chapter 1[[1]](#endnote-1)

Editors’ Perspectives of Educational Technology Research and Development (ETR&D) Journal

Reflecting the growth of ETR&D through editors’ personal journeys

Abstract

Using a historical timeline, we share personal stories from the editors and assistant editors of Educational Technology Research and Development (ETR&D), AECT’s flagship journal. We discuss the issues, trends, goals, initiatives, influential work, and important milestones in research, theory, and practices during the time when each served as the editor or assistant editor. ETR&D was first published in 1989 by AECT after a decision was made by the AECT Executive Board to consolidate the Educational Communications and Technology Journal (ECTJ) and the Journal of Instructional Development (JID). Through archival research and accounts of our own experiences, we hope to provide a birds-eye view that will share the past journey and inform the continued growth of Educational Technology Research and Development.

Keywords

Educational Technology Research and Development; ETR&D; Editors’ Perspectives

1. Introduction

In this chapter, we share personal stories from editors and assistant editors who have served ETR&D. We start with Steve Ross, James Klein and Abbas Johari, who share their experiences of the earlier years of ETR&D. Building on their accounts, the current editors and assistant editors, including J. Mike Spector, Gloria Natividad, Tristan Johnson, Patricia Young, Hale Ilgaz, Lin Lin Lipsmeyer, and Gwen Morel highlight their memories, initiatives and experiences. We are very sad that we cannot include a personal account by one of our editors and colleagues, Dr. Michael J. Hanafin, who passed away in 2020. Dr. Hanafin was not only a prolific author and scholar in the field, but he also served as an editor for the ETR&D Research Section during 2010 – 2012. Figure 1 shows the timeline when the editors and assistant editors serve for ETR&D journal.

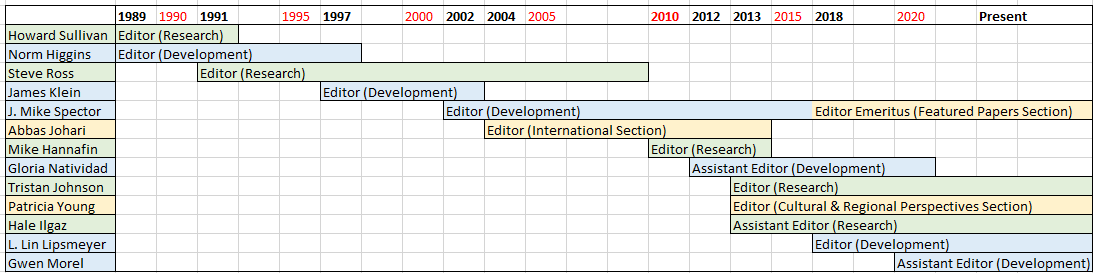


Figure 1 Editors and Timeline of Service at ETR&D

1. Reflecting ETR&D Early Years
   1. Eventful Beginning, Early Goals, and Promising Future – Steve Ross

In the March of 1991, I received an unexpected but eventful call from Howard Sullivan, the first and then-current editor of the Research section of ETR&D. My prior contacts with him had been through occasional emails about papers that I had reviewed for the journal or had submitted personally for publication. Howard was not only highly respected as the founding ETR&D editor (starting in 1989), but also as a distinguished scholar and the mentor/advisor at Arizona State University to many accomplished early-career researchers in educational technology. His reputation among his students and journal authors was that of being a fair but very “exacting” editor of manuscripts. As I remembered well from my own experiences, receiving a positive publication decision from Howard indicating “minor revisions” offered only a fleeting moment of joy, which faded rapidly as you scanned a sea of post-it comments and red ink on your returned manuscript copy (paper was the medium of exchange at that era). So, when I answered the phone, I felt both nervous and curious. After a rather long preamble in his inimitable friendly, meandering style, Howard announced that he had decided to step down as editor to focus on writing and advising, and asked if he could recommend me as his successor. I vaguely recall being much too overwhelmed and flattered to object, so that exchange became the starting point of my 17-year tenure as Research Editor. While I may have run with the ETR&D editorship ball longer than anyone else to date, Howard (who passed away in 2017) was the one who set its course and got it rolling.

In 1993, ETR&D was still fairly new and evolving as a research journal. It was spawned from and essentially replaced AECT’s Educational Communications and Technology Journal (ECTJ) and the Journal of Instructional Development (JID). The intent was to increase ETCJ’s and JID's reach and standing in the field, in part, by establishing separate sections focusing on rigorous educational technology research, instructional design studies, and international scholarship. After I accepted the offer to become editor, Howard graciously invited me to visit him at ASU to learn more about the journal and its operations. I especially looked forward to seeing the ETR&D office, so that I could appeal to my dean to similarly provide what I imaged to be vastly spacious and well-appointed accommodations. As it turned out, the “office” consisted of three metal file cabinets in a hallway storage closet. Each cabinet was stocked with neatly labeled manila folders arranged by journal submission number and containing copies of the manuscripts, completed reviews, and author and editor correspondence letters. That observation aptly foreshadowed the nuts and bolts of the editing routine that lied ahead. In those days, there was no “Editorial Manager,” which was established in early 2000s to transmit manuscripts, reviews, and communications electronically.

Most important to my new role, Howard and I spent considerable time discussing the status of the journal, current successes and challenges, and critical needs to ensure its long and promising future. Below I will describe how, based on this initial discussion and subsequent feedback from authors and reviewers, I and my associate editor, Gary Morrison, implemented various strategies to support this goal. By continuing many of these practices and implementing additional improvements, my successors from all three sections of ETR&D shepherded the journal through significant increases in volume, recognition, and impact ratings. These efforts are described by several of them in subsequent sections of this chapter.

* + 1. Goal 1: The Care and Nurturing of Reviewers

As he passed the editorship baton to me, Howard Sullivan conveyed that his biggest frustration was obtaining timely and thoughtful reviews of manuscripts. Some members from the incumbent reviewer panels that he inherited from ECTJ and JID were much less engaged and committed than others. He further noted that the sensitivity and overall professionalism of feedback were continuing concerns. Upon hearing this, I recalled a few of my own negative experiences in receiving sarcastic or demeaning feedback from a reviewer.

