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Editorship-as-curatorship: Celebrating 50 years of *Management Learning*

Curator, n. One who has the care or charge of a person or thing. From Latin *cūrātor*, overseer, manager, guardian. **Curate, v.** To act as curator of (a museum, exhibits, etc.); to look after and preserve; to select, organize, and present (content), as on a website.¹

In this editorial we use the metaphor of curatorship to look back on and explore the past 50 years of research and scholarship published in *Management Learning*, and to reflect on our role as current editors and curators of this journal. Importantly, to curate is not simply or primarily a matter of gathering together, organizing and making available articles by publishing them in the journal. Instead we see curatorship as a process that involves collectively attending to and *taking care of* articles-as-objects that are read, shared and cited by others.

Reaching 50 is a significant milestone for any journal. *Management Learning* predates other main learning and education journals in our field, *Journal of Management Education* (1975) and *Academy of Management Learning & Education* (2002). The journal has also been around longer than other ‘critical’ journals, such as *Organization* (1994) and *Journal of Management Inquiry* (1992) and longer than some of the most well-known management journals, including *Academy of Management Review* (1976) and *Organization Studies* (1980). Many, but not all, readers will be aware that *Management Learning* spent its first 25 years as *Management Education and Development* (MEAD). It was connected with the UK-based Association of Teachers of Management, which later became the Association for Management Education and Development. The journal’s founding mission was ‘to enable management teachers to contribute to the policies and practices of the profession’ (Pugh, 1970: 1). While the articles published in early issues look quite different to the ones published today, an enduring feature has been the value placed on research in enriching the practice of education and learning. Another has been an interest in management development, both within the formal educational setting of business schools and in management programmes within the workplace. The emergence of a critical orientation in the journal - the desire to reflect on and challenge practice and the assumptions on which it is based - can also be traced to the MEAD days, especially under the leadership of Mark Easterby-Smith and Mike Pedler in the 1980s. This unwavering commitment to criticality continues to distinguish *Management Learning* from other learning and education journals in our field.

The rebranding of *Management Learning* in 1994 recognised the growth of the learning literature in management and organization studies and marked a desire for the journal to become more international in orientation (Vince & Elkjaer, 2009). Internationalization is reflected today by the geographic diversity of our editorial team, international editorial board and reviewers, and in those who submit manuscripts to the journal. Later in this editorial we showcase this diversity through a selection of articles that we are making open access as part of our anniversary celebrations, while acknowledging that there is still distance still to be travelled in this regard.

In reflecting on the meaning of curatorship, and on relations between ourselves as editors, and authors and reviewers of articles published in this journal, we draw here on Kiriakos and

Tienari (2018: 263) who characterise academic writing as ‘an embodied, sensuous, emotional, social, and identity-related activity’. Love is an essential aspect of our editorship-as-curatorship of this journal. It is ‘the pleasure of pursuing intellectual challenges together with others’ (Kiriakos and Tienari, 2018: 269) that drives us, as editors, to gather together and make available the collection of articles that is contained within the material pages of this journal. When oriented towards love, the academic work of reviewing and editing is inherently communal and to an extent ‘unconditional’ (Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012), in that there is likely to be no direct benefit to the self, although, following Kiriakos and Tienari (2018), we do not wish to overlook the importance of self-love by promoting a vision of academic work as sacrificial suffering (see Bell and Sinclair, 2014).

Love enables us to expose ‘our vulnerabilities and [gives] us courage in embracing writing wholeheartedly (hooks 2000)’ (p. 264). For Kiriakos and Tienari, the practice of writing journal articles can be understood in terms of love, not primarily as a feeling, but as a source for intentional action that enables us to ‘stand up for ourselves and for [who and what] we care about’ (p.269) while also maintaining awareness of our own vulnerability. However, not all scholarly writing is equally lovable. Rhodes (2019), published as part of the ‘Writing differently’ special issue in *Management Learning*, calls for an alternative scriptology driven by reflexive awareness of the relationship between writing and knowledge. He proposes that management and organisation studies scholars must try to liberate themselves from the strictures of a scientific discourse that disciplines us into forms of writing that are aesthetically and emotionally devoid. Not only does he question the aesthetics of academic writing, he also considers what can legitimately be written/said - politically and ethically - within the pages of an academic journal like *Management Learning*.

Editorship-as-curatorship positions *Management Learning* articles as a source of ‘object-love’ understood as the passions between curators and the objects they curate (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015; Macdonald, 2002). This positioning portrays the journal as a space where affect - intensities that arise prior to cognitive thought (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010) - is generated between bodies, including between bodies of work as well as the lived bodies of scholars and research participants, through reading and writing articles-as-objects. Drawing inspiration from museum studies scholarship, this positioning ‘brings to life the social interactions that take place’ between ourselves as editors and the articles-as-objects that we gather together and care for. In so doing it enables us to ‘consider anew’ what journals ‘are and what they are for’ (Geoghegan and Hess, 2015: 445).

