Postdigital Science and Education
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EDITORIALS

History of the Postdigital: Invitation for Feedback

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Introduction

This editorial was written as the first chapter for the two forthcoming edited volumes about postdigital research, *Postdigital Research: Genealogies, Challenges, and Future Perspectives* (Jandrić, MacKenzie, and Knox forthcoming 2023a) and *Constructing Postdigital Research: Method and Emancipation* (Jandrić, MacKenzie, and Knox forthcoming 2023b). The paper presents the author's personal view on the history of the postdigital supplemented with the selection of the most prominent sources. In this way, the article offers a resource that supports readers' own research and interpretation. This approach makes sense as ideas can never be divorced from the context of their making; however, it may inadvertently omit important historical facts or overpraise an author's own work. To ameliorate such bias, the author invites all readers to respond with their feedback and suggestions for improvement. In Spring 2023 all feedback will be implemented and the text will be turned into the first chapter in *Postdigital Research: Genealogies, Challenges, and Future Perspectives* (Jandrić, MacKenzie, and Knox forthcoming 2023a).

What's in A Concept?

Since 2000 the concept of the postdigital has rapidly developed within the context of the arts, humanities, and social sciences. These developments have become increasingly hard to keep track of, yet researchers need to be clear about the foundational scholarship that has shaped their work and the context within which that scholarship has taken place. This editorial responds to this need and outlines the history of the postdigital as I have experienced it.

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History is important yet we live in the present and our research shapes the future. Would not it be better to stop beating around the bush and just define the concept?

First, it might be prudent to examine the pros and cons of definitions. Recently, the Networked Learning community published an open invitation article, 'Networked Learning: Inviting Redefinition' (Networked Learning Editorial Collective 2021), followed by a definition article, 'Networked Learning in 2021: A Community Definition' (Networked Learning Editorial Collective et al. 2021). That paper had 40 contributors, from six continents, working across many fields of education, a paper that 'reflects the breadth and depth of current understandings of NL' (Networked Learning Editorial Collective et al. 2021: 327). Yet the article does not offer even a few sentences on a definition that could be used widely, and the contributors themselves have identified a range of problems with its approach.

One especially important critique arrives from Siân Bayne, who warns that '[t]o define a field is necessarily to put boundaries around it, to determine which writings, conversations, people are 'inside' and which are "outside"' (Bayne in Networked Learning Editorial Collective et al. 2021: 333). Resulting exclusions, arguably, can do no good either to theory or to members of the community. Learning from the example of Networked Learning, Derek Ford and I recently wrote that

> one day, probably, our postdigital condition will be condensed in concise encyclopaedia entries and routinely explained by undergraduates. One task is to ensure this does not happen, and that the postdigital remains—for as a long as it is productive—a concept that constantly resists any final definition. (Jandrić and Ford 2020)

In a world where power derives from naming, defining, and demarcating, this resistance to definitions arrives with consequences and needs to be negotiated carefully.

Boundaries and power relationships aside, there is a deeper philosophical reason why attempting to define the postdigital is not the best idea. The paradox of definition, originally postulated by Bernard Bolzano in *Contributions to a better-founded presentation of mathematics* (1810), is that 'all concepts are ultimately defined in terms of simple concepts, but these remain undefined and thus devoid of meaning' (Rusnock and Šebestik 2022). The paradox of definition is applicable well beyond mathematics, as researchers in all fields regularly use concepts that cannot always be unequivocally defined.

For instance, a key concept in physics, force, is defined through Newton's second law as 'a push or pull upon an object resulting from the object's interaction with another object' (Neal 2019: 74). Yet force cannot be described self-referentially—we can only define it in relation to two other physical concepts, mass and acceleration. Concepts that run across fields and disciplines can be even more problematic. For instance, love is a foundational concept in many fields of human inquiry yet each field sees it in a very different way. Geneticists explore ways in which sexually reproducing organisms choose their partners, and sociologists are interested in cultural representations of these ways and related issues such as increasing divorce rates and their consequences. These questions are clearly related to falling in and out of love, but the two fields understand and approach love in very different ways.

