I am a big fan of the Roman god Janus. While not as well-known as some of his counterparts such as Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, and Aphrodite, the functions of this god of transitions pertain to journeys and exchanges. Janus encourages us to look backward, to draw on the lessons learned to look forward, and to move forward in effective and meaningful ways. Additionally, where most Roman gods are mirrored in the Greek gods, and vice versa, only the Romans had a Janus. Janus is unique!

I draw on these images as the International Journal of Qualitative Methods (IJQM) makes a leadership transition. It is with great excitement and trepidation that I take over the reigns of IJQM from Alex Clark as editor in chief. Alex’s astute stewardship during the past 2 years has, among other things, allowed the journal to make a highly successful transition to SAGE Publishing. This transition has been characterized by the continued publication of quality articles that reflect insights, innovations, and advances in methods and study designs using qualitative or mixed methods research. Indeed, this continued tradition is reflected in the journal’s significantly increased impact factor within the first few months of its move (Clark & Sousa, 2015). Importantly, the journal’s transition was driven by the continued intent to share “innovations, insights, and advances in qualitative research methodology . . . with the global community . . . across disciplines” (Clark & Sousa, 2015, p. 1).

Taking Stock
As the complexity of both understanding and responding effectively to psychosocial, economic, and health issues globally becomes increasingly apparent (see, e.g., American Psychological Association [APA], 2002, 2012; Pawson, 2006), the role of qualitative research is gaining importance. This pertains to both the use of qualitative methods on their own and in mixed methods studies. Similarly, this increased uptake of qualitative methods draws on both conventional qualitative approaches (such as standard semistructured individual interviews) and the use of more creative and technologically driven approaches (e.g., participatory video and cellphilms; see, e.g., http://www.networks4change.ca/). Additionally, we find ourselves in an era when “applied qualitative research is being carried out not only by academics but also more by practitioners and clinicians too” (Clark & Sousa, 2015, p. 1), and where results are used to inform critical areas of policy and practice (Nutley, Walter, & Davis, 2007). The need for spaces where the exchange of ideas and sharing of how-to knowledge can occur in effective and meaningful ways is increasingly evident. While several sharing and exchange options do exist, both in terms of conferences and publications, IJQM provides some unique opportunities in this regard. IJQM stands to offer more than a space to simply publish on ideas. Rather it has the capacity to become an educational resource and a powerful tool kit for all qualitative researchers.

Looking Back
From its inception in 2002, IJQM sought to reach the broadest of audiences in terms of both disciplines and geographical location. This was achieved through the use of an open-access forum that ensured free access by anyone to high-quality content. This is vital if the journal is to be a supportive forum for especially researchers and practitioners working in fiscally resource strained contexts. And, as the use of qualitative methods increases globally, across disciplines and beyond academia, ease of access to knowledge together with opportunities for critical reflection on personal research experiences is important to supporting this prolific uptake of qualitative approaches. It is equally important to supporting the continued development of the field.

The benefit of being an open-access journal is amplified by the fact that IJQM is available solely online; no print version exists. The implication is that IJQM is “one of the first social science journals to fully and readily embrace methods that use photography, video, and sound” (Clark & Sousa, 2015, p. 2). This benefit is extended by the successful transition of the journal to the SAGE platform and all the additional resources the SAGE team provides. As highlighted by Clark and Sousa (2015) during the journal’s transition, contemporary qualitative research is characterized by exciting possibilities: “Innovative technology raises basic questions about what constitutes...
 qualitative data…. Developments in knowledge translation and social media provide new possibilities for qualitative research to change the world” (p. 1). The format of IJQM combined with resources of the SAGE team means that the journal has the capacity to be at the forefront of knowledge exchange as it pertains to advances in qualitative research methods. These technical features, combined with the high-quality publications, mean that IJQM is already one of the key go-to journals for some of the most readable and engaging articles in our field (see, e.g., Clark & Sousa, 2017).

Looking Forward

I am fortunate to assume the editor in chief role at the point at which the editorial team and I can direct increasing amounts of attention to capitalizing on the sound platform established by Alex Clark and Bailey Sousa. Together with an excellent team of coeditors (Lisa Given, Paul Galdas, Karis Kin Fong Cheng, and Brigitte Smit), we are able find innovative, creative, and even fun ways of furthering the journal’s aim of being influential and of supporting those working in the field of qualitative research. These developments will no doubt continue to be inspired in part by Alex Clark, who will remain on our team as corresponding editor, ensuring that we can continue to draw on his experience and creativity. Similarly, this work will continue to be supported by SAGE, Bailey Sousa, and the phenomenal team at the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM).

The Journey

As our journey continues, we have some exciting additions related to expanding the journal’s capacity for knowledge exchange planned. These additions are largely inspired by the plethora of advances in using technology in innovative ways in both research and knowledge translation, the developments in and increased use of mixed methods as well as social media, and the growing emphasis on effective knowledge translation and knowledge uptake (see, e.g., Mitchell, 2017). In addition to encouraging authors to make greater use of the web-based nature of the journal to include sound, video, and so forth, in submissions, we will be expanding the ways in which articles and their content can be promoted.

Exchanges

To promote new publications, we will be asking authors to provide “tweetable tweets” when manuscripts are accepted for publication. Authors know their work best and are able to provide us with strong publicity points on their manuscript. These points can then be tweeted out by our IJQM team.

Additionally, we plan to ask reviewers to nominate journal articles for other types of promotion. First, authors of articles that present especially unique or interesting perspectives on a qualitative approach will be invited to attach a brief synopsis video of their article. In additional to talking about the content of their manuscript, authors can bring in additional sound and visual resources to elaborate on particular points that may not be as easy to convey with only written text.

Similarly, if the discussion of a method is based on a study where the method has resulted in especially interesting findings, authors may be invited to share links to web-based knowledge translation and/or mobilization resources (such as videos, posters, or policy briefs; see, e.g., Reich et al., 2017). These resources would reflect the findings of the studies discussed in their manuscripts. In this way, authors are able to share not only their knowledge of a qualitative or mixed method approach but also contribute to the demonstration of various knowledge mobilization strategies and the sharing of their research findings.

Alternatively, where an article makes a significant knowledge contribution to a particular research method, it can be nominated by reviewers or members of the editorial team as a “state of the method” article. Connected to these state of the method articles, we will be working with IJQM to invite the authors of these articles to present on their publication as part of the IJQM Master Class Webinar Series (https://www.ualberta.ca/international-institute-for-qualitative-methodology/webinars/master-class-webinar) or the Mixed Methods Webinar Series (https://www.ualberta.ca/international-institute-for-qualitative-methodology/webinars/mixed-methods-webinar).

Through these various options, we hope to expand the ways in which journal articles can provide to readers opportunities for learning; where various modes of communication can be brought together to bring the written word to life, expanding, understanding, and increasing knowledge uptake. At the same time, we expect that these expanded communication opportunities facilitate increased opportunity for bidirectional communication and debate, where consumers of articles increase their engagement with authors.

As those of us who currently hold the responsibility of furthering the journal’s success continue on our journey, it seems wise to retain Clark and Sousa’s (2015) goal for IJQM to remain “firmly fixed on being a vital, collaborative and transformative hub for all those who seek to use and advance qualitative inquiry for a better world” (p. 1). These aspirations, combined with its online only publication format, stands to make IJQM, like Janus, unique!

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