

AJET and the shifting dynamics of educational technology publishing in 2024

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In this end of year reflection on AJET in 2024, the editorial team consider the achievements of the journal and the changing academic publishing environment in which it operates. We profile two publications that the AJET Lead Editors contributed to this year that address the shifting dynamics of educational technology publishing and what these mean for AJET. These include issues such as the increasing number of journals in the field, the costs associated with academic publishing, engagement in the peer review process, the emergence of generative artificial intelligence, and the ethics and integrity of educational technology research and publication. This is followed by an exploration of the journal's bibliometrics for 2024. We end with a look at the future directions for AJET as we move into our 40th year of publication.

Keywords: bibliometric data, educational technology, academic publishing, tertiary education

Introduction

As we reflect on the past twelve months, 2024 has been a year where the AJET editorial team has had to respond to the ever-changing academic publishing environment. In an increasingly crowded field of educational technology journals, AJET strives to remain a top-quality venue for new research that can inform policy and practice in educational institutions and beyond. In considering this publishing environment the AJET Lead Editors have contributed to two publications that explore some of the key aspects of this environment that impact AJET and its operations. In this editorial we will explore the main outcomes of these works as well as present our annual summary of the bibliometrics of the journal and future directions.

At the annual conference of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) in 2024, the AJET Lead Editor team presented a position paper entitled "Navigating the terrain of academic publishing in educational technology" (Corrin, Han & Huijser, 2024). In this paper we considered the influences that are impacting the current educational technology publishing environment. We identified five key issues and explored each issue with reference to what they mean for a journal like AJET. The first issue is the increasing number of publications in the field where we found a 650% increase in journals in the categories of Education and Education Research according to Clarivate's Journal Citation Reports (JCR) system, while the Scopus Scimago Journal and Country Rank (SJR) database showed that the number of journals in e-learning had more than

doubled between 1999 and 2023. This increase has resulted in greater competition between journals to attract high impact research and well-known researchers.

The second key issue discussed was the cost of academic publishing practices which are most evident through the high article processing charges (APCs) charged by journals owned by large commercial publishers. The average APC for educational technology journals in the top 16 according to Google Scholar was approx. \$5,300 AUD. This is despite the fact that the cost of the labour of authors and peer reviewers is borne by the institutions employing the authors and reviewers. This high cost makes publication in high quality venues very difficult for authors from institutions that cannot afford to pay these costs, making this a significant equity issue. Thankfully, AJET does not have to charge APCs due to the generous support of ASCILITE to cover our copyediting and systems costs and the wonderful voluntary work of our editorial team and peer reviewers. This means that we remain one of only three journals in the top 16 that do not charge an APC.

The difficulty of getting reviewers to engage in the peer review process and the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) are two issues that we also addressed in the 2023 year in reflection editorial for AJET (Corrin et al., 2023). Both these issues continue to occupy a significant position in the ongoing considerations for the AJET editorial team in how we function and the sorts of processes and guidelines we need to establish and adhere to in order to ensure we maintain high review and authorship standards.

The integrity of research, publishing and authorship processes is the fifth issue that we considered in the position paper, and this was also the focus of the other publication that the AJET Lead Editors contributed to in 2024. Led by Associate Professor Simon Knight who is a previous Lead Editor for the Journal of Learning Analytics (JLA), the paper entitled "Emerging technologies and research ethics: Developing editorial policy using a scoping review and reference panel" (Knight et al., 2024) involved authors from the editorial teams of AJET, JLA, and the British Journal of Educational Technology (BJET). There are many different aspects of this issue that was addressed throughout these two papers including the reporting of research ethics, the integrity of the peer review process, unethical authorship practices, predatory journals, and academic integrity issues. These concerning issues exist in an environment where academic publishing has seen all-time high levels of retractions of research articles due to questionable publisher practices (Van Noorden, 2023). The result of these practices is a threat to the quality of published research and the impact measures currently used. Consequently, some are advocating that ways we currently use to measure the impact of research be reviewed due to the current strain on academic publishing (Hanson et al., 2023).