The philosophical paradox of definition should not paralyze inquiry. There would be no physics without the concept of force, and whole scientific fields and artistic genres would not exist without the concept of love. Therefore, while the postdigital also resists final definitions, we do need to use, and talk about, the concept of the postdigital. One of the ways to start that conversation, commonly used in textbooks from physics to literature, is to explore the evolution of the concept. Physics students learn about the progress from Newton's proverbial apple to Einstein's relativity; literature students study history of love poems anywhere from The Song of Songs and Baudelaire to Rihanna. In the same vein, this paper presents a necessarily brief overview of the historical development of postdigital thought from the mouth of its participant.

My historical overview is divided into two main phases, Postdigital Arts and Humanities and Postdigital Science and Education. Historically, the phase of Postdigital Arts and Humanities Humanities precedes the phase of Postdigital Science and Education. However, that does not imply a clear distinction, temporal sequence, or a hierarchy. In 2022, the postdigital is a transdisciplinary concept that develops in interaction of all major fields and disciplines. While I do not engage in the question 'What is postdigital', each phase is supplemented with the selection of some of the most prominent sources speaking about the postdigital. In this way, the article begins to offer an overview of literature that supports readers' own research and interpretation.

This approach is far from perfect. While I did my best to include as many sources and viewpoints as possible, ideas can never be divorced from the context of their making and histories can never be divorced from their writers. I have been actively involved in the history of the postdigital for years and cannot claim any pretence to neutrality. Thankfully, the history of the postdigital is a book open to everyone with Internet access, and my strategy for avoiding (at least the most fundamental) factual mistakes and misinterpretations is to invite everyone to respond to this article. After a period of consultation, I will implement all feedback and publish an updated version of the article as the first chapter in *Postdigital Research: Genealogies, Challenges, and Future Perspectives* (Jandrić, MacKenzie, and Knox 2023a).

Postdigital Arts and Humanities

Within a few short months in 2000, the word postdigital independently appeared in several publications including 'The Aesthetics of Failure: "post-digital" tendencies in contemporary computer music' (Cascone 2000) and *The Postdigital Membrane: Imagination, Technology and Desire* (Pepperell and Punt 2000). It is impossible to identify which of these publications was published first, and for all practical purposes that is irrelevant. As I wrote in the interview with Kim Cascone,

> time difference between [these] publications is not more than few months, and publication dates often depend on production issues beyond authors' influence. I think it is fair to say that [the two publications] explored the concept at

> the same time, independently of each other, thus reflecting a certain *Zeitgeist* of the turn of the millennium. (Jandrić in Cascone and Jandrić 2021: 567)

Cascone (2000) sees the postdigital in a glitch; a computer error, a mistake in technological processes, which symbolizes the human (or analog) in the technological (the digital). Pepperell and Punt (2000: 2) use the metaphor of the 'biological membrane, a lubricating sheath that gives form to complex phenomena … at the same time as enabling a continuity between them' through 'its dual and contradictory function: like a transparent wall, it both connects and divides' (see Ford forthcoming 2023 for a deeper discussion).

However different, the concepts of glitch and membrane share an important image of intermixing the analog and the digital; a marriage between 'technological and non-technological; biological and informational' (Jandrić et al. 2018: 895); an encounter of two different worlds, and incommensurable models that describe these worlds, which happens daily and at scale. Glitches and membranes are transitory phenomena. In that sense, the postdigital is a signal or a transition to something else and one of many ways of describing this transition.

Post-2000, the postdigital has attracted a lot of attention, predominantly within arts circles, and has participated in the development of whole new artistic genres. Writing in 2021, one of the founding theorists of the postdigital, Florian Cramer, claims that 'I think that, in the meantime, the term postdigital has become rather useless in the arts, because it is constantly being conflated and confused with the too-similar-sounding and much better-known "Post-Internet"' (Cramer in Cramer and Jandrić 2021: 977). As a transitory phenomenon, the postdigital is always in flux; its appearance is just as significant as its disappearance.

