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## Editorial

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### Idle Moments

Idle Moments, we regret, are becoming rarer, and therefore more precious, though on our galactic time scale [1], Idle Moments are ensured. Since the last Moment [2], we have seized idle moments to consider two topics that we very rarely feature, *Copyright* and *Internationalisation*.

#### Idle Moment No. 7: Copyright

Take time for a browse through copyright policy statements made by publishers of scholarly journals. This is very easy to do, because these statements are almost invariably free to the Internet on the publisher's website, unlike the substantive content in a publisher's holding, the full text articles. There are several important questions that warrant occasional browsing by the Editors into copyright policy statements. What are the trends, and is AJET up with, or ahead of these, or going in a dead end direction? Is AJET's own policy a good policy for authors and readers? Is intellectual property derived from academic endeavour becoming more like *private* property or more like *communal* property?

AJET does have a venerable, simple and progressive policy on copyright. Since foundation in 1985, "Copyright in individual articles contained in *Australian Journal of Educational Technology* is vested in each of the authors in respect of his or her contributions". In 2004, *Australian* became *Australasian*. Apart from that, no changes were made, no justification ever given, no arguments ever arose, and, as far as we can determine, the policy has never been questioned by an author or a reader. Consider the question of 'justification', absent in AJET's copyright policy, but usually specified by other publishers in terms of *protection* and *dissemination*. Here are three examples, from a commercial publisher and a society:



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It is a condition of publication that authors vest copyright in their articles, including abstracts, in *The Australian Educational Researcher*. This enables us to ensure full copyright protection and to disseminate the article, and the journal, to the widest possible readership in print and electronic formats as appropriate. Authors may, of course, use the article elsewhere after publication providing that prior permission is obtained from the Managing Editor. *The Australian Educational Researcher* [3]

It is interesting that *AER*, a recent adopter of an open access, free to the Internet policy (as discussed in Idle Moment No.1 [4]), shares a key sentence, word for word, with *HERD*. Your Editors will try to identify the author of this sentence, partly because recognition could be due, and partly because we would like to clarify what was meant by "copyright protection" and "widest possible readership", at the time that sentence was written. Copyright protection is a law [5], and not an action that a publisher has to take on behalf of authors. Whilst the intention to "disseminate... to the widest possible readership" is admirable, the phrase has different meanings for different stakeholders. For a commercial publisher, "widest possible readership" means "obtain more readers by selling more subscriptions". For a society publisher, it means "obtain more members by offering subscription as a membership benefit". For authors it meant, pre-Internet, that obtaining more readers was dependent upon a publisher's success in selling more subscriptions, or recruiting more members. For readers, pre-Internet, there was a similar dependence upon the publisher's success. Post-Internet, after the 1990s revolution in scholarly publishing enabled by the Internet and HTTP



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(hypertext transfer protocol), the term "widest possible readership" has become open to a radically new scope. This is *all Internet users*, if a publisher wishes to take advantage of near zero *marginal* costs per copy distributed "free to the Internet". In the new scholarly publishing environment, a copyright policy that makes claims about "widest possible readership" whilst not offering "free to the Internet" is flawed to the point of near silliness.

The casual reader could be forgiven for perceiving that many strange inconsistencies occur in the topic of scholarly publishing and copyright. Take this example from a major publisher's 'FAQs' on copyright, that indicates a most unusual use of the term 'public domain'. Used, but not actually implemented!

All Taylor & Francis journals are now published in simultaneous print and electronic, online editions; the latter is made available to institutional subscribers at no additional cost, on an open site LAN licence, for any number of concurrent users. Thus the electronic version of any paper accepted by and published in the Journal is available in the public domain, as the definitive version. [6]

Seriously, whilst we can say with confidence that the intentions of AJET's copyright policy and open access policy are firmly established, and strongly supported by authors [7], we may need to work upon the details of how we express these policies clearly, efficiently and purposefully. One approach we intend to keep under review is the use of internationally standardised licencing classes as propounded by the *Creative Commons* [8], now developing in Australia [9]:

Creative Commons is an international initiative which is attempting to reconceptualize the way we think about and create and share intellectual property, particularly in a creative context...

Creative Commons aims to better identify, negotiate and reutilise content for the purpose of creativity and innovation. [10]

### **Idle Moment No. 8: Internationalisation**

One purpose for our recently implemented change from *Australian* to *Australasian* in AJET's title [11] is to improve our recognition of the growing number of authors from the Asia-Pacific region. We are using the data illustrated in Figure 1 to help assess our progress, and we look also at kindred journals such as *Higher Education Research and Development* (HERD). It is interesting to note that in 1997 HERD's Editors stated their expectation that "... the new publishing arrangements through Carfax will extend internationalisation of the journal still further." (Martin and

Ling, 1997). However the data for the 'post-Carfaxing' years shown in Figure 1 suggests that progress in HERD's desired direction has been slow and uneven.

