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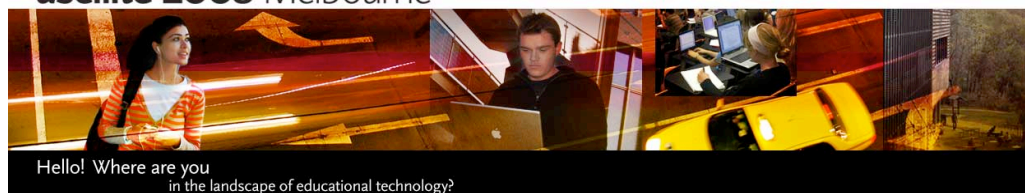
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The *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* (AJET) is a refereed research journal published four times per year by the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ascilite). AJET retired its printed version (ISSN 1449-3098) at the end of Volume 23, 2007, and from Volume 24, 2008, the journal is open access, online only (ISSN 1449-5554), and does not have paid subscriptions.

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For editorial inquiries, contact the Editor, Associate Professor Catherine McLoughlin, School of Education (ACT), Australian Catholic University, PO Box 256, Dickson ACT 2602, Australia. Email: [C.McLoughlin@signadou.acu.edu.au](mailto:C.McLoughlin@signadou.acu.edu.au), Tel: +61 2 6209 1100 Fax +61 2 6209 1185.

For review process, production, website and business matters, contact the Production Editor, Dr Roger Atkinson, 5/202 Coode Street, Como WA 6152, Australia. Email: [rjatkison@bigpond.com](mailto:rjatkison@bigpond.com), Tel: +61 8 9367 1133. Desktop publishing (PDF versions) and HTML by Roger Atkinson.

AJET is managed by a committee nominated by ASCILITE. The AJET Management Committee comprises:

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Ms Meg O'Reilly, Southern Cross University, ASCILITE Executive  
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## Editorial

### The decision to retire AJET's printed version

During a number of relatively brief formal meetings and informal discussions held during the *ascilite Singapore 2007 Conference* [1], the Society's Executive Committee and AJET's Management Committee arrived at a unanimous decision to retire AJET's printed version at the end of 2007. Thus, as announced in December 2007 in letters to subscribers, postings to the *ascilite* Members' email list, and on AJET's website, AJET 23(4) was the last of our printed issues, and this issue, 24(1) is our first open access, online only issue.

Why retire AJET's printed version? There isn't a single, dominating reason, it was a case of the combined influence of a number of trends that have been impacting upon us for some years, trends that have been worried over in a number of AJET Editorials. In Editorial 23(4) we worried that "...sometime in the relatively near future, AJET will have to make the transition to online only." [2] In Editorial 23(3) we worried that "...the point about "print to be phased out within several years" is likely to force its way back onto the agenda." [3] Our "worries" are detailed below, approximately ordered from the "most immediate" problems to "medium to longer term" concerns.

We faced a problem with increasing costs for AJET's printed version. Table 1 illustrates the trend, and indicates that the problem is due to cumulative factors, rather than any of the three individual factors, namely increases in number of issues per year, increases in print costs per issue (due mainly to decreases in numbers of copies printed, see Table 2), and increases in postal expenses.

Table 1: Actual and estimated printing and postal expenses per volume

Year	No of issues per volume	Print per volume	Post Australia per volume	Post Asia-Pacific zone	Post Rest of World zone
Vol 19, 2003	3	\$13.39	\$3.00	\$9.00	\$13.50
Vol 22, 2006	4	\$17.20	\$4.40	\$15.00	\$22.20
Vol 23, 2007	4	\$19.30	\$4.56	\$15.40	\$23.20
Vol 24, 2008	5*	\$26.00*	\$5.70*	\$19.25*	\$29.00*

\* Estimates made at 26 Nov 2007. Data in Au\$. Cost estimates are based upon the most economical format, namely C5 format, not exceeding 250 g. For details on postal charges and zones, see Australia Post's website [4].