As the world of the arts has slowly moved beyond the postdigital, the term has started to appear in other related fields such as architecture, publishing, media studies, and many others. Probably the most extensive list of postdigital events, centers, publications, and so on, can be found in the Monoskop wiki page titled 'Post-digital aesthetics'.[1] With entries in English, German, Italian, Croatian, Portuguese, Swedish, and several other languages, this page shows width, depth, and geographical distribution of postdigital debates. The list of keywords that Monoskop sees as describing the postdigital is a good shortcut to early understandings of the concept:

> Fields and theories: Classics, Art history, History of architecture, Anthropology, Semiotics, Philosophy of technology, Marxist aesthetics, Design research, Humanities computing, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, Mediology, Media archaeology, Cyberfeminism, Cultural techniques, Neuroaesthetics, Posthumanities, Sensory ethnography, Media ecology, Digital humanities, Software studies, Modern periodical studies, Accelerationism.
> Concepts: Faktura, Ostranenie, Biomechanics, Commons, Postmedia, Evil media.
> Related theories: Systems theory, Information theory, Cybernetics[3].

[1] See https://monoskop.org/Post-digital_aesthetics. Accessed 5 September 2022.

In 2014, Christian Ulrik Andersen, Geoff Cox, and Georgios Papadopoulos edited a Special Issue of *A Peer-Reviewed Journal About* on 'Post-Digital Research' (2014). They wrote, '[t]he issue does not present a uniform interpretation of the notion, but includes a variety of positions related to the use of the term, its application within various fields, and how it is reflected in artistic research' (Andersen et al. 2014). The Special Issue has openly focused on artistic research, yet contributions such as Florian Cramer's 'What Is "Post-Digital"?' (see Cramer 2015 for an expanded version) have opened up philosophical and methodological questions beyond the arts and humanities and have been used in a wide spectrum of disciplines.

In my experience, some of the most influential sources from the Postdigital Arts and Humanities phase are the following:

Negroponte, N. (1998). Beyond digital. Wired, 12. http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/6.12/negroponte.html. Accessed 8 September 2022.

Cascone, K. (2000). The aesthetics of failure: 'Post-digital' tendencies in contemporary computer music. *Computer Music Journal, 24*(4), 12–18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/014892600559489.

Pepperell, R., & Punt, M. (2000). *The postdigital membrane: Imagination, technology and desire*. Bristol: Intellect.

Alexenberg, M. (2011). *The Future of Art in a Postdigital Age: From Hellenistic to Hebraic Consciousness*. 2nd Ed. Bristol: Intellect.

Ludovico, A. (2012). *Post-Digital Print: The Mutation of Publishing Since 1894*. Eindhoven: Onomatopee and Rotterdam: Instituut voor Onderzoek en Innovatie.

Hall, G. (2013). Towards a post-digital humanities: Cultural analytics and the computational turn to data-driven scholarship. *American Literature, 85*(4), 781–809. https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-2367337.

Andersen, C. U., Cox, G., & Papadopoulos, G. (2014). Post-digital Research. *A Peer-Reviewed Journal About, 3*(1). https://aprja.net//issue/view/8400. Accessed 8 September 2022.

Berry, D. M., & Dieter, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Postdigital aesthetics: Art, computation and design*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cramer, F. (2015). What is 'post-digital'? In D. M. Berry & M. Dieter (Eds.), *Postdigital aesthetics: Art, computation and design* (pp. 12–26). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137437204_2.

Bishop, R., Gansing, K., Parikka, J., & Wilk, E. (Eds.). (2016). *Across and beyond: a transmediale reader on post-digital practices, concepts and institutions*. Berlin. Sternberg Press and Transmediale e.V.

The postdigital has also expanded beyond the world of theory. Since 2018, Coventry University has operated the Centre for Postdigital Cultures led by Gary Hall[2]; and Leibniz Institute for Educational Media and Georg Eckert Institute operate their Leibniz Science Campus—Postdigital Participation led by Eckhardt Fuchs.[3] The

[2] See https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/postdigital-cultures/. Accessed 8 September 2022.

