be called into question. Gerard Goggin, in a recent keynote address about technology and the university, commented that it was “difficult to imagine not having access to a computer at the university” (2010). But he also pointed out that there is a gap in discussions about the ‘digital divide’ between

generations and a lack of access to these technologies for many communities and student cohorts. Goggin canvassed the “terrible paradoxes” of internet technologies, that their seemingly open access applications, new opportunities for marginalised voices to be heard, and 24/7 connectivity, actually elide practical issues relating to the labour of education workers, not to mention the often third world factory conditions and environmental unsustainability of the production of these technological devices. Discussion more often focuses on the politics of process of technologies in use in educational contexts, rather than on their political and social impact.

The open-ended term ‘next media’ may prove useful to frame further thinking about technology and educational integrity: what will come *after* education workers have wrestled with current pressures to change and adapt to the new? Can we find continuity in our scholarly activities when new technologies continue to emerge and encroach on our everyday teaching and learning practices? How will our academic identities and activities be impacted by the fading of the distinction between online and offline activities, and the blurring of the division between the professional and personal? Will digital technologies challenge or strengthen the core values of academic integrity? At this point, attitudes to the incorporation of technologies in education - or acknowledgement of the different literacies they might call upon - range from recalcitrance and suspicion to excitement and stimulation.

Some teachers – who might be considered as either ‘purists’ or ‘luddites’ – take steps to avoid the infiltration of technology in what they do in the lecture hall or classroom ‘for the sake of it’, even at the potential cost of losing their audience, but they have little opportunity to resist the increasingly online and enforced administrative processes of their institution. Others are frustrated with waiting for their institutions to catch up to the possibilities and promises of new technologies, and are already working with blogs, games, wikis and online networks outside of their institution’s control or ambit. Although new forms of interaction and knowledge production are flourishing outside the closed education system and proscribed IT services, it is important to recall that it took decades for education workers to get acclimatised to the now ubiquitous photocopier and the distribution of copied materials: despite ongoing indoctrination about appropriate copyright practices, staff and students are still often unaware of the fair dealing provisions for the educational use of resources. The implication for work produced, reproduced and distributed by mobiles phones, wireless broadband and online social networks will take longer to resolve as their mutation, iterations and uptake all vary.

Rather than play a reactive game of ‘catch up’ – as has happened with issues surrounding intellectual property law or the administrative procedures around the use of information technology services – it is important to encourage the development of curriculum, teaching and learning practices, digital literacies and policy frameworks that will flow across multiple platforms, be they embedded in online learning management systems, social networking sites or virtual environments. An educational integrity for the change that is inevitable with *next* media is about contributing to a discourse of integrity between peers, between teachers and students as well as between the institutions that incorporate, as well as being embodied by, practices of integrity.

Each of the papers in this special issue reforge the concept of educational integrity in the digital environment of teaching and learning in new ways, offering different positions from which to evaluate and consider the promises and risks of the use of new technologies. Our first of two invited contributions reports on the findings of a recent Australian Teaching and Learning Committee (ALTC) project about the implications for academic integrity of using web 2.0 for teaching, learning and assessment in higher education. The authors present a snapshot of a range of student authoring practices in web 2.0 environments, where students can publish their work to an open audience, use different communication styles and texts, co-create

content with other students, and, perhaps most significantly, manage their content outside the confines of the university. The authors of this paper point out that just as each of these affordances provides opportunities for enhancing students' learning in higher education, they also impose new ways of thinking about scholarly writing and assessment that can be challenging for both students and staff. This report on current practices by students using digital technologies in universities is complemented by a second invited contribution by Brady Robards, who concentrates more closely on issues relating to integrity and identity in social networking sites. Robards' paper challenges the suggestion by Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg that multiple online identities represent a lack of integrity on behalf of the user. Robards reports on a study of young Australian users of MySpace and Facebook, and employs Erving Goffman's theory of audience segregation into order to suggest that we have much to learn from young people's management of multiple social networks, online identities and abilities to distinguish themselves between multiple publics and different audiences.

A similar positive framing and reminder of what we have to learn from our students, comes from Nicole Pfannenstiel's discussion of the "home-based" digital literacy practices employed by media users in the everyday. Pfannenstiel offers an instructional perspective of digital literacies and the uses of the internet in the move from the social, recreational and casual use of technologies and the literacy practices acquired incrementally and experientially, to the dynamics of the classroom and the needs and demands of curricula and more discipline specific academic discourse. This paper draws on the experience of the author working in an American higher education system, where students have ready access to a variety of personal and mobile digital devices.

From a very different perspective, the paper by Michelle Eady and Stuart Woodcock reports on the experience of members of an Australian Aboriginal community, the Narungga people of the York Peninsula, as they used synchronous computer technologies to enhance literacy learning. While Indigenous learners are often disenfranchised due to geographical barriers, government policies, language background, poverty, health or technical insufficiencies, this paper reports on how distance and digital learning approaches can be usefully incorporated. Eady and Woodcock's paper breaks new ground in its reflection of an 'integrative' approach to the creation of content and learning experiences through the use of synchronous technologies for Indigenous adults. They interpret 'educational integrity' as encompassing the need for an incorporation of Indigenous culture into learning experiences with respect for all participants (including community Elders), equity of access and opportunity, as well as a delineation of the ethical research approaches used by the investigators themselves. The paper outlines the value of integrating all these approaches in the building of online learning environments, with an aim to ascertain ethical and culturally sensitive approaches to learning and teaching.

