

# Editorial Introduction: Volume 4, Issue 1: From Author to Editor – Sam's Route

By Sam Allen (University of Oxford)

This is my second time writing a piece for *Routes*, having first had an essay published in its very first edition. It was my first publication at the end of the first year of my undergraduate degree – a lot of firsts – and was one of the most influential experiences I have had as a student. Now, nearly four years later, I find myself a postgraduate student and privileged to be on the editorial board of *Routes*. Coming full circle in this way has highlighted to me that my author experience played a critical role in my development as a student of Geography.

Submitting an adapted essay with modest expectations, I found the peer-review process incredibly rewarding. Receiving detailed feedback from two expert peer reviewers was a novel experience, and wrestling with at times contrasting comments allowed me to think critically and maintain real agency in how I engaged with them to improve my work. Through this process, I not only improved the submission, but also took away valuable lessons to apply to my future work. Ultimately, seeing my essay published brought both excitement and satisfaction, and demystified the opaque world of academic publishing and peer review. This experience boosted my confidence and helped solidify my interest in pursuing an academic career in geography.

Much of what made this experience so positive were the people involved. My communications with the Editors-in-Chief, Dr Elizabeth Rushton and Dr Cyrus Nayeri, the detailed comments from my reviewers, and even the congratulatory email from one of my undergraduate supervisors (and *Routes* Editor), Dr Lander Bosch, when my submission was published were all full of encouragement and the sense that these people cared about me and my development as a geographer. I am pleased to note that my positive experience appears to be mirrored by other authors, who highlight the academic growth that the authorship process helped them to achieve (Editorial Vol 1.3).

Now, as an Editor myself, it is my hope that I can play a role in making the author experience with *Routes* as helpful and encouraging for students as possible, just as it was for me. Truly, this is a fairly easy task surrounded as I am by a team of diverse and dedicated Reviewers and Editors, under the leadership of the Co-Editors-in-Chief, Dr Jonathon Turnbull and Dr Liam Saddington. And of course, the articulate, thoughtful submissions we receive from students are both fascinating to read, and a real indication of where our discipline is heading. For most students, this will be their first experience of sharing their academic work with a wider audience. *Routes* takes its role in this seriously, with an explicit guide on how best to deliver feedback and work with students to ensure they gain as much from this process as possible (Editorial Vol 2.3). It is our expectation that all submissions will go on to be published after any necessary revision, and this ensures that *Routes* is a journal not only of the highest standard of scholarly work, but also one that showcases a plurality of topics and student backgrounds.

My own academic interests have developed since my entry in *Routes*, and I now find myself on the fringes of what is often considered (at least in the UK) Geography. However, to me, Geography is not bounded in the same way as is traditionally the case in other disciplines. It is far less about what we study, but more to do with how we study it. It is, to my mind, a way of thinking, a critical lens that we can use to cross disciplinary silos and tackle the world's big issues. *Routes* encourages students to explore topics that they are passionate about, and that may not be included in school or university

curricula. We see that in the six fantastic submissions in this issue, which provide a vignette of all that a geographical perspective has to offer.

Against the backdrop of the UK government's recent approval of drilling at the Rosebank oil field off the coast of Scotland, Emily Blanchfield discusses the wider risks associated with climate change, and whether we as individuals, corporations, nations and an international community are doing enough. This frames many contemporary geographical issues, such as the importance of conserving carbon sinks, leading nicely onto Emma Hoddle's report on the results of an extensive palaeoecological study of long-term vegetation change in Dartmoor. This identifies the Tor Royal Bog as a longstanding and influential carbon sink, but with periods of fluctuating vegetation regimes associated with both human activity and natural climatic variation. Hoddle highlights the value of an historical perspective when considering future ecological management, particularly where responses to climate change are concerned. Also looking at long-term landscape development, Abigail Huggett reports on the role of intra-plate volcanism in the formation of the unique landscape in Long Valley, California. This case study is often over-shadowed by the better-known examples of Hawaii and Yellowstone, but Huggett convincingly argues it is worthy of greater attention due to the way that the landscape continues to provide benefits such as tourism and geothermal energy, but also risks that must be carefully managed and communicated to local residents.

Two fascinating approaches to human geographical research follow. Firstly, Thomas York takes us on a sensory journey to The Garlic Farm on the Isle of Wight, highlighting the importance of visual, olfactory and social experiences in creating a unique marketplace. Zuhri James then provides an essential analysis of the University of Cambridge's Scott Polar Research Institute museum, discussing how displays therein romanticise (white and male) Arctic "explorers" and render indigenous inhabitants and knowledges invisible. In so doing, James argues this museumscape upholds colonial narratives and Arctic imaginaries, highlighting the need for carefully considered decolonisation of such spaces.

Finally, Cherena Reynolds' *Morning Diaries of a Geographer: An Ode to Geography*, eloquently expresses the importance of geography, not just as a field of academic study, but as a wider perspective on the world. Once exposed to a geographical way of thought, the everyday complexities and hidden issues of the world are impossible to ignore. This piece is a celebration of Geography and the valuable contributions it offers for tackling the world's most pressing issues, just as this issue offers a glimpse of the interdisciplinary, varied approaches students are already taking.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue, and congratulations to all of our authors on producing such erudite contributions to contemporary geographical debates. We are delighted to continue to work with the RGS IBG to publish Emily Blanchfield's essay, the winner of the 2023 FT Schools/Royal Geographical Society student essay competition - giving a wider audience to this excellent scholarship. *Routes* continues to bring together a passionate community of geographers with the aim of promoting and celebrating the work of students, and I look forward to what is to come from future issues, and the students who have or will appear in them. I would encourage anyone reading this to get involved with *Routes*, either through submitting some of your work if you are a Sixth Form or undergraduate student, or by joining our wonderful team of Reviewers if you are a geography postgraduate student, teacher or academic. From personal experience, I can assure you it is something that will benefit you and the wider community, wherever you are in your geographical career. I end with a quote from Cherena Reynolds' piece in this issue: 'For some, perhaps, a world of Geographers would be reason for cheer'.

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