As an initial step to develop a more positive culture, I contacted all current reviewers individually, gave thanks for their service, and conveyed our new expectancies for review timelines (30 days) and quality (e.g., constructive, instructive, sufficiently detailed, respectful, etc.). These conversations and personal circumstances resulted in some voluntary withdrawals. But I also had to carry out the uncomfortable task of “rotating off” some individuals, who had notably poor track records. Over the years, we took other actions to improve the review process, as described below.

*Learning from Peers.* When a manuscript review was completed, ETR&D’s traditional practice was to send the first author the decision letter and copies of the reviews. The reviewers, however, received the decision letter only. To enable reviewers to examine others’ evaluations and potentially model effective styles and practices, we began sending each a copy of all reviews involved in the decision. This new procedure, now a routine practice by most journals, was very well received by the reviewers and appeared to have some positive influences on weaker ones.

*Providing feedback and guidance.* To help improve the quality of reviews, Gary Morrison and I regularly conducted seminars and made presentations at AECT conferences to discuss best practices in evaluating manuscripts, writing for publication, and designing educational technology research. We devoted a portion of the annual ETR&D Board Meeting, also held at the conference, to discussing authoring and reviewing practices based on the year’s experiences. As a new procedure, we invited all reviewers (“consulting editors”) to attend the full meeting, while opening up the first portion (the yearly overview) to any interested conference participants. The overview included a report on the year’s submissions and acceptances, including data on the types of research designs employed, universities or organizations represented, gender of authors, and inter-reviewer agreement in making final recommendations. Very similar year-end reports are disseminated by ETR&D editors today. On occasion, we distributed copies of what we felt were exceptional reviews (with the writer’s permission) at the meeting and through group emails.

*Matching the reviewer to the research.* Given a cadre of over 40 to 50 reviewers, their varied schedules and research backgrounds, and the need to process journal submissions in a timely manner, matching reviewers to manuscripts is hardly an exact science. At the time I became editor, the field of educational technology was growing rapidly in real-world practices and research interests. Qualitative research was emerging as an increasingly respected alternative to quantitative research and experimental-type studies for examining applications of technology to instructional design, training, and teaching. Clearly, asking reviewers to evaluate research papers focusing on topics or using methodologies with which they were inexperienced was likely to result in either the reviewer declining the invitation (thereby delaying the review process) or accepting it to be considerate but ultimately providing a less informed evaluation. Given these considerations, we asked reviewers to intermittently complete background and interest surveys and made a deliberate effort to identify from the “ready list” which reviewers would be the best choices for the submission at hand. Particularly important, regardless of the research topic, was ensuring that the selected reviewer was familiar with and open to the type of design being used (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed).

*Youth movements.* When he became editor, one of Howard Sullivan’s priorities for the new journal was generating more interest and involvement by graduate students and young researchers. I fully supported this idea. One approach that we employed was inviting novice researchers and advanced doctoral students, who were recommended or expressed interest, to perform “guest reviews” of submitted manuscripts. To maintain the integrity of evaluation process, we did not consider these reviews formally in making publication decisions but shared them with the authors as supplemental feedback. The guest reviewer, in turn, received the full set of reviews as well as the decision feedback. Many of these “guests” eventually became regular reviewers. The research section of ETR&D also managed the “Young Scholar Award” competition by conducting a refereed review of theoretical papers submitted by early-career authors. The winning paper was published in a subsequent issue, and as with the guest reviewers, many of the winners and participants became regular reviewers for one or more sections of ETR&D.

*Rewarding reviewing*. Good reviewing takes considerable time and effort while providing a valuable professional service to both the journal and prospective authors. Most reviewers find the experience to be personally rewarding but receiving external recognition can also boost morale. Accordingly, we established the “Outstanding Reviewer Award.” The initial winner was Michael Hannafin. The award criteria placed emphasis on “constructive and timely” reviews to further the goal of treating authors as “customers” who deserved to receive useful feedback without extensive waiting and worrying. In that vein, we enacted the additional strategies described below to support authors.

* + 1. Goal 2: The Care and Nurturing of Authors

While disseminating high-quality scholarship is a research journal’s most fundamental goal, behind the curtain lies the important business need of being highly competitive in the publication arena. During the first five or so years of my editorship, we were struggling to meet the quota of accepted manuscripts required for each issue. After all, ETR&D was a still fairly new journal and hardly a household name as a publication outlet. When quality and rigor of research are the priorities, acceptance rates naturally are reduced, and ours bordered on only 10% each year. The natural remedy, as next described, is increasing the volume of strong submissions.

*Outreach.* In those formative years, I made considerable efforts to “market” and promote ETR&D through communications with our large reviewer cadre and presentations at AECT meetings and other conferences. Gary Morrison and I wrote a series of applied articles about publishing and presenting educational technology research (e.g., Ross & Morrison, 1992, 1993), which we made available to both reviewers and prospective authors. We collaborated over the years with Phil Harris, the Executive Director of AECT, to promote the journal to members. We also sponsored “special issues” to explore interesting topics in depth and involve authors who hadn’t yet published in ETR&D. Submissions and acceptance rates steadily increased.

*Communicating and connecting.* While positive publication recommendations obviously make happy authors, the vast majority of decisions, as previously noted, will not go the authors’ way. But even in the latter situations, there are ways of making the process more useful and straightforward. One was to reduce the wait time relative to other journals. Specifically, we requested that reviewers complete their evaluations within 30 days. Not all reviewers met the deadline, but with the help of gentle reminders where needed, we were able to keep the typical turnaround time within eight weeks or less. Another strategy was to continually promote and model for reviewers’ feedback styles that were instructive and professional in tone. Although somewhat time demanding, I tried to write decision letters for authors that provided a helpful summary of the reactions, and in the case of rejected manuscripts, made recommendations for improvement and considering other, potentially more suitable journals for the particular type of study.