[3] See https://www.postdigitalparticipation.org/en/outlook. Accessed 8 September 2022.

postdigital appears in prominent arts exhibitions such as Transmediale (Bishop et al. 2016), as well as science and engineering.[4] Following the footsteps of many other philosophical concepts such as postmodernism, accelerationism, and so on, the postdigital took less than two decades to spread from music, through the visual arts and humanities, to nearly all imaginable areas of inquiry.

This spread is far from straightforward as the concept has altered, shifted, and been shaped by these diverse contexts. Therefore, dissemination of the concept also implies its multiplication and branching. This calls for inquiry into overlaps and distinctions—a worthwhile research direction, which is beyond the scope of this article.

Postdigital Science and Education

Postdigital Science and Education Journal

In 2017, I decided to start a new journal. This decision came out of my deep dissatisfaction with the state of academic publishing including its rapidly increasing orientation to profit (see Peters and Jandrić 2018; Peters et al. 2020) and my frustration with the state of mainstream educational research, especially its technological determinism and instrumentalism (see Jandrić and Knox 2022). I also had (and still have) a problem with strict disciplinarity. In the realm of theory, I felt that EdTech people do not talk enough to critical pedagogy people and that none of them talks enough to philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and so on (Jandrić 2016, 2019a, b). In the realm of practice, I felt that teachers do not talk enough to theorists, policymakers do not talk enough to practitioners, for example. I have also been deeply frustrated with the rampant neoliberalization of teaching and learning (Hayes and Jandrić 2014), resulting in merciless individualism (Jandrić 2019a, b; Jandrić and Hayes 2020), and many other problems that many of us experience and occasionally write about but often cannot really do much against (Jandrić 2022).

While I like venting my frustrations as much as the next guy, I wanted to *do* something about them, and academic publishing spontaneously crystallized as the battlefield of my choice. Publishing is always a community activity and I started thinking about my team. Before I sent out my invites, however, I needed to write down an outline of my ideas and offer up a name for the journal. But how do I cram all these ideas into a productive and easily communicated brief?

A few years previously, while I was interviewing some artists and activists for my book (Jandrić 2017), I encountered the term *postdigital*. The concept seemed to roughly correspond with my ideas and ethos but seemed somehow 'reserved' for the arts and was philosophically underdeveloped. Looking for the name of the journal, however, I decided that it would be a good idea to consider the postdigital as a possible candidate. First, many scientific concepts, philosophies, and approaches such as postmodernism, accelerationism, and so on, emerged within

[4] See https://postdigital.astonphotonics.uk/. Accessed 8 September 2022.

the arts—'appropriating' an artistic concept for the purpose of starting an academic journal is not at all unusual. Second, I was able to agree with pretty much anything offered by early postdigital theory, and this protean theory offered an important backdrop that the new community could hold on to. Third, I found that the lack of philosophical underpinning was actually a bonus, as it provided some low-hanging fruit to early theorists and allowed the budding community to freely develop its own ideas. So *Postdigital Science and Education* it became—I pitched my proposal to my closest friends and scholars and waited for their reaction.

Founding Associate Editors Jeremy Knox, Tina Besley, Thomas Ryberg, Juha Suoranta, and Sarah Hayes took my proposal seriously. They dissected it from every possible angle. We discussed, wrote, discussed, overwrote, and then again, resulting in a Guest Editorial in *Educational Philosophy and Theory* titled 'Postdigital Science and Education' (Jandrić et al. 2018). This paper helped us consolidate our thoughts during the complex ideation and contracting process. It was also aimed as a sort of foundation, or perhaps even manifesto, for *Postdigital Science and Education* journal founded few months later. In the paper, we listed early developments of the concept of the postdigital and theoretical influences that contributed to this development. We then developed our own interpretation of the concept and brought it into the humanities and the social sciences with a heavy accent on education.

In early issues, most notably *Postdigital Science and Education 1*(1) and *1*(2), authors extensively debated the concept and its potentials. Along the way, the community had to make many 'small' but important decisions; for instance, it was decided to consistently use the spelling 'postdigital' (see Cormier et al. 2019 for details). These debates and decisions provided much-needed input for further work. Slowly but surely, they have naturally faded and given way to other interests and ideas. In my experience, the community has found the following writings published in that period as the most useful for their work:

Jandrić, P., Knox, J., Besley, T., Ryberg, T., Suoranta, J., & Hayes, S. (2018). Postdigital Science and Education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 50*(10), 893–899. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1454000.