The paper by Jeannette Stirling, Kerry Hopkins and Brendan Riddick discusses the implications of the use of educational media at remote or distant satellite university campuses. Educational technologies have opened up possibilities for students and their teachers in regional areas to participate in higher education, but pragmatic cost-cutting organisational approaches can potentially lead to a breakdown of pedagogical integrity. The use of available educational technology is suggested to be utilitarian and alienating to sessional or short-term contract staff, who, in already precarious work conditions, are not paid adequately to support their students through online learning management systems, let alone to watch the video-streamed lectures, although the content of these are a key part of their students' assessment and tutorial activities. The authors appeal to a more nuanced appreciation of multi-location blended teaching and learning contexts, that would take into account local communities' learning needs and existing local teaching expertise. Their concern is that disregarding these with the centralisation and standardisation of subject delivery

– and only minor alterations across campuses that are aimed at information dissemination rather than effective learning – jeopardises the educational and pedagogical integrity of the university experience for both teachers and students.

The book reviews for this edition augment the discussion canvassed by the two invited contributions and the refereed papers. Katie Freund's review of John Hartley's book *The Uses of Digital Literacies* (2009) found that it skirted the issue with generalisations and assumptions about the digital divide. Annalise Friend addressed another perspective in her review of Larry Rosen's *Rewired: Understanding the iGeneration and the Way They Learn* (2010), again noting the elision of large groups of people without access to technological devices and broadband. However, Chris Moore found some redeeming qualities in Marc Prensky's latest publication about *Teaching Digital Natives* (2010), drilling down to find that the pedagogical methods and practices Prensky bases his celebration of new media on are actually socially inclusive and flexible enough to account for a range of student contexts and available technologies. Margaret Wallace's review of Vibiana Cvetkovic and Katie Anderson's *Stop Plagiarism: A Guide to Understanding and Prevention* (2010) reminds us of the ongoing emphasis in discussions of academic integrity on the 'war' against plagiarism and the fear of digital technologies copy-and-paste functions. Andrew Whelan offers a careful commentary on the *Ethics of Internet Research* (2009), where he unpacks concerns about finding appropriate ethical frameworks for online research, taking a broader sociological view of activities and risks of what is commonly understood as an 'easier' and more manageable online research practice. The review of *Wikiworlds* (2010), by Ruth Walker, investigates the expanded emancipatory potential of online participatory media like 'wikis' while providing a genealogy of theorists interested in critical pedagogies and the impact of new technologies, useful for readers interested in developing a theoretical grounding in the tensions between technology and education, as well as the opportunities opened up through collaborative online peer activities.

The genesis for this special issue occurred as part of the *4th Asia Pacific Conference on Education Integrity* (4APCEI) at the University of Wollongong in 2009, which featured a student online video competition to create a short production on the topic of 'educational integrity' (Figure 1). Both the co-editors worked on administrating this competition, designing the guidelines, encouraging student participation and eventually judging the entries before screening them at the 4APCEI conference. Digital communication students in a first year Bachelor of Media and Communications subject at the University of Wollongong were given the opportunity to work in groups to submit entries for the competition as part of the subject's focus on user generated content and online videos. This subject's mixing of critical theory with practice-based development of digital literacies was considered an ideal environment for the students to expand their awareness and/or test their understanding of issues related to educational and academic integrity.

