

Reflections on the first three years of ASRHE

Eva Heinrich

Massey University
e.heinrich@massey.ac.nz
ORCID: 0000-0003-4210-5444

Geof Hill

The Investigative Practitioner
drgeofhillip@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-5775-9972

Jo-Anne Kelder

Jo-Anne Kelder Consulting
jokelder@outlook.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-8618-0537

Michelle Picard

Flinders University
michelle.picard@flinders.edu.au
ORCID: 0000-0002-3087-7407

Keywords

Generous scholarship, publication statistics, readership statistics, journal review, journal plans

Abstract

This editorial looks back at the first three years of ASRHE, the journal for Advancing Scholarship and Research in Higher Education. It describes the ethos of ASRHE, which is grounded in generous scholarship based on social praxis, generous mindedness, reciprocity, generous heartedness, and sense of agency. Details on submissions and acceptance rates, evaluation of the review processes and development opportunities are provided. The statistics on readership demonstrate the world-wide attention ASRHE enjoys. Plans for the coming year are outlined and include further development opportunities for the ASRHE reviewer community, research on

the effectiveness of the review feedback, as well as plans for working towards a group-review process extension for the Open Journal System (OJS) management system.

Introduction

We are writing this editorial at the end of 2023, three years after launching ASRHE with the publication of our first editorial in September 2020 (Heinrich et al., 2020). At the time, we highlighted the design of the group-based peer review, the article categories of *research complete* and *research in progress*, our desire for publishing articles in emerging formats, and our publishing procedures, enabled by starting a new and independent journal in times of electronic publishing.

Our review presented here addresses key points of the aspirations voiced in 2020 and also comments on initiatives not foreshadowed at the time. We start our review with the ethos shared by all involved in making ASRHE possible.

Ethos of ASRHE

This year has once again been challenging for staff in higher education across the globe, with war, the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, deep financial cuts, and general pessimism pervading so much of our work. This has also been the year of generative artificial intelligence, with almost daily developments enthusing some academics while sending others into existential crises! As individuals, we editors too have been challenged by personal and global events and this has made us think even more deeply about the concepts of academic generosity and kindness and how we can continue to reflect these values in our editorial actions in ASRHE.

In their blog post, *Generous Scholarship: A Vision for Academic Life*, back in 2021 (Scott et al., 2021), and again in their follow-up article (Martinovic et al., 2022), Ruth McQuirter Scott and colleagues noted that a reimaged way of being an academic was needed in these tumultuous times. They defined 'generous scholarship' based on social praxis, generous mindedness, reciprocity, generous heartedness, and sense of agency (Table 1).

The principles of generous scholarship aptly describe the ethos of ASRHE. They not only enrich the work within our editorial team and our interactions with reviewers and authors, but also help us publish high quality articles.

Table 1

Definition of ‘Generous Scholarship’ by Martinovic et al. (2022)

Component	Description
Social praxis	Environment conducive to generous scholarship, facilitating ‘discursive, collaborative, and collegial communities of scholarly practice’ (p. 48)
Generous mindedness	‘Intellectual support and intellectual generosity are at the heart of the engagement’ (p49); ‘prioritises learning, and affirms others as scholars’ (p. 49)
Reciprocity	‘Multidirectional relationships in which generous scholars learn with and from other generous scholars across career stages, expertise, and experience’ (p. 48)
Generous heartedness	Focus on kindness, giving and nurturing, on attention to the needs of others, on providing emotional support
Sense of agency	‘Consciously practicing generous scholarship by embracing, embodying, and modelling each of the principles’ (p. 49); ‘commitment to generous scholarship is both intentional and motivational’ (p. 49)

Achievements

Overall, 47 research articles have been submitted to ASRHE in the first three years. The acceptance rate over this timeframe sits at around 20% (several of the articles submitted in 2023 are still under review).

In 2023 we added ‘invited articles’ as a new genre of publication and published an article based on Molly Dollinger’s keynote presentation at the HERDSA 2023 conference. The article provides the keynote transcript, annotated with questions provided by the editors, and Molly’s responses recorded as audio. The publication provides an example of how ASRHE extends the boundaries of traditional academic publishing.

The editors and reviewers found the ASRHE process of screening and reviewing satisfying in its collegiality, transparency, and constructive approach toward authors. We are confident that each submission has been treated with respect and reviewed with the aim of empowering authors to disseminate their research. Advice has encompassed suggestions on academic writing, article structure and flow of arguments, inclusion of relevant and current literature, methodological clarity, and clear presentation of findings to enable insightful discussion and conclusion.

We continuously reflect on ASRHE’s practices, in light of our personal experiences as editors and reviewers, and in context of both history of and current developments in academic publishing. Our forthcoming publication (Heinrich et al., forthcoming) presents our findings on the collaborative peer review practised in ASRHE.

We have attended to the professional learning of our review group members with a workshop series focused on reviewing practice in early 2023, followed by a first journal club session in November. As in previous years, we are sending out letters of recognition that document the specific contributions of each reviewer over the year.

To further advance recognition of ASRHE in the higher education field, we attended to administrative steps. ASRHE now has an ISSN and is part of the national edeposit system administered by the State Library of New South Wales, Australia. ASRHE is part of the DOI system and identifiers have been assigned to all articles published.

Statistics on readership

We are pleased with the attention the journal and its articles receive from a world-wide readership. Table 2 shows the average views per article grouped by publication year. Figure 1 shows the origin of visitors to the journal’s homepage since its inception. The strong representation of visitors from Australia and New Zealand is expected as our parent organization HERDSA is predominantly active in those countries and is surpassed only by the visitor numbers from the United States. Overall, the journal has attracted visitors from 133 countries.

