



## June 2007 e-Newsletter – 4/07

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### EDITORIAL

This month's edition sidesteps all mention of the Australian Federal Budget – I figure you've read all about it. If you want to read more, try these links. For all things in Julie Bishop's bailiwick: <http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/bishop/budget07/default.htm> For all things in Andrew Robb's Bailiwick: <http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/robb/budget07/default.htm>

I've also skipped over the formal start up of Universities Australia. UA's website is pretty much the AVCC's website rebadged, which is fair enough. The address, for future reference is: <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/>

I gave the AAIR journal the wrong name in the last edition. I rendered it the *Journal of Institutional Research in Australasia*. That's its old moniker. It was changed a while back to the *Journal of Institutional Research*. Apologies.

As always, ideas and content for the newsletter are welcome, as is your feedback. Subject to space and relevance to members, the newsletter can run notices about job vacancies and upcoming events.

### IT IS WRITTEN

#### *Journal of Learning Design*

This is a good site to check every now and again if your bent is pedagogical and higher educational. The *Journal of Learning Design* started life in 2005. It publishes scholarly work in relation to the way in which student learning might be enhanced through approaches to the design of learner experience.

All articles are available online right here: <http://www.jld.qut.edu.au> From the tables of contents of various numbers, some titles and authors to whet your whistle:

- **Using conceptual mapping as a tool in the process of engineering education program design** – Alistair Inglis, Victoria University, Australia; and Alan Bradley, RMIT University, Australia
- **Lessons Learned From Three Projects To Design Learning Environments That Support 'Generic' Skill Development** – Barbara de la Harpe, RMIT University, Australia; Alex Radloff, Central Qld University, Australia
- **On Using Popular Culture to Enhance Learning for Engineering Undergraduates** – Peter O'Shea, Queensland University of Technology, Australia
- **Designing for reflective practice in legal education** – Judith McNamara and Rachael Field, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

#### **AAIR Committee members**

**President:** Ivan Skaines, University of Western Sydney  
**Immediate Past President:** Wendy Marchment, Griffith University  
**Vice President:** Josephine Palermo, Deakin University  
**Hon Secretary:** Dean Ward, Edith Cowan University  
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Dave Marr, Australian National University  
Andrea Matulick, University of South Australia  
Rob Sheehan, Sharp Words Editing & Writing Services (Victoria)

**AAIR website:** <http://www.aair.org.au/>

# AAIR 2007 Forum

## CHANGE, EVIDENCE & IMPLEMENTATION: IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

**When: 28-30 November**

**Where: Crown Plaza, Darling Harbour, Sydney**

**Program details and registration information:**

<http://www.aair.org.au/Forum2007/Index.html>

### **Latest news**

AAIR President, Ivan Skaines, has news about both the 2006 and 2007 Forums.

The 2007 AAIR Sydney Forum is shaping up well. We received abstracts for 50 papers including proposals from Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, Malaysia, Thailand, India and the USA. The submissions are fairly evenly distributed across the four Forum themes. It's interesting that we have several papers on student retention and/or first year experience. There is a good spread of papers from academics and practitioners.

At this stage several Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and Workshops are planned for Wednesday, 28 November. SIG topics will include data warehousing and surveys. There will be workshops on KPIs for community engagement, strategy development, AUQA round 2 audits, and developing an Australian Graduate Survey database.

In May AAIR received approximately \$19,000 from Southern Cross University (via their company Norsesearch), this being the final amount from the 2006 AAIR Forum held in Coffs Harbour last November. I would like to thank Don Johnston and his colleagues from Southern Cross for all their hard work in staging a very successful, friendly and enjoyable Forum.

**The 2007 AAIR Forum hosted by the University of Western Sydney.**

**The 2007 Forum is sponsored by Graduate Careers Australia**

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### **Staff resources allocated to the DEST Student Collection**

AAIR conducted a survey on the level of resources committed by universities to service the maw of the DEST Student Collection.

Thanks to all those who participated.

A summary of survey results is available on AAIR's web site:

<http://www.aair.org.au/Pages/DestStats.html>

(The survey, and results, were put together by Dean Ward. Dean is the Secretary of AAIR. He also gets around as the Manager – Strategic Information Services at Edith Cowan University).

## PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

### **YOU CAN'T GO TO THIS ...**

... because you'll be in Sydney at the AAIR Annual Forum. But you may know someone else who could go along and take notes for you. It's the eighth biennial national conference of the Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL), 29 - 30 November 2007.