In taking care as editors of this journal we must continually reflect on inequalities in practices of knowledge production and the need to foster more pluralistic communities of research practice in our field. Czarniawska and Sevón’s (2018) historical analysis of referencing patterns in key organisation studies texts shows that the proportion of women authors who are cited remains proportionally very low, and has grown very slowly since the 1950s, despite the proportion of publications by women scholars having increased significantly. Female academics also continue to be underrepresented on the editorial boards of many management journals (Metz, Harzing and Zyphur, 2016). This analysis points towards the role of senior editors in determining editorial board member appointments, using homosocial reproduction theory to explain women’s underrepresentation. A failure to maintain diversity of curatorship can lead to certain topics, theories and approaches being preferentially treated, while others are marginalised (Metz, Harzing and Zyphur, 2016).

Management Learning has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to diversity by ensuring that women are equally represented in editorial roles, including as editors-in-chief, associate and guest editors, although we are mindful of the need to do more in ensuring the diversity of the journal. Taking care as editors thus comes with a responsibility to attend to issues of gender, race, age and geography in ensuring the avoidance of homogeneity. This raises a broader question regarding the role of a curator, as to whether this an objective practice of gathering together and presenting what already exists, or a power-laden practice that carries with it responsibilities to ensure that those with less power are not silenced. As in critical museum studies, we see our role as curators as being concerned with broadening the body of knowledge by creating spaces that are open to conceptual and methodological inventiveness and are genuinely pluralistic in terms of the voices that are heardⁱⁱ.

Curatorship of the journal also include editors of special issues. While special issues have long been a feature of *Management Learning*, we have expanded this our under editorship. We are delighted with the response to the ‘Writing differently’ special issue, guest edited by Gilmore, Harding, Helin and Pullen. This issue, published Vol. 50(1), exemplifies the values of critique, creativity and quirkiness (Bell and Bridgman, 2018) that *Management Learning* has cherished throughout its history. Special issues provide an opportunity for focused discussion of a particular theme and are a vehicle for diversifying and growing the readership of the journal. Guest editors enrich the pool of editorial expertise and connect the journal to academic and practitioner communities who might not have published in, or read the journal previously. With special issues, members of the journal’s regular editorial team, including members of the editorial board and other regular reviewers for the journal play an important role as curators by ensuring the special issue remains within the aims and scope of the journal and engages with the existing readership, as well as reaching out to new audiences. This is a delicate balance to achieve and one that we continue to appreciate.

A centrepiece of our anniversary celebrations is the forthcoming special issue ‘Celebrating 50 years of *Management Learning*: Historical reflections at the intersection of the past and future’, to be published in February 2020. Turning 50 presents an opportunity to explore the past of management knowledge, learning and education and the contribution this journal has made. But we also saw it as an opportunity to connect with the growth of critical historical research in management education and learning, as well as organization studies more generally. Critical historical approaches are well suited to the critical, reflexive mission of *Management Learning*. The crafting of new histories of the past is a critical endeavour, through their challenge to the taken-for-grantedness of established narratives. Through this critique, new histories create space for different understandings of the past, involving events, characters and plots that might have been forgotten or deliberately excluded from conventional history. This is a potentially radical form of curation, moving beyond preserving and taking care of historical artefacts. We look forward to our special issue contributors reflecting on the past and encouraging us to think differently and innovatively about the present and the future of management learning and education. In 2020, in addition to the 50th anniversary issue we will publish a special issue on the performative university around the theme of ‘Targets and terror in academia’. We also have calls open for special issues on ‘Management Learning and the unsettled humanities’ and ‘Identity and learning (not) to be different’, scheduled for publication in 2021.

To celebrate *Management Learning* turning 50 we will, throughout the year, be showcasing a selection of the articles that exemplify critical and reflexive scholarship on organisation and learning. These will be announced on the website and made open access for a limited time. To begin with, we highlight five recent papers written by scholars in Brazil, Australia, France, United Kingdom and The Netherlands.

Cunliffe (2019) reflects on her career as a scholar and concludes that the decisions we make about the work we do are not just intellectual choices but have political consequences for our identities and career. Her paper will resonate with many of those who have published in *Management Learning* through its history. Rhodes' (2019) article, already mentioned, is also about the politics of knowledge and our identities as academics, demonstrating that the way we write is an act of politics. Contemporary interest in writing management and organisation studies differently is a development that this journal has long been supportive of and continues to encourage.

Management Learning has long been a home for papers that critique colonialism and imperialism as they relate to the production of management knowledge, as well as papers that reflect critically on research practices. Girei (2017) combines these streams in an account of her quest for an ethical and rigorous methodology for studying organisations in Uganda. Ybema, Kamsteeg and Veldhuizen (2019) also reflect on the positioning of researchers in their empirical study of a Dutch police force, encouraging ethnographers to move beyond the taken-for-granted notion of the immersed 'insider' to adopt a variety of positionings. Our final selection, de Vaujany and Aroles (2019) is another example of rich empirical studies published in *Management Learning* over the years. These authors take us into a collaborative workspace in Paris to explore how silence is inscribed in learning processes within this new organisational form.

As part of the journal's current editorial team, we have been privileged to have been involved in the task of curating these articles. As we continue to celebrate *Management Learning's* 50th anniversary throughout this year, we look forward featuring influential articles that have been curated by previous editors of this journal.

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ⁱ Oxford English Dictionary Online (2002-)

ⁱⁱ Museum Studies as Critical Praxis, Tate Papers <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/29/museum-studies-critical-praxis> [accessed 01.03.19]