



Introducing our special issues

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EDITORIAL

Introducing our special issues

Two years ago, the editorial team after much online discussion decided to introduce Special Issues (SIs) of *The Journal of Environmental Education (JEE)*. Last year, we published our first SI, *The Politics of Policy in Education for Sustainable Development*, which was guest edited by Phillip Payne from Monash University in Australia. The metrics on the downloading and readings of this publication, as well as the feedback received informally at conferences and online, indicates that both this particular issue and the idea of SIs are being very well received.

We are pleased that this first issue of 2017 is our second SI, *Gender and Environmental Education*, edited by Annette Gough, Connie Russell, and Hilary Whitehouse. As the guest editors describe, the articles in this issue resulted from a call for contributors that was widely disseminated, including in the *JEE*. This SI, along with the first, focuses on an issue that has been marginalized in environmental education research. Our third SI, *Political Ecology of Education*, guest edited by David Meek and Teresa Lloro-Bidart, which is in an advanced stage of preparation, will introduce invited contributors from outside the field of environmental education who offer different perspectives on education and environment.

Accompanying this development of SIs is the news that we will be increasing the number of issues published from four to five per year from this year. This will allow for the publication of at least one SI per year as well as up to four regular issues.

As Phil Payne did such an outstanding job in putting together the first SI, we appointed him to a new position we created of Associate Editor (Special Issues). He has energetically tackled his new role of seeking proposals for future SIs, working with guest editors and promoting published SIs. Phil initiated the development of workshops held at the conferences last year of the Australian and North American Associations of Environmental Education, which led to the writing of the editorial invitation below. The invitation describes suggested themes for SIs that emerged from these workshops, and situates issues and trends in environmental education research in a global sociocultural and political context in order to argue for the kinds and qualities of SIs we are seeking. We commend this invitation to our readers interested in guest editing or contributing to our new program of SIs.

Robert (Bob) Stevenson
Editor-in-Chief

Issues and trends in environmental education and its research: A special invitation

Engaging the future

The intensifying footprint of neoliberalism on global and local environmental problems, related social and cultural issues, and recent dramatic shifts in global and national politics threatens to undermine at least 50 years of sporadic progress in the environmental and education movements. This “new crisis” of the unsustainable politics of sustainability confronts the fields of environmental education (EE) and its research (EER) at a time when *The Journal of Environmental Education (JEE)* will celebrate its 50th year of publication in 2019. The challenges are profound. The list of ecological, human, social/cultural, (environmentally) aesthetic-ethical-political and, even, other/more-than-human issues demanding a potent educational response is expanding. These practical, empirical, theoretical, and methodological issues and trends warrant special treatment in a journal such as *JEE*. But what do those who contribute professionally, institutionally/organizationally, and personally to our fields of practice have to say about the future of the field?

Two workshops titled “What is ‘special’ about Special Issues (SI) of environmental education journals?” were conducted in October 2016 at the annual conferences of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) held in Madison, Wisconsin and the Australian Association of Environmental Education (AAEE) held in Adelaide, South Australia. The purpose of these “data collection” workshop efforts was to “listen to and hear from” the “grass roots” of environmental education practitioners, policy makers, leaders, and researchers. The workshops were conducted by editorial board members of *JEE* (Editor-in-Chief, Executive Editor, Associate Editor, Consulting Editor, Co-Editor of an in-process SI, and Managing Editor).

A brief for the workshops was circulated well in advance via the conference programs. Approximately 20 participants from 8 “national” backgrounds “voiced,” shared and discussed what they now believed were “very special” topics in EE and EER, including contemporary issues, unfolding trends, and ongoing debates about past problems. Participants were also asked what they thought should be the distinctively *special* purposes, qualities, and characteristics (and pitfalls) of an SI sufficient to the needs, aspirations, and expectations of the field.

