# Twitter in Education

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This special issue of *e-Learning and Digital Media* arose from a chance discussion at lunch one day, when one of us mentioned to the outgoing editors of this journal that she had just managed to connect with someone from the other side of the world (they must have been up late!) and share ideas of interest to us both, particularly through using the DM (direct message) function in Twitter as a private conversation.

We then constructed the call for papers using GoogleDocs to enable easy sharing, drafting, and finalising and, once approved by the original editors Professors Tina Besley and Michael Peters, blogged about it: (http://interrogatingeducationz.blogspot.co.nz/2015/06/call-for-papers-e-learning-and-digital.html). From there, we tweeted to spread the word, adding specific people's Twitter handles to pique interest and disseminate the message. We also held two Tweetups to discuss potential ideas from authors as a way of stimulating discussion and encouraging contributions. And, since Twitter is now in its 10th year of existence, it is timely to examine its use in educational settings.

The call for papers for the Special Issue sought contributions that promoted the following focus:

> **Twitter in Education**: Microblogging is now an accepted part of the social media landscape. But what does it look like in educational settings for educational purposes? What is it used for, what impact does it have, and who for?
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> This call for papers for *E-Learning and Digital Media* aims to collect articles that directly focus on how and why Twitter is used educationally. Explorations that dig deeply into its affordances for learning as well as examples of practice across sectors (from compulsory schooling to various tertiary and informal learning contexts) are welcome. A range of methodological approaches are also welcome.
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> **Objective**
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> This issue on **Twitter in Education** will bring together examples of practice and thinking that help us understand how these social media tools are appropriated for specific educational purposes and the extent to which they address issues of impact, which must be defined in relation to the context under scrutiny. In addition to practice-based submissions, we welcome literature reviews and theoretical considerations of Twitter use in education.

Collectively, the work contributes to what we know about educational appropriations of Twitter in a range of contexts – mostly in higher education. These contexts ranged from examining its value in language learning (Lomicka & Hattem) to its use as a platform for in-service teachers' informal learning (Cleveland, Jackson & Dawson) or a meta-analysis of tweets as generated from state institutions (Rosenberg, Greenhalgh, Koehler, Hamilton & Akcaoglu). From Malawi to Michigan, the authors consider how undergraduate and graduate students use Twitter. A common focus for articles is the examination of the purposes of tweets and Twitter-based activity (Chawinga; Greenhalgh, Rosenberg & Wolf), as well as patterns of use (Rosenberg). The articles generate ideas for tertiary teachers in particular, as

well as learners seeking to make situated, distributed, and purposeful uses of Twitter. The authors also champion affordances of communication and connection. A balanced critique is provided by those who acknowledge the limitations and challenges of microblogging, including constraints caused by (lack of) infrastructure (Chawinga), the need to manage overload (Lomicka), and an exploration of some more sinister aspects of Twitter (Rosenberg), including identifying potential problems of the public permanence of Tweets (Rainford).

A range of methodological approaches are also represented in this special issue, as authors examine Twitter in Education through diverse lenses. For example, Rainford writes a meta-reflexive piece, whereas Lomicka undertakes a systematic literature review. These contrast with Rosenberg, Greenhalgh, Koehler, Hamilton, and Akcaoglu's large-scale quantitative work and Greenhalgh, Rosenberg, and Wolf's study of the use of categories and codes to analyse the communicative intent of Tweets.

Alongside practical ideas for teachers and learners seeking to maximise the affordances of Twitter in Education in particular, and similar social media platforms in general, each author identifies gaps in the research literature and identifies some implications for future research related to such social media affordances in educational contexts. We are hopeful readers will find much to inform future practice and research.

Finally, we congratulate the contributors for making this Special Issue a reality.