

***Revue YOUR Review* and Experiential Learning**

Editor's introduction

Welcome to the second volume of *Revue YOUR Review*, York University's online undergraduate research review. This volume picks up on the momentum created by the publication of the inaugural issue of the *Review* (2014), and by the success of each iteration of York University's associated Undergraduate Research Fair since its inception in 2013. The articles published in Volume 2 have been selected, through a process of peer review, from among submissions that stem from research projects presented at the 2014 Fair.

A guiding principle in the establishment of both the Undergraduate Research Fair and *Revue YOUR Review* was one of promoting experiential learning. Loosely defined, experiential learning is a process of intellectual discovery that includes the application of a theoretical framework to concrete situations and reflection upon that endeavour with a view to augmenting awareness, to developing competencies, and to enhancing critical-thinking skills. Experiential learning builds upon acquired knowledge—often delivered in a classroom environment and reinforced through independent reading and exercitation—which is then tested in some form of “real-life” laboratory; but it is incomplete without the crucial element of contemplation about the process. The procedure of publication in *Revue YOUR Review* seeks to capture each of the fundamental aspects of the experiential-learning model for our contributors, and to extend the experience to an even broader selection of learners in the York University academic community.

The initial stage takes place within the structure of a for-credit undergraduate course at York University in which students are tasked with crafting a thesis for a research-based project and with developing that thesis into an original, coherent, and fleshed-out analysis, argument, set of findings, or creative work. After having received feedback from their instructors, potential participants submit an application to present their projects in the juried Undergraduate Research Fair with a newly elaborated abstract. Those who are selected and who participate in the Fair are then invited to attend a workshop on writing for publication, organized by the *Revue YOUR Review* editorial board, to help them to rework and refine their projects in the

format of an article; from there, they are encouraged to submit their articles to peer review for potential publication in the *Review*. All accepted papers are submitted to a round of copy-editing undertaken by students of a fourth-year professional-publishing practicum in York's Writing Department (Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies), and then may be delivered to individual writing coaches who work with authors to help them to strengthen their argumentations and to cultivate their written academic expression. The final product undergoes a last copy-edit, performed, this time, by journal staff.

The very act of undertaking a research-oriented project is in and of itself a form of application of theoretical knowledge to a concrete situation—that of knowledge transfer. The Research Fair provides a forum in which to actualize that transfer to a public of several hundred people; what's more, it requires that researcher-presenters process their instructors' comments and revisit their projects both to incorporate any suggested improvements and, most challengingly, to re-structure them into two-pronged presentations, each consisting of a poster and an oral presentation that requires mastery of the subject, a dynamic delivery, and concision. This jump from the course assignment to the idea marketplace certainly demands reflection: "What is this research about? What is its use or application? How can it be effectively communicated to those present?"

The experience of the Fair stage is instrumental in researchers' assessment of their own projects, and of whether their research might find resonance in the vast expanse of open-access online publishing. Their participation helps them to understand better their methodological approaches, eventual biases, and the potential impact of their work when met with the critical engagement of Fairgoers who carry with them their own perspectives, areas of expertise, and personal experiences.

Having tested and reflected on their theoretical learning as "sellers" of knowledge at the Fair, those participants whose articles have been selected for publication in the *Review* must confront yet another level of reflection on their work. Each contributor must ask: "How has the experiential quality of the process to this point shaped its direction moving forward? Will this analysis stand up to time? How has the process deepened my own understanding of and engagement with the matter?" It is at this stage that authors are paired with writing coaches, against whom they test their evolved knowledge and from whom they receive further critiques and valuable insights based on their coaches' own experiences in writing and in publishing. This stage often includes a back-and-forth between the two parties of the pairing, eliciting a final round of reflection on the part of authors before the last editorial touches are made and the definitive product unveiled to the public.

Revue YOUR Review's learning-through-experience principle is not limited to its authors, who have navigated the research, writing, presentation, selection, and editing processes outlined above, but also seeks to lend the critical-knowledge-transfer space that it has carved out to others within the University whose learning

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environment might be enhanced by an active, participatory experience in the production of such an enterprise. To this end, the *Review* teams up with the aforementioned professional-publishing practicum both to receive copy-editing assistance from the students enrolled in the course and to provide those students with a valuable hands-on, experiential endeavour. Another way in which the *Review* has sought to provide a platform for student work—and precisely for *creative* student work—lies in its selection process for each volume’s cover art: as of the 2016 Research Fair, parallel to the Fair’s poster presentation event is an art walk, from among whose pieces a jury selects a winner to be exhibited on the cover of the ensuing volume of *Revue YOUR Review*. Finally, with generous funding from York University Libraries, we have been able to hire a student Digital Production Assistant whose education, skills, and perspectives complement the competencies of the editorial board.

We invite you, therefore, to view this venture as the product of a multifaceted effort that builds on theory, practical application, and reflection—the fundamentals of experiential learning—and on the collaborative toils of a broad community of York University instructors and learners. It is, as such, a fitting forum in which to exhibit and to circulate a broad spectrum of investigations, critical analyses, and creative work undertaken by some of York University’s most promising undergraduate researchers.

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