

Interview

This little bag of dreams: An interview with Joy Schmidt about ANZJAT a decade on

In celebration of ANZJAT Volume 10, Toril Pursell interviewed Joy Schmidt, ANZJAT's inaugural editor and in later years, book review editor.

On a brisk and rainy winter evening we sit by the kitchen window in her warm and inviting home, sipping coffee. We glance at a cardboard box full of original ANATA newsletters dating back to the early 1990s and original printers' proofs from ANZJAT 2006. As we talk, Joy shares her experiences and enthusiasm for the journal. She reflects on the lead-up to the publication of the first ANZJAT, how the journal has developed since, and considers future demands, challenges and possibilities.

Keywords

ANZJAT, publication, production, editor, peer review, arts therapy literature.

Toril Pursell: *I found my copy of ANZJAT Volume 1 from 2006 and recalled receiving a copy at my first ANZATA Conference when I had returned to Australia to pursue studies in art therapy. I was so pleased at the time to have a hard copy of the journal that covered work from both Australia and New Zealand, that I read it front to back. Here is an image of my rather worn copy. Looking at it now, what thoughts does it evoke?*

Joy Schmidt: A worn, well-read copy is good. It is wonderful that the journal inspired you at this point. I certainly value my 2006 copy, as I do all the issues. But when I look at that first rather colourful ANZJAT copy, I feel a deep satisfaction that the idea of a journal became a reality. Possibly since the beginning of the organisation there had been notions of a professional journal as distinct from a newsletter, and I think the time was right. I am pleased that I was the person at that time and that the move was supported by the membership. For me this was a worthwhile and important task, and a productive use of time

and energy spent towards supporting the art therapy profession.

I have the printers' proofs of the 2006 ANZJAT, which a printer would normally have thrown out. These proofs could be stored in archives if there were such a place, but the art therapy association is 'gypsy-like' in its lack of a permanent home. We need more than a post box in Glebe – ideally we need a benefactor to bequeath us a house – perhaps in Jolimont or some such place!

I also feel satisfied with the content of the first journal – an eclectic mix – and it was appropriate to have a history of the organisation written by Annette Coulter in this first publication. A number of pioneer art therapists contributed, with a balance of newer practitioners also. Those who agreed to participate as advisors and reviewers reflected the range of art therapists from the beginning of art therapy in Australia to recent graduates, all willing to support the idea of a journal to bring about the realisation of a significant milestone in our association.

TP: Joy, could you tell us a bit about the 'embryonic' stages of ANZJAT and how it came about?

JS: The embryonic stage – yes, the journal grew out of the newsletter. To offer a context, I joined the ANATA committee in 2002, when Jean Eycamp was president, and took on the role of newsletter editor in 2003. I strove to create networks to begin a journal. To quote Yeats,

Take, if you must,
this little bag of dreams,
Unloose the cord,
And they will wrap you round.¹

Jean supported the idea of a journal and was happy for me to scope the project. Around this time, at the annual art therapy conference, I attended Sheridan Linnell's engaging presentation on 'The making of an art therapist'. I wrote a response to this in the ANATA newsletter, noting that with such dynamic academic material, a refereed journal would be the place to document such writing and ideas, and that a journal needed to become a reality. This would leave the newsletter to carry reports and news about members and matters related to organisational procedures. The focus of a peer-reviewed journal would be primarily on art therapy research projects and include book reviews, case studies and clinical art therapy reviews. Such a journal would help share our Australian and New Zealand art therapy research, to give evidence of the value of our work and to further communicate our professionalism. I began advertising in the newsletter for people interested in the creation of a journal and emailed to invite people to join in making a journal a reality.

Tarquam McKenna was the next president of ANATA, and fully endorsed the initiative for a journal. As president and working in a university, Tarquam was well placed to arrange for a seeding grant from the universities providing art therapy courses.

The layout/design work for the first journal was almost cost-free, with an honorarium given to friend and fellow graphic designer Prudence Read (who was at the time working in England for Cherie Blair, producing a specialist library

magazine). This embryonic stage was an exciting and satisfying time, as the journal took on its form, as we emailed back and forth about design matters. When the proof copy was ready, members of the editorial committee assisted with the final proofreading, and the final layout of the 2006 journal was then uploaded as a pdf design file to Adams Printers in Geelong, published in October and launched in November at the annual Conference. The second journal in 2007 I took to print stage, with Tarquam taking over as editor and writing the editorial in September. After finalising the layout and liaising with the printers, the completed boxes of journals were delivered to Tarquam, who went on as editor of the next four peer-reviewed issues.