Relatedly, one of an editor’s most challenging tasks in processing manuscripts is to write summary guidance to authors who are asked to make revisions and resubmit their papers. This need is especially important when reviewer recommendations are not consistent, potentially pulling the author in different directions. Sometimes, a reviewer’s recommendations are simply off base, for example, requesting the author to use a particular analysis that is not appropriate for the data at hand or to include an irrelevant theory or reference. Each editor has to decide how much authority to exert in acceptance and revision decisions. But given the diversity of our ETR&D authors and reviewers, I generally considered it risky and unfair to both groups to leave it to the authors to figure out by themselves what to change or leave alone. Authors, in general, appeared to appreciate the personalized guidance and to be more comfortable following up with me if additional questions arose.

*To review or not to review*—the first decision. As a journal’s visibility expands nationally and particularly internationally, variability in the quality of the manuscripts submitted are also likely to increase. The result is receiving a fair percentage of manuscripts that reflect very poor writing, weak or invalid research designs, severe violations of APA style conventions, or topics irrelevant to desired focuses. Forwarding these papers for external review can burden reviewers with having to read and attempt to react appropriately to them. Should several less discerning or overly kind reviewers recommend that the authors “revise and resubmit” the weak manuscript, the editor is put in a difficult bind of having to either override the recommendation or initiate a likely cycle of multiple rounds of revisions that will either culminate in a rejection (which could have occurred at the outset many months before) or a likely substandard contribution. To reduce this risk, I established a sub-panel of several strong reviewers whom I could engage in pairs to screen such submissions fairly quickly. If they concurred that the paper was not acceptable and reasonably fixable, we would inform the authors about the “screening decision” and the major reasons for not proceeding with a more extended review (e.g., not an appropriate topic for ETR&D, study needed a control group, etc.).

*From author to reviewer.* Communications and success with our published authors naturally provided opportunities for recruiting new reviewers. Importantly, many of these recruits were outside the usual collegial and university networks, and therefore diversified our membership.

* + 1. From an Eventful Beginning to a Promising Future

In the preceding pages, I reflected on my experiences as ETR&D research editor over a 17-year period. During this “formative” life of the journal, elevating its visibility and credibility were our main priorities. Research in educational technology was growing rapidly and competitor journals in the field were becoming increasingly more numerous. Research designs also were more varied with the growth of qualitative paradigms and more specialized quantitative analyses using multivariate statistics. As I revisit the new strategies and practices that we introduced, as described in the preceding pages, none seems exceptionally radical or inventive. Rather, they comprise what was needed at the time to conduct essential journal operations and further our primary goal of delivering “timely and constructive reviews” to all authors. Looking forward, prospects for the journal have never seemed better. My successors used the foundation that each inherited to substantially increase the volume of submissions and the diversity of research topics and authors. Importantly, they oversaw the continual rise in ETR&D’s impact factor, an internationally recognized measure of a journal’s prestige in the field. Because they can tell these stories best, I turn the narrative over to them now as this chapter continues.

* 1. How ETR&D Started – James D. Klein

Educational Technology, Research and Development (ETR&D) was first published in 1989 by the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) after a decision by the AECT Executive Board to consolidate the Educational Communications and Technology Journal (ECTJ) and the Journal of Instructional Development (JID). According to Winn (1989), one reason for merging ECTJ and JID was the belief that AECT should not publish separate theory and application journals since "educational technology, more than any other sub-field of education, is concerned with the application of theory to practice (p. 35).

The ETR&D charter was established by AECT in 1990. It specified that that the journal would have two sections – a research section and a development section. The charter indicated that each section would have its own editor, editorial board, and consulting editors. It stated that the research section should publish studies on educational technology, literature reviews and analyses of research, and discussions of new research recommendations and theoretical interpretations. It also indicated that the development section should focus on the systematic development of instructional programs and learning environments and publish reports of innovative development projects, reviews of literature related to development processes and the development of programs and environments, and discussions of conceptual models of instructional development (AECT, 1990).

The first issue of ETR&D included a study by Higgins, Sullivan, Harper-Marinick, and Lopez (1989) conducted to determine what AECT members would prefer to read in the journal. Results indicated that there was no strong preference for any topic when all respondents were considered. Subscribers of ECTJ and JID had stronger preferences than general AECT members for certain topics. The five most preferred topics for journal subscribers in 1989 were: instructional development, effective instruction, interactive video, computer applications, and distance learning. The three most preferred article types for all respondents were: case studies, applied research, and literature reviews of educational technology uses, while the most preferred article types for subscribers were: applied research, case studies, and literature reviews of research and development.

Higgins, et al. (1989) compared these preferences with the contents of ECTJ and JID. Results suggested that media selection/utilization was the most frequently published topic in ECTJ, followed by effective instruction and computer applications. Experimental research was the most common type of article published in ECTJ. Findings also indicated that descriptions were the most common type of article published in JID and instructional development was the most frequently published topic, accounting for 72% of all articles.

Over the years, research has been conducted to examine the content of articles published in ETR&D. A study by Villarreal-Stewart et al. (1997) suggested that the primary topic areas published in ETR&D from 1990 to 1995 were related to computer applications and interactive technologies. A review of ETR&D from 1992 to 1996 by Driscoll (1997) indicated that literature reviews and conceptual pieces accounted for 37% of articles the development section and 35% of articles in the research section. Reeves (1995) reported that the primary article types published in the research section of ETR&D from 1989 to 1994 were empirical research using quantitative methods and theoretical literature reviews. Klein (1997) examined articles published in the development section from 1989 to 1997 and discovered that 40% of articles related to the design and application of computer and other technologies and 25% focused on instructional design and development. Turning to type of article, Klein (1997) found that almost half of all articles published in the development section from 1989 to 1997 were descriptions about a specific program, project, method, or model with little or no use of data to draw conclusions. Literature reviews accounted for 21% of articles published, while articles that used data to draw conclusions (case studies and empirical research) accounted for approximately one-third of all published articles from 1989 to 1997.