Conference themes include: to exchange ideas, research and experiences as Academic Language and Learning (ALL) practitioners; to contribute to the growth of a network of national and international ALL advisers/lecturers. Latrobe is hosting this one:

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/aall2007/>

### **AND YOU CAN'T GO TO THIS EITHER ...**

... because once again, you'll be at the AAIR Forum. Partnership for World Graduates, 28 - 30 November 2007. RMIT is hosting the inaugural Partnerships for World Graduates Conference as part of RMIT University's 120-year anniversary celebrations. This conference aims to bring together academia, industry and community to examine how the demands of this globalising society can be met preparing world graduates for the future. More: <http://www.rmit.edu.au/aic2007>

### **BUT YOU CAN SIGN UP FOR THE WRITING IN HE CONFERENCE 2008**

This is one of my pet topics so I'm struggling to keep the hobbyhorse in the stable. Suffice to say that good writing is hard to do, and academics need to do a lot of good writing. I sometimes observe that Newton didn't get it quite right. Breathtaking, I know. He famously said: If I have seen further it is by standing on ye shoulders of Giants. What he should have said is this: If I have seen further it is by standing on ye shoulders of Giants who wrote things down. So it's good to see a conference about writing in higher education. Well done, those people.

Pity it's in Scotland. There's time to save the fare I guess – it's on at the end of June next year:

<http://www.writenow.ac.uk/wdhe/>

## HAS THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION ALREADY HAPPENED?

### **Who nobbled the university?**

Arran Gare of Swinburne Uni argues academics have been silenced and universities neutered over recent years, with dire consequences for democracy in Oz. His paper, 'The neo-liberal assault on Australian universities and the future of democracy', is at Citizen Online:

<http://www.citizenonline.org/demedau2vint.pdf>

Simon Marginson of Melbourne Uni (in a paper titled: 'Are neo-liberal reforms friendly to academic freedom and creativity?') concludes: 'Academic life is not eliminated by neo-liberalism. It is tamed and more closely harnessed to economic interest and state control and hence to a particular kind of social order. Its larger imaginative horizons are folded into limited reflexivities. In social disciplines the capacity for critically-inspired invention is weakened. In understanding the neo-liberal project and its consequences, we might begin to work our way out of the trap.' The paper is here: [http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/people/staff\\_page\\_s/Marginson/Seminar280507-Marginson.pdf](http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/people/staff_page_s/Marginson/Seminar280507-Marginson.pdf)

### **Who nobbled VET?**

In this paper presented at the 2006 AARE conference, Ian Cornford of UTS argues ideology has driven policy and practice shifts in VET, and that those shifts have failed miserably. Cornford suggests small business has been left out of the consultation loop, and a small number of big businesses have held too much sway. The Queensland Skills Plan is a good start at doing the right policy work and encouraging the right practice. The paper is here:

<http://www.aare.edu.au/06pap/cor06432.pdf>

### **The Enlightenment strikes back**

Things rocket onto the net and then sputter out. Can The Education Hub keep its enlightenment flame alive. It's hard not to like its intentions: '... we want to make the case for knowledge as an end in itself, for the intellectual emancipation of the child through the transmission of knowledge, and for teacher autonomy and academic freedom'. Have a look:

<http://www.manifestoclub.com/hubs/education>

## **THE HE BOOM IN CHINA**

We read endlessly about China's booming economy, but that's not the only booming going on in China. Higher education is booming, too.

Here's an eclectic overview – more journalism than scholarly material.

### **Seminar on Chinese HE**

Professor Wang of Zhejiang University gave a seminar on April 30 this year entitled China's Higher Education in Transition: Analysis of Recent Dramatic Enrolment Expansion. It was held at Bristol University Institute of Advanced Studies. You can find your way to the presentation from here: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/ias/events/2007/100>

### **China doubles its 2008 financial aid fund for students**

The Chinese government has announced that with the doubling of its financial aid fund for students, millions more Chinese university and vocational students from low-income families will be entitled to some financial assistance.