Feenberg, A. (2019). Postdigital or Predigital? *Postdigital Science and Education, 1*(1), 8–9. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-018-0027-2.

McLaren, P. (2019). Reclaiming the Present or a Return to the Ash Heap of the Future? *Postdigital Science and Education, 1*(1), 10–13. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-018-0015-6.

Peters, M. A., & Besley, T. (2019). Critical philosophy of the postdigital. *Postdigital Science and Education, 1*(1), 29-42. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-018-0004-9.

Fawns, T. (2019). Postdigital education in design and practice. *Postdigital Science and Education, 1*(1), 132-145. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-018-0021-8.

Jandrić, P., Ryberg, T., Knox, J., Lacković, N., Hayes, S., Suoranta, J., Smith, M., Steketee, A., Peters, M. A., McLaren, P., Ford, D. R., Asher, G., McGregor, C., Stewart, G., Williamson, B., & Gibbons, A. (2019). Postdigital Dialogue. *Postdigital Science and Education, 1*(1), 163-189. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-018-0011-x.

Knox, J. (2019). What does the postdigital mean for education? Three critical perspectives on the digital, with implications for educational research and

practice. *Postdigital Science and Education, 1*(2), 357-370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-019-00045-y.

Sinclair, C., & Hayes, S. (2019). Between the post and the com-post: Examining the postdigital “work” of a prefix. *Postdigital Science and Education, 1*(1), 119–131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-018-0017-4.

Hayes, S. (2021a). *Postdigital Positionality: Developing Powerful Inclusive Narratives for Learning, Teaching, Research and Policy in Higher Education.* Leiden: Brill.

Jandrić, P. (2021a). Biology, Information, Society. *Postdigital Science and Education, 3*(2), 261-265. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00220-0.

Special Issues in *Postdigital Science and Education*

The genre of the scholarly article is restrictive in size and scope. As we planned the new journal, we wanted to be as inclusive as possible, so we started with the following genres: Editorials, Original Articles, Commentaries, Interviews, and Reviews (see Jandrić 2020 for a detailed explanation of the genres and the decision). What we did not predict, however, was the need to develop wider scholarly discussions about certain themes. When Alison MacKenzie and Ibrar Bhatt offered to edit a special issue, we immediately decided to start a series of Special Issues. At the community initiative, *Postdigital Science and Education* now publishes three issues per year: one special issue (in January) and two regular issues (in April and October). This is the list of current and forthcoming Special Issues:

MacKenzie, A., & Bhatt, I. (2020). (Eds.). Lies, Bullshit and Fake News Online: Should We Be Worried? Postdigital Science and Education, 2(1). https://link.springer.com/journal/42438/volumes-and-issues/2-1. Accessed 8 September 2022.

Hayes, S. (Ed.). (2021b). ‘Measuring Excellence’ in Higher Education. Postdigital Science and Education, 3(1). https://link.springer.com/journal/42438/volumes-and-issues/3-1. Accessed 8 September 2022.

Carvalho, L., Lamb, J., Gallagher, M., & Knox, J. (2022). The Postdigital Spaces of Higher Education. Postdigital Science and Education, 4(1). https://link.springer.com/journal/42438/volumes-and-issues/4-1. Accessed 8 September 2022.

Selwyn, N., Perrotta, C., Hillman, T., & Bergviken-Rensfeldt, A. (forthcoming 2023). Education in An Era of Pervasive Automation. Postdigital Science and Education, 5(1).

Ford, D. R. (forthcoming 2023). Postdigital Soundscapes: Sonics, Pedagogies, Technologies. Postdigital Science and Education, 5(1).

Macgilchrist, F., Jarke, J., Allert, H., & Cerratto-Pargman, T. (forthcoming 2024). Designing Postdigital Futures. *Postdigital Science and Education, 6*(1).

As the journal’s popularity has grown, it has become harder and harder to accommodate everyone who wanted to edit collections on postdigital topics. The community asked for more publishing space—the time had arrived for a new publishing venture.