All suggestions and recommendations were recorded. Issues raised at each workshop were summarized, collated, listed, then combined. Independently, two of us conceptually and discursively analysed the combined listing. Finally, “clusters” were identified and are presented here as *themes*. In a number of instances, two and even three issues/topics listed separately were combined, reinterpreted, and clustered. There were limitations (geographical-demographic) of the “transnational” 90-minute workshops, including participant availability at each of the national conferences (primarily northern-western-Anglo), and, subsequently, the interpretation of emergent themes summarized below. Nonetheless, they do provide a reasonably “solid” basis for ongoing discussion and debate about special issues warranting special treatment in the future. Our clustering and thematizing of issues and trends is highly suggestive of an “assemblage” of important, interesting, and challenging inspirations for environmental education practitioners and researchers. The *JEE* is one medium readily and regularly available to meet these challenges—in two ways: by developing submissions for a) *regular* issues of environmental education and education for sustainability/sustainable development journals, noting there are different formats and purposes for this type of manuscript, and b) planning and preparing proposals for *special* issues of, for example, *JEE*.

Emergent themes

Our thematic findings about issues and trends in EE and EER include, in no particular order or ranking or priority:

- *Locations of knowledge production situating EE and EER.* Similar suggestions were received at both workshops about the role that culture, and its various dimensions, plays in environmental experiences, education and learning. In this first theme only, we briefly elaborate on the different voices and rich thinking we “heard.” Pedagogues, curriculum theorists/developers, policy makers and researchers are, indeed, “positioned” culturally in and by their histories, actions and sense(s) of agency (or not), languages/discourses within the structures in which they “live” (socially and ecologically) and educate/research (organizationally/institutionally). So are learners. Locating (environmental) education and its research knowledge is also shaped geographically and demographically by the environments (biological/geological, physical/material, and social/symbolic) in which that knowing occurs. “Geo-cultural-ecological onto-epistemologies” of knowledge generation and production also “stretch” across human–environment interactions and relations and nature–culture formations and structures. In so doing, particularly in a postmodern world, this stretching and collapsing reconstitutes various socioecological scales of being/knowing: local–translocal, national–transnational, regional–transregional, global–planetary.
- *Conceptions of nature, human-non-other-than-human interrelations and constructions in education:* pedagogical connections with/against nature; Culture–nature *worldviews* for curriculum/policy comparisons.
- *Global ecological/environmental citizenship:* Pros and Cons in education.
- *Whole school curriculum/pedagogy* in EE (in formal schooling and alternative “informal” early years forest/bush schools, as well as undergraduate “liberal arts” colleges).

- Curriculum/pedagogy *innovations* in EE (the eco-arts, eco-humanities, STEM).
- *Food, gardens*, environmental health and wellbeing educations.
- *Parks*, national, commons, open spaces, public places visitor experiences and environmental interpretation.
- *Urban* environmental education.
- Environmental and socioecological *service learning*.
- *Disciplining* of disciplinarity, multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity in environmental education and its research.
- *Revisiting critiques of KAB* (knowledge, attitudes, [pro-environmental] behavior) in the post-modern condition of globalizing knowledge/information/digital productions and technical performativities.
- *Revisiting historical formations of EE*. Histories of the present, presences and absences of, for example, Tbilisi (UNESCO, 1977).
- Environmental *movements and power*: environmental justice, intergenerational ethics/politics, rewilding, ecofeminisms in EE.
- *EE and EER as decarbonization*. Anthropocene, global heating, climate disruption, ocean acidification, body toxications and *critical pedagogy* in EE.
- Movements of *thought*/perspectives/methodologies in EER.
- *Margins/edges* in EER. Politics-ethics of the outside in EER.
- *Eco(aesthetics)*, geo/bio-affectivities/spatialities of feeling: links with environmental ethics and ecolitics in EE and EER.
- EER *communications* and public/policy engagements.

Some of these emergent themes can be recombined or, even, declustered, in creative ways for certain special purposes. To be sure, many “other” issues and trends in EE/EER were not discussed at the NAAEE and AAEE workshops but are worthy of pedagogical, curriculum/program, policy and research inclusion and development. As always, an SI aims at advancing the narrative of environmental education in rapidly changing local-planetary circumstances and conditions.

