At a time when much is written in both the popular press and academic literature about the very nature and purpose of higher education (often in response to concerns about deficits in criticality and higher thinking from undergraduates), this publication could not be more appositely timed. As university teachers, it also highlights the question that we’ve been asking ourselves since time immemorial: ‘Why don’t they get it?’ Perhaps reading this will put us all in a better place to address the question, and to come at this age old problem from a different, and more enlightened space.

**Materialities, Textures and Pedagogies**  
Tara Fenwick and Paolo Landri (Eds.)  
Routledge (2014)  
Review by Gill Clifton

*Materialities, Textures and Pedagogies* is an edited collection of seven articles originally published in *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* (vol 20 issue 1, Mar 2012). Contributors are drawn from a range of International and European institutions that span a variety of faculties including Education, Sociology, Education Sciences and Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research. This broad base means the authors cover a range of contexts which include curriculum and practice in relation to schools and post-compulsory education, as well as learning in the context of the workplace and the community. However, the dynamic of the perspectives is brought together by the authors’ central aim, which is to challenge perceptions of education that only take account of the human subject. Promoted as joining ‘a developing tradition of “practice based” conceptions of learning but with a special interest in foregrounding the materiality of educational processes’, the authors argue that materials (described as texts and technologies, tools and natural forces and the concept of embodiment) are in fact central to understanding how learning and knowing can be seen as a collective activity. Such a sociomaterial analysis, it is argued, proposes a reconceptualisation of what is understood to be pedagogy and of where and how pedagogical processes occur, including the effects they can have on culture and society.

In this sense, the authors position pedagogy within the context of Action Network Theory (ANT) and the broader concept of Science and Technology Studies (STS). Briefly, ANT sees understanding (and thus methods of analysis) as a web of interconnected relationships located within material and semiotic (signs and symbols) domains. In foregrounding ANT, the authors set out to ‘expand and push forward ANT or STS conceptions of pedagogical enactments’ and they do this through both theoretical and empirically-evidenced studies.

As the name implies, ANT, albeit a theory, is actually concerned with exploring the relational ties that link a network together, rather than seeking to discover ‘how’ or ‘why’ the network exists. In this sense, this collection assembles examples of what could be perceived to be different ‘networks’, for example: the notion of a standardisation network in relation to professional standards in education, a science classroom, a professional work environment, work-related online communities, and women in voluntary community organisations. The authors interrogate the materials and semiotic connections within the different settings in the context of various case
studies. The final chapter is a theoretical discussion that argues for the materiality of the concept of critique. It is suggested that ‘critique’ is not simply ‘a form of theorising’ but is ‘something present within practices’ and specifically has transformative potential.

It could be argued that edited collections give the reader more for their money in that the often found diversity of the articles brings together broader, wider insights into a specific topic or theme. Conversely it could be said that if seeking a specific context then actually it would be better to go straight to the relevant article. However, given the topic and central aim of this collection, I would suggest that anyone interested in exploring knowledge and learning beyond the traditional models and discourses that underpin educational research and, similarly, anyone new as I am to ANT, would find this an interesting read. There is, on occasions, an assumption that meaning and context of some of the language and terms used is implicit, and I did find myself at times challenged in recontextualising my understanding in order to grapple with the authors’ intended meaning. Nevertheless, it has spurred an interest in wanting to discover more, given that these articles were published in 2012 and such theorising has no doubt moved on still further. It does not answer the question of the reconceptualisation of pedagogy but it does position sociomaterialisation in a range of different cultural and societal contexts, which has significance when reflecting on educational enquiry.

Chasing Literacy: Reading and Writing in an Age of Acceleration
Daniel Keller
University Press of Colorado (2014)
Review by Elizabeth Chapman Hoult

The process of reading Chasing Literacy: Reading and Writing in an Age of Acceleration was much like most of my other reading experiences these days. I read it over a week or so, sometimes on trains, sometimes at home, once in my office at work and sometimes in cafes. What linked all of these locations together was the fact that at no point did I ever just read the book. On nearly every occasion I had my iPhone switched on, my work emails close to hand, and my personal emails readily accessible. Reading for many of us now is a fragmented experience. A few moments of deep thought about what Daniel Keller means by his insight that participation in social media for many people is an attention-seeking practice – ‘a rhetoric aimed at fading’ (p. 91) – is broken by a text message flashing on my iPhone reminding me to pack a hat in my daughter’s school bag because it’s going to be a hot day. A few more moments thinking about his convincing argument that ‘speed has become a defining feature of contemporary literacy’ (p.69) are terminated by my memory that I must check, and then respond to, an email from an ethics board by the end of the day. Accompanying this scattered experience of taking in words from different sources at the same time is an underlying feeling of underperformance. A guilty sense that in some other place there are other people who still do ‘proper’ reading – of meditating on real books in quiet concentration for long periods of time and that what I’m doing, surrounded by my laptop, my iPhone and my tablet, is a shabby version of that. At some point, I tell