Table 2

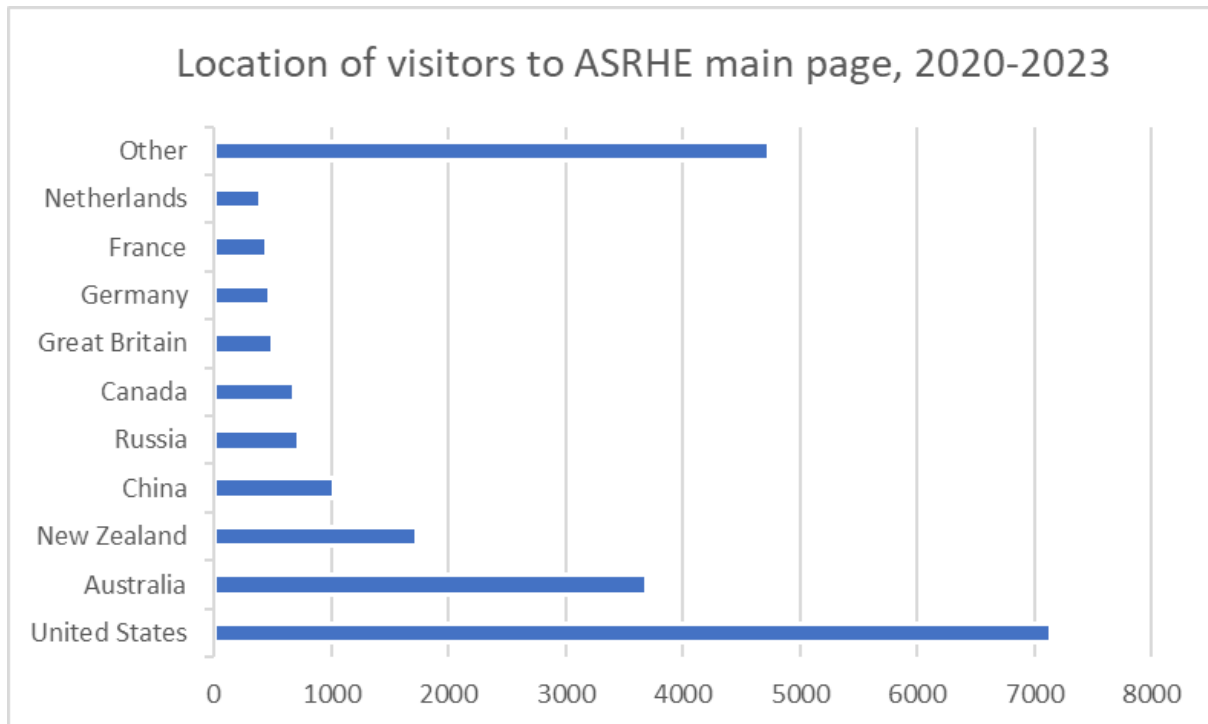
Average Views per Article to 05 December 2023

Year article was published	Abstracts	Full articles
2020	342	433
2021*	318	305
2022	252	156
2023	132	92

* In addition, the audio version of the editorial was accessed 87 times.

Figure 1

Location of Visitors to ASRHE Main Page, 2020-2023, Data Obtained with the OJS Custom Report Generator



Plans for the upcoming year

Mindful of the value of providing professional development, we aim to create progression opportunities for our reviewers next year. This will allow some of our reviewers to become review group leaders. This initiative is closely related to the journal’s choice of adopting a collaborative review model and provides development opportunities related to all tasks required in journal review and editing processes.

Our research project for next year will focus on how our authors experience the feedback on their submissions that they receive from our collaborative review process. We need to ascertain if the feedback we create in our review groups assists our authors in understanding our critique in constructive and kind ways.

Like many open-source journals, ASRHE is using the Open Journal System (OJS) platform to handle submission, review, and publication steps. OJS is designed around traditional peer review processes. While we have modified some of the user roles and created our own message templates, many of the steps required for our group-based processes are manual, increasing our administration workload and limiting the transparency for our authors. In 2024 we will be undertaking the first steps towards extending the OJS platform by carefully detailing our processes, prototyping a group review OJS extension and engaging with the OJS community.

Conclusion

Establishing a new journal is not an easy task, especially under the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has only allowed us to connect with the HERDSA community face-to-face since 2022. We are grateful for the continued support by the HERDSA President and Executive, which enables us to be a diamond open-source journal and allows us to draw on the wisdom of a wide array of experienced academic colleagues.

While we are proud of the articles published in ASRHE and the attention they have garnered from the world-wide researcher community, we are especially gratified by the 'unseen' work. Journal publishing processes operate largely as black boxes. Our initiatives of group-based reviewing, sharing evidence on the effectiveness of our processes, and offering development opportunities impact positively on researcher development and transparency.

References

- Heinrich, E., Hill, G., Kelder, J.-A., & Picard, M. (2020). Welcome to Advancing Scholarship and Research in Higher Education. *Advancing Scholarship and Research in Higher Education*, 1(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.59197/asrhe.v1i1.5133>
- Heinrich, E., Hill, G., Kelder, J.-A., & Picard, M. (forthcoming). Group-based journal review: Opportunities for researcher development and enjoyment. To be published in the *International Journal for Academic Development*.
- Martinovic, D., McGinn, M. K., Scott, R. M., & Obradović-Ratković, S. (2022). Conceptualizing generous scholarship. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.56433/jpaap.v10i1.494>
- Scott, R. M., Martinovic, D., Obradović-Ratković, S., & McGinn, M. K. (2021, November 15). Generous scholarship: A vision for academic life. *SRHEblog.com*. <https://srheblog.com/2021/11/15/generous-scholarship-a-vision-for-academic-life/>