* 1. The International Section – Abbas Johari

My story of ETR&D experiences started when I saw the beautiful ETR&D bronze logo on the office door of Norm Higgins while I was a graduate student at Arizona State University (ASU). Norm was the first Development Editor of ETR&D; he served as Editor of the Journal of Instructional Development, the forerunner of ETR&D’s Development Section. I asked about the ETR&D, and Norm gave me an ETR&D volume with a valuable talk encouraging me to submit work to the journal. I took several courses with him regarding media attributes (typography, visual and graphic design, etc.) and their role in instructional design and research to figure his work out.

Then I met and took courses from Howard Sullivan, Jim Klein, and Willi Savenye. Norm was in a program called “Educational Media and Computers,” and Howard, Jim, and Willi were in the “Learning and Instruction Technology” program.

Although I was in the Educational Media and Computers program, I took many courses from the Learning and Instruction Technology program. In addition to taking classes from Howard, Jim, Willi in “Instruction,” I took several with Ray Kulhavy in “Learning.” To not only review research on/for learning but to learn the reality of conducting research.

At AECT, in the International division, Nick Eastmond had an event called “The ETR&D Luncheon” every year. I kept missing attending it till when my ex-wife and I were ABD and struggling to find two jobs at the same time and same place. In 2001, At AECT, I asked Nick Eastmond, if my ex-wife and I could write an article regarding academic couples and the challenge of finding jobs. He immediately accepted it. We wrote a paper titled Dual academic careers: Issues and personal perspectives. It that was not only published, but it also obtained a plaque from ETR&D, “International Review” Section.

Having surrounded by ETR&D editors at ASU and publishing at ETR&D gave me enough confidence and courage to ask Nick if I could be a guest editor of the “international Section” in 2003. He kindly gave me a chance, one of the best opportunities that I have had in my courier. In the following year, I became the editor of the International section of ETR&D, which lasted nine years (2004-2013).

I have to admit that this could not happen without mentorship and support from Howard Sullivan, Mike Spector, Steven Ross, Mike Hannifin, and Jim Klein many years. Fortunately, the editorship position gave me a permanent board seat at the International division, which helped me have a poll of international consulting reviewers in the USA and abroad. For this reason and scholarship, when my tenure was over at ETR&D, I made sure that the new editor, Patricia Young, had the same advantage of being a board member of the International division; that she has held till today.

It is difficult to remember, but according to my vita, I had approximately 40 "Editor-edited" manuscripts from 2004 to 2006. I have no record of papers published during 2004 and 2005. However, I managed to publish 43 "Editor-edited" manuscripts from 2006 to 2013 (see resume) with a total of approximately 85 "Revise-Before-Review" comments during this period. It is also worth noting that for a good period of my time at ETR&D, I did not have the Springer managing system to help manage the activities of the publication process. Thanks to Mike Spector, who implicitly and respectfully forced me to adopt the Springer system toward the end of my tenure at ETR&D.

In 2013 I received a presidential award for my service as International Editor for ETR&D 3004-2015. That was an honorable award from the AECT community. In addition, during the International Dinner and Auction event in 2013, I was surprised by the International Division Distinguish award handed to me by Mike Spector, along with a standing innovation that brought tears to my eyes. During these moments, I remembered the beautiful ETR&D bronze logo on the office door of Norm Higgins and my dream of becoming an editor of ETR&D during my graduate study at ASU.

I have been continuing to serve ETR&D since 2013. During this time have received two Outstanding Reviewer awards from the Cultural & Regional Perspectives section of ETR&D. I honor my service and would always be humble for the opportunity given to me to serve our field.

1. ETR&D: Current and Future
   1. The Highlights – Jonathan Michael Spector

When I was nominated to become the ETR&D Development Editor, I was surprised … almost shocked. I had been serving as a reviewer for the Research section and did not think I was qualified. I struggled the first couple of years and frequently asked Steve Ross for guidance and advice. He always responded in a positive manner and after some time I began to feel like I was doing a reasonable job as Development Editor.

One of things that left an early impression on me was having to notify David Jonassen that a manuscript he had submitted had received three rejection decisions. I had hesitated for weeks to let him know but when I did send him the results along with the anonymous reviews, David thanked me and the reviewers for the feedback and said he would completely rework and piece and submit a new manuscript which he did months later. That manuscript received only recommendations for minor edits and was published. What I learned from that experience was that the best authors and most serious researchers appreciated the feedback and used it to improve their work.

A second strong impression involved a Canadian author who received major revisions on her first three submissions. My letter suggested that she might want to seek an alternative publication venue, but she said she was determined to improve the manuscript and see it published in ETR&D. After seven revisions, it was accepted and published. She came to a journal talks session at AERA in Vancouver to thank me in person and convey her thanks to the reviewers. She has become one of the most conscientious reviewers for the journal since then. In closing, I think serving as ETR&D editor has been the highlight and highpoint of my career.

* 1. The Cultural and Regional Perspectives Section – Patricia A. Young

I am the first woman and African American to serve on the editorial board of the journal Educational Technology Research and Development. This has been a journey full of wonder, enlightenment, and professional growth.

On September 5, 2013, I received an email from Michael J. Spector (Editor of the Research section), Michael Hannafin (Editor of the Research section) and Phillip Harris (President of AECT). The email stated the following:

You have been nominated to serve as the editor of the newly created Cultural and Regional Perspectives Section of Educational Technology Research and Development (see the description below). The next step in the selection process is for each of the final candidates to submit a one-page statement of interest that (a) confirms your interest, (b) briefly indicates your qualifications, (c) addresses the focus of this re-branded and re-focused section of ETR&D, and (d) indicates actions that you might take to solicit papers and recruit reviewers. In addition, we ask that you send a two-page resumé that can contain a link to your Website that could contain additional relevant information.