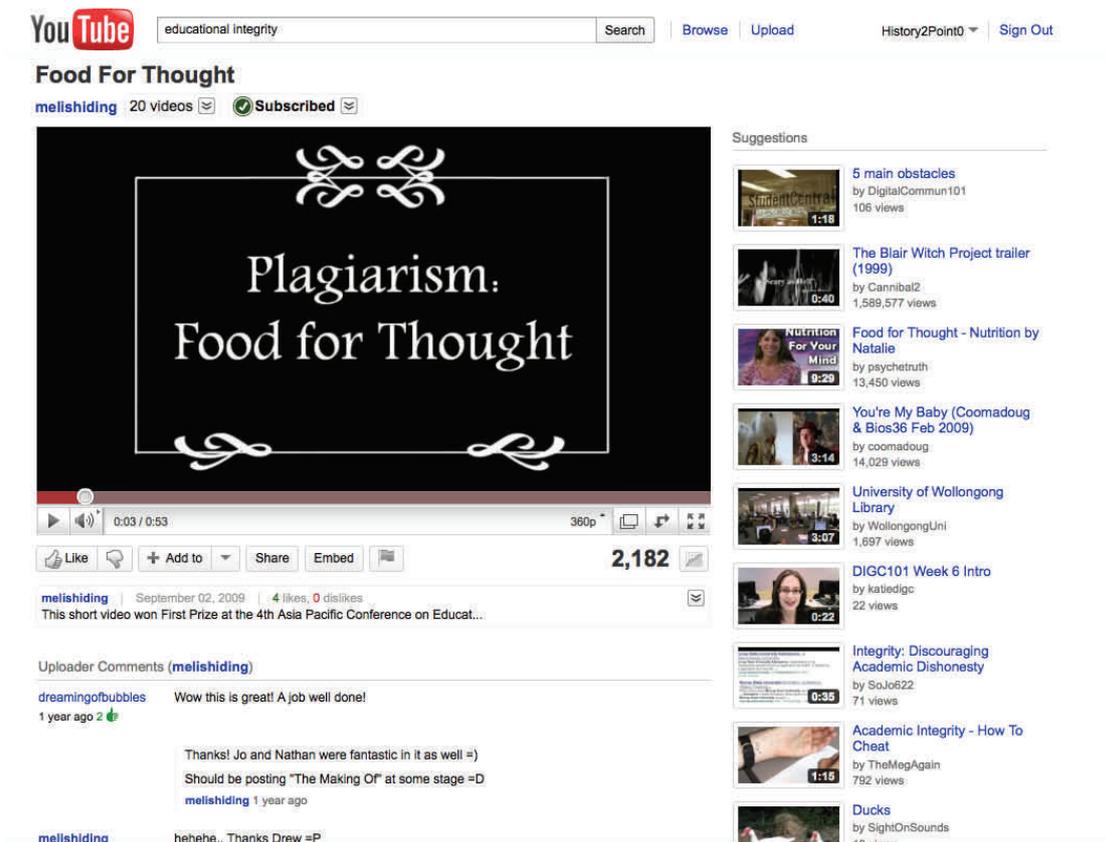


Figure 1. The winning entry for the 4APCEI 2009 short video competition hosted on YouTube.

The remit for the video competition was open ended, so that students were free to experiment with genre, humour and parody to critique the topic, or simply to be informative. We did not define the term 'educational integrity' for the students, so that they were free to discover or express what the concept might mean to them. The goal was simply to get the video producers and others to think creatively about engaging and supporting both students and academics in coming to terms with the dynamics of new technologies, new social media practices and the new digital literacies entering higher education institutions. The students had little to no experience in producing, editing or uploading videos to YouTube, but were able to borrow cameras and use mobile phones to produce an imaginative, innovative and sometimes poignant collection of amateur videos in a few hours of class and independent time.

For the most part, we found that the students understood 'educational integrity' to relate directly to plagiarism; it became clear that students have taken on the message that plagiarism is the primary issue of integrity at university. They have internalised it as an institutionalised transgression with zero-tolerance outcomes in higher educational settings, unrelated to their otherwise everyday online practices of copy-and-paste, appropriation and remixing without acknowledgment using digital technologies. The video competition also raised other issues of integrity for the organisers (and now co-editors of this issue), including concerns about exposing their students to public scrutiny, and allowing the University to re-appropriate the material (the winning entry has now been showcased in the compulsory online guide to 'academic integrity' found on the UOW Library homepage, and has appeared on other sites worldwide). Even though we counseled students on the fair use of copyrighted music and video sources for their projects, the students willingly (if perhaps too readily and unreflectively) gave permission for us to use their material, without critically

considering their own rights. The broader questions of educational integrity surely demand that we carefully consider these practices on their behalf, at the very least to ensure that students are alert to questions of appropriate access to their public and private identities and work. The processes afforded by digital technology promises a quick and relatively easy leap to authorship, and the concomitant transformation of otherwise passive consumers into active creators, collaborators or authors of new media content. However, it is important to keep in mind the possibility that information and knowledge can and will be controlled, packaged or exchanged as if they were simple commodities.

The intentions for this special issue were therefore twofold: to explore and extend of the analysis of the impact of digital technologies on educational integrity and to contribute to the expansion of the dialogue regarding the ways we teach, learn and share with integrity in the online environments and interactive spaces of digital technologies. We were keen to expand on the types of discussions we have had with students and colleagues in coming to terms with the complex dynamics and consequences of extending traditional literacies for the digital age. Our remit was to consider a broad range of questions about the role of technologies in education and to critically examine educational integrity. Our desire was to begin to move beyond the preoccupation with plagiarism in order to explore examples of best practice in dealing with the institutional boundaries associated with the use of technologies in collaborative research and teaching. Any success or failure in this regard is perhaps not important, as these are not issues that can be fully encompassed in a single special edition. Instead, we have arrived at a new point in an ongoing conversation, one that is underscored by this journal's status as an online and open content resource. Rather than sequestered behind a subscription license or paywall, these articles can potentially be linked to and embedded in our Twitter streams, Facebook and Academia.edu profiles, professional and personal blog posts, and linked to from our Scribd.com resumes and tagged via our Delicious.com bookmarked biographical collections – not just to increase their popularity or readership, but as part of our expanding professional practices using digital technologies and online networking activities. From here, new conversations about educational integrity will hopefully emerge and continue beyond their initial points in this collection of papers for *IJEI*.

Chris Moore and Ruth Walker, *IJEI* Special Issue Editors

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