

ALT-C 2009: “In dreams begins responsibility” – choice, evidence, and change

8-10 September 2009, Manchester, UK

Call and Guidelines for Research Papers

Call opens in mid December 2008 and closes at midnight on Monday 16 February 2009

This document can be found at http://www.alt.ac.uk/docs/ALTC2009_research_papers.pdf

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1 Welcome and introduction

Welcome. Whether you've been involved in ALT for years, are new to the learning technology domain, or are an experienced researcher, writer, or presenter from other fields, please take the time to review this call and guidelines document. With your help we can make the 2009 ALT Conference a truly outstanding, influential, and enjoyable event.

The Association for Learning Technology's annual conference (ALT-C) helps fulfill three of ALT's aims, namely:

- ◆ facilitating collaboration between practitioners, researchers, and policy makers;
- ◆ spreading good practice in the use of learning technology;
- ◆ raising the profile of research in learning technology.

In line with these aims, ALT, the Conference Co-Chairs, and the ALT-C 2009 Programme Committee call for high quality proposals for inclusion in the ALT-C 2009 programme.

This document is the call and guidelines for research papers. It is accompanied by a template for research papers (http://www.alt.ac.uk/docs/ALTC2009_research_paper_template.doc)

A companion document (http://www.alt.ac.uk/docs/ALTC2009_abstracts.pdf) is the call and guidelines for abstract-based submissions, namely, short papers, posters, symposia, workshops and demonstrations.

2 The call for research papers

Submissions should address one or more of:

- ◆ the five challenges described in section 4 below;
- ◆ any aspect of learning technology research.

In line with the 'choice, evidence, and change' part of the conference title, proposals which describe empirical research and evidence-based practice are particularly welcome, as are studies which take account of the learner voice, and collaborative research studies which cross traditional disciplinary boundaries. However, quality, and relevance to the overall focus of ALT-C 2009 remain the overriding criteria.

ALT defines research inclusively; to encompass informed scholarship and critical reflection, as well as empirical and evidence-based study. Therefore, we will welcome proposals which offer: synthesis and re-interpretation of existing research; critiques of developments in practice; theoretical arguments or conceptual frameworks; critical / reflective analysis; innovative research methodologies; collaborative research studies which cross traditional disciplinary boundaries.

ALT is determined to establish learning technology as a discipline in its own right. Therefore any submission whose quality and distinctiveness support this ambition will be considered, even if it does not conform fully to the summary above.

3 Submission deadline

The deadline for submissions is **midnight on Monday 16th February 2009, U.K. time.**

4 About the conference

The conference title, drawing on WB Yeats, is **"In dreams begins responsibility" - choice, evidence, and change.**

Learning technologies and learning technologists are now at the heart of modern learning, and yet our community still faces many challenges, for example:

- ◆ learning from history to build on past gains and avoid previous mistakes;
- ◆ spreading innovations that are of true value, rather than mere fads;
- ◆ redesigning pedagogy, the curriculum, and assessment methods to secure a substantial positive impact on learning;
- ◆ ensuring cost effectiveness by various means, from working effectively at a large scale, to supporting peer-assisted learning cultures;
- ◆ developing a research culture that informs practice, and a culture of practice that uses research evidence.

To rise to these challenges, we must dream and act on our dreams, but evidence must justify the choices we make. ALT-C 2009 will provide a broad forum for practitioners, researchers and policy-makers from all sectors to explore, reflect, and learn.

5 Examples of submission topics

Here is an indicative list of examples of subjects for submission.

- ◆ Papers that provide details of research exploring the synergies between Higher Education, Further Education, Adult and Community Sector and the schools and post-14 sectors – such papers could, for example, present and evaluate work from one of these sectors, and generalise the experience to other sectors.
- ◆ “Powerful ideas”¹, emerging from scholarly work, for enhanced learning.
- ◆ Strategic models for change, including strategies that effectively encourage the spread of learning technology.
- ◆ Critical evaluation of innovative learning technology projects, including evaluation from an evidence base.
- ◆ Research studies of the design and evaluation of new learning technology systems or technology-enhanced learning spaces.
- ◆ Evaluative studies of technology enhanced resources used in the teaching and learning process.
- ◆ Studies of methodological innovation in the area of learning technology.
- ◆ Critical studies of new social and cultural practices involving learning technology.
- ◆ New theoretical frameworks for the design or evaluation of learning technology.
- ◆ Theory-informed surveys of learning technology innovation and adoption.