We are talking serious money here. From September 2008, central and provincial governments will spend about US\$3.95 billion on student aid. More here: [http://english.gov.cn/2007-05/21/content\\_621649.htm](http://english.gov.cn/2007-05/21/content_621649.htm)

### **List of Chinese HE institutions**

I thought it was instructive just to scroll through list of Chinese HE institutions. If size means anything, this means a lot: <http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/list.htm>

### **Building the Chinese academy**

The New York Times International Edition carried an article a few years back that is still worth reading now – 'China Luring Scholars to Make Universities Great': <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/28/international/asia/28universities.html?ex=1288155600&en=39f9797569997426&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

## **Private and public HE**

If you've got the cash, you can start your own university. Geely did: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0729/p01s01-woap.html>

The Beijing Geely University website, text heavy and a bit opaque, is here:

### **Boom and bust**

But growth doesn't come without costs: [http://en.ce.cn/National/Education/200703/13/t20070313\\_10674738.shtml](http://en.ce.cn/National/Education/200703/13/t20070313_10674738.shtml)

### **Yet more Chinese HE links**

The Chinese Education and Resource Network has a host of news about all aspects of education in China. This is the link to the higher education page: [http://www.edu.cn/highedu\\_1413/index.shtml](http://www.edu.cn/highedu_1413/index.shtml)

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## **YOUTHFUL ENTHUSIASMS**

### **Optimism in spades**

That brilliant outfit – the Dusseldorp Skills Forum – commissioned Newspoll to ask young Australians what they reckoned about life, work and study. How's it going? Sick as. 95% are satisfied with their life overall, 88% are confident that everything will "work out okay" for them in their working life in the years ahead, 86% are confident they will be financially secure and a large majority say their experience of being a student so far has either met (40%) or exceeded (43%) their expectations. Find out what this large part of the VET/HE student population is thinking in these 50 or so fascinating pages – *What Young People are Thinking* is here: <http://www.dsf.org.au/papers/195.htm>

### **The winding way**

ACER and The Smith Family have also been checking in on how young Australians construct the story that is their life, now and into the future. *Australian young people: their stories, their families and post-school plans*, by Jennifer Bryce, Michelle Anderson, Tracey Frigo, and Phillip McKenzie, asked some high performing secondary school kids about home, school, study, career, and just

growing up, and how it all fits together. These are great stories – nothing out of the ordinary. Just great. There's a cautionary note for post-secondary providers, captured in the Exec Summary: Many young people in this study had no familiarity with university environments. Their backgrounds, social environments, and networks would not have contributed to their understanding of tertiary institutions. The array of tertiary courses was confusing (and sometimes lacked meaning) and most of these young people had non-linear pathways – a kind of trial and error process – before discovering the courses they were pursuing at the time of interview for this study.

[http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.shtml?file\\_name\\_num=150867](http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.shtml?file_name_num=150867)

### Who's for teaching?

We need teachers. We need good teachers. We need young teachers. We need to know what influences young people to take on the noble art. In the current edition of *Issues in Educational Research*, Anthony Stokes of ACU has a paper titled 'Factors influencing the decisions of university students to become high school teachers'. Money makes a difference. Respect makes a difference. And one of the biggest differences is successful practicums.

The paper is available online here:

<http://www.iier.org.au/iier17/stokes.html>

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## NEWSLETTER NOTES

### 1. There's no FERL like an old FERL

Still digital, and still in the Old Dart, there's a website called Further Education Resources for Learning. Not so old – set up in 1988. FERL is managed by the UK Quality Improvement Agency. FERL is a web-based information service with scads of material on learning and teaching (and management of same). Tis here:

<http://ferl.qia.org.uk/index.cfm>

### 2. The space-cost continuum

If university space is your thing, take a trip to the University of Bristol's Space and Property Management arm. How the university's space is carved up between faculties and functions, how to

count the costs and the income – it's all lovingly described right here:

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/property/spacecost/fiscost0607.html>

### 3. Peas in a pod

Enough already of the cheesy, clichéd headings! An interesting resource from the University of Wisconsin, which I found through FERL. A site dedicated to the effective use of podcasting in educational settings:

<http://engage.doit.wisc.edu/podcasting/index.html>

### 4. Podcasting to enhance teaching and learning

I haven't listened to this yet so sight unseen, or hearing unheard, the website spruiks this podcast as follows: While podcasts are generally used to distribute information and entertainment, more and more academic institutions are using them to enhance courses. Samantha Earp, Director of Foreign Language Technology Services at Duke University, discusses how podcasts can be used as a teaching tool. Listen up:

<http://pa.gigavox.com/shows/detail1788.html> (It's worth having a look around the links on this webpage – podcasting is moving into HE fast).

