

## **FROM THE EDITORS**

### **WHY BE AN EDITOR?**

Why be an editor? It entails voluntary service, is intellectually demanding, and comes with an unpredictable workload that often seems to arrive at precisely the wrong time! As the outgoing editor in chief, I (Paul Hibbert) have taken the opportunity to gather reflections from our team of editors about their highlights from our journey together across three years. Their reflections illustrate three key themes that show why editing can be such an important and fulfilling part of a scholarly way of life. These themes— collaboration, scholarship, and growth—are set out below, after which I will offer some personal concluding thoughts.

### **COLLABORATION**

The first theme is collaboration. Collaboration is part of our way of life at Academy of Management Learning & Education (AMLE), and most of the editorial team have comments that reflect this theme. The insights selected here emphasize how collaboration supports generativity (April Wright and Arran Caza), leads to new intellectual connections and guidance (Oliver Laasch), and supports both the refinement of scholarly work and community-building (Olga Ryazanova).

#### **April Wright**

At the start of our editorial term, I was struck by how the file-drawer problem in management learning and education (MLE) seemed to be one of emptiness. Contrary to the traditional problem of scientific papers with negative results being stored unpublished in the researcher's file drawer, many ideas and projects that could advance pedagogical theory and practice never even make it into the file drawer, let alone out of it, because scholars do not write them up. The drawer stays empty and papers remain unwritten because potential authors are uncertain that their ideas warrant investigation, are unaware that this type of scholarship can be published, or are unconvinced by the value of publishing in management education journals. Yet, as the three-year term unfolded, I was inspired by how people in the AMLE community kept chipping away at this empty file-drawer problem in spite of, or perhaps because of, the Covid-19 pandemic. Encouraged by paper development workshops and editorial guidance from Paul and the associate editors (AEs), new authors found the enthusiasm and the time to communicate and share their ideas, projects, and lived experiences of teaching and learning. Reviewers engaged thoughtfully, developmentally, and creatively with manuscripts and ensured all papers were improved through the review process, whether they made it into publication in AMLE or continued their journey at other education journals. Every submission, review, decision letter, and AMLE workshop signaled

that researchers' file drawers for MLE papers were not empty but were being productively and generatively employed.

### **Arran Caza**

The standout highlight of my term as AE for AMLE was in the many outreach activities I participated in. I traveled to many conferences and other events to serve on "Meet the Editor" panels. Doing so gave me the opportunity to work with our own editorial team and management learning colleagues at other journals. It let me travel to locations I would otherwise not have visited, and it gave me the chance to interact with future AMLE authors. Managing submissions through the review process is a powerful way to contribute to the development of a potential paper, but it is also somewhat constrained by its format, and it has an inevitable evaluative component. In contrast, the presubmission workshops escaped those constraints. I was able to play with ideas with potential authors in a purely formative way. I enjoyed the enthusiasm and unlimited possibilities evoked in those conversations.

Oliver Laasch My highlight was working with fellow co-editors on From the Editors (FTE) articles. Paul Hibbert, as editor in chief, worked in an exceptionally collaborative, bottom-up manner. This included developing already slated FTEs as a larger editorial group of coauthors. The FTE you are reading right now is an excellent example. It also meant allowing us as individual editors to develop FTEs that emerged from smaller groups of coeditors' areas of interest. For me personally, this first took the form of developing two FTEs on Covid-19 and business schools with Olga Ryazanova and April Wright. In the second FTE of this series, we discussed the relationship between grand crises like Covid and business school business models (Laasch, Ryazanova, & Wright, 2022). This work offered me an unexpectedly fruitful space to further delve into this topic of high interest with two very knowledgeable coauthors and fabulous human beings. Second, the FTE on ontological foundations (Laasch, Lindebaum, & Caza, 2022) enabled us—Dirk Lindebaum, Arran Caza, and yours truly—to take a deep-dive into the fundamentals of management learning and what these mean for our research designs. An important part of this FTE development process, after writing a first full draft, was to respond to friendly and critical feedback received from the larger group of coeditors who were not involved in the writing. It allowed us to mutually get to know our research, to develop collaborations and friendship inside an editorial team, that I want to believe will transcend our editorial tenure at AMLE. The process also enabled us to voice our views freely and in an unaltered manner, unlike the more diplomatic and compromising tones often fostered in a doubleblind peer-review process.

### **Olga Ryazanova**

The highlight of my editorial term was the AMLE Paper Development Workshop (PDW) that Maynooth University hosted in March 2022. For me, it was the first in-person academic event since 2019. What a joy it was to return to face-to-face conversations. I was also amazed by the international diversity of participants. I could never imagine that people would come from Australia to a small university town in Ireland for a one-day chat about a potential publication. Post-event, the excitement of seeing colleagues was tinged by more sobering reflections. Did participants come because the pressure to publish in “top” journals was so strong that it now made sense to fly across the ocean for an increased chance of publishing in the highest-ranked outlet in the management education field? If that was the main reason, we need to acknowledge the cost—financial and environmental—of access to top journals, and weigh it against the benefits such journals offer: large audience, developmental feedback from expert reviewers, and (most importantly for many) the signaling of high research competence to our employers and peers. I still hope that participants sought (and found) another benefit of an in-person PDW—the opportunity to be part of a community that shares their research interests. Serendipity and unstructured conversations are both the firewood for sparks of scientific creativity and the source of personal resilience in our demanding careers. I am very grateful to my fellow coeditors and all participants at our events for the opportunity to have those conversations with them.