Postdigital Science and Education Book Series

In 2020, I started the Postdigital Science and Education book series.[5] The series complements the *Postdigital Science and Education* journal and together they provide a complete, whole-rounded publishing ecosystem to researchers working in the field. The book series covers a wide range of topics within postdigital science and education, including learning and data analytics, digital humanities, learning, teaching and assessment, educational technology, and philosophy of education. Since 2021, the series has published six edited volumes (with three more forthcoming in 2023):

Savin-Baden, M. (Ed.). (2021). *Postdigital Humans: Transitions, Transformations and Transcendence*. Cham: Springer.
MacKenzie, A., Rose, J., & Bhatt, I. (Eds.). (2021). *The Epistemology of Deceit in a Postdigital Era: Dupery by Design*. Cham: Springer.
Fawns, T., Aitken, G, & Jones, D. (Eds.). (2021). *Online Postgraduate Education in a Postdigital World*. Cham: Springer.
Peters, M. A., Jandrić, P., & Hayes, S. (Eds.). (2022). *Bioinformational Philosophy and Postdigital Knowledge Ecologies*. Cham: Springer.
Jandrić, P., & Ford, D. R. (Eds.). (2022). *Postdigital Ecopedagogies: Genealogies, Contradictions, and Possible Futures*. Cham: Springer.
Savin-Baden, M., & Reader, J. (Eds.). (2022). *Postdigital Theologies: Technology, Belief, and Practice*. Cham: Springer.
Hayes, S., Connor, S., Johnson, M., & Jopling, M. (Eds.). (forthcoming 2023). *Human Data Interaction, Disadvantage and Skills in the Community: Enabling Cross-Sector Environments for Postdigital Inclusion*. Cham: Springer.
Jandrić, P., MacKenzie, A., & Knox, J. (Eds.). (forthcoming 2023a). *Postdigital Research: Genealogies, Challenges, and Future Perspectives*. Cham: Springer.
Jandrić, P., MacKenzie, A., & Knox, J. (Eds.). (forthcoming 2023b). *Constructing Postdigital Research: Method and Emancipation*. Cham: Springer.

Special issues and edited books are both similar and different at the same time. This is not the place to reproduce our extensive debates about the pros and cons of each (see Peters et al. 2021; Jandrić 2021b), yet it is important to emphasize that *Postdigital Science and Education* journal articles and book chapters undergo the same rigorous peer review procedure (see Jandrić 2020 for details). While the two genres slightly differ in scope and focus, the Postdigital Science and Education community has already produced 15 themed collections and there is a healthy influx of new edited projects.

What I find crucial in these collections is their vernacular nature. The bottom-up process of making these collections has done a lot of good for postdigital thought. However, it suffers from an important drawback: there are so many different strands of postdigital inquiry that it is hard to keep track of them all. As the community produces more and more forward-looking research, there is an increasing need to look backward and crystallize key ideas in a simple and accessible format. This, unsurprisingly, calls for a new publishing venture.

[5] See https://www.springer.com/series/16439/books. Accessed 3 September 2022.

Encyclopedia of Postdigital Science and Education

In early 2022, after a lot of consultation with my closest associates, I decided to start the first reference work with an explicit focus to postdigital themes and research approaches: the *Encyclopedia of Postdigital Science and Education*. The *Encyclopedia* will consist of ca. 500 entries. Writing will start in early 2023 and will continue until approximately 2026. Entries will be approximately 2000 words in length.

The *Encyclopedia of Postdigital Science and Education* will address all major issues linked with postdigital science and education. Following the common structure of reference works, the *Encyclopedia* will be sub-divided into main disciplines and areas of research such as philosophy, sociology, information science, arts, for example. However, the concept of the postdigital is inherently transdisciplinary (see Jandrić 2019a, b), so boundaries between the traditional disciplines will be purposefully blurred. Special attention will be given to themes that can be used across a range of disciplines and to 'general' fields such as philosophy, research methods, and so on.