### 5. Educause pod page

And on podding in Australian higher education, the Educause Learning Initiative has put some 'how to use podcasting' material on the web. (Educause, as you may know, promotes the clever use of IT in higher education). Here 'tis:

[http://www.educause.edu/content.asp?PAGE\\_ID=12482&bhcp=1](http://www.educause.edu/content.asp?PAGE_ID=12482&bhcp=1)

### 6. e-learning rife in VET!

You may know of the exercise started in 2005 by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework. The e-learning Benchmarking Project measures the uptake of e-learning in the VET sector. (The lowdown is here: <http://e-learningindicators.flexiblelearning.net.au/>). The final report of the '06 surveys is online, and the bottom line is that 17% of VET activity in '06 involved e-learning, up from a tiny 8% or less in '05. The report holds lots of interest in its 30 or so pages. This, from the summary, is especially good news: 'As a measure of client satisfaction, 65% of VTE students said that they would recommend e-learning to their peers, with less than 10% saying

that they would not do this'. But it's patchy, all the same – TAFEs are way out in front of small VET providers. And trade teachers are warier than others about applying of e-learning to their patches. The report is here: [http://e-learningindicators.flexiblelearning.net.au/pdf/benchmarking\\_report2006.pdf](http://e-learningindicators.flexiblelearning.net.au/pdf/benchmarking_report2006.pdf)

## 7. Anarchy rules!

How did this happen? Students grabbing a corner of a university website and setting up a cybersquat! Or maybe they were invited. Surely not. No. Couldn't be.

First I suggest you go to the home page of the Auckland University of Technology website: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/> It's like, um, will it's like the home page of a university website, isn't it?

Okay, now click on the tab to the right labelled My AUT. If you can't find the tab, here's the url: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/myaut/>

Way cool, huh?

## 8. Getting engaged

Most of you will know about AUCEA (Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance). Over 30 Australian unis are members, and the mission is to support engagement on all fronts between universities and the communities they serve. The website has a good list of discussion and conference papers and you can sign up for the slightly irregular newsletter. This is it: <http://www.aucea.net.au/>

## 9. Getting it – together

This is nuts and bolts community engagement. The Catalyst-Clemente program – a joint undertaking by Mission Australia and ACU – is making university a reality for people who are picking up lots of pieces following a personal crash of one kind or another. It's a raging success. Sometimes I get wrapped up in stats and metrics, dollars and systems, models and strategies. After I read this brochure I felt like I needed a sign up over my computer, reminder that says: It's the personal learning, stupid. Read every word: <http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/cm/resources/documents/Catalyst%20snapshot.pdf>

## 10. Don't forget the rest

Always good to be reminded that a university education is a scarce commodity for most of the 6 or 7 billion of us. The battle is to get a primary schooling for some. The World Economic Forum announced in early May establishment of Partnerships for Education (PfE). There's a bit of acronymic overload here and there. (I kid you not, GEI, PfE, UNESCO, MSPEs and MDGs all get a run in two neighbouring sentences, but hang in there). Despite its insider language, it has a simple and noble aim: it's a global movement seeking to provide quality basic education for everyone. More right here: <http://url.edna.edu.au/Cnwr>

## 11. The Joint Information Systems Committee

Okay – it sounds like an eye-roller. One of those committees you try to find someone else to sit on – it's the one designing horses that look like camels. Wrong. JISC isn't your ordinary Thursday afternoon sleep-catcher. It tackles the innovative use of ICT in post-secondary environments and integrates delivery of ICT services across providers.

A UK outfit, JISC is funded by a bevy of government and higher education bodies. Chaired by Prof. Sir Ron Cooke (ex Vice Provost, University College London, and ex Vice Chancellor, University of York). It sports people from unis, Microsoft and Blackwell on its board. Put an e- in front of it and JISC is on the job: e-assessment, e-administration, e-research. Wander through JISC's cyberspace: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/>

## 12. An Aussie e-research strategy

Covering a bit of the territory that JISC covers in the UK, the final report is out from DEST's e-Research Co-ordinating Committee. What's proposed is ambitious and exciting. One of the stated outcomes from an Aussie e-research strategy is this: 'Australian researchers will be world leaders in the use of advanced and innovative information and communications technologies, to achieve internationally recognised, high quality research outcomes across Australia's national research priorities'.

When the opportunity comes up to sit on this committee at your university, I'd say yes. It's a steed, not a camel.

The 75 page report is here – hopefully one e-research skill we'll all pick up is the knack of the economical url:

<http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/90E2B0F3-A569-4AF4-A48F-F41EA2579131/16578/eResearchFinalReportPublicVersionforweb.pdf>

### **13. Discipline bias in research performance frameworks?**

A few of us would like to read a thesis by Craig Ashcroft, whose PhD was supervised at Otago University. The title is 'Academics' experiences of Performance-Based Research Funding' – The PBRF is the NA forerunner to Australia's RQF. His abstract reads in part: '... I argue that the PBRF Quality Evaluation framework operates as a form of disciplinary power exercised as part of an international trend of intensifying audit and assessment practices in higher education'.

