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EDITORIAL

Changing truths of project management

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Conversations about projects and project management are changing. Project management researchers and practitioners are no longer only focused on the processes and practices, but increasingly looking for “some truths” of project management as well (Morris 2016), truths that can be as likely found when considering values as much as knowledge. And what is considered so valuable that a new journal is needed to reveal those truths? Quite simply, a better world – one where humanity’s problems are alleviated through shared and publicly available innovative projects, and socially responsible project management research and practice. And what is PMRP’s role in this quest? To provide a forum where informed dialogue can occur among project management researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders.

Metaphors are powerful tools, and the use of “dialogue” is especially so – and quite deliberate – in this context. It offers better imagery than the oft-used “bridge” separating project management researchers and practitioners. Perhaps we are all speaking “conversations of project management,” but can’t understand each other? Perhaps the language of researchers is not what practitioners need to hear? Perhaps practitioners and researchers already understand each other more than many think? To create further dialogue between practice and research, and improve the likelihood of mutual understanding, PMRP will adopt an activist editorial model based on several key [editorial and publishing principles](#) that focus contributor and reader attention on public priorities, and the kinds of socially responsible research and practice that address them. But what is the rationale for an activist model and what will the journal content look like as a result?

Traditional academic publishing is rooted in the principle of peer review, the result being only those researchers whose articles “successfully” pass through that review process are published. Those who don’t pass this trial by fire must seek other venues to get their messages to a broader audience. One can look at the world of journal content using a simple categorization, inspired in part by the well-known “goals-and-methods matrix” (Turner & Cochrane 1993) (Figure 1). The content most often seen in research journals is “type 2” (see Table 1), that is, research articles that editors “know” are coming, but are “unknown” in terms of their frequency or quality.

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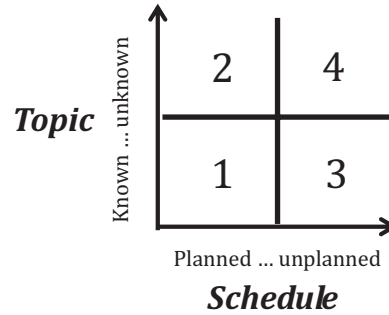


Figure 1 PMRP content typology (based on Turner & Cochrane, 1993)

While consistent with the principle of peer review, the publishing of such content has three immediate effects: it eliminates multiple contributions that could influence the project management practitioner(s) in meaningful ways; it makes the journal itself vulnerable should submissions stop meeting peer review; and it predetermines topics of public discussion.

The challenges facing us today are far too important to *wait* for such contributions, and to wait for a select few to determine the issues that affect all of us. One must also recognize that critical information can come from other stakeholders in the project management community. And while I think that the editors of other project management journals would agree with this, traditional publishing policies and procedures do not. It is with this in mind that PMRP will actively publish all four content types as shown in Table 1. Details about each can be found [here](#), including descriptions of the extended abstracts that highlight the key information of a research article for practitioners.

These explanations describe how PMRP will facilitate the metaphorical conversation of project management, but the real conversations we want to influence are beyond these pages, and beyond the authors whose writing appears upon them. Research is, by its nature, an examination of history, with conference papers and peer-reviewed publications serving as

Table 1 PMRP: Content types and examples

Type	Schedule	Content	Examples
1	Planned	Known	Research paper (invited) Lead story Teaching case (invited) Interview (invited and unsolicited) Guest editorial (invited) Practitioner’s view
2	Planned	Unknown	Research paper (unsolicited) Practitioner case Editorial
3	Unplanned	Known	Book review Teaching case (unsolicited) Interview
4	Unplanned	Unknown	Expert commentary (unsolicited) Conference paper Student research

historical records. Even the “best” papers (by whatever measure) are theoretical offerings, with the possibilities for further application only implied in the latter stages of the piece.

The time has come, however, when we must move beyond the possible to the actual. Climate change is an obvious example. This is not a theoretical construct but an arresting reality demanding attention and immediate action. Other challenges associated with public health policies, food and agriculture, infectious diseases, clean water, and Internet governance (to name a very few) are all examples of topics for which conversations of project management and by project managers need to happen. PMRP readers, it is our intention, will be among those who can take that action and demonstrate, through the increasing use of projects and project management, that change is possible. The authors of PMRP articles can give them valid and valuable data to inform that action.

