

From the Editors...

Friends and Colleagues,

We are very excited to finally see this special double issue on using language portfolios make its way from the planning stages into print. For the past decade, both of us have implemented a variety of language portfolios in the EFL classroom. In addition, we each have presented on the subject at numerous language learning conferences and JALT events. As a result, we simply felt it was time to offer some of these wonderful teaching ideas and explorations into alternative assessment to the CUE community.

Readers will immediately notice that all the articles contained within this issue of OCJ adhere to a qualitative approach. This is not by accident, but by design. It is our intention that these papers help CUE members learn about a variety of language portfolio applications and provide readers with the impetus to adapt them into their own teaching environment. For the record, all papers were blind reviewed and, although one of the editors contributed to this issue of OCJ, strict adherence of professional editorial protocol was followed.

The first paper by **John Howrey** promotes active learning through writing portfolios. Howrey's paper shows that portfolios can be a very useful tool for utilizing teacher feedback, helping with paper revisions, and encouraging independent learning. **Cameron Smith's** contribution to OCJ 5.2/5.3 focuses on creative writing portfolios. Smith's portfolio approach challenges students to develop the structure of a story, improve vocabulary usage, and introduces metaphors and symbolism. Similar to Howrey's contribution, students' continual revision and

reflection of texts is also another way to promote autonomy. Harnessing the power of reflective learning is the key theme of **Suzanne Bonn's** article as she asks students to self-select influential work over the academic year using project reflections and a final self-reflection. These steps are like building blocks and help students perceive their SLA strengths, weaknesses, and overall language goals. The next paper is **Fergus O'Dwyer's** description of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and the efficacy of can-do statements to supplement all elements of the learning cycle. Most importantly, self-assessment and reflection can enable learners to see how quickly they are progressing toward quantifiable and realistic language goals. The final article is an argument for going digital by **Juanita Heigham**. In this informative and practical overview, Heigham helps demystify ePortfolios and highlights their benefits and challenges. The author wisely notes that promoting online learning not only improves students' technological skills, but it can also help expand young people's horizons beyond the confines of the classroom.

We believe most, if not all, educators involved in Japanese higher education will come to realize the positive elements of portfolios in the language classroom. They are an excellent way to promote reflective learning, help students become more accountable for their education, and assist students in establishing both short-term and long-term goals. With that, we hope you feel as empowered as our students have by enjoying the articles in this special issue.

Reflectively yours,
Steve Quasha and Suzanne Bonn
OnCUE Journal
Special Issue Guest Editors