If you know Craig, tell him we'd like to know more. All we have to go on is the abstract on the Australasian Digital Theses Program website: <http://adt.otago.ac.nz/public/adt-NZDU20070125.162438/>

### **14. TAFE, the Feds and the States**

Minister for Vocational & Further Education, Andrew Robb delivered a speech on 30 May that raises interesting prospects for TAFE – and he isn't waiting until the election. Changes to autonomy for TAFE institutes and a university-like funding model are on the table. The TAFE section of the speech starts about a third of the way through the text: <http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Robb/2007/05/R001300507.asp>

### **15. Learning, Teaching & Leadership**

UWS and ACER, and a bunch of other Australian Universities, are using Carrick Institute Funding to identify distinctive academic leadership capabilities related to quality and change management for learning and teaching in our universities. Due to report this time next year. Project Director is Hamish Coates. A bit more here (and check out ACER's new website while you're at it): [http://www.acer.edu.au/research\\_projects/LeadershipCapabilities.html](http://www.acer.edu.au/research_projects/LeadershipCapabilities.html)

### **16. We're mad as hell, and we're not going to rank it any more**

The ranking universities game gets weirder and weirder. The Washington Post carried a story just a fortnight or so ago titled *Some Colleges Want to Curb Flow of Data to Magazine*. Here's the topic paragraph: 'A group of college presidents, fed up with the annual *U.S. News & World Report* list of top colleges, has begun pressuring colleagues to limit the information they provide to the magazine and eliminate any mention of the list when promoting their schools'. The story is here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/19/AR2007051900665.html?referrer=email>

### **17. Room at the top**

Now that we have mass undergraduate education on the ground, I suppose we'd better start turning our minds to mass postgraduate education. Canada's CD Howe Institute has published a paper titled 'Room at the top: strategies for increasing the number of graduate students in Canada'. It tackles policy matters, financial arrangements, and implications for learning and teaching. Find it here: <http://www.cdhowe.org/display.cfm?page=research-social>

### **18. PC's Almanack and Fisherman's Calendar**

The *Report on Government Services (ROGS)* sounds a bit turgid – thought a change of title might lift it onto your desktop. For some years now the Productivity Commission has produced ROGS, the eminent task of which is to report on the effectiveness and efficiency of government services. The chapter on education (schools and VET only) is a valuable resource for all those headline stats about how much is spent on what and whether it was spent wisely. The education chapters are here: <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/2007/education/>

### **19. Pick me**

For many students, getting a job, or a better job, is the business end of study. Niamh Gallagher and Duncan O'Leary of Demos have been thinking about the recruitment industry – talking to a range of experts about where it's going and why, and how job seekers (be they low skilled or high skilled) and employers get service. (Demos is a think tank with links to the Blair, soon Brown, UK Labour Government (<http://www.demos.co.uk/>). Their

report – *Recruitment 2020: how recruitment is changing and why it matters* – is a good read if your interest is helping students tangle with the recruitment mill as they finish their courses. You can find it here:

<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/recruitment2020>

## **20. HASS on the Hill**

This is innovative lobbying by the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. The idea is to take academic stories directly to MPs, improving academics' lobbying skills on the way to improving MPs' appreciation of the riches that lie in the humanities.

It's on Wednesday 20 June – great program, great idea, and for what it's doing, cheap as chips. All here:

<http://events.chass.org.au/events/E20070619/>

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## **APOLOGY**

Some infelicitous editing in the May edition of the Newsletter led to the removal of the second of two notes about the Spellings Commission. So sack me.

For what it's worth, the note from May (Funny Spellings) is repeated below, followed by its as yet unseen companion.

## **Funny Spellings**

I think the American Enterprise Institute is mostly over the top. Its April Fool's Day seminar - Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education - reviewed the Spellings Commission which turned over the rocks in US Higher Ed. One of the participants said: 'too many intellectually incapable people go to college today, placing a "false premium" on the value of a college degree'. You can get more detail here:

[http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.25826,filter.all/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.25826,filter.all/pub_detail.asp)

## **Good Spellings**

The biggest rock the Spellings Commission turned over was the limited opportunity for US minorities to access HE. This must be fixed, says the Commission report. And Secretary Spellings wholeheartedly agrees. The Commission's report is

titled: *A Test of Leadership – Charting the Future of US Higher Education*. There's lots here about the need for better data and learning amongst other things. There's only about 25 pages of close reading in the 70-odd page publication, but there are references to other documents you might want to chase up. The report was released at the end of 2006:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/final-report.pdf>

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