## **SCHOLARSHIP**

Another key theme in the team’s reflections was scholarship, and how we could take pride in helping people to do their best work. The reflections selected here typify the extra work that editors put in to help particular authors produce their best work (Diego Coraiola), establish principles and guiderails that make it easier to understand the standards of the field (Dirk Lindebaum), and encourage a breadth of voices and varieties of intellectual contribution to be recognized and flourish (Clare Rigg).

### **Diego Coraiola**

The major highlight in my tenure at AMLE speaks to a common narrative in the field but that nonetheless reflects the fundamental role editors play helping authors develop their papers for publication. There was a paper I supported in spite of the doubts some reviewers had about it during the first two rounds of review. By the third round, all three reviewers thought the paper had advanced tremendously and should be accepted. One reviewer, in particular, said: “I had my doubts regarding previous versions of this manuscript. And at times I was surprised that you continued to believe in it and gave it another R&R. Looking at the final result, I can understand why you did. Glad to recommend an acceptance.” Key to the successful outcome was not only the belief that the authors had something important to share and the great work they had done revising their paper; it was also important meeting with them and making sure they understood the challenge they had ahead of them and how

they could potentially address the demands of the reviewers. After they received a conditional acceptance on their paper, I was sent a kind message from the first author saying that “reading your letters allowed me to recognize how devoted you are in fulfilling the critical gatekeeping role of academia. I also look forward to fulfilling those roles someday.” That comment made my day, and is one of my highest points at AMLE. This story is meaningful to me because it illustrates what collegial reciprocity is supposed to be. It offers an important reminder that we are all authors. We only serve as editors for a brief period of time. Somebody else will be on the other side when we submit our paper—and we hope they will treat our paper with the same care and interest as we believe we do for others. The paper in question, by Kim Kang, Kim, and Park (2023), was recently published with the title “Questioning unquestioned habits of mind: How executives learn new approaches to familiar situations through transformative learning.”

### **Dirk Lindebaum**

I was fortunate enough to witness the finest curation of MLE research as conversations between authors and reviewers unfolded during my tenure as AE for the essay section. Of course, not just any conversation led to acceptance—unfortunately, only six essays made it through the peer-review process during my tenure (against about 80 decisions overall). But perhaps acceptance rates are beside the point here. What I take away from these conversations is the constructive willingness from both authors and reviews to listen to each other’s perspective, and to learn from that, despite most submissions not meeting AMLE publications standards in the end. One key challenge was the framing of a “disciplined provocation” (DP; Vince & Hibbert, 2018). Sometimes, submissions were too “timid”; on other occasions, they resembled more of a “rant” (a frequent comment from reviewers). Figure 1 is designed to help authors get the balance right. Building on this, a frequent struggle for authors is how the DP can be mobilized to articulate a theoretical contribution to MLE debates (see also Lindebaum, 2023). Put differently, how can a normative concern (e.g., that collegiality can have a negative side) be converted into an opportunity for a theoretical contribution (i.e., theorizing “negative” collegiality as a form of “concertive control” communicated via norms of good organizational citizenship? see Fleming and Harley, 2023). Based on this insight, the authors offer actionable recommendations for “revitalizing a fuller expression of collegiality in business school” (Fleming & Harley, 2023: 8). This is only one example among several recent ones, but it highlights the consistency with which AMLE essays link a DP to a theoretical contribution, and use that insight to offer actionable recommendations for practice. If you have an idea for an AMLE essay, do reach out to the new team!

### **Clare Rigg**

Being AE for AMLE since 2020 has been one of the absolute highlights of my career. Engaging with authors and working with such a wealth of insightful reviewers to help bring to fruition so many interesting papers has been incredibly rewarding. My highlight of being AE is not so much a single moment as one of being witness to a movement of increasing engagement by AMLE of challenges to our purpose, intentions, and consequences as educators. Just as I began my term as AE, Denis Tourish's (2020) article "The triumph of nonsense in management studies" was published in AMLE. That this paper went on to be awarded best article of 2021 by the journal editorial review board represented to me an exciting and important moment of self-critique by the MLE Academy. I welcomed the subsequent explicit editorial articulation of an agenda for MLE to be bold, relevant, and embracing of opportunity to influence policy and practice for positive change (Greenberg & Hibbert, 2022). This has helped the journal to hold space for MLE boundaries to continue to be expanded, and within this I have been particularly glad to be able to help innovative articles be realized, such as that by Bigo and Islam (2022) on embodiment and management learning in a yoga-based learning model, and by Allen and Girei (2023). Long may this continue.