Table 2: Print requisitions and average cost per copy

Issue	Total number of copies requisitioned	Number of library subscribers	Average cost per copy, Au\$
23(4), 2007	590	65	\$5.202
23(3), 2007	616	65	\$4.863
23(2), 2007	655	65	\$4.650
23(1), 2007	640	65	\$4.591
22(4), 2006	710	66	\$4.299
22(3), 2006	700	66	\$4.422
22(2), 2006	740	66	\$4.187
22(1), 2006	730	66	\$4.246
21(4), 2005	770	65	\$3.934

In addition to the cash expenditure pressure indicated in Table 1, we faced increasing workloads in the areas of printing firm liaison, purchasing stamps and envelopes, packing and despatching printed copies, subscription processing, managing access restrictions for the online version, and for ascilite Secretariat, in the area of label runs for postal despatches.

As subscription income is based on small numbers (Table 2), AJET is very dependent upon funding by ascilite. We reconsidered two broad options we have for relieving pressure on the Society's budget. Essentially these options, which we have monitored for some years, are to become a "cost minimiser" or a "revenue earner" for the Society. The cost minimisation strategy of "going online only" is very familiar to us, as the technological enablers and foundations for this strategy have much in common with those for online courses, computer mediated communications, multimedia, computer assisted learning and similar everyday topics for AJET. In scholarly publishing, the key enablers are remarkably favourable changes in the "...cost of information storage, cost of digital network transport, and the cost and efficiency of search processes that enable readers to find the content they are seeking" [5], leading us to the possibility that "... the technologies... have decreased publishing costs so much that making articles free to online readers is a viable option" [6].

By contrast, a "revenue earner" strategy would be difficult for AJET because the publishing niche for paid subscription journals in AJET's topic area is fully occupied, or even over-occupied, by well-established international names: BJET, ALT-J, C&E, ETR&D, JCAL, and numerous others, for example as listed in Table 1 of AJET Editorial 23(4) [2]. Many of these journals were originated by academic societies and have been outsourced to multinational publishers such as those listed in Table 1 of AJET Editorial 23(3) [3]. The data reviewed in these two Editorials helps to determine that going to online only, open access is a very good strategy for differentiating AJET from the competition. We noted that "revenue earner" strategies could be implemented under open access, for example by requiring authors to pay an article publication charge (for example, CSIRO Publishing charges an "Open Access Author Fee" [7]) or by requiring authors to become an ascilite Member. However, these were unattractive strategies, because to secure AJET's growth we need to minimise the disincentives that may be perceived by potential authors.

Thus our key tactic in a growth strategy for AJET is to become a "cost minimiser". By cost minimising we will be able to run with the "growth spurt" that we noted for some leading journals in educational technology, in Figure 3, AJET Editorial 23(4) [2]. With some timesaving from print retirement and the appointment this year of several Associate Editors, we will be able to move more quickly on other tasks. These include



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implementing 'free subscriptions', in the form of a facility for email or RSS notifications about the publication of each new issue [8], to replace the notification provided in the past by arrival of a printed copy (thus substituting technology for one of the print version's functions).

Print retirement avoids another task: the printed version had been in an uncertain state for some years, pending a decision about whether to upgrade with features such as coated paper, B5 size (250 x 176 mm, the most popular size for academic journals) and improved graphics for the cover, or to economise with time and money by staying the same. Print retirement has enabled a compromise. Commencing in 2008 with Volume 24, AJET will have a B5 page size, with printing area 201 x 136 mm (excluding header and footer), compared with 118 x 175 mm used during 1985-2007. Of course readers will see the new format only if they choose to use the PDF version of an article, either for screen reading or for printing their own paper copy. Replacing the old A5 page size with B5 will make matters easier for authors who wish to present large diagrams, or wide tables, or copies of full screen pictures. From the production editing perspective, fitting into 13.6 mm width will be rather nice and easy, after so many years of squeezing these objects into 11.8 cm width [9]. In the short to medium term, the new option to download a PDF file for each article is one of only two changes that readers will see in AJET's web site. The other change, not evident to readers connected via a subscribing library's campus network, is the ending of the three month period of restricted access that was applied to each new issue of AJET.

