



Editorial

Nick Hutchinson

Editor, *Geographical Education*

Every teacher arguably attempts to bring something of the real world into the confines of the four walls of the classroom. The English teacher, expert in the making and using of texts, describes and encapsulates that world inside the classroom. The Maths teacher can help students better understand and describe the world outside the classroom, and science students all too easily recognise that they are learning about the world around them.

Geography teachers go further and argue that fieldwork is a necessary condition, an intrinsic element in order to understand and engage with the real world. They contend that fieldwork brings together a specific body of knowledge that constitutes the subject, geography, with distinctive ways of studying the real world. Fieldwork fleshes out concepts learned within the classroom and illustrates abstract ideas. Fieldwork stimulates interest, develops environmental ethics and deepens an appreciation of aesthetic aspects of the environment. A teacher in charge of an environmental education centre observed that, “For some students it may be the only time that they get to see, feel, hear and smell the environment” (Foott, 2009, p. 20).

The theme for *Geographical Education* Volume 29, 2016 is *Fieldwork Questions*. Two non-refereed articles are included as reports from Julian Woolhouse and Aaron Bermingham. Both Julian and Aaron are graduates from the Master of Teaching Program at The University of Melbourne.

Julian investigated the progression of fieldwork skills in Years 7–10 examining evidence obtained from fieldwork booklets, fieldwork report instructions, and observations drawn from both fieldtrips and the classroom. He reported that, by the time they reached Year 10, geography students examining urban planning and liveability at Laurimar Estate in suburban Melbourne could successfully employ fieldwork skills with minimal guidance from their geography teacher.

Aaron focused on student booklets that were designed to facilitate fieldwork in Years 7, 8 and 9, in particular data collection in the field. He sought to find out the extent to which student-led inquiry is supported by fieldwork booklet design? Aaron found that, although geography students were highly engaged in their allotted tasks, the booklets provided limited opportunities for students to plan their fieldwork inquiries, clarify their values, or reflect on the fieldwork inquiry process.

Two refereed articles are included in Volume 29, 2016.

The first is by Dr Lou Preston who undertook a qualitative content analysis of various examples of fieldwork reported in the Geography Teachers’ Association of Victoria’s journal, *Interaction*. She argues that school-based geography fieldwork does encompass distinctive ways of studying the world but that these practices tend to be teacher-led, focusing on knowledge acquisition and skill development rather than on the affective and sensory dimensions referred to in the second paragraph above.

The second paper comes from your Editor. Although this article focuses on landscape it does advocate approaches to fieldwork that extend beyond the all-seeing eye to engage students with their personal geographies in terms of lived practice and corporeal engagement with the landscape.

Many thanks to Geoffrey Paterson as proof reader and Reviews Editor of the current volume. The review titles reflect a range of topics in geography and the teaching of geography. Each reviewer is thanked for finding time to write a review.

I look forward to contributions to the next edition of the journal Volume 30, 2017.

Reference

Foott, B. (2009). Fieldwork at Environmental Education Centres. *Geography Bulletin*. 41(4), 20–21.