The inception of the *Encyclopedia of Postdigital Science and Education* seems contradictory to mine and Ford's opposition to defining the postdigital (Jandrić and Ford 2020). However, an encyclopaedia is not simply about the academic community keeping track of the concept; it is also a means through which the ideas can be solidified and packaged so that things can be done with them. Similarly to this article, the *Encyclopedia of Postdigital Science and Education* will be designed to describe rather than define. In this way, I am hoping to provide the community with some power derived from naming and demarcating while avoiding the philosophical paradox of definition.

What Makes Us Different?

As I have already said and wrote on many occasions, I strongly believe that the world does not need yet another academic journal or book series, yet I do believe that the world desperately needs *qualitatively different* journals and book series. Proverbial apples and oranges are always hard to compare: this is one of many reasons why I am wary of 'measuring excellence' using standards such as downloads, citations, and impact metrics (see Hayes 2021a for details). Yet numbers can be useful, when used with a grain of salt; over the years, I have learned how to utilize a few basic statistics in support of strategic decisions.

By the end of 2022, *Postdigital Science and Education*[6] was listed in many prestigious scholarly databases (with more to follow); its download[7] and

[6] Presented statistics apply only to *Postdigital Science and Education* journal, as the book series is not yet listed in academic databases.

[7] Full-text downloads for 2021, as per publishers' information: *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 753,000; *Philosophy and Technology*, 599,360; *Policy Futures in Education,* 560,041; ***Postdigital Science and Education,* 526,200**; *Learning, Media, and Technology,* 287,000; *E-Learning and Digital Media,* 290,735; *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 172,971. Accessed 8 September 2022.

citation[8] statistics are comparable to much older and prestigious journals. Since 2019, the journal and the book series have published ca. 500 articles and chapters. For each published article and chapter, there are approximately nine rejected submissions; with time, our acceptance rate gets lower and lower. As the amount and selection/quality of published material increases, so does the community. Most articles in the first few issues were written by invited colleagues; today, I personally know less than one in ten authors who submit their work.

Those reading between the lines may already feel how I understand my own position in the Postdigital Science and Education community—it is time to make that position explicit. I founded the journal and the book series; to this day, each and every paper and chapter goes through my hands. My position at the organizational top of the Postdigital Science and Education community arrives with a huge workload and responsibility. One of the rare perks of this position is that standing higher allows me to see further. I can identify hot topics months before they arrive online. I can identify patterns between articles and chapters, and see concordances and discords that may be invisible or obscure to others.

My position also carries the responsibility for catering to the needs of a diverse community. The community wants to edit and read Special Issues? Here you go. Let me know if you need any help. The community wants to write, edit, and read books? Here is the book series and its proposal forms. For as long as the approach is roughly postdigital, and for as long authors and editors follow highest quality standards from peer review to formatting, I am happy to editorially support pretty much every genre and theme. However, I do not see myself as a mere supporter of other people's work. While I do insist on vernacular development of journal themes and approaches, I do not shy away from active involvement in that development.

A good case in the point is the *Postdigital Science and Education* interview section. I deeply believe that interviews are important for many reasons, not least because readers get to know the people behind the ideas (see Jandrić 2017). But interviews are not well recognized in assessment procedures such as the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF), and authors are just not used to doing them. Since its inception, *Postdigital Science and Education* publishes two interviews in each issue. At the beginning, it was next to impossible to find authors, so I just authored most of the interviews myself. After a while, the community picked up, and these days, most interviews arrive without my inviting them.

[8] Citation impact of *Postdigital Science and Education* is hard to assess as the journal is still very young, was only recently accepted in its first major database, and does not yet have an impact factor. To provide at least some ground for comparison I devised the following procedure. Opened Scopus and searched for all articles published in a publication. Limited my search to 2019, 2020, and 2021. This procedure returns following results: *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 589 cited documents, 1773 citations; *Philosophy and Technology*, 186 cited documents, 1585 citations; *Policy Futures in Education,* 221 cited documents, 801 citations; ***Postdigital Science and Education*****, 181 cited documents, 2,470 citations;** *Learning, Media, and Technology,* 116 cited documents, 1613 citations; *E-Learning and Digital Media,* 91 cited documents, 360 citations; *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 131 cited documents, 397 citations. Search was conducted on 8 September 2022.