All of these issues are taken extremely seriously by the AJET editorial team and are continually reviewed in the work we do. We feel that academic publishing is currently at a crossroads where important decisions need to be made by the research community to ensure quality and impact for educational technology research outputs into the future.

Bibliometric data for 2024

Research on artificial intelligence (AI) dominated the topics addressed in articles published in AJET in 2024, with 25% of articles making reference to AI in either the keywords or abstract. This included the use of generative AI in artistic drawing classes, AI virtual patients in health education, AI-generated formative assessment, AI-assisted assessment marking, and teachers' perceptions of

generative AI. Other key topics addressed in 2024 include digital fluency, interdisciplinary e-learning, online course quality evaluation, digital storytelling, and belonging in online learning.

The 40 articles published in AJET in 2024 remains lower than recent years (see Table 1) despite the fact that submission numbers have been higher than ever (see Table 3). Unfortunately this continues to be as a result of a large number of submissions falling outside the aims and scope of the journal or not meeting other quality thresholds set for inclusion in the journal. To help authors ensure their work has the best chance to make it through to peer review in AJET, our first editorial of the year was entitled “A step-by-step guide on how NOT to get published in a high impact educational technology journal” (Lodge et al., 2024). In this editorial we set out six key areas that often prevent articles from getting through the AJET editor triaging process including: (1) a lack of alignment with the aims and scope of the journal; (2) a lack of contribution to the educational technology field; (3) the lack of relevance of the outcomes of the research to an international audience; (4) insufficient detail provided about methodology and methods; (5) the use of outdated research methods; and (6) the incorrect reporting of results. In setting out what not to do, it was hoped this might deter authors from going through the submission process if their manuscript was not up to scratch in any of these six areas. These recommendations also formed the basis of a webinar that the AJET Lead Editors presented as part of the *ASCILITE Live!* Webinar series in November (a recording of which can be accessed via the ASCILITE YouTube channel) as well as an interactive session at the 2024 ASCILITE conference.

Table 1
AJET Publication Summary

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Issues published	6	6	6	6
Articles published	67	72	43	40
Editorials published	6	6	6	6

The readership figures for 2024 show a continued increase in access to both abstract and full articles through the AJET website. While the abstract view figures increased by 9% in 2024, access to full articles had a more substantial rise, increasing by 18% over the 2023 figures.

Table 2
Readership interest in AJET

	2022	2023	2024
Access numbers to article landing pages (abstracts)	518,833	530,424	576,407*
Access numbers to full articles	369,418	385,133	453,719*

* These figures are calculated up to 29 December 2024, so do not include the last two days of the year.

In 2024 AJET saw its highest ever number of submissions at 875. The increased submission rate has put some strain on the AJET Lead Editor team to triage these submissions quickly so there have been some delays in triaging throughout 2024, especially as we settled into a new triaging workflow as a

result of the changes to the Lead Editor team. However, we expect that the delays experienced in 2024 will not carry on into 2025. In calibrating our triaging among multiple Lead Editors undertaking this process we have been able to improve the decisions made as to whether manuscripts go through to peer review. This is evident from the lower percentage of manuscripts that are declined through the peer review process. It is hoped that if they trend continues into 2025 that we will be able to restore our normal number of 12 articles per issue going forward.

Table 3
AJET Submission and Review Statistics based on submissions per year

AJET Submissions and Reviews	2022	2023	2024*
Total submissions	618	695	875
Declined at editorial screening (percentage of total submissions triaged to date)	473 (77%)	576 (83%)	703 (87%)
Peer reviewed (percentage of total submissions triaged to date)	145 (23%)	119 (17%)	107 (13%)
Declined at peer review (percentage of peer reviewed)	108 (74%)	82 (69%)	47 (46%)
Accepted (percentage of peer reviewed)	37 (26%)	37 (31%)	22 (21%)
Declined (either at editorial screening or following peer review, percentage of total submissions triaged to date)	581 (94%)	658 (95%)	750 (93%)
Accepted (percentage of total submissions triaged to date)	37 (6%)	37 (5%)	22 (3%)**

* These figures are calculated from 1st December to the 30th November as per our reporting period

** Some articles are still going through the peer review process, which is why the total declined and accepted doesn't equal the total submissions

Previously in our annual bibliometric-focused editorial we presented a table of the top articles by downloads per issue of the current year. In the past the timing of when the issues are released has impacted the opportunity articles have had to be accessed and the sixth issue of the year was not able to be included as it is published along with the editorial. Therefore we have made a change to how we will present data about popular articles going forward. In Table 4 we present the top 3 articles accessed (in terms of both abstract views and downloads) during 2024, over the last 5 years, and since the current AJET system began collecting access data in 2015.

