The theme of this issue is clear from the title: digital technologies in career education and guidance. From a number of perspectives, the issue provides an overview of the current use of digital technologies in the field. As individuals we engage with such technologies (and the plural - technologies - is the better word) to varying degrees in our personal lives, but in our professional roles we need to be informed of developments and their impact on career education and guidance practice. Many embrace the technological phenomenon, others may wish to keep it at a distance – the latter position is, increasingly, untenable. The internet now provides a significant context within which people explore and develop their career thinking and development. Examples of how digital technologies can shape that context are discussed in what follows.

The leading article is by Tristram Hooley. Tristram was asked to provide a summary of the current state of development: a Sisyphean task! However, beyond a mere description of the inter-relationship between the internet and career development, he discusses the ‘conceptual architecture’ that underpins the expansion of the internet and highlights the importance of digital career literacy. Bill Law then offers an evaluation of what works well in terms of online careers work, alongside a critique of the emerging issues. His conclusion demonstrates the need for what he terms ‘grasp, reach and embodiment’ - in effect a repositioning of careers work.

Tracey Innes is a senior practitioner working in the university sector. She writes about a project designed to consider how career learning theory can underpin the design and evaluation of ICT-based careers intervention. From her analysis, Tracey proposes a framework that can be used to both design and evaluate the effective use of such services. Elle Dyson works in a Youth Employability Service which has adopted a broad approach to working with young people; incorporating both online and offline services. Her article celebrates the success of using a blended approach; seen as vital for the engagement of young people and the future of careers work.

Next, Anne Chant discusses the changes in the way that career professionals access their own continuing professional development. She offers an evaluation of e-learning and blended learning experiences. Anne extends her argument to explore the parallels between the learning experiences of these adult learners and those of young people. Whilst highlighting the benefits, she also points to the limitations where these may reduce the engagement of learners - if there is a sole reliance on the use of digital technologies. Debra Longridge and Tristram Hooley also write about the effectiveness of blended learning, by analysing the experience of running a ‘social media internship programme’ at their university – an intervention designed to develop students’ digital career literacy. They suggest that while we often assume good ICT skills are evident, not all young people are able to identify how to apply these skills in the context of the development of their own careers.

The penultimate article by Andrew Manson, explores the role that online Labour Market Experience plays in challenging stereotypes in the construction of personal narrative for students in years seven and eight (ages 11-13). Andrew is a software developer who is concerned to broaden the focus of young people’s views regarding their own potential, beyond the often narrow emphasis of the employability agenda. Through the use of case studies in the online video player ‘Talking Jobs’, he provides an interactive challenge to promote creative thinking and, potentially, social mobility. Finally, David Dickinson and Leigh Henderson discuss internet navigation and their thoughts regarding an application that can support sense-making in the career decision process. They explain ‘intermediated facilitation by the careers adviser’, as one of a series of professionals who can support the client’s continuous ‘Orientation, Navigation and Engagement’ process.

There seems to be a general consensus within all the articles that engagement with digital technologies for careers work is not only inescapable, but also highly beneficial: alongside a clear recognition that a blended use with face-to-face work is essential. With the rapid growth of such technologies it is vital the field keeps up to date – this issue provides an interesting insight into current developments.

Hazel Reid, Co-editor