My thought is that a university-situated editor with the academic skill and the possibility for time organisation is ideal. With the current editor, Sheridan Linnell, we have a university art therapy educator as well as a published author. With you as co-editor, Toril, with your love for words and working in the art therapy field, we have great editorial management to direct and evaluate the content. The journal is the creation of a team, and together with you and Sheridan as co-editors, Jill Segedin plays her role in coordinating our editorial team and the process of ANZJAT. She ensures the timeline is observed and is the contact person for those submitting work. Jill coordinates the reviewers and ensures work is uploaded to dropbox for Constance Ellwood and Rigel Sorzano to do a final proofreading. Jill's skill as a graphic designer is well utilised. She was responsible for the association's visual 'branding', which also includes the journal design and production. She has lifted our public profile with her design work.

TP: In your 2006 ANZJAT editorial 'A vision realised' you write what is in effect a statement of purpose:

ANZJAT aims to encourage intellectual rigour, to foster cross-disciplinary investigation into a variety of different interventions and environments and is shaped to support, strengthen and inform

progress in the profession as a whole. It affirms the work and successes of art therapists in enhancing the personal development and emotional healing and well-being of clients. (p.5)

Do you find this to still be the case, and if so, how?

JS: These aims, or ‘statement of purpose’ as you put it, Toril, are being addressed through the journal. To cater for our membership, as well as being cross-disciplinary, investigations can also be cross-cultural. There is no doubt in my mind that the sharing of information via a journal helps encourage and strengthen us personally, and as a group of art therapy professionals in our work with clients. However, Andrea Gilroy observed some time ago now, that art therapy research needs to observe the rules of evidence-based research.

Australians Nadia Balatti and Patricia Fenner, in their recent research published in the 2014 *ANZJAT*, also suggest systemic, evidence-based, cross-disciplinary research would serve to accelerate progress in the recognition and credibility of the arts therapists and their work. Following this advice, the journal might well give preference to evidence-based submissions ahead of other writing such as a self-reflective articles and narrative reviews. Yet I personally believe that a mixture serves to enrich the journal.

TP: *The first editorial also makes mention of the link between Australia and New Zealand as both having “long grappled with a sense of place” and refers to the cover artwork by artist Michael Leunig, A picture of innocence (see Figure 1). As ANZATA has grown in size, expanding geographically to include parts of Asia, and has in recent years changed from the singular ‘art therapy’ to more inclusive ‘arts therapy’, how has this been reflected in the journal?*

JS: I was so pleased Michael Leunig was happy for us to use this colourful visual, which I considered a good choice for our first journal as the two figures convey so well an innocence and a cross-cultural blend. Leunig, in the writing accompanying this work, encourages us

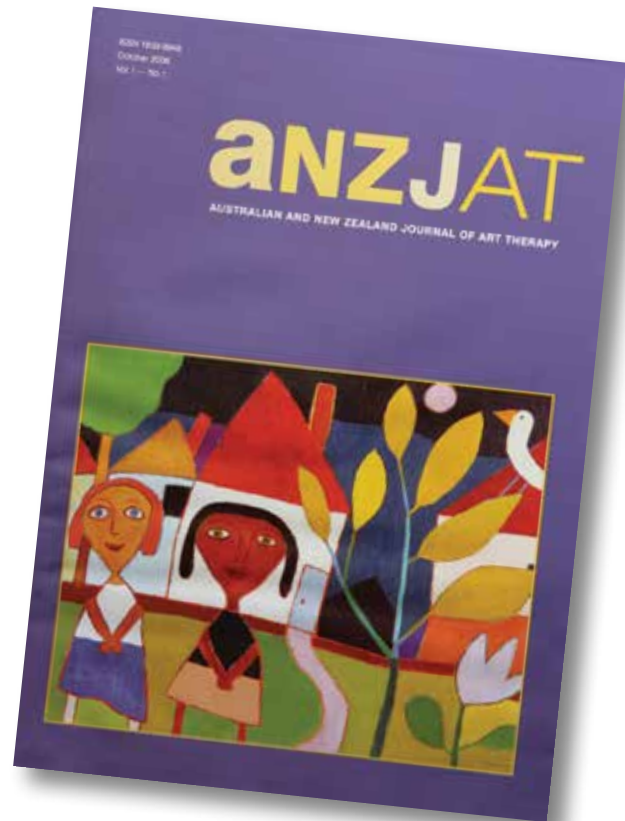


Figure 1: ANZJAT 2006.

to have the openness and innocence to embrace cultural difference and gain from its richness. Our ANZATA membership is a cross-cultural mix and the membership has always had an international representation, and has always had both New Zealand and Australian art therapists, as noted in the very first newsletter in 1989. The joining of Australia and New Zealand was recognised officially in 2006, the year of our first journal. The membership now includes arts therapists from Singapore, Hong Kong and elsewhere. And Amanda Levey, writing as president in *ANZJAT* Volume 9, referred to the continued need for us as arts therapists living in the Asia/Pacific region to look to our own cultural region and its potential for development.

