

Editorial introduction: Volume 3, Issue 1

By Dr David Preece

As we start a new academic year, A Level students and their teachers will be exploring the potential to study Geography at university. As well as researching and exploring different courses and campuses, aspiring Geographers want to know if this is right for them. What kind of people do they want to become, and how does Geography form part of their emerging identity? What do they care about? What difference do they want to make in the world? These decisions matter. We know that this means an enormous amount of preparation for making successful applications and becoming the best candidates possible. What does this look like?

Great candidates to read Geography at university have a deep and meaningful relationship with aspects of the subject and discipline. They are, fundamentally, motivated to study Geography at university, because they've found parts of it intellectually fascinating and enjoyable, and they are connected to the purpose of the discipline.

There are three key components that great Geography candidates are able to demonstrate in their engagement and their applications.

First, great Geographers can demonstrate scholarship and critical engagement. This is more than just reading textbooks and thinking about what you've read. The best Geographers – even just when we consider this in terms of an A Level lesson or essay, for example – are able to recognise lots of ideas, lots of case studies and examples, and evaluate and think about what that means. They don't accept ideas at face value, but are able to thoughtfully incorporate them into their existing understanding.

And, just like in our A Level experience, the best Geographers are able and motivated to play at a level above their existing understanding. They're able to demonstrate engagement with undergraduate quality thinking (or beyond!), rather than sticking closely to the confines of their specification and taught course. We see this in all of the articles in *Routes*, with a clear scholarship and peer reviewed process showing high quality thinking and rigorous disciplinary approaches (Rushton & Nayeri, 2022). This month's articles reflect the significant advance beyond the taught content – with ideas reflecting the multi-scalar forces of domesticity in South East Asia, the Great Oxidation Event, and even the debates around conceptual domains of globalisation or Human Geography as it relates to the urban epoch. For over

two years, and seven issues, *Routes* has been a testament to the ability of students and teachers to engage in the highest quality Geography scholarship.

Second, great Geographers recognise the complexity and range of the discipline. Geography is a broad and wide-ranging subject, and there are lots of areas of it which have their own focus and specialisation. It's important to recognise that there's a lot of ideas to explore, and that you don't have to engage with, or indeed, be an expert on all of them. By the publication of our April 2022 issue, *Routes* alone had covered nearly sixty articles, essays and book reviews, on a range of topics, geographical ideas, and representing a range of community perspectives. Our [Editorial Board](#) and reviewers reflect a diverse platform of academic backgrounds, disciplinary experiences, and professional contexts. We've got physical geography specialists in alpine environments, climate change, petroleum geoscience, arid environments and volcanoes, who work alongside political geographers, cultural geographers, health risk specialists, and those who work with sustainability, environmental activism and the economy. Like our authors, we share a passion for our own fields, and an enthusiasm to understand more about the dynamic and interconnected nature of our work, our discipline, and our planet alike.

While our examined specifications and syllabus material typically require a full range of understanding across all aspects of Geography, it's often more intellectually satisfying to adopt a deeper and selective engagement with a smaller slice of the discipline. Rather than trying to show that you know all of the bits of Geography in a very limited or superficial way, a critical and sustained engagement with an idea demonstrates academic focus and intellectual tenacity. Whether at the global scale impacts of mass extinction, or the 'View from a Bench', great Geography is grounded in a deep understanding of concept and place, and in a thoughtful and considered examination of an issue whether local or global (Walkington, 2021).

Finally, it's important to be able to explain and explore the ideas with clear and precise communication. We demonstrate this with our *Routes* articles – and indeed, it's the primary purpose of the journal. As Rushton & Nayeri (2022) noted, "this is why *Routes* exists: to provide a space for emerging geographical voices who are undergraduates or students in their final two years of school". Through effective feedback, and thoughtful reflection, students are encouraged to find their 'academic voice' and use it in a way that is meaningful to them. Whether you are a Sixth Form student, an undergraduate, or an experienced academic, teacher or educator, your voice matters. Your Geography can change the world.

We believe the best way of doing this is through a 'rich diet of Geography education' from start to finish. We want to be part of a community of

thoughtful, engaged and enthusiastic Geographers: whether that's in our lessons, schools and university courses, or in our community and shared spaces. We want to be able to confidently model the scholarship, complexity and communication of our discipline. When our students can hear and see what academic Geographical discussion looks like in their day to day, the higher quality our shared Geographical experience will be.

References

Rushton, E. & Nayeri, C. (2022) Editorial introduction: Volume 2, Issue 3. *Routes* 2(3): 133-135

Walkington, H. (2021) Editorial introduction by Professor Helen Walkington: Student research – from local to global. *Routes* 1(3): 258-260.