¹ “Powerful ideas” term adopted from Seymour Papert

- ◆ Large-scale or longitudinal studies of learning technology adoption.
- ◆ Critical assessment of the potential of technological advances in the delivery of learning.
- ◆ Critical assessment of theory and practice of technology-enhanced learning across cultures and nationalities;
- ◆ Theory-informed critical discussion of policy and strategy at institutional, sector, or discipline levels.

Research papers should also aim to address at least one of these three desirable areas.

- ◆ Engagement with a community of users.
- ◆ Interdisciplinarity.
- ◆ Engagement in broad scientific debate about discipline-level enquiry in the field.

6 Publication

Accepted papers will appear in print before the conference in the conference's research paper proceedings. An abstract for the paper presentation will appear both in the printed conference handbook and online.

Both printed volumes will be identified by ISBNs.

After the conference the papers, may, at ALT's discretion, be hosted online in ALT's repository, currently under development.

7 Requirements for full research papers

7.1 Structure

A guide to the structure for **evidence-based research papers** appears below, and there is important guidance on language, style and content, in the research papers template at http://www.alt.ac.uk/docs/ALTC2009_research_paper_template.doc.

- ◆ Abstract (compulsory): A short 200-300 word abstract summarising the paper.
- ◆ Introduction: Brief introduction to the topic of the paper and the paper's structure.
- ◆ Background: The theoretical basis of the work and reference to related work with appropriate citations.
- ◆ Method: The research methods being employed.
- ◆ Contribution: A critical account of the research work.
- ◆ Evaluation: An evaluation of the work in terms of the theory and method.
- ◆ Conclusion: A reflection on the successes and limitations of the work, its contribution to learning technology as a research discipline, and its potential for further development.
- ◆ References: References should follow the Chicago Author-Date System, which is described in full at http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/style/reference/tf_F.pdf, and in the research papers template.

For papers in **non-evidence based scholarly traditions**, no guide is provided besides: abstract; introduction; the body of the paper; conclusion; and references.

7.2 Other requirements

The following requirements apply to **all** research papers:

- ◆ The maximum word count is 5,000 words. This includes everything, from the title to the references. Longer papers will not be reviewed.
- ◆ Authors must format research papers according to the template at http://www.alt.ac.uk/docs/ALTC2009_research_paper_template.doc.
- ◆ A list of author-provided tags (similar to keywords) is required for each paper submission, see section 13.2.
- ◆ Authors are required to submit **two** copies of the paper, the first is a complete paper, and the second is a carefully and fully anonymised version of the paper that ALT will use for refereeing purposes².
- ◆ The anonymised paper should have all author names, institutions and references to the authors work removed. Thus a text fragment like

“one of the authors, Jane Digby (2006), described how work at the University of Manchester ...”

with the accompanying reference

“Digby, J. 2006. Tapetum character states: Analytical keys for tapetum types and activities. *Canadian Journal of Botany* 75: 1448–59.”

should appear as

“one of the authors, <author A>, described (2006) how work at the University of ...”

with the Digby, J. 2006. reference removed from the list of references.

- ◆ Your paper must be formatted as a Microsoft Word file (.doc), of 7 MB or less, including any diagrams in a single file. If you are using OpenOffice or other document preparation system, then please convert the file you submit to Word 97 or Word 2003 compatible .DOC (not .DOCX) format.
- ◆ Filenames will be converted to internal submission system names. However, before beginning any uploads please make sure that you can distinguish (and double check on) which file is the full version and which file is anonymised. The best way to do this is to include, respectively, the text-strings “complete” and “anon”, without the quotes, in the filenames for the complete and anonymised versions of the paper.
- ◆ Papers must not have been published elsewhere, in whole or in part.
- ◆ ALT is committed to an open publication model for conference contributions. By submitting a research paper to ALT-C 2009, authors agree that they or their employer retain copyright, and that the paper is licensed for use with a Creative Commons “Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivative Works 2.0 UK: England & Wales licence” (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/uk/>).

In addition, ALT:

- ◆ may approach those submitting research papers to seek clarification or request changes so that they better fit the conference programme (in the case of research papers this relates particularly to the presentation overview that you are asked to provide with your paper – see 8 below);
- ◆ may return ill-structured or grammatically poor submissions to the authors for correction before the review process (typically these comprise a very small proportion of all research papers);
- ◆ reserves the right to make sense-preserving grammatical edits to accepted papers during the proof-reading and publication process;

² This represents a new departure for ALT. As in previous years, all proposals will be reviewed “blind”. But by asking you to provide the anonymised version we avoid the risk that your proposal will suffer during the anonymisation process, since you are in control of this process.