If you are willing to accept the nomination, please send both of these items as PDF attachments to me (mike.spector@unt.edu) by September 20th. As noted, we would like to make a decision soon so that the editor-elect has a chance to meet with us at AECT 2013 in Anaheim at the end of October. If you are not interested, please also let me know that as soon as you can.

Congratulations on your nomination and we look forward to your response.

Best regards,

Mike Spector

Mike Hannafin

Phil Harris

The description of this new section and its focus and responsibilities was extensive. The responsibilities included reshaping the section as it was previously the International Review section.

I was elated by the nomination, because it meant that my peers recognized me and my scholarship in culture and instructional design and technology. Further, this was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I wrote my statement of interest in being editor of the Cultural and Regional Perspectives section and included a letter of support from my chair that he would provide resources if selected. On September 25, 2013, I received a letter from Mike Spector confirming my selection as editor. This was a momentous time for my career and myself. The position started in January 2014.

As editor of the Cultural and Regional Perspectives section, I have had the pleasure of publishing scholars from all over the world. I believe part of this work has also been mentoring scholars in that the feedback from reviewers can also help scholars grow as writers. For many years, I would send out an additional supplement to authors who submitted articles to the section. The supplement tried to guide authors in building a cultural context to their research studies. This was challenging because some authors tailored their manuscripts to a western audience with little reference to a cultural context. Other authors did not collect the needed cultural data so they could not write about it in their manuscripts. This was the mentorship aspect that I mentioned as part of my editorial support.

Of late, I have been trying to get more articles through the process. I can offer authors the opportunity to revise and resubmit. During the review process, scholars’ manuscripts may receive major revisions. However, this is an opportunity to be published in one of the top educational technology journals. If an article is rejected, Springer Publishing offers authors the opportunity to have their manuscript reviewed by one of their other journal publications. This speaks to the supportive environment and care we have for the journal, the process and publishing our peers.

The Cultural and Regional Perspectives section publishes 6 to 9 articles per year and receives 180+ manuscripts. The section reviews all types of manuscripts that include qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, design study, concept papers, literature reviews and case studies. Some recent topics covered include elearning during Covid-19, the flipped classroom and cross-cultural learning.

I work closely with the International Division and serve on their executive board as a representative for ETRD. Further, the International Division selects an outstanding journal article, from the section, every year.

As editor of the Cultural and Regional Perspectives section, I believe I am guiding the topics and future of the field of instructional design and technology. All of the work we do as editors, scholars and practitioners in the field serves as a historical record of our contributions.

* 1. Renowned Scholars, Trends, and Technologies – Gloria Natividad

It was a great honor to have had the opportunity to serve ETR&D as an Editorial Assistant when I was an international graduate student at UNT.

I met Dr. Michel Spector for the first time when he graciously accepted Dr. Lin Lin´s invitation to our class and he talked to us about the peer-review and publishing processes. I had no idea it was going to be the start of an amazing and exciting journey having both of them as my mentors and role models for the following years in my life.

A few months later, Dr. Spector was recruiting an editorial assistant for ETR&D Development Section. I was not going to apply for that position, it was my dear friend Yvette, the Department Assistant at that time, who pushed me to do so. Dr. Spector interviewed several applicants. I could not believe it when I was called for the second-round interview, and as you can imagine, I was so thrilled when I was selected to be able to work with such a stellar team!

Attending AECT Conventions offered me the opportunity to meet in person the rest of the team: Dr. Tristan Johnson, Dr. Patricia Young, and Dr. Hale Ilgaz, which got me very excited to learn that they were very kind and friendly, and that we were all committed to the same objectives. The teamwork was so great that it made always unforgettable experiences. We were more like a family.

A graduate student´s real reason to go to a conference is attending sessions, learning new things, and presenting about what makes him or her passionate about. However, another amazing and very important opportunity a graduate student gets from attending any AECT convention, is the chance to meet, face-to-face, the “Champions” one is reading about and following their research work; and, to me, it was very special to meet in person several of our ETR&D authors and reviewers. I always left every AECT convention I attended, exhausted but invigorated with many incredible memories I have treasured in my mind and in my heart.

During the years I served ETR&D, I understood how the exponential growth of technology usage in education was influencing the focus and importance of educational technology research and why ETR&D recognizes the need to promote and ensure a continuing conversation in the dynamic and diverse system of scholarly communication for which researchers and scholars provide the focus and the purpose.

We took the approach of examining what educational technology scholars had been publishing by means of analyzing the published research articles in the multidisciplinary domain of educational technology, to better understand where the discipline had been, where it was, and where it might be headed.

It seemed reasonable to look at persistent trends and technologies that might have had a positive impact on learning. The comprehensive analyses involved data collected from 663 research articles published in Educational Technology Research and Development (ETR&D), from January 1995 to December 2014 (20 years); advanced analytic approaches such as latent semantic analysis (LSA); and subject-matter expert insights and interpretations; as well as what had been published and by whom.

The most cited article overall in those twenty years was “Teacher pedagogical beliefs: The final frontier in our quest for technology integration?” by Peggy A. Ertmer, published in 2005 and the subject of 1433 citations in only 9 years since the article was first published, at the time this analysis was completed (January 10-16, 2016). The published research papers which were cited 200 or more times during those twenty years were a total of 64 papers. The years showing the highest number of citations were 1999, 2000, and 2005, with a total of 2,991, 3,076, and 3,779 citations respectively.

Through these analyses we wanted to show both individual thoughts as well as findings on the field overall: trends in research topics, citations, and authorship. This is how to better understand trends in scholarship over the past 20 years (1995 -2014) and potential new directions in research and publications.

The most prominent trends the data and the analyses uncovered are: the research topic *Learning and Instruction*, including papers that address research, educational systems, knowledge, design, educational theories, and technology, had been consistently studied and reported on in publications during the last 20 years.

Publications in the research topic of *Learning Systems and Tools*, which include papers on web-based learning, authoring, adaptive technologies, resources, and systems, had remained fairly stable in number since the end of 1999 and beginning of 2000.