“Special” issues and their qualities

Some of the above themes will, undoubtedly, already mirror an individual researcher’s current interests that will, in all likelihood, lead to the submission of a manuscript to a regular issue of a journal. Of additional editorial purpose and importance to *The Journal of Environmental Education* is an increased commitment to methodological and global diversity (Hart, Shultis, Stevenson, & Whitehouse, 2014).

Many of the emergent themes (and others) also demand further elaboration, and comprehensive and extended treatment of “how” and “why” a certain issue or trend now requires sustained “collective” inquiry and shared “social (and ecological) intelligence,” following John Dewey’s notion of education as a democratically inspired form of reconstructive growth. Critical inquiry of a thematic issue or trend will examine the underlying assumptions, substantive concepts and theories, associated contexts of inquiry, and relevant methodological deliberations beyond the conventional submission of a manuscript for a regular issue. SIs establish and articulate a broader frame of inquiry, critique and theory building in EE and/or EER. This, inevitably, provides the literature base that will assist educators and researchers (or curriculum developers, program directors, and policy makers) in situating a current or proposed study of an issue/problem, theme, trend, or debate *in* the always unfolding historical narrative of EE and/or EER and *within* the particular discourses/practices directly informing the issue demanding academic scrutiny.

Special Issues of *JEE* will, hopefully, promote “assemblages” of authors contributing to a clearly articulated issue, trend, or problem as a theme warranting coherent attention in a collective or democratic manner. In keeping democratically and reconstructively with the different scales of the various practices of EE and EER (embodied/personal-local/social-planetary/global, or micro-meso-meta), an SI will also be mindful of the increasingly “other” audiences that *JEE* now reaches and serves globally as well as locally. For example, in our first *JEE* SI, Volume 47, Number 2 (Payne, 2016), given the precise “nature” but global “scape and scopes” of the “policy making in ESD” issue, the *framing* of the SI deliberately assembled authors from various cultural-

ecological and linguistic backgrounds. In so doing, it included a wider range of empirically-driven, theoretically-developed studies pertinent to, in that very timely instance, the (global) politics of policy in ESD following the “end” of the DESD (Decade of Education for Sustainable Development) and subsequent “rollout” of new global policy formulations such as the GCED (Global Citizenship Education) designed for local consumption and development. In that SI, therefore, the “inclusion” of a diverse authorship was also highly attentive to the potential “transferability” (not generalizability) of the shared intelligence represented by the SI across the different socioecological scales of human–environment interactions, and culture–nature relations.

An invitation

Individual and coauthored submitters of original manuscripts to regular issues should refer to <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jenve>.

For Special Issues, the proposer(s) (and, potentially, invited guest editor(s)) should, in the very first instance, contact the *JEE* editorial office at jee@jcu.edu.au to obtain further information about SIs and submitting proposals.

In general terms, noting there are various models for an SI of approximately 50,000 words and, therefore, different timelines, the initial framing and naming of a “special” issue will need to demonstrate how its contents and processes advance the literature of EE and EER via the following:

- A concise statement of the “working” title, purposes, rationale for, and historical significance of the special issue undergoing inquiry, development, and/or critique.
- A synopsis of how the SI text, in its “methodological self” including an acknowledgement of its limitations, will represent a coherent assemblage of contributions that aim to empirically and/or conceptually/theoretically, and/or methodologically advance the discourse/practice of the issue focussed on.
- A concise statement demonstrating how the proposed SI aims to appeal to, and engage with, the global diversity of a readership spread across the different socioecological scales and scopes of human–environment, local–global–planet, and culture–nature interactions and relations most demanding of attention in EE and/or EER.
- A short statement of any other merits, qualities, and characteristics of the proposed SI that will critically advance the identity/ies, historical narrative(s), commitments and expectations/aspirations of EE and EER.
- A brief bio of the intended editors, highlighting their publications and editing experience.
- A proposed timeline for the development of the SI, including method of obtaining contributions, quality control of submissions, proposed guest editor management of the SI including review processes, ethical concerns, communication processes, and submission of final manuscript.

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