

Dedication

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This special issue is dedicated to the memory of Professor Stephen Bax, who died on 22nd November 2017. Stephen was professor of Modern Languages and Linguistics at the Open University.

Stephen was a plenary speaker at the BMELTT Symposium, held in June 2017 at Coventry University, and the event that inspired this volume. His speech was entitled ‘MOOCs as a new technology: Approaches to normalising the MOOC experience for our learners’.

Stephen started his teaching career as an English tutor in Sudan and the Middle East, and was one of the early pioneers of English teaching with the British Council in that part of the world. He drew on his own rich experience of teaching English as a foreign language, as well as his personal commitment to language learning, to inspire and motivate many people—both learners and teachers of language.

His interest in and talent for technology led him to start drawing on digital resources in his teaching practice. He was also an early and important contributor to research in this field. His seminal article ‘CALL, past, present and future’, published in *System* in 2003 was awarded the Elsevier prize. Stephen received the International Distinguished Researcher Award in 2014 from the International TESOL Foundation for his expertise in language learning and testing.

His interest in texts and technology motivated him to develop the tool textinspector.com, leading this year, 2017, to his ELTon award for digital innovation in English teaching and testing. His recent work decoding the 15th century Voynich manuscript shows the fascinating diversity of Stephen’s research interests, as well as his enthusiasm for innovative and challenging scholarship. Never a lone researcher, he thrived on sharing ideas with colleagues and students, inspiring others to conduct ground-breaking research in our field.

Stephen was a model teacher, who kept his finger on the pulse of new developments in the industry, ready to take on board new knowledge and skills—and he encouraged everyone else to do the same. As a teacher, he always made time for students. He was always encouraging and supportive, and constantly showed his faith in his students, giving them the confidence to set and meet challenging targets. He was also a very inspirational teacher trainer.

We were very honoured to be able to invite him as a speaker to share his insights into MOOCs and the digital learning world. We are deeply saddened by his passing, only a few short months after he joined us at BMELTT. He will be sorely missed by many readers of this special issue, as well as those involved in producing it.

The editor and contributors offer their deep condolences to Stephen’s family: his wife Paloma, and his children Andrew, Michael and Elena.

The Editor
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