Table 4
Top 3 articles of the last year, the last 5 years, and since 2015

Issue	Article	Authors	Access
During 2024			
2020 Vol 36, No 4	Facilitating student engagement through educational technology in higher education: A systematic review in the field of arts and humanities	Bendenlier, Bond, Buntins, Zawacki-Richter & Kerres	11,452

2020 Vol 36, No 3	University students' digital competence in three areas of the DigCom 2.1 model: A comparative study at three European universities	López-Meneses, Sirignano, Vázquez-Cano & Ramírez-Hurtado	9,518
2022 Vol 38, No 2	The importance of choosing the right keywords for educational technology publications (<i>Editorial</i>)	Corrin, Thompson, Hwang & Lodge	8,990
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The last 5 years			
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2014 Vol 30, No 4	Blended learning in higher education: Three different design approaches	Alammary, Sheard, Carbone	47,827
2019 Vol 35, No 1	Stop! Grammar time: University students' perceptions of the automated feedback program Grammarly	ONEILL & Russell	35,027
2020 Vol 36, No 4	Facilitating student engagement through educational technology in higher education: A systematic review in the field of arts and humanities	Bendenlier, Bond, Buntins, Zawacki-Richter & Kerres	32,602
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Since 2015			
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2014 Vol 30, No 4	Blended learning in higher education: Three different design approaches	Alammary, Sheard, Carbone	54,499
2008 Vol 24, No 1	First year students' experiences with technology: Are they really digital natives?	Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray & Krause	38,091
2019 Vol 35, No 1	Stop! Grammar time: University students' perceptions of the automated feedback program Grammarly	ONEILL & Russell	35,403
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The 2024 special issue on “Advancements in technology-enhanced assessment in tertiary education” brought together work from leading scholars in the field and was guest edited by Daniele Agostini (University of Trento, Italy), Alexandra Lazareva (University of Agder, Norway), and Federica Picasso (University of Trento, Italy). Published in November 2024, it contained 10 articles covering topics such as online examinations, the role of generative AI in assessment, AI-assisted marking, and analytics to support assessment design and delivery. There has been a decision not to publish a special issue of AJET in 2025 while we focus on the 40th anniversary of the journal and to allow our increased pipeline of papers in review to build the number of articles in regular issues to our previous levels.

In 2024 we observed a slight decline in AJET's ranking, although AJET's Q1 status has been maintained across the major journal ranking services. Changes to how JCR counts education and educational research journals this year now compares AJET with a much larger list of journals and we are now 64th out of 760 journals. AJET has maintained a consistent H5 index of 51 but dropped one place to 14th in the Google Scholar educational technology journal rankings. Pleasingly, AJET's Citiscore, a four-year average of citations across all articles in the journal, has increased from 6.9 in 2022 to 7.6 in 2023.

Table 5
AJET Bibliometrics

AJET Bibliometrics		2021	2022	2023*
JCR	JCR Impact Factor	3.73	4.1	3.3
	JCR 5-year Impact Factor	3.865	4.4	3.9
	JCR journal ranking in Education category based on 5-year Impact Factor	58/270 Q1	45/269 Q1	64/760 Q1
Scimago	SJR Impact Factor	1.249	1.104	1.0
	SJR ranking in Education	Q1	Q1	Q1
Google Scholar	H5 index	49	51	51
	H5 ranking within Educational Technology category	13/20	13/20	14/20
Scopus	CiteScore	5.9	6.9	7.6
	Journal ranking in Education	92/1406	95/1469	105/1543
	SNIP	1.948	1.728	1.5

* 2024 bibliometric data will be available in 2025

As mentioned in the introduction to this editorial, the AJET lead editorial team are very aware of the increase in players in the educational technology publishing environment. While we are very pleased to maintain our Q1 rating in both JCR and Scimago, we are conscious that there are several other journals that are increasing in impact which could threaten this rating in the near future. Therefore we are working on strategies to ensure that our articles remain of high quality and are accessible to the right audiences for the work to achieve its highest impact.

