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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, Tel: +61 2 6209 1100 Fax +61 2 6209 1185. For review process, production matters and subscriptions contact the Production Editor and Business Manager, Dr Roger Atkinson, 5/202 Coode Street, Como WA 6152, Australia. Email: rjatkenson@bigpond.com, Tel: +61 8 9367 1133.

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Editorial

Outstanding Paper Awards at ASCILITE 2006

Three Outstanding Paper Awards were made by the ASCILITE 2006 Conference Committee. We congratulate the authors for achieving this distinction in a large and distinguished field, comprising 180 full and concise papers [1] published in *Who's learning? Whose technology? Proceedings of the 23rd ASCILITE Conference* [2]. As we have done with Outstanding Paper Awards since 1999, we republish the 2006 Conference's Outstanding Papers in this issue of AJET, to record our Society's recognition of their merit.

Sarah Lambert and Linda Corrin from the University of Wollongong wrote *Moving towards a university wide implementation of an ePortfolio tool*. [3] The tool is designed to be customisable for all students across all faculties, and its development reflects a productive collaboration between two groups in UoW, the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources, and the Careers Service.

The paper by John Pettit and Agnes Kukulska-Hulme from the Institute of Educational Technology, Open University UK, *The going with the grain: Mobile devices in practice* [4], explores innovative uses of mobile devices, with an emphasis upon the changing relationships between learners and educational institutions.



<http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/singapore07/>
Proposals due 23 July 2007

Supporting peer assessment of individual contributions in groupwork [5], by Richard Raban and Andrew Litchfield from the Faculty of Information Technology at the University of Technology, Sydney, discusses a new groupwork support tool for an undergraduate subject with large student numbers. Their use of Team Contribution Tracking (*TeCTra*) supports the development of student evaluation, feedback and review skills when peer assessing individual contributions to large group projects.

After eight years of publishing Outstanding Paper Awards, does AJET see any patterns emerging, to enable practitioners in educational technology and ICTs to define in a precise, quantitative manner, the characteristics of "outstandingness" for our fields of research? The short answer, very definitely it seems to us, is "No" (numerous long answers may be made, but these are beyond the scope of this editorial). The Outstanding Paper Awards 1999-2006 [6] show diversity in topics, methodologies, findings and implications for stakeholders. One interesting angle is that readers may compare Awards papers with 'non-Award' papers very readily, all being in the same publication series [7]. Without detracting from the merit of Awards papers, the big number of 'equal to or very near Award quality' papers revealed by such comparisons indicates to us that we have to be very wary about attempting to devise precisely defined demarcations between papers for 'research quality' ranking purposes.



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Idle Moment No. 15: HERD, DE and AJET rates revisited

Having made an error in taking Idle Moment No. 13 twice [8, 9], we'll move right along to No. 15, which is revisiting the topic for Idle Moment No. 10. IM 10 compared AJET subscription rates with those for two kindred journals, HERD and DE [10]. Figures 1 and 2 record the continuation of an all too familiar trend, annual increases around 8.5% for the "T&Fd" journals whilst AJET stays at a kind of grass roots level. So, has anything happened in the two years since previous versions of Figures 1 and 2 were published? Looking at these figures, some observers may say, "just a case of business as usual". However, we feel that influential new factors have been emerging, and the patterns shown in Figures 1 and 2 will

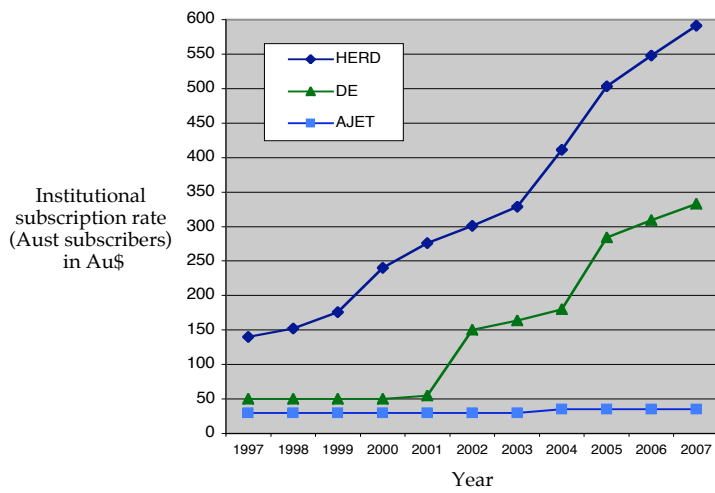


Figure 1: Institutional subscription rates, 1997-2007 (GST not included)

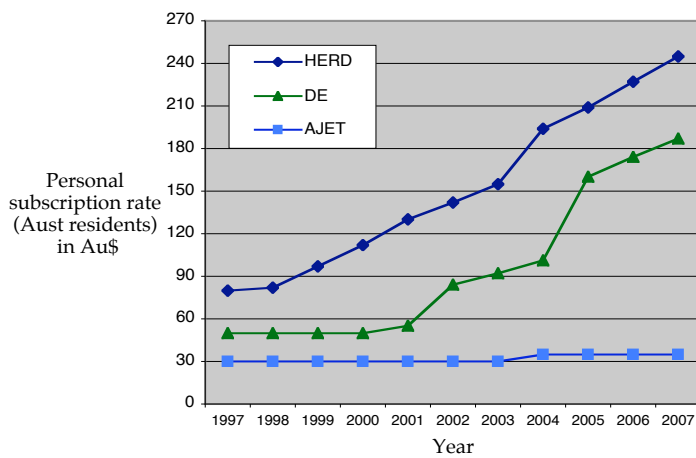


Figure 2: Personal subscription rates, 1997-2007 (GST not included)

Data sources: Rates quoted in printed copies of the journals and the publisher's website (GST not included). Prices include Internet access from an institutional local area network in the cases of HERD and DE institutional subscriptions (AJET is 'open access', being unrestricted, free to the Internet, three months after publication).