Interest from a research perspective in the research topic of *Student Learning*, increased dramatically after a steady period from 1995 to 2005 and appeared to keep rising. Studies on issues associated with *Faculty Training* and *Adult Education*, such as online programs, instructional design, distance learning, and technology development programs, revealed in their graphs a steadily declining trend in the number of research papers published during the last 20 years. This research topic had its peak year in 2003, reaching 12% of the published articles in educational technology; then, from 2003 to 2010, its percentage dropped to 2%, where it had remained for the last 4 years of the span of this study.

Articles published in the research topic of *Problem Solving*, which include papers on complex, ill-structured and well-structured problems; problems solving strategies, as well as on learning systems, had remained relatively steady, with a slight upward momentum during the last five years of the study period.

There have always been discussions of paradigm shifts; even so, in the enterprise of educational technology publications, the one guaranteed constant is change, and the pace of that change is accelerating, and so are the trends that are driving that change.

Some trends may present opportunity for advancement of an idea, while others may disrupt, challenge, or threaten advancement. Technology innovations may result in fads or temporary novelties, while others may endure for many years with little attention.

At ETR&D they are constantly reflecting on these changes and on new trends appearing in the field of educational technology. Having had the opportunity to be a part of such a unique team, of one of the ten top educational technology journals, highly recognized, as selected at a National Technology Leadership Summit by the journal editors who meet every year, has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life!

* 1. Research Publishing Challenges and Growth – Tristan Johnson

My introduction to the journal was initially as an author and then as a reviewer and then I served as a member of the Development Section Editorial Board. In 2012, I was elected to the Editor for the Research Section.

Michael Hannafin mentored me through the 4th Quarter of 2012 to get me up to speed on the journal and its culture. We meet weekly to review tasks and I took many notes as to how he was thinking about the editor tasks. He was generous in his time and sharing the specifics about how he approached the adjudication of the peer-review process.

January 2013 was a long month as I deliberately applied the decision framework to the editorial tasks. While Michael continued to help me, I gradually leaned on Mike Spector (the Development Editor) for help and guidance as I was seeking to align editorial approaches with the journal at large and not have wide variance in approaches. Mike with whom I had prior experiences with the journal was explicit and open to the new collaboration.

I initially had assistance from a staff member who was not a graduate student. The various tasks required to process manuscripts were tedious and the majority of them required a level of familiarity of the field and a fundamental understanding about research. In consulting with Mike, I had quickly realized that the work Gloria was doing for Mike was at the level that I needed to build the capacity to keep up with the number of papers being submitted to the journal. A friend and colleague, Arif Altun, has referred me to Hale Ilgaz, whom I subsequently invited to serve as an editorial assistant and then promoted to Assistant Editor. The work Hale was conducting really gave our Research Team the capability to process the growth of manuscripts. Over the following 7 years, Hale has fully contributed to the management and operations of the Research section and is a significant and full contributor to the Research section of the journal.

During the 2013-2017 timeframe, the journal had a steady growth of submissions and a growth of accepted manuscripts. Aside from the weekly tasks to keep up with the demands, we sought to determine if any of the publishing trends needed to be addressed. In several meetings with Mike, Patricia, Gloria and Hale, we would discuss impact factors and open access issues. We were concerned that the time to publication was so long. We were concerned that younger scholars were not getting published as much as more senior scholars. We continued to use the focus of the journal to not become an anything journal, but a journal focused on the research and development of anything technology related to the impact on learning. We have done our best to keep true to the initial focus of the journal.

On a handful of cases, I would consult with Mike on the alignment of submitted manuscripts. I would consult with Mike on fairly making editorial decisions on specify cases. Mike’s advice was consistent and fair. What was the connection to “learning’? What did the reviews say? Mike instilled the value and power of “peer-reviewing” and the impact of having double-blind reviews. I had seen several times where I was encouraged to seek reviewer buy-in as I would call it. These principles of equity and fairness are still embodied with Lin, Patricia, and myself.

As such, the issue of supporting and growing the reviewer pool has been one of the most challenging issues that we have dealt with. This would and continue to be a big concern for the journal.

Moving into 2018, Lin was elected to serve as the Editor for the Development section. This was a big change as Mike had served 15 years as Development section editor. To keep the continuity and build capacity, Lin and Patricia and I were able to secure an Emeritus position for Mike. This was a big step as the position was created an active member of the editorial team with the specific focus on key position papers and featured papers that we felt were needed to bring to the community. This new position has allowed ETR&D to highlight key ideas and impactful researcher in ways to inform and share critical insights and views. Moving forward in time from 2018, the journal needed to build efficiencies and as such the editorial team commenced on hold quarterly and then soon after monthly coordination meetings to consider issues and discuss possible approaches to dealing with these challenges. The section on Synergies outlines the work that we started working and continues to this day.

A final remark. Based on my predecessors and the current work, the editorial team is and has been very grateful for the contribution of ETRD editorial board members, AECT presidents and staff, professional experts who review for the journal, publication staff, and colleagues around the world for their time and commitment to the service provided by the journal. I am daily grateful for the time commitments of hundreds of reviewers.

* 1. ETR&D Outstanding Reviewers – Hale Ilgaz

When I first heard that ETR&D was looking for an editorial assistant for the Research Section, I did not have a big hope for acceptance, but after several interviews with Editors and a one-month trial process finally, I was a team member of this great journal. Serving ETR&D is both a highly prestigious mission and a very special and unique learning experience. Since 2015 I have learned a lot and am still learning. We are working with the best authors all over the world and the journal is so fair and inclusive to all the authors. Even if the submitter authors are top academicians they can get rejected. And as a young researcher, seeing their communication is so valuable. And the other major experience is on the reviewer side. All the reviewers are spending great effort and time on the journal. Sometimes I see 10-page long comments, this is such incredible work.