- ◆ will not make any alterations to the titles of accepted papers, but please ensure that titles are **concise**, readily comprehensible, and that they avoid **florid or pretentious language**.

8 Presentation overview

In a 20-minute presentation (which will be followed by 10 minutes for discussion) it will rarely be appropriate to present the whole of a 5,000 word paper. Instead, presenters need to draw out and focus on key areas or points. This may be the theory or model generated from the research data, the framework used to analyse the data, or key results that have significance for future research and practice, etc.

Consequently, authors must provide into the online submissions system a **presentation overview** (max 200 words) with their submission, indicating which particular aspects of the paper they intend to focus on in their 20-minute presentation, if included in the programme. (The presentation overview takes the place of the paper's abstract in the online submission system, and, along with the abstract, it will be published in the conference abstracts handbook, and online).

- ◆ The presentation overview should not be included in the paper itself, but there is space in the research paper template for a 350 word normal abstract, for inclusion with the paper in the research proceedings itself. This is distinct from the presentation abstract, which serves a different purpose.
- ◆ The presentation overview will **not** be used to judge the suitability of the proposed research paper. There is therefore no need for it to be provided in anonymised form.
- ◆ The word count for the presentation overview does **not** contribute to the 5,000 word paper limit.

9 The refereeing, selection, and acceptance process

After review (and, possibly, one cycle of change and re-submission) the research proceeding editors and the conference Programme Committee **select** papers for potential inclusion in the conference. After at least one presenter books to attend the conference, the paper is **fully accepted** for inclusion in the conference programme and publication.

9.1 Criteria for refereeing and selection

Research papers for presentation at the conference will be refereed according to appropriate criteria drawn from the following.

- ◆ Relevance to conference title "*In dreams begins responsibility*" - *choice, evidence, and change*, though this does not exclude other high-quality contributions (see section 2).
- ◆ Contribution to scholarship and research into the integration of learning technologies into education.
- ◆ Reference to the learner voice.
- ◆ Contribution to practice or the development of learning technology in education.
- ◆ Links that are made between theory, evidence and practice.
- ◆ Appropriate reflection and evaluation.
- ◆ Clarity and coherence.
- ◆ Usefulness to conference participants.

In the above, education is considered broadly and includes formal and informal learning settings in schools, colleges, universities, the workplace, homes and communities, at any stage in learners' lives, including continuing adult education.

9.2 Review and selection

Anonymised papers will be refereed by two anonymous referees, and the four editors of the research proceedings will then work with members of the conference Programme Committee to select papers for the conference.

Some papers may be selected dependent on making changes to the paper, and the authors will be provided with details of the changes required in referee and/or editor feedback. Any changes submitted will then be considered by editors to assess if the reviewer/editor comments have been satisfactorily addressed.

9.3 Full acceptance

After selection for inclusion in the conference, at least one presenter must book to attend the conference. When this booking has been made the paper will be accepted for the conference.

Authors should note that somewhat more papers may be selected than it is possible to accept for the conference. ALT will operate a "first-come, first-served" system in relation to a) revisions (where these have been requested) and b) bookings. Therefore:

- ◆ ***if you have been asked to revise your abstract, make the changes and resubmit the abstract as quickly possible;***
- ◆ ***whether or not you have had to revise your paper, ensure that at least one presenter books a place at the conference as soon as possible after the conference opens for bookings in May 2009.***

If so desired, ALT will on request swiftly refund any payment made by a potential presenter who books to attend the conference and whose paper is not, for any reason, accepted.

10 Presentation at the conference

You will have 20 minutes to present your paper followed by 10 minutes for discussion. Guidance on presenting will be provided on the conference web site or by email closer to the conference.

Please keep ALT updated on any changes to the presenter(s) for an accepted paper via admin@alt.ac.uk.

11 Outstanding and Best Paper Awards

All presented research papers will be considered by ALT for an Outstanding Research Paper Award. To receive this award, the judges must all agree with the statement "This paper presents work that strongly advances the field of learning technology".

If there is no agreement on the words "strongly advances" then the judges may make a Best Research Paper Award.

12 Potential publication in the ALT Journal

The best papers at ALT-C 2008 will be forwarded to the Editors of the Association for Learning Technology Journal (ALT-J), one of whom is a member of the Programme Committee, to be reviewed for possible publication there. This does not preclude authors of other accepted papers from submitting revised papers to ALT-J. Information about ALT-J can be found at http://www.alt.ac.uk/alt_j.html.

13 The online submission system

The online submission system for ALT-C 2009 will be available at <https://alt.conference-services.net/> from mid-December 2008.

