AI Practitioner

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

The Open Issue, 2021

Edited by

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AI Practitioner

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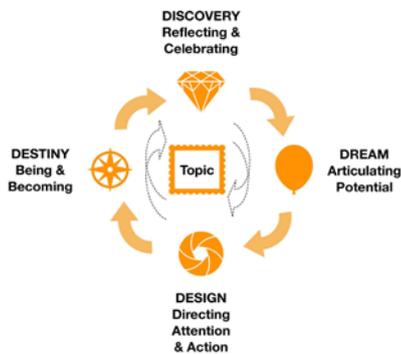
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AI Practitioner: The Open Issue

The *AI Practitioner* journal relies on the support of the practitioners to keep it generative and relevant, both to the wider world and the field of Appreciative Inquiry. The range of interests of the practitioners, researchers, academics, students and consultants is reflected in the breadth and depth of the articles they write, as this second open issue of the journal shows.

This is the twenty-third year of the publication of the *AI Practitioner* journal. Started in May, 1998 by Anne Radford in her proverbial "garage" as a newsletter to support what was then a very new and rather radical field, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), it has grown and evolved with the field of AI over the past two decades. *AIP* is what it is today because of the support of the practitioners, from thought-leaders, consultants and business leaders, to academics and students – and from those who are none of the above. The wide range of interests within the community and applications for the field of AI are reflected in the topics you, our contributors, have chosen to write about over the years.

The flexibility of AI as a theory of practice has become ever clearer: it is one that many have taken and made their own, while staying rooted in the fundamental principles (Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Anticipatory and Positive), which have been complemented by emergent principles (i.e. Wholeness, Narrative, Enactment, etc.) It is exciting to reflect on the myriad ways our AI models and methods have evolved over the years. Originally, there were 4Ds (Dream, Design, Discover, Deliver) as a framework for applying AI, which then became 5Ds with the addition of Define at the outset of a process. Others introduced the 4Is into our shared vocabularies (Initiate, Inquiry, Imagine,

Innovate). We have seen large-scale systems methods, like the AI Summit which has been used in many situations, to the growth of other methods including Appreciative Coaching (which Heike Aiello and Ann Clancy write about in this issue), SOAR, and even appreciative conversations that bring AI to life at the level of the individual. This shows the flexibility of AI; practitioners have taken its ideas and practices and expanded and enriched them.

Authors of articles published in *AI Practitioner* have been equally creative in combining AI with other disciplines: positive psychology, Generative Journalism and Lean, for example. New Ds were added: the work of those involved in improving dementia care in Canada added "Dawn" as one of their principles, and the article in the current issue by Uma Arora explores "Deepen: A New 'D' for a More Generative Appreciative Inquiry", starting on page 73. As she says, from the beginning, the principles of AI were not written in stone. Other new principles have been added, such as Authenticity in the article by Neena Verma in the September 2020 issue and new metaphors like AI as a personal operating system (aiOS). If one sign of a healthy system is that it is both flexible and grounded enough to be able to absorb and thrive in times of change, then Appreciative Inquiry is indeed in a healthy state.

Cabells and EBSCO

Anne Radford first arranged *AIP*'s membership in EBSCO, a listing service used by academics and institutions to find and download relevant articles, to ensure that it would be more visible in those communities. That membership was continued by Wick van der Vaart when he took over as the publisher of *AIP*, and again by the current co-publishers, Kessels & Smit and the Cooperrider Center. The data shows that in one year, 2019–20, nearly 8,000 articles and/or issues were downloaded at least once, some more than that.

The institutions and countries represented in EBSCO's figures show how much Appreciative Inquiry has grown as field. As you might expect, there are many from primarily English-speaking countries, including the USA, Canada, Britain, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. But the list of countries is so much greater than we had imagined: Korea, Turkey, Romania, Poland, Finland, France, Israel, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain, India, Italy. And the topics that interested the practitioners, researchers, academics, consultants – and the many people who combine two or more of those roles – was equally varied: mentorship, positive adaptive leadership, AI in military and prison settings, strategic AI interventions, children making their own plays, stewarding sustainability, AIM2Flourish, the value of meditation and mindfulness. The range of topics

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How we got here

David Cooperrider became the caring steward of the *AI Practitioner* after Wick's illness and death in 2017. Over many conversations, it became clear that a listing in Cabells, the foremost curated database of verified and reputable academic journals, would help raise the visibility and credibility of *AI Practitioner* in the academic community, a credibility that was necessary if *AIP* was to continue to evolve.

When, in 2019, Kessels & Smit, The Learning Company joined The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry as co-publisher supporting the journal, they agreed that it was important to continue the journey. This involved organising so much of what had "just grown" with *AI Practitioner*, especially guidelines for editors and contributors, deciding what peer reviewing meant for *AIP*, what our publishing ethics could and should be. What kind of journal did *AI Practitioner* want to be, and how could it best serve the AI community? All of this needed to be transparent, and to be on the *AI Practitioner* website. Cabells followed the journal for a year before making the decision, in January 2021, to accept *AI Practitioner* to be listed in Cabells Journalytics, which means that we have been included in the database of journals that aim to raise the quality of scholarly discussion around the world. This will raise the profile and credibility of the journal even further.

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Where do we go from here?

The subject of the February 2016 issue of *AIP*, edited by Wick van der Vaart and Robbert Masselink, was reflected in its title: *How has Appreciative Inquiry Lived Up To Its Promises?* Wick's article asked 'What Will the Future of Appreciative Inquiry Look Like?' What, indeed?

The goal of *AI Practitioner* has always been and will continue to be to support and reflect the diversity of voices in the AI community: thought-leaders, experienced authors, young authors, new authors and students, those whose first language is not English and, increasingly, those who want and need to have AI resources in their own language, as well as those who are more comfortable in the new range of media that did not exist when *AI Practitioner* began.

We have already published articles and issues in French, Spanish and Dutch and are planning to actively seek more opportunities to include articles and podcasts

in languages other than English, which has predominated so far. And the November 2018 issue on Accelerating Positive Education Around the World and the September 2020 issue on Generative Journalism were both based on podcasts, an area that we plan to continue to expand in future issues. *AI Practitioner* has also teamed with The Cooperrider Center to offer quarterly webinars on the topics of *AIP* issues with the co-editors and, most recently, with the authors – which was stimulating and energizing for everyone involved.

In this issue

A year ago, the co-publishers experimented with a new approach: what if, instead of setting a topic for an issue we just asked contributors to write about whatever was currently pressing for them, what interested them the most right now? We had a good response, so we decided to do so again. This year we had even more responses from those who've written for *AIP* before, and from quite a few who haven't. The range in includes an article on the evolution of Appreciative Coaching, a poem, an article on how untranslatable words can provide thoughtful encounters for practitioners, what appreciative AI online teaching looks like, how AI has been used to support small businesses in Vermont in the US during the Covid-19 pandemic, how AI can be combined with action learning, using AI in the prison system for whole-system communication…the list is as creative as our contributors. We hope that you appreciate the diversity of the contributions and hope to be able to welcome even more of our readers as our contributors in future as we continue to expand and evolve the theory and practice of AI together.

Luc Verheijen, Lindsey Godwin, Saskia Tjepkema & Shelagh Aitken
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