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The Lapidus
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About the Journal

The Lapidus International Research and Innovation Community (LIRIC) Journal is an international, peer reviewed, scholarly journal. It aims to provide a forum for contemporary critical debate on the relationship between the written (and spoken) word and (mental) health and wellbeing. This includes writing as a social practice.

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*A sincere thank
you is due our
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reviewers who
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Editor's Foreword

Timothy Buescher, PhD

Editor, *LIRIC Journal*

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Hello and welcome to this issue of *LIRIC Journal*.

In May of this year, the entire editorial board and many associated reviewers resigned en masse from the journal *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. The board of this journal then went on to found a new open access publication without the prohibitive fees which mark most academic journal publishers' open access arrangements. This is the latest in a long list of similar cases across publishers and disciplines. It seems change is perhaps coming to academic publishing. Reading of the steps these academics have taken to reclaim integrity in the sharing of knowledge in their community of practice is inspiring and heartening. For four years now, Lapidus International, the community for writing for wellbeing, has published an open access, peer-reviewed research journal which asks for no fees from authors.

Where *LIRIC* also differs somewhat from other journals is in the commitment to remain free of the disciplinary narrowness promoted and perpetuated by academic publishing culture. Authors publishing in *LIRIC* (and readers of our journal) come from many backgrounds, reflecting the intersecting influences and ideas which make up the broad range of understanding of what writing for wellbeing is and might be. Our reach is across the arts and therapeutic practice, as well as education and community work. As a consequence of this, *LIRIC* also promotes and celebrates creativity and diversity in approaches to research, bringing together arts-based, reflexive, co-produced, and more traditional elements. It is my belief that this is in large part possible due to the freedom from narrow disciplinary habits and tropes.

My own introduction to academic publishing was as an undergraduate mental health nurse. After much support and encouragement from my two prospective PhD supervisors, the paper was accepted with a few amendments. Most of these were suggestions on style or referencing, but one request struck me as very odd. I was to make mention of a particular paper by two authors I did not know, which had no direct reference to the content of my review. There was no clear logic in the reviewers' comments as to why this paper should be cited in mine. Being green (and desperate to get on) I included this amendment without question, and the review was published shortly after. The whole process was smooth and the infrastructure around the journal was supportive, but this detail niggled at me. It still does.

Some years later, with three colleagues from mental health nursing, I wrote a discussion paper on the experiences of our students whilst on placement. Issues raised related to cultural 'fit' and how this seemed to form an unspoken element of their practice assessment, which had no professional or formal grounding in the Nursing and Midwifery Council documentation but rather reflected the personal and group preferences and culture of local workplaces and teams. Despite some encouragement and support from a large publisher in developing and submitting this work, we could not get it published. A nursing journal turned this discussion paper down on grounds of lack of empirical evidence. A cross-disciplinary journal turned the paper down because of its focus on a specific aspect of nursing education. We were stuck in the middle.

My last published paper was with a major publisher and was published open access at a large cost to my then employer, who had a number of agreements with different publishers allowing a limited number of open access publications per year. My good fortune was to complete a paper at the beginning of the window for the annual funding for this publisher. Later in the year, this may have been used up, and I would have to wait months for the next opportunity or reformat the paper for another journal. This would mean a delay of years. As it was, it had been two years since the small piece of research reported in the paper had concluded. As with my first publication, there was a great deal of support and encouragement from reviewers and editors, all of whom are full-time academics, undertaking this work for little or no money.

During the period between my first and last publications, I had reviewed a paper or two each year, covering three of the major publishers. This work can be time consuming, but somewhere in the back of my mind I

held the belief that by reviewing I would see more clearly how to put a good paper together (some truth in that) and curry favour with the publisher (not the case).

No surprise, then, that when I was approached to get involved in *LIRIC*, I thought that this would be like my previous experience of journals, only with more responsibility (I would become assistant editor as well as reviewing papers from time to time). I took the post because of my respect and trust in the person who asked me, but also because at that point, still fearful of not achieving what needed to be done to ‘progress’ at work, this would look good in my performance reviews and on my CV. Unfortunately, the pervading culture of academic work is one of internalised self-centred competition, which in my case led to frequent over-commitment to numerous projects and prospects, CPD opportunities, and initiatives in a desperate attempt to meet the never-quite-articulated status of ‘excellent’.

Once I started to see the way that editors and reviewers at *LIRIC* nurtured and encouraged new authors to develop and shine, it became evident to me that this was a very different project with a very different ethos. This was about community. There were no fees for authors, no need for institutional backing, so anyone could submit their research paper for consideration. And the journal was connected to the Lapidus Living Research Community (LLRC), where research is presented and discussed, sometimes as individual projects and sometimes particular aspects, approaches, and themes. Often, what is presented in one forum later appears in the other, after careful mentoring from editorial staff. As we develop, we have come to the conclusion that essays on research topics are also very valuable for inclusion in *LIRIC*, where readers can learn about new and innovative ways of investigating words and wellbeing in their many different contexts and uses.

My experience working with the editorial board at *LIRIC* and wider Lapidus community has shown me that whilst there can be career benefits to publishing, this needn’t be the reason for doing so. Sharon Martinelli’s words capture the essence of this, I think:

[T]he journey I am writing about in this paper is marked by nonlinearity in thinking, writing, and being—a journey that remains in a constant state of evolution and dynamism.

This issue of *LIRIC* demonstrates the breadth of influences across disciplines and settings we are so proud to include. The papers presented here offer creative and reflexive representations of experience that together describe and promote connection and resilience within an ethic of care.

Through a deep analysis of her PhD writing and research process, Sharon Martinelli offers personal insights into living with long-term conditions that expose wider cultural implications in her home country and in her professional domain of nursing, through her own life experience.

Jo Metcalfe and Chris Westoby bring us their findings and learnings from a project that encouraged prison officers to engage with creative writing, showing a group of people engaged in a highly stressful job who find connection, catharsis, and escape through writing.

Mark Smalley provides us with a meditation on the climate emergency as he offers re-engagement with deep time for participants in geologically based writing workshops. The engaging format of his paper offers as much as does the interesting content.

Jeannie Wright shares a deeply personal yet highly relatable account of how change can be navigated through the use of personal writing, and how we can rediscover and relearn from ourselves in our past writing. She brings together the professional and personal in this meditation on the role(s) of writing through a rich career full of challenges and transitions.

We hope you find connection and solidarity in these papers and would love to hear from you if you have reflections, responses, or papers of your own that you would like to share. We hope to bring you another edition of *LIRIC* in the first half of 2025 and look forward to connecting with you.

Tim

Dr Timothy Buescher

Editor (on behalf of the editorial board)

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