Another increasingly important factor is that with a whole new suite of environmental and conservation concerns now gripping the world, many people feel that the print medium should be used more sparingly, as illustrated by the common occurrence of email signature file messages such as "*Please consider the environment before printing this message*" or similar. Retiring print for small print run publications such as AJET is very much in tune with these concerns. As expressed by one ascilite Member, in response to our posting about print retirement [10]:

this is great news - an open journal. as much as I enjoyed the print version it was a luxury. Roll on 2008. [10]

There will be some or even many regrets about print retirement. Another Member, who is also an AJET author and evidently a long distance commuter, told us:

I understand about the online publishing imperative, but will miss the little booklet style on my long train trips! [Claire Brooks, 10]

We record with much appreciation the excellent work for AJET done by Pilpel Print [11] of Beaufort Street, Perth, with every issue accorded a highly professional production standard, though we were one of their smallest customers.



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## Merger with e-JIST

We are pleased to record the merger of the *Journal of Instructional Science and Technology* [12] with AJET, to be implemented in the first months of 2008. The merger, announced by Professor Alan Smith, e-JIST's Executive Editor, in the Editorial for 10(1) [13], e-JIST's final issue, recognised

... a growing trend towards consolidation into a smaller number of larger sized journals, driven by new concerns about the ranking of journals for research quality assessment purposes, apparent declines in the amount of academic staff time available for honorary work upon journals, and an increasing concentration of journal publishing "power" in the hands of a small number of large multinational publishers.[13]

This merger will lead to a new mirror and archival website [14], under development during January-February 2008 to situate a copy of the works of e-JIST's authors and editors within the actively growing body of similar research articles published by AJET since 1985. The key purposes are to:

- preserve the work of those created and supported e-JIST within a collection that continues to grow every year;
- develop the strongest possible Australian based, open access journal publishing effort in educational technology and related topics, by working upon growth, mergers, search engine presence, abstracting journal presence, citation frequency, RQF presence, author development, special issues development, organisational relationships and related matters.



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## AJET's review process: 2007 update

Table 3 shows progress since our last report on AJET's review process, dated 9 May 2007 and presented in Editorial 23(2) [8]. We continue to experience difficulties in attaining our desired benchmark of three months maximum for AJET's review process, owing to the Production Editor's commitments to *ascilite Singapore 2007* Program Committee, the increased number of submissions, and the extra tasks associated with print retirement. However, with *ascilite Singapore 2007* and print retirement completed, we expect to resolve the submissions in the "No. pending" column by about the end of March 2008.

Table 3: Article review outcomes AJET 2003-2007

Year of receipt	No. rec'd	No. rejected editorially (b)	No. reject ext review (b)	No. with-drawn (c)	No. pending	No. accept(d)	No. publ-ished	% accep-ted (e)
2003	61	34	14	0	0	13	24	21.3%
2004	97	51	13	2	0	31	21	32.0%
2005	91	47	9	5	0	30	30	33.0%
2006	100	59	9	3	0	29	28	29.0%
2007(a)	119	50	6	4	33	26	30	-

- a. Data in columns 2-8 is at 9 January 2008.
- b. Some of the rejected articles may appear again as receivals in a subsequent year. The reasons for counting these instances as rejections are to enable a clearer cut off for each year's outcomes, and to align data collection with the editorial advice, used in a significant proportion of cases, 'Reject. Invite resubmission of a revised or expanded work for a new review process'.
- c. Withdrawn means withdrawn at the request of the authors.
- d. The number of articles accepted from a particular year's receivals does not correspond to the number published in each year, owing to time taken for review and revisions, and fluctuations in the speed of these processes.
- e. % accepted is calculated from column 2 (No. rec'd) and column 7 (No. accepted).