When I first prepared the Research Section’s annual report in 2015, we received 297 papers from the Research Section. This number grows every year, and today we received almost 850 papers in the Research Section. I learned a lot from this huge growth.

Being a member of the editorial board at ETR&D has been an invaluable experience for me. Besides that, I really felt like part of a family. I think being a member of the ETR&D editors’ team is one of the most important parts of my career.

* 1. Growth and Synergies – Lin Lin Lipsmeyer, Tristan Johnson, and the current editors’ team

ETR&D has grown tremendously in the past 5 years. There have been expansion and close collaborations between the section editors. Below, we will highlight some major issues and developments as the current editors’ team. We will focus on 1) the expanded roles of the editors and editorial board members; 2) the international editorial board members; 3) recruiting and securing high quality reviewers; 4) journal service awards; 5) continuously increased impact factors; and 6) evolving and addressing complex issues.

* + 1. Expanded roles and multiple layers of collaborations

As mentioned previously by Patricia Young, the “Cultural and Regional Perspectives” has become an increasingly important section of ETR&D. In addition, we have also created a new section, “Featured Papers” section, which is edited by Mike Spector. It was created to benefit from Spector’s knowledge, experience, and networks in the field. Most “Featured Papers” are by invitations, for instance, highlighting Early Career Awards, Distinguished Development Awards, and other AECT award papers. The Featured Section focuses on lessons learned and insights across multiple studies that move the discipline forward.

The following are some of the main activities regularly conducted by the editors:

* Process manuscripts
* Conduct editors’ monthly meetings (to discuss vision, continued improvements of operation, communications, and initiatives)
* Communicate with the AECT leadership and Springer
* Recruit, and elect new editorial board members (two new members for Research and two for Development each year)
* Conduct joint-editorial board member meetings (once a semester and at the AECT conference)
* Communicate, seek suggestions, and collaborate with the editorial boards
* Update author and reviewer templates, keywords in the Editorial Manager system
* Present mid-year report for the AECT Summer Leadership meeting
* Present annual report at the AECT Annual Conference
* Offer journal talks at AERA; AECT, and other conferences
* Participate at the AECT Annual Conference
  + Conduct the ETR&D joint-board meeting at the AECT. This joint editorial board meeting is open to the public. We present annual reports and discuss issues and respond to questions. We also announce awards at the joint editorial board meeting, including, e.g., AECT Distinguished Development awards, ETR&D Early Career Scholar awards, and Best reviewers’ awards.
  + Coordinate the ETR&D award presentations, including, e.g., the AECT Distinguished development awardee presentations and ETR&D Early Career Scholar awardee presentations.

The following figure (Figure 2) shows the numbers of submitted, rejected, withdrawn, and accepted manuscripts and rates in the past five years (note that the numbers for 2022 are only till May 2022). Figure 3 shows the numbers of editorial decisions in the past five years. The big jump in 2020 was due to the number of papers that were linked to the special issue “Shifting to Digital” which was targeting the application of research on practice with a direct focus on implementing research-driven decision making on the design and development of education and learning systems.

**Table

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Figure 2 The numbers of submitted, rejected, withdrawn, and accepted manuscripts**Table

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Figure 3 The numbers of editorial decisions in the past five years

* + 1. International editorial board members

Our editorial board members are not only from the U.S., the other parts of North America, but are also from Asia, Australia, and Europe. The following table (TABLE 1) lists the editorial board members and their institutions that have served in the past several years.

table 1 Editorial Board Members (2019 – Present)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Research Section** | **Development Section** |
| **Xun Ge** (2022-2024)  University of Oklahoma, USA | **Christian Schunn** (2022-2024)  University of Pittsburgh, USA |
| **James Birt** (2022-2024)  Bond University, Australia | **Camille Dickson-Deane** (2022-2024)  University of Technology Sydney, Australia |
| **Kaushal Kumar Bhagat** (2021-2023)  Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, India  **Xiaoqing Gu** (2021-2023)  East China Normal University, China  **Royce Kimmons** (2020–2022)  Brigham Young University, USA  **Kun Huang** (2020–2022)  University of Kentucky, USA  **Yuping Wang** (2019–2021)  Griffith University, Australia  **Kay Wijekumar** (2019–2021)  Texas A&M University, USA | **Susan McKenney** (2021-2023)  Twente University, The Netherlands  **Marco Kalz** (2021-2023)  Heidelberg University of Education, Germany  **Michael Kerres** (2020–2022)  University Duisburg-Essen, Germany  **Andri Ioannou** (2020–2022)  Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus  **Camille Dickson-Deane** (2019–2021) University of Technology Sydney, Australia  **Ellen Meier** (2019–2021)  Columbia University, USA |
| **Yun Ju Lan** (2018-2020)  National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan | **Xiaodong Lin** (2018-2020)  East China Normal University, China |
| **Victor Law** (2018-2020)  University of New Mexico, USA | **Andreja Istenicˇ Starcˇicˇ** (2018-2020)  University of Ljubljana, Slovenia |

Several main tasks regularly conducted by the editorial board members include: regular manuscript reviews, elections and votes of editors-in-chief, new board members (two for each section each year), nominations and elections of awardees of the ETR&D Early Career Scholar award (research section), the AECT distinguished development award (development section), and decisions on special issues.

We have invited our editorial board members to form ad hoc committees and help us tackle several issues such as 1) ETR&D reviewers: quality, incentive, and capacity building; 2) The editorial manager system (keywords/categories); 3) ETR&D social impact: social media and marketing; 4) ETR&D special issues; and 5) ETR&D professional impact, system, and performance (impact factor).