## **GROWTH**

The final theme overlaps very strongly with the preceding two. But Danna Greenberg and Megan Gerhardt also bring out a reflexive angle: the ways in which we collaborate to cultivate scholarship in the field also supports our own growth as editors.

### **Danna Greenberg**

As academics, we are taught early on how to "critique" someone's work: how to break apart another scholars' argument, how to look for the methodological flaws, and how to present our own work as superior or as an advancement of what has come before. Over my six years as an AMLE AE, I have come to appreciate that new ideas and progression in an academic field emerge through cultivation—not critique. Like in a garden, cultivation starts with looking for the seeds of life in a manuscript. What is the captivating part of the manuscript and does it have the potential to enhance our understanding of management teaching and learning? Cultivation also means starting from a place of compassion as one focuses on a manuscript's strengths, not its fatal flaws. As cultivators, editors will have to make difficult decisions, imparting challenging feedback or rejecting a manuscript. Yet, we must also try to do so in such a way that supports authors' learning and commitment to improving their research program. Finally, cultivation means recognizing how all contributors to the peer-review process—editors, reviewers, and authors—collectively contribute to the growth of the field. Ultimately, this is what we are all here for—to cultivate the field of MLE. I want to thank Bill Foster for inviting me on this journey, and Paul Hibbert who has helped me grow as an editor, as a scholar, and as a human being. Finally, I want to thank my fellow AEs, reviewers, and the Academy of Management team for your support, collaboration, and humor. Most importantly, I want to thank the authors with whom I have worked. I hope you have learned as much from me as I from you.

## **Megan Gerhardt**

As I reflect back on my time at AMLE, the last three years of my term have been markedly different from the first three. My first term as an AE was marked by annual travel to meet with my fellow editors, soaking up the perspectives and insights of my colleagues as we met twice a year to discuss the direction and goals of the journal. The second term began as Covid-19 turned the world on its head. Our editors' meeting, scheduled for Norway, was dramatically cancelled. The next two years brought few opportunities for us to connect in person, meaning my fellow editors were known to me through their work and as names on a screen. As our term drew to a close, we were finally able to meet in the wonderful country of Iceland for a PDW. The event drew scholars from all over the world, gathering in this place to discuss developing work and gather feedback on their scholarship. That event illustrated something profound to me: that we can get all kinds of work done virtually, but the in-person exchange of ideas, critical discourse, and energy cannot be replaced with technology. Stepping away from our routines and prioritizing time to think and learn from one another is rare and vital. It is this lesson that I believe is central to the scholarship of learning and education, and the one I will take with me from my time at AMLE.

## **CONCLUSION**

Editing is about a collaborative, scholarly process that supports growth, as the reflections above have illustrated. But it is also about the work that is produced and shared, and that involves a production team at the Academy of Management that you do not normally hear from. They care deeply about the work that we collaborate to produce, so I asked our managing editor, Stacey Victor, to comment on our term too:

We began our work in earnest in early 2020. Reviewing correspondence from that time, specifically the first week of March 2020, we had no idea what was to come. We had to pivot and pivot we did. Although we were disappointed about not being able to meet in person, this team rose to the occasion. This is shown by the FTE published in June 2020, "COVID-19: Learning to Hope and Hoping to Learn" (Greenberg & Hibbert, 2020), where our editors provided a path for our colleagues to begin navigating our "new normal" and deal with the trauma everyone was experiencing. It helped provide a runway where we all could begin the process of healing. I am proud of all the work that was done during this team's tenure, but I am most proud of our 2022 "Special Issue on Learning and Education Strategies for Scholarly Impact"—this Guest Editor team worked more diligently and passionately than ever I've seen before. And finally, our 2023 landmark issue in March 2023, in honor of Women's History Month: With every article in this issue contributed by women, it is a powerful testament to women everywhere and what can be achieved.

I share Stacey's view of some of the highlights of the work that we have facilitated and produced together. The last point she mentions—the issue to mark Women's History

Month—has been the most important one for me, and I am grateful to my friend Danna Greenberg for taking a leading role in that issue. But, in closing, I also want to mention two general points that have been key for me across the last three years. The first point is concerned with learning. Across three difficult years, which included service as a dean as well as an editor, I feel that I have learned a lot about the work of leadership. This has been such an important learning time for me that I was motivated to write a book (Hibbert, 2024), in the hope that my learning might be useful to others. The second—and by far the most important— point is gratitude. I am overwhelmingly grateful to the wonderful team of editors that I have worked with. I am thankful not just for their hard work and intellectual insight but also for their overwhelming kindness and generosity. It has been a privilege to be trusted to lead by a team who are all, in different ways, much smarter than me. I am also grateful to a larger collaborative team of editorial board members, reviewers, and of course authors striving to do their best work. There is no such thing as solitary scholarship, and the three volumes of the journal we have produced together belong to all of us.

Paul Hibbert University of St Andrews

Arran Caza University of North Carolina

Diego M. Coraiola University of Victoria

Megan Gerhardt Miami University

Danna Greenberg Babson College

Oliver Laasch ESCP Business School

Dirk Lindebaum Grenoble Ecole de Management, France

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