So what information can be found in our launch issue? Under the leadership of John Lannon and John Walsh (both of the University of Limerick), the first issue includes a collection of research and practitioner papers reflecting project management activities in the nonprofit sector. Their insightful [guest editorial](#) positions these articles in a broader discussion.

- The lead case study by Matturi and Pain looks at Concern Worldwide (www.concern.net), an organization whose mission is “to help people living in extreme poverty achieve major improvements in their lives which last and spread without ongoing support from Concern.”
- Visser’s study of a large-scale collaborative project called The Advocacy Initiative examines a temporary, rather than permanent, organization that sought to reframe relationships with the state, involving many diverse civil society partners and policymakers.
- The article by Reddington et al. is concerned with increasing levels of engagement in a community, involving a variety of stakeholders with multiple, often unstated, agendas, through the application of formal techniques in this environment.
- Lacerda et al. use a case study to examine project portfolio management (PPM) in a nonprofit organisation. They provide a comparative analysis of PPM models based on a review of literature, and propose a model to identify how nonprofit organizations can best manage a portfolio of projects.
- Bogacz-Wojtanowska and Jalocho look at projectification in the social economy from this broader perspective, drawing on 36 case studies of existing social enterprises. Their work provides an insight into how projectification, influenced by European Union policies, changed the landscape for social enterprises in Poland.
- Ang et al. open up new avenues of inquiry through an investigation of the way value constructs are identified in portfolios, using an in-depth case study of two interrelated organizations.

Several times per annual volume, readers will also find multiple examples of the other content types – all of which are chosen and written in ways to heighten their value to researchers, educators, and practitioners of project management. For our launch, one can read:

- Leybourne’s teaching case, “Alpha: strategic diversification and cultural change in the US food retail sector;”
- Sankaran’s book review of *Industrial megaprojects: concepts, strategies and practices for success* (by Edward Merrow); and
- Bredillet’s “idiosyncratic musings,” which explore the necessity for PMRP to have a methodological focus on case studies and other qualitative methods.

In writing this, my first PMRP editorial, I wanted to achieve many goals and looked for guidance in other “firsts,” finding inspiration along many themes as other new editors sought to contextualize their journals. Commenting on the status of the profession and practitioner needs were long-standing themes (Rad 2000; Turner 1994; Walker 2008). Specifying journal ambitions was a natural and common occurrence (Gemunden 2013; Willcocks & Sauer 2004). Methodological considerations were described (Bredillet 2004; Rad 2000), and editorial innovations and procedures duly noted (Walker 2008).

Confident in the suitability of these themes (and with enormous respect for those authors), I’ve tried to accomplish the same here and throughout this journal site. I encourage you to take a moment to read and reflect on what you find. Does our mission resonate with you? Can you see yourself adding your voice by sharing your project management truths? I hope the answer is yes to both.

Beverly Pasian

Utrecht

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About the Editor

Dr. Beverly Pasian is an avid educator, researcher, author and association leader committed to the development of project management internationally. In addition to her current role as an Associate Professor at the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, she has faculty positions at multiple international universities including the University of Technology Sydney, Boston University and Royal Roads University (Canada). She has taught both undergraduate and graduate students in both project management and research methodology, and has supervised hundreds of students to successful completion of their research thesis. Her research collaborations have spanned the globe to examine project management from various industry, sector and topical perspectives (including project management maturity, e-Learning, construction consulting services, and ‘human factors’ such as trust, motivation and creativity). Multiple books are amongst her publication credits including *Designs, Methods & Practices for Research of Project Management* (Gower Publishing) and *Plan to Learn: Case studies in eLearning project management* (CeLEA). A book for practitioners will be her next project, with an interpretative focus on award-winning research specifically written for project managers.

Beverly has had extensive involvement with professional associations nationally and internationally. She is the founding President of the Project Management Association of Canada (2007-10) and the first recipient of its Fellowship award. For the IPMA Netherlands member association, she was its representative for the international IPMA Research Management Board (2012-14), expert team member on the development of the Organizational Competency Baseline, and was the academic program lead for the 2014 World Congress in Rotterdam. In April 2013 she founded the Dutch National Research Group to bring awareness to the topic of ‘human factors’ in project management and a sense of collaboration to national associations in the Netherlands.

Beverly’s own education includes project management (PhD from the University of Technology Sydney), online education (Masters degree from the Open University of the UK) and executive-level management (EMBA from SKEMA Business School – 2016-17).

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