The cultural mix is reflected in the journal’s inclusive content, in the articles, artwork and reviews. The last issue was printed in Singapore, with an artwork by a Singapore art therapist on the cover. Looking at past copies, the representation is commensurate with the spread of the membership. The journal content also reflects the move from a lone focus on the

visual arts, to include the arts therapies. An increase in visual material can also be noted, along with some poetry, in the more recent issues.

TP: *Joy, can you describe some aspects of your role as book review editor and any observations about how the reviews have changed? And, how do you think the literature has evolved?*

JS: I was delighted to accept the role as book review editor for the 2013 and 2014 editions of *ANZJAT*, happy to revisit my contact with the journal, and it was a pleasure to work with such a fine talented team. I have had a long interest in the whole publishing process, including design, and draw on years of experience in editing student work at secondary and tertiary level.

In reviewing work, I respectfully aimed to assist authors by providing an objective view, making suggestions, corrections and generally encouraging authors to polish their work. Copy editing was done by Constance Ellwood. Peer-reviewers who have a major role in reviewing the articles don't check the reviews of books. I suppose the review is by a peer!

Submissions evolved in three ways: a reviewer choosing a book to review, an author inviting a reviewer to review their work, and for the larger part, I was in the privileged position to commission reviews – a good option, as this offered the opportunity to select new texts, or books written by an Association member and then offered the opportunity to match a reviewer with the book. Australian and New Zealand authors who have had their books reviewed in *ANZJAT* include Miller, Coulter, Crimmens, Linnell and Elbrecht. Of course book selection was always discussed with you, Toril, and Sheridan, as editors.

The books reviewed have broadened over the years to include the arts therapies. This is to be expected given our membership blend.

The arts therapy literature globally has increased noticeably over the years and should impact on the growth and recognition of the arts therapies. Journals form part of the professional literature and offer the opportunity to publish a body of knowledge based on

research in the arts therapies. As already mentioned, Gilroy pointed out some years ago the need for evidence-based research and it was interesting to read the research by Balatti and Fenner in *ANZJAT* Volume 9, 'Taking a closer look: A review of *ANZJAT* publications 2006-2011'. This review examined the first six *ANZJAT* journals and one finding was that systemic research and research skills will make a difference in advancing our profession. We certainly need to heed this.

TP: *What do you foresee in the way of future demands and challenges and possibilities for ANZJAT? How might this connect with technology, access and distribution? And Joy, noting that members have been able to access online copies of the articles on the ANZATA website, does this raise a good point about digital distributions and the possibility of having videos, audio recordings and other media featured?*

JS: One challenge could be to remain as a committee of passionate and energetic volunteers, of busy people stretching themselves to produce a high quality academic journal. Or the challenge could be to find the financial backing to outsource the journal. Or there could be a challenge to rely on the people able to take advantage of global networks and information technology with a view to considering an electronic publication that suits us. All challenges require a deal of thought and debate. And there is the challenge to push for the submission of more rigorous evidence-based research.

Yes, videos, audio recordings and the like we should keep in mind, especially because these ways of communicating offer visual and other means. The sale of such media might assist in the finance to support other advances. Again, there is a limit to the time and energy of volunteers, and financial backing is needed. Perhaps there is no great hurry, and the time will make itself known, with those in the organisation willing to take up the challenge. And times change, witness the demise of the ABC shops! We need to be resilient!

TP: Do you think the 'aesthetic' of the journal has shifted over time, and if so how?

JS: When looking at the 'aesthetic' of the journal, from the 2006 issue onwards, I think healthy subtle shifts can be noted in both design and content.

The graphic design set out in 2006 to grasp and communicate our professionalism and the effectiveness of our work as art therapists. The journal has reflected the changes in our membership to be inclusive of the arts therapies, and therapists from different cultures.

When looking at the aesthetic of the journal from the 2006 issue onwards, subtle shifts in style can be noted between the first two issues and those to follow. For example, the masthead, *ANZJAT*, after the second issue becomes slightly elongated, and visually lighter, and the layout column width inside narrower, with a serif font replacing the earlier sans serif and the grey, and mortise heading areas have been removed. One would expect changes with a change of designer. There is also a noted increase in the coloured images and artwork. A shift in content finds the introduction of poetry and I find this pleasing even if it contrasts with the push to encourage more rigorous evidence-based research.