The AJET team

2024 was a significant year of change in relation to the AJET Lead Editor team. Associate Professor Kate Thompson ended her term as Lead Editor at the end of 2023, and we therefore welcomed Associate Editors Dr Feifei Han (Australian Catholic University) and Associate Professor Henk Huijser (Queensland University of Technology) to the Lead Editor team. In mid-2024 Associate Professor Jason Lodge ended his term as a Lead Editor of AJET and we welcomed Associate Professor Chris Deneen (University of South Australia), who was also previously an AJET Associate Editor. Associate Professor Linda Corrin was invited by the AJET Management Committee to serve a second term to provide continuity for the Lead Editor team. Throughout the year the AJET team of associate editors, copyeditors, and reviewers have continued to provide quality service in their voluntary capacity to the journal to ensure AJET's success. In particular, we would like to acknowledge our team of Associate Editors:

- Dr Thomas Chiu, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Dr Simon K. S. Cheung, The Open University of Hong Kong
- Associate Professor Thomas Donald Cochrane, The University of Melbourne, Australia
- Associate Professor Chris Deneen, University of South Australia, Australia
- Associate Professor Rachel Fitzgerald, University of Queensland, Australia
- Associate Professor Teresa S. Foulger, Arizona State University, United States
- Associate Professor Chien-Ching Lee, Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore
- Associate Professor Stephen Marshall, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

- Dr Kwong Nui Sim, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand
- Professor Jerry Chih-Yuan Sun, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Taiwan
- Professor Joke Voogt, University of Amsterdam/ Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands

During 2024 we also welcomed several new Associate Editors to the editorial team, including:

- Dr Polly Lai (Southern Cross University)
- Dr Carmen Vallis (University of Sydney)
- Dr Nona Press (Queensland University of Technology, Australia)
- Dr Vickel Narayan (Massey University, New Zealand)
- Dr Abhinava Barthakur (University of South Australia, Australia)
- Dr Kashmira Dave (University of New England, Australia)
- Dr Yi-Shan Tsai (Monash University, Australia)
- Associate Professor Omid Noroozi (Wageningen University and Research, The Netherlands)
- Associate Professor Na Li (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China)

We have continued to be supported by our copyeditor, Antonina Petrolito, who has overseen all AJET articles throughout 2024 and has done so in a swift and thorough manner. As we explored in our 2023 editorial on “The importance of a good review(er) for educational technology research” (Corrin, Thompson & Lodge, 2023), the role of the peer reviewer is vital to the functioning of a journal such as AJET. Consequently, we sincerely thank all our reviewers from around the globe who have given of their time to ensure the quality, rigor, and relevance of AJET articles in 2024.

Future directions for AJET

As we enter our 40th year of publication, the future is bright for AJET. With submissions at an all-time high and a good relationship with the educational technology community, we are in a strong position to maintain our role as a leading publication in the field. However, we will not rest on our laurels in relation to the changing academic publishing environment and our responsibility to the ASCILITE community to provide an academic outlet that delivers quality evidence to inform practice. In 2025 we plan to revise the format of the AJET Editorial Board and introduce an Expert Advisory Group to guide the future direction of the journal and its activities. We are continuing our focus on professional development for peer reviewers and refining core workflow processes related to how the journal operates. It is now as important as ever that AJET maintains its ability to publish impactful and important work in educational technology within an increasingly crowded environment. We remain committed to our open-source goal of ensuring access for everyone to cutting edge research to inform policy and practice. The future offers many possibilities which may include new ways and formats to share great research to best meet the needs of our audiences which is an exciting prospect as we celebrate 40 years of servicing the ASCILITE community and beyond in 2025.

Author contributions

Linda Corrin: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft, Writing - review and editing; **Feifei Han:** Writing - review and editing; **Chris Deneen:** Writing – review and editing; **Henk Huijser:** Writing – review and editing.

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