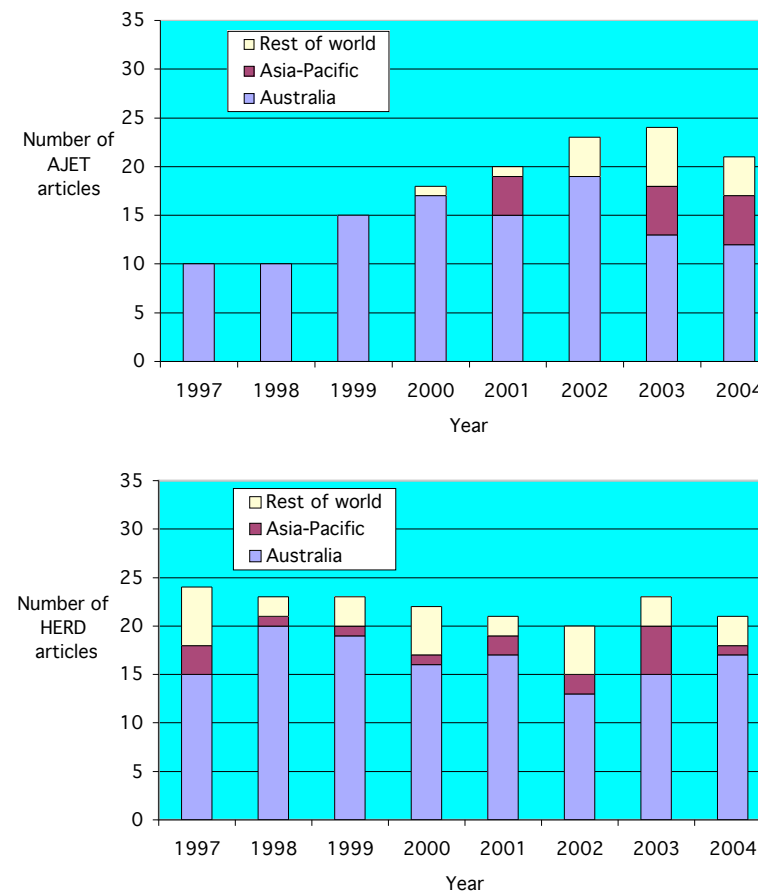


Figure 1: Number of articles in AJET (upper) and HERD (lower), 1997-2004, by first author's region of institutional affiliation

Notes: The classification of countries into the regions Asia-Pacific and Rest of World was based upon Australia Post's charging zones [12]. Data was obtained by inspection of printed copies of the journals. The counts for 2004 are incomplete.

In the context of scholarly journals in general, and AJET in particular, what is "internationalisation" and why is it deemed to be an important purpose? The word "international" is common enough in journal titles. For

example, in the Taylor and Francis Group's list of about 121 journals classified under education, "international" occurs 21 times in titles [13]. Many journals announce their "international, peer reviewed" status in the publisher's description, but reasons for seeking to be "international" are rarely stated. One interesting exception is *International Education Journal* [14], based at the School of Education, Flinders University of South Australia. This journal's aims include the phrases "examination of educational issues from a cross-cultural or indigenous people's perspective", and "syntheses of research findings from comparative and cross-national studies in education." IEJ seeks to define a different kind of merit and benefit in being "international", when stating that:

True to our name, we believe in the value of authors from a wide range of nationalities, cultures and contexts. Although we only currently publish in the English language we encourage contributions from around the world, particularly from the Asian countries. ... we do not discriminate against authors from non-English speaking backgrounds. On the contrary, we offer an Editorial Service to improve poorly written papers. [14]

Whilst there is an admirable link between "international", and "cross-national" and "cross cultural", viewed as positive features in the aims for a journal, the potential implication that other journals might *discriminate* and may fail to provide appropriate editorial support for NESB or LOTE [15] authors would be strongly contested by editors of many other journals, including AJET's Editors.

### **Idle Moment No. 9: Web accessibility guidelines**

An article by Alexander (2004), reporting on a study of the accessibility of Australian university Web sites, provides a final idle moment, though it's not exactly idle. It relates to the serious question of *html and pdf, or pdf only?* [7] Alexander (2004) summarised as follows:

A selection of key pages from all 45 Australian tertiary education Web sites were analysed to assess their compliance with basic accessibility standards, as required by Australian anti-discrimination legislation. The results--98% of sites failed to comply--suggest that Australian university Web sites are likely to present significant barriers to access for people with disabilities. (Alexander, 2004)

In the section on text equivalents for PDF content, Alexander (2004) outlined a number of problems for persons with disabilities, and pointed out that "as a result of these limitations, the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) have issued the following advice":

The Commission's view is that organisations who distribute content only in PDF format, and who do not also make this content available in another format such as RTF, HTML, or plain text, are liable for complaints under the DDA (HREOC 2002).

A matter we need to take into consideration. From time to time we check AJET web pages for our degree of compliance with W3C's *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* [16]; we also use the *W3C Markup Validation Service* [17].

Roger Atkinson  
AJET Production Editor

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AJET Editor

### Endnotes

1. <https://www.inderscience.com/papers/submissions.php#copyright>
2. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/cherauth.asp>
3. <http://www.aare.edu.au/indexaer.htm>
4. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet19/editorial19-3.html>
5. *Copyright Act 1968*. Commonwealth Consolidated Acts.  
[http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/ca1968133/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ca1968133/)
6. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/copyright.asp> [viewed 24 Aug 2004, verified 3 Oct 2004]
7. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet20/editorial20-2.html>
8. <http://creativecommons.org/>
9. <http://creativecommons.org/projects/international/au/>
10. Prof Brian Fitzgerald - Head of Law School. [verified 3 Oct 2004]  
<http://www.law.qut.edu.au/about/staff/lstaff/fitzgerald.jsp>
11. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet20/editorial20-1.html>
12. <http://www1.auspost.com.au/download/ms160.pdf>
13. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/listings/edu.asp> [viewed 3 Oct 2004]
14. *International Education Journal*. <http://iej.cjb.net/>
15. In accordance with the recommendation in *Style Manual* 6th ed, p.56, AJET uses the acronym LOTE in preference to NESB.
16. <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/>
17. <http://validator.w3.org/>

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