TP: And just out of curiosity, when you pick up a copy of ANZJAT what is the first thing you do? Examine the cover, visit the table of contents, skip straight to book reviews or articles, read the President's Welcome or the Editorial?

JS: For me, it is always exciting to receive the journal in the post. I enjoy opening the envelope and my first focus is on the cover – noting the colour and the image – and I enjoy the tactile sense of the slightly thicker cover printed on satin card. I then flip over to read about the cover artist and the meaning of the artwork. I would then turn the slightly lighter pages – scan the content page and possibly look briefly at all the visual content throughout and depending on the content headings I might skip to an article that takes my immediate interest and scan that briefly, but then would return to read the *Editorial* and *President's*

Welcome. Then, because I was book review editor, I would check the reviews to see these in print, before a serious reading of the articles and the contributor biographies.

TP: What do you believe will keep the readership engaged with ANZJAT?

JS: Engaged is the key word, and to keep the readership engaged, the journal needs to continue to provide an inclusive forum to give arts therapists a voice. And the voice needs to be varied, with a balance of representational work from the different arts, between practitioners in different countries, and presenting different approaches in the arts therapies to show the effectiveness of our work with clients. Providing cutting edge and evidence-based research essential for our profession will engage those serious about further hard evidence to support practice. In offering variety, I have personally enjoyed the little bites of poetry as well as the art reflections of fellow practitioners.

The journal is indexed and maybe if we did become, or when we become electronic, a digital object identifier would be positive. Perhaps a computer person – someone like Jill – might have ideas here. Putting the journal online would certainly engage a wider audience.

Maybe advertising with other networks such as in the music therapy journal or psychotherapy journal or in other art therapy universities overseas, or the new La Trobe web-based magazine. And consider placing the journal in more libraries and even in bookstores such as Readings in Melbourne or its equivalent.

TP: Yes, dare we mention 'open access' journals here? This may be entering into another topic altogether...

JS: The idea of sharing, by offering an 'open access' to our journal, introduces a good debate. Australian pioneer art therapist Susan Hogan with Graham Dickerson founded one such online open access journal, *The International Arts Therapies Research Journal*, and there are a number of others. One of the

drawbacks for us would obviously be the cost of such a directional move, although libraries and universities do subsidise many open access journals. So just as the universities offering art therapy courses supported our first journal with a seeding grant, maybe these universities might subsidise an open access journal. Perhaps a big ask. Looking at other funding possibilities, I doubt we would get such a healthy flow of articles if authors were required to pay to publish, which would offer another way to cater financially for an open access journal. There would be also be the technical, among other considerations. Perhaps this will not happen easily or does not need to happen soon.

TP: Joy, why is it important for us to have a peer-reviewed journal?

JS: I continue to believe it is important for us to have our own professional journal. In our case we have chosen a peer-reviewed journal. The choice of not disclosing the identity of the reviewer may be debatable, but perhaps important in a small association such as ours. Beyond this, the blind peer-review process of having your work reviewed, followed by copy editing and proofreading aims to offer an improved version of the submitted work, ensuring a good quality record of what is happening in our field. Reviewers spend a great deal of thought and effort in reviewing the work of their peers.

Our profession can benefit and we can benefit individually by having an arts therapy journal. There is the satisfaction for the individual in having work published, and in doing so, to gain some recognition and satisfaction in knowing that writing in the field encourages an interest in the profession and a collective record of our work. So, both personal and profession profiles can be lifted. Having a peer review your work assumes you have someone knowledgeable in your area of interest. The reviewer also gains in reading up-to-date information and, at its best, cutting edge information. The journal remains pivotal to a collegial sharing and the professional development of arts therapists. It offers a record

of the very essence of our professional work in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the Asia/Pacific region, a way – as Sheridan put it – of “connecting with each other across land and water” (2012, p.7).

TP: Thank you Joy.

Endnote

1. From the Irish poet and playwright W.B. Yeats, “Fergus and the Druid” (1893) which is a dialogue between King Fergus and a shape-shifting Druid. Fergus, in search of unearthly wisdom, has followed the Druid who has taken on the appearance of a raven, weasel and then man. The Druid gives Fergus a bag of dreams for the king to see his earlier incarnations.

Reference

- Linnell, S. (2012). Editorial: Connecting with each other across land and water. *ANZJAT* 7(1), 7-10.