

## Editorial: Inaugural Issue of the *Journal of Learning Analytics*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article introduces the inaugural issue for the *Journal of Learning Analytics*. The article outlines the journal’s aims and scope and summarizes the research and Hot Spot papers for the issue.

**KEYWORDS:** Inaugural issue, learning analytics, research, practice, Society for Learning Analytics Research, SoLAR

### Editorial

Since the establishment of the Society for Learning Analytics Research (SoLAR) in 2011, the rapidly emerging learning analytics field warranted greater focus and opportunity to showcase the quality research and practice underway. As an initial step, SoLAR established the international conference on Learning Analytics and Knowledge. The *Journal of Learning Analytics* represents another important step supporting learning analytics researchers and practitioners.

On behalf of the Society for Learning Analytics Research, welcome to Volume 1, Issue 1 of the *Journal of Learning Analytics* (JLA). The JLA is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal published by SoLAR. This field-defining publication is the first journal dedicated to research investigating the challenges of collecting, analyzing, and reporting data with the specific intent to understand and improve learning. A core goal for the journal’s development is to provide a space for promoting both research and practice. The first issue presents research papers and practitioner “hot spots.” The publication represents and reflects the diversity of learning analytics work in formal and informal education contexts: from K–12, vocational and higher education, and workplace settings. The journal aims to connect researchers and developers with practitioners, to inspire, motivate, and disseminate the publication of new tools and techniques, to study learning transformations, and to provide evaluation and critiques of the conceptual, technical, and practice-based outcomes. The interdisciplinary focus of the journal recognizes that computational, pedagogical, institutional, policy, and social domains must be brought into dialogue with each other to ensure that interventions and organizational systems serve the needs of all stakeholders.

This first issue illustrates the diversity of learning analytics research and practitioner outcomes. The research papers address important challenges such as scaling-up learning analytics initiatives: the relationship between LMS/VLE usage and learning performance, the role of psychometric data to predict academic achievement, and the capacity to detect boredom through user log-data.

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In arguing for open learning analytics Jayaprakash et al., outline how models to predict students at-risk of academic failure can be applied across alternate educational contexts. This is an important point for the transferability of such models into the myriad of teaching and education settings that could benefit from such assessments. Interestingly, the authors found no significant difference in improved academic performance for students supported through a learning intervention versus students simply made aware of their potential risk.

The following research paper by Andergassen et al., describes a process for dealing with large LMS data and provides a novel insight into the analysis of such log-data. The authors examined some 250 million log-file entries to investigate patterns related to academic performance, finding that quantity and frequency of access along with completion of assessment exercises were predictive of overall academic performance.

In taking an alternate approach to the previous papers, Gray et al. examine the role of psychometric data for predicting academic performance. Psychometric factors of ability, personality, motivation, and learning strategies predicted academic performance. While the authors note that prior academic ability is a sound predictor of future academic performance, this is not the case for mature learners or groups with ethnic diversity.

In their investigation of the ASSISTments math tutoring system, Pardos et al. analyse the longitudinal and fine-grain data related to student affect and behavioural engagement and the relationship with exam performance. Through these analyses the authors were able to calculate the probability a learner is in a state of boredom, concentration, confusion, or frustration, or that the student is exhibiting off-task or gaming behaviours.

The practitioner *Hot Spots* section features two distinct yet complimentary reports of learning analytics in higher education institutions. Buerck and Mudigonda discuss the challenges they faced with implementing a top-down approach to academic analytics at their institutions to shifting to a more successful bottom-up learning analytics strategy. The second paper by Heath advocates for the consideration of contemporary privacy theories and student feedback to help inform institutional governance policies to address the privacy aspects and concerns of learning analytics initiatives.

In addition to the research and practitioner Hot Spots papers, this issue features an article by George Siemens, President of SoLAR. In his article, Siemens gives a brief overview of the main activities of SoLAR and describes the importance of the journal for the development of the field of learning analytics. The insight and creative analysis of learning data represented in this first issue of the *Journal of Learning Analytics* sets a tone and direction of critical insight coupled with practical advice. We hope you will share your work through JLA as we build the field together.