### Online references: 2007 update

We expend a significant amount of copy editing time upon adding URLs to references, and verifying and correcting URLs inserted by authors. This is done only for freely accessible URLs, for the reasons discussed in AJET Editorials 17(1) [15] and 22(4) [16]. Table 4 extends the monitoring to the end of 2007. We note with disappointment that the ratio of "URLs added" (added by the Production Editor during copy editing) to "URLs cited" (cited by the author) has not improved. Copy editing work increased the number of URLs cited by 63% for the 2000-01 sample, by 65% for the 2006 sample, and by 78% for 2007's articles. Table 4 also suggests the trend in percentage of references that are online, open access, is no increase or a very slow rate of increase.

Table 4: Citations of URLs in AJET articles

AJET Vol (issue)	No. of articles	Total refs	URLs cited	URLs added	Total URLs	URLs %	Average no. of refs per article
16(2), 16(3), 17(1)	19	469	89	56	145	30.9	24.7
22(3), 22(4)	15	542	117	76	193	35.6	36.1
23(1), (2), (3), (4)	30	1030	208	162	370	35.9	34.3

### Revisiting "The long path to journal viability"

Table 5 expands and updates a similar table presented in AJET Editorial 21(4) in 2005 under the heading "The long path to journal viability" [17, Table 1]. Table 5 adds four journals, three being from 21(4)'s Table 5, "Some recent startups of OA journals".

Table 5: Numbers of issues and articles in nine Australasian journals, 1995-2007

Year	HERD [a] inaug '82		DE [b] inaug 1980		e-JIST [c] inaug 1995		JLD [d] inaug 2005		JUTLP [e] inaug 2004		AJET [f] inaug 1985		APCJ [g] inaug 2004		ITEC [h] inaug 2005		MOJIT [i] inaug '04	
	iss	arts	iss	arts	iss	arts	iss	arts	iss	arts	iss	arts	iss	arts	iss	arts	iss	arts
95-00	16	129	12	109	9	22	-	-	-	-	14	79	-	-	-	-	-	-
2001	3	20	2	20	1	7	-	-	-	-	3	20	-	-	-	-	-	-
2002	3	21	2	15	1	8	-	-	-	-	3	23	-	-	-	-	-	-
2003	3	22	2	14	1	5	-	-	-	-	3	24	-	-	-	-	-	-
2004	4	25	2	13	2	13	-	-	2	8	3	21	1	9	-	-	2	15
2005	4	26	3	21	1	6	1	7	4	17	4	30	1	7	1	6	3	36
2006	4	27	3	22	2	15	2	16	2	10	4	29	2	16	1	6	2	14
2007	4	28	3	20	1	6	1	7	1	5	4	30	0	0	2	5	0	0
Tots	41	270	29	234	18	82	4	30	9	40	38	256	4	32	4	17	7	65
	(95-07)		(95-07)		(95-07)		(05-07)		(04-07)		(95-07)		(04-07)		(05-07)		(04-07)	

Notes: Last updated 6 Jan 2008. 'inaug' is year of first issue, 'iss' is number of issues, and 'arts' is number of articles, for each year. Data obtained from journal websites. The journals are:

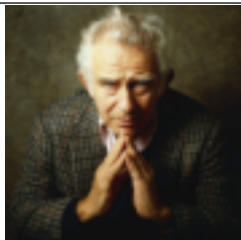
- HERD. *Higher Education Research and Development*.  
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/07294360.asp>
- DE. *Distance Education*. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/01587919.asp>
- e-JIST. *e-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology*. <http://www.usq.edu.au/electpub/e-jist/>
- JLD. *Journal of Learning Design*. <http://www.jld.qut.edu.au/>
- JUTLP. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*. <http://jutlp.uow.edu.au/>
- AJET. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/>
- APCJ. *Asia Pacific Cybereducation Journal*. <http://www.acejournal.org/>
- ITEC. *Information, Technology and Educational Change*. <http://ejournal.cite.hku.hk/>
- MOJIT. *Malaysian Online Journal of Instructional Technology*. <http://pppij.usm.my/mojit/>

To paraphrase the observation made two years ago in Editorial 21(4), the "saplings in the great forest of scholarly journals" face a long path to viability, and a time may soon come for considering new possibilities for inter-journal collaborations.

Roger Atkinson and Catherine McLoughlin  
*AJET Production Editor and AJET Editor*

## Endnotes

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