* + 1. Special issues

With the help of the editorial board members, we have expanded special issues. TABLE 1 below shows the special issues in the past years:

table 2 Special Issues (2019 – Present)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Published** | **Titles** | **Guest Editors** | **Handling Editors** |
| 2024 | Learning Through Design and Maker Education | Andri Ioannou, Brian Gravel | Tristan Johnson |
| 2023 | Methodologies for Research on Educational Technology: Emerging Approaches | Michael Kerres, Pasha Antonenko, and Marco | Lin Lin Lipsmeyer |
| 2023 | Teachers' digital competencies in higher education: Shifting to a blended future? | Jo Tondeur, Sarah Howard | Patricia Young |
| 2022 | Shifting to digital: Informing the rapid development, deployment, and future of teaching and learning | Camille Dickson-Deane, Andri Ioannou, Royce Kimmons, Andreja Starcic, Kay Wijekumar, Patricia Young, Gloria Natividad, Hale Ilgaz, Gwen Morel | Lin Lin Lipsmeyer & Tristan Johnson |
| 2021 | Embodied Cognition and Tech for Learning | Theodore Kopcha, Keri Valentine, Ceren Ocak | Tristan Johnson |
| 2021 | Learners and Learning Contexts: New Alignments in the Digital Age | Joke Voogt, Gerald Knezek | Tristan Johnson |
| 2020 | Systematic Reviews of Research on Emerging Learning Environments and Technologies | Florence Martin, Vanessa Dennen, Curt Bonk | Lin Lin Lipsmeyer |
| 2019 | Theory in Learning Design & Tech Research/Practice | Rick West, Peggy Ertmer, Susan McKenney | Patricia Young |

One special issue to note is the “special issue – Shifting to Digital” published in early 2022. This was one that came out of collaborative work between the editors’ team and the joint editorial board members during the pandemic. This ETR&D Special Issue was created to understand and inform the “the rapid development, deployment, and future of teaching and learning”. Rather than rushing out a special issue for new studies to COVID-19, the ETR&D editors and editorial boards wondered how previously published research might inform the best ways to respond to rapid shifts to digitally intensive learning, in the pandemic situation and in similar situations that might arise in the future. In addition, an effort was made to ensure that the selected papers were applicable in helping educators, and that we represented multiple countries, cultures, perspectives, and situations. An emphasis was also placed on the responding authors examining the papers from various points of views. The process was deliberate and reasoned. A team of seven editors and five editorial board members worked intensively for nine months to put together this issue, resulting in a total of 97 peer-reviewed responding papers and editorial notes. The issue is a deeply reflective exercise in examining how what we as academic researchers are doing might inform practice and improve instruction when facing these challenging situations.

* + 1. Recruiting and securing high quality reviewers

Recruiting and securing high quality reviewers have been the major issue over the years. In assigning reviewers to each manuscript, we usually try to find 1) one expert on content; 2) one on method; 3) one on technology; and try to balance between young scholar and senior scholar, gender, country, and so forth. We try not to assign a reviewer another manuscript within a month. Yet, when we do, we usually add a personal note in addition to the template. Recently, adding a personal note when inviting a reviewer has become a norm when the reviewer has either accepted or rejected the manuscript previously, or when the reviewer has recently completed reviewing another manuscript or has one already assigned to him or her.

In the past year, the editors’ team has also been pondering the initiative to invite “subject matter experts” as the first round of desk-reject process due to the rapid development of artificial intelligence, VR, AR, mixed realities, and learning analytics. The idea is to invite the SME to read the abstract (or the manuscript) quickly, and determine 1) whether it's a good fit; 2) whether it adds any value or significance; 3) whether it is outdated; 3) whether the methods sound good; 4) whether the reference and literature are up to date.

* Subject Matter Area 1: Artificial Intelligence/Robotics/Robot Assisted (Language) Learning/Adaptive Technologies, Intelligent Systems, Tutoring Systems, or Pedagogical Agents
* Subject Matter Area 2: Learning Analytics, Data Analytics, or Data Science
* Subject Matter Area 3: Simulations, Virtual Reality, or Augmented Reality or Mixed Reality/Games, Gamification, or Play
  + 1. Awards

Over the years, we have presented awards to various early career and distinguished development scholars: The awardees have been included in the AECT awardee database as the AECT Distinguished Development Awards (<https://members.aect.org/Foundation/Awards/award.asp?AwardName=Distinguished+Development+Award&AwardGroup=ETR%26D+AWARDS>) and the ETR&D Early Career Scholar Award (Previously: Young Scholar Awards) <https://members.aect.org/Foundation/Awards/award.asp?AwardName=Earlier+Career+Scholar+Award&AwardGroup=ETR%26D+AWARDS>. Figure 4 is a screenshot from the website.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ETR&D Early Career Scholar Award (Previously: Young Scholar Awardees) | AECT Distinguished Development Awardees |
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Figure 4 ETR&D Early Career Scholar Awardees and AECT Distinguished Development Awardees

* + 1. ETR&D increased Impact Factors

We are very proud of the continued increasing impact factors for ETR&D over the years. Figure 5 below shows the upward trends of the increasing impact factors.

Figure 5 Increasing Impact Factors of ETR&D

Table

Description automatically generatedAlong this line, The ETR&D Journal Impact Factor rank has also increased substantially as can be seen below (Figure 6). ETR&D is ranked as one of the top 20 journals in education and educational research.

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generatedFigure 6 Increasing Impact Factor Rank (JIF) of ETR&D

ETR&D is ranked as Number #4 of all the educational technology journals on the Google Scholar list, arguably after Computers & Education, British Journal of Educational Technology, and Education and Information Technologies.

1. Conclusion and Complex Issues

New issues emerge about manuscripts and publications with the rapid development of artificial intelligence, big data, learning analytics, mixed realities, metaverse, and biotechnologies. For instance, we have been adjusting our approaches with open access publications. We’ve had reviewers who no longer review for ETR&D because they “no longer perform peer review for non-open journals”. We have been pondering not only methodological but also ethical issues related to data collections and research processes. We are also constantly examining our identity (e.g., research or practice or both), subject matters (e.g., language learning, medical education, instrument validation, computer science education).

Our field(s) are changing dramatically in all aspects. We have new and old methods (and different ways of knowing), discussions on whose voices get heard or published, what are seminal or innovative works. As ETR&D editors, we take our work and the consequences of our work seriously.

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1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)