I have tried to push many ideas; some of them have held the test of time, others have failed. But that does not prevent me from trying! Active editing is much more than accepting and rejecting papers; I see the Postdigital Science and Education publishing ecosystem, and my role as its editor, as a co-creator of wide scholarly discourse. As my own scholarly work has slowly been reduced to editorials and birds-eye-view articles such as this one, editing has come to feel a bit like writing through other people's pens.

Conclusion

Writing my proposal for *Postdigital Science and Education* in 2017, I thought that I was founding a journal. I was aware that the journal needs its own community and I tried to build that community to the best of my efforts. Yet the intensity of people's response surprised me to no end! As the community has continued to grow, more and more work has landed on my plate, including writing countless emails, making daily editorial decisions, proofing 100 + papers and chapters per year, contracting new publishing venues, and making strategic decisions. I am the only one responsible for this situation, yet I have somehow managed to take myself by surprise. Now I am discovering my new role(s), and I am doing the best I can to play them right.

These days I am doing a lot of thinking about the mid-term and long-term future of postdigital thought and about the ways in which the Postdigital Science and Education publishing ecosystem can support its development. In practice, this often translates into the dangerous game of prediction. How strong are the community needs I perceive? And how sustainable are my responses to those needs?

For instance, the *Encyclopedia of Postdigital Science and Education* will require at least 500 authors and 1000 reviewers in the period 2023–2026. Its success depends on two main assumptions: that the Postdigital Science and Education community will grow roughly to twice of its current size in the next 4–5 years, and that most of these people will want to contribute. Yet the publishing contract has only one responsible person—and that's me. Shall we succeed? That does not depend on me but on the community. Yet if the *Encyclopedia* succeeds, it will be everyone's success; if the *Encyclopedia* fails, it will be my own failure.

A risky bet? Perhaps. Yet every evaluation of risk depends on criteria used to define success and failure. While I do work in merciless neoliberal academia which defines these concepts through money, citations, and what not, my take is very different. Some years ago, Peter McLaren introduced me to Antonio Machado's poem 'Traveler, There Is No Path'. While I cannot reproduce the whole poem due to its length, the verses below have taught me more than hundreds of academic articles:

> Everything passes on and everything remains,
> But our lot is to pass on,
> To go on making paths,
> Paths across the sea. …

Traveler, your footprints.
Are the path and nothing more;
Traveler, there is no path,
The path is made by walking.

By walking the path is made
And when you look back
You'll see a road
Never to be trodden again. (Machado 2003)

We, the Postdigital Science and Education community, make our own path by researching. To assess our efforts, and to provide these efforts with a voice, we occasionally need to examine and document our own trail. *Postdigital Science and Education* journal and the book series are predominantly about path making, and the *Encyclopedia of Postdigital Science and Education* is predominantly about trail examining. But there are no right or wrong paths; the process is much more important than the results.

I do need to play the game of standard academic measures of success and failure, and the Postdigital Science and Education publishing ecosystem is surprisingly strong in regard to these measures. Yet I strongly refuse to take these measures seriously! Somewhat paradoxically, I have grown to believe that this could be the 'secret' ingredient of our 'success'. Measures such as citations and reads seem to be a bit like love; they often arrive once you stop searching for them.

Invitation for Discussion

This article does not define, describe, or prescribe—it merely presents my very personal history of the postdigital. To ameliorate at least some of my own bias, I invite all readers to react to this article. Write a response article, email me, let us have a coffee or a wee dram! While I will appreciate your comments on any part of the article, I am especially interested in three questions:

1. Which facts (histories, important publications, research centres, projects, and so on) should be added to, or removed from, this article?
2. What do you make of my interpretation of these facts? What would you interpret differently, and how?
3. What is your preferred direction for future development of the Postdigital Science and Education community?

Based on received feedback, in Spring 2023 I will rewrite this article and turn it into the first chapter in *Postdigital Research: Genealogies, Challenges, and Future Perspectives* (Jandrić et al. forthcoming 2023a).

Ubuntu: I am because we all are. I look forward to your feedback!

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