- ◆ Anyone submitting a potential contribution to the conference must create an account on the online system. If you are submitting more than one proposal you can use the same account for each submission.
- ◆ You can alter a submission that you yourself have made at any time up to the deadline.
- ◆ The submission system uses pop-up windows. If you have problems submitting your paper, please temporarily allow pop-up windows for this site on your browser.

13.1 Information required from submitters

The submission form will require the following information.

- ◆ Title of your proposed paper.
- ◆ The presentation abstract of up to 200 words – see 8 above.
- ◆ Your research paper, in both full and anonymised forms, as Word documents, to a maximum file size of 7 MB, and saved in Word 97 or Word 2003 compatible .DOC (not .DOCX) format.
- ◆ Name(s) of the author(s) and the presenter(s), and their affiliations, in the order you wish them to appear in the programme.
- ◆ Session type (choose research paper from the selection of demonstration, poster, research paper, short paper, symposium, or workshop).
- ◆ A set of author-generated tags (similar to keywords) to help in assigning reviewers, and to help people who are considering attending the session to understand its focus. Please choose these tags carefully before you start the submission process, and read carefully the tag specification in section 13.2;
- ◆ Audio-visual and IT needs (you should describe fully what your presentation requirements are, including any required software which will need to be pre-loaded. If your paper is accepted ALT will endeavour to supply these, and consult with you if the requirements are difficult to meet).
- ◆ Intended audience(s) (e.g. practitioners, researchers, policy-makers).
- ◆ Intended outcomes and activities for participants (activities will not be required for research papers, but outcomes will).
- ◆ You will also need to answer other questions regarding registering for the conference, etc.

13.2 Tag list

Please write the tags associated with your submission carefully. These will be used to allocate appropriate reviewers and, if your paper is accepted, to supply information to conference participants, support searching etc.

The tag list must be in this format.

- ◆ Tags are separated by spaces.
- ◆ Tags start with a small letter.
- ◆ Tags which are constructed from multiple words are elided with second, third, etc word initially capitalized, with a similar treatment for numbers, for example: **learnerExperience** or **web2.0**.
- ◆ The plural form is used for tags describing physical objects, for example: **tabletPCs** or **eBooks**.
- ◆ The singular form is used for concepts and approaches, for example: **constructivism** or **socialConstructivism** or **learnerExperience**.
- ◆ Acronyms that normally appear in capitals are retained as such, possibly pluralised,. Only common acronyms can be used, for example: **VLEs PLEs CPD**.

To ensure consistency, ALT may standardise tags across submissions.

13.3 The submission process

Here are some hints for submitters.

- ◆ Log in to the submission system when you have prepared your abstract. Enter your email address and the password you chose when you registered with the system.
- ◆ You will be taken to a screen on which the submission process starts. Please read the instructions on this screen carefully. If you want to submit a new proposal, select the link that says "Click here to submit a new proposal".
- ◆ Submitting a proposal is a multi-step process. Each step asks several questions. Some questions are marked "required" and you will not be able to complete your submission until these questions have been answered.
- ◆ If you have to stop part-way through the process, your submission will be stored until you return later and complete all the questions. For example, when you log in again you can click on an incomplete abstract and resume submission.

13.4 Amending a submission

If you wish to change your submission, you can do this at any time up to 15 February 2009.

- ◆ Log in to the submission system.
- ◆ You will see a list of the proposals that you have submitted. Select the proposal that you wish to change.
- ◆ Amending a proposal is just the same as the original submission process except that the online form will be automatically filled in with the answers that you gave previously. You don't have to change an answer if you don't want to.
- ◆ When you reach the final step and press "Finish" you will be sent an email confirming that your proposal has been amended.
- ◆ Once submissions close on the 16th February 2009 you will no longer have access to your paper until after the Programme Committee reaches decisions on the programme.
- ◆ Once your submission has been accepted for inclusion into the programme, with any amendments that are required, we intend that users will be "locked out" from access to the system to give us a free run at preparing papers for publication.

13.5 Queries about the submission process

If you have any queries about the submission process or you want to withdraw from the process please contact the ALT Publications Officer at: publications@alt.ac.uk.

14 Further information

If you have any queries related to the Research Papers strand, please contact the Research Papers Editors:

- ◆ Maggie McPherson m.mcpherson@leeds.ac.uk
- ◆ Hugh Davis hcd@ecs.soton.ac.uk
- ◆ Linda Creanor L.Creanor@gcal.ac.uk
- ◆ Frank Rennie Frank.Rennie@lews.uhi.ac.uk

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