- 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>
- AJET *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*.
<http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/>

become more difficult to sustain. These factors include, among others, changing attitudes of publishers towards copyright, pressures from governments concerned with "Research Quality Frameworks" and efficient dissemination of research, and authors' desires for more readers and increased citation rates for their work. All of these (and many other issues) are matters of interest to the editors of academic journals and conference proceedings.

To consider briefly the first of these issues, changing attitudes towards copyright, readers may have noted relatively recent changes in the policies of Taylor & Francis (publishers of HERD and DE) and Blackwell Publishing (publishers of BJET [11]). In brief (see [12] for more detail), both publishers now permit 'self archiving', that is authors placing electronic copies of their own articles on a publicly accessible website [13, 14]. If authors value open access principles, or even if they are merely hoping for more readers and more citations, they may place their articles on a personal website or in an institutional repository [12]. No pay per view or expensive subscription! That's good for readers, and for authors, but is there a risk to the journal's subscription income? If there is a high proportion of a journal's articles available free to the Internet through self archiving, librarians may decide to cancel it (and who could blame them, given the inexorable rises illustrated in Figure 1?).

However, the data in Table 1 suggest that self archiving is no more than a minor threat to T&F's and Blackwell's subscription income from HERD, DE and BJET. Very few authors have taken the opportunity offered by these publishers' new attitudes towards self archiving. The publishers' specificity embargo periods, 18 months for HERD and DE [14], and 24 months for BJET [16], during which an author may not self archive, and therefore 2005-06 counts may increase in future. However the 2002-04 data, covering articles which are out of embargo, suggest that future increases will be minor. Also, Table 1's data suggests that only a very few authors (or others, see [12]) are "overlooking" the publishers' embargo.

Table 1's data also may suggest that the average author does not value 'free to the Internet' as highly as desired by proponents and enthusiasts for open access publishing of academic articles. Richardson (2006) [17] conceded that "The concept of self-archiving has not, however, fulfilled initial expectations", and suggested that Australia's *Research Quality Framework* could act as a catalyst for increasing the "generally low uptake worldwide by academics":

Table 1: Extent of self archiving of articles in three commercial journals, 2002-07

Journal	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2002-06	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
HERD	4/21	19.0	0/22	0.0	3/25	12.0	3/23	13.0	0/28	0.0	10/119	8.4
DE	1/16	6.3	1/14	7.1	1/13	7.7	4/20	20.0	1/21	4.8	8/84	9.5
BJET	9/55	16.4	8/52	15.4	10/58	17.2	6/89	6.7	4/48	8.3	37/302	12.3

See Figure 1 and 2 notes for HERD and DE details, and [11] for BJET. The No. column for each year records *No. articles found free/No. articles published*. The first figure is the number of articles found online with free access, as determined by Google [15] searches for each article's title (exact phrase). The second figure is the total number of articles, as listed by the tables of contents, excluding editorials and book reviews. Publisher's free sample copies that appear occasionally were not included in *found free*. Searches were conducted at various dates during 20 Feb to 11 Mar 2006 for 2002-05 (all journals), with repeats on 25-26 Feb 2007 for HERD and DE (2007 data presented above, see [12] for 2006 count), and on 23-26 Feb 2007 for 2006, usually checking only the first 10-20 occurrences. All articles counted as *found free* were checked by viewing. For more details, see [12].

Notwithstanding the burdensome aspect of RQF, universities have an opportunity to leverage the exercise by building a repository of research output to be assessed as a "closed" process, and to then take the associated descriptive metadata and use it to either create the foundations of an open access eprint repository (if one does not already exist) or more likely to boost content in an existing eprint service. Promoting the eprint repository as a mechanism for potentially increasing "impact" (downloads, hits, citation counts) through open access in preparation for the subsequent RQF should offer some enticement to academics to actively engage in the process.[17]

The linking of RQF to 'increasing "impact"... through open access' is a positive perspective, which may help to counteract the concerns that we as editors have about the possibility or risk that RQF processes may eventually give increased competitive advantages to the largest, oldest, most prestigious journals, relative to other journals. For example, in future will more authors submit to BJET, which can claim "ISI Journal Citation Reports® Ranking: 2005: 33/98 (Education & Educational Research) Impact Factor: 0.593" [11], compared with AJET, which is not one of the 95 education journals listed by ISI Thomson? [18]

One of our editorial priorities during 2007 will be increased and hopefully improved monitoring of the "impact" that publication in AJET is creating for our authors, and how we may best define and present AJET's "impact".

Roger Atkinson and Catherine McLoughlin
 AJET Production Editor and AJET Editor



Adelaide, 8-11 July 2007. Deadline for all submissions 23 March 2007.
<http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2007/>

Endnotes

1. A detailed summary of outcomes from the ASCILITE 2006 review and editorial processes is available in the *Proceedings* Editorial.
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1999 at <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet16/editorial16-1.html>
(owing to space constraints the 2005 Award was not cited in an editorial but it appears at <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet22/markauskaite.html>)
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ALT-C 2007: Beyond Control
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 social network generation*
 Nottingham, UK, 4-6 September 2007
<http://www.alt.ac.uk/altc2007/>