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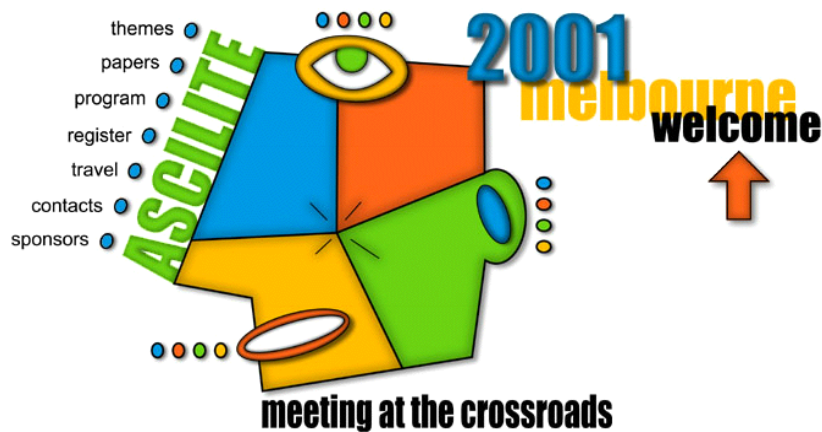
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Editorial

Articles in previous issues of AJET have been overwhelmingly sourced from Australia and New Zealand, with only 4.5% of articles for Vol 13 to Vol 17(2) being sourced from other countries (Atkinson 2001a). However, in 17(3) we attain a new high level of representation from other countries: four of the seven articles in 17(3). The input from academics and researchers in Malaysia and Singapore into 17(3) is very welcome and we hope that increased diversity of source countries will become well established for AJET.

Increased diversity is especially important in an era of continual changes for professional society based publishing. A reminder about the alternatives has arisen recently, with the announcement by the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia that from 2002 its journal *Distance Education* will be published by Carfax Publishing (ODLAA 2001; Carfax 2001a). The "carfaxing" of *Distance Education* follows a number of similar "outsourcings" from society to commercial publisher. These include, for example, HERDSA's *Higher Education Research and Development* (HERDSA 2001), and ATEM's *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* (ATEM 2001). Others include *Australian Journal*



ASCILITE 2001, 9-12 December, hosted by the
University of Melbourne and the Biomedical Multimedia Unit
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of *International Affairs*, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, *Australian Geographer*, *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, and *Australian Feminist Studies* (Carfax 2001b).

What are the advantages and disadvantages of “outsourcing” a professional society publication to a commercial publisher such as Carfax? As we may expect, there are quite a number of perspectives on this question (Atkinson and McBeath 2001). Let’s select just one perspective: cost per article. The main reason for investigating “cost per article” is that, in theory, a large scale publishing group such as Taylor and Francis with over 540 journals in 2001 should enjoy economies of scale, compared with small scale publishers such as the ASET-ASCILITE partnership publishing AJET. Table 1 compares “cost per article” for AJET and some similar journals published by Carfax.

Table 1: Cost per article for AJET and some Carfax journals

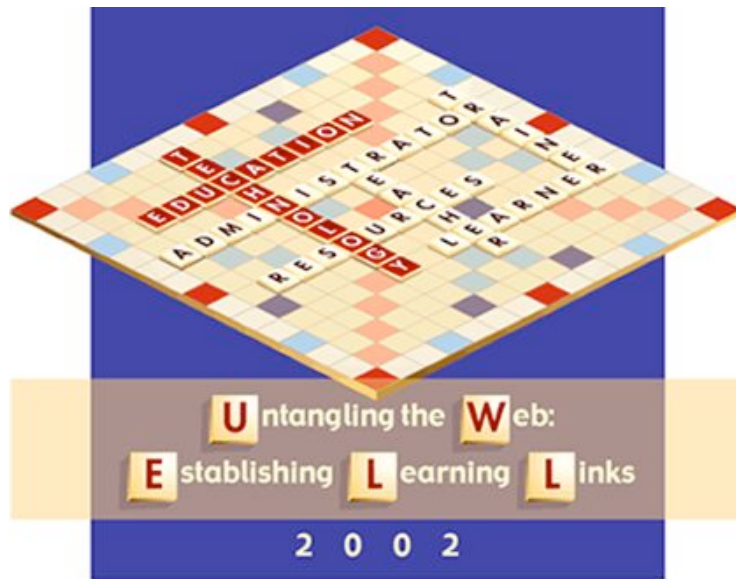
Journal	Society	Av. no. of articles per year [1]	Indiv sub. per year US\$ [2]	Av. cost per article US\$[2]
<i>Distance Education</i>	ODLAA	20 (2 issues)	48	2.40
<i>Higher Education Research and Development</i>	HERDSA	20 (3 issues)	92	4.60
<i>Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management</i>	AEM	16 (2 issues)	74	4.63
<i>Australian Journal of Educational Technology</i>	ASET and ASCILITE	20 (3 issues plus some bonuses)	15 (or 20 for rest-of-world air post)	0.75 or 1.00
[1] From Year 2000 tables of contents, except for AJET which is based on 2001. [2] Based upon Carfax publishing data, 18 Nov 2001, or AJET data (assuming that Aust\$1.00 = US\$0.50). Notes: Institutional subscriptions are priced at about three times the rate of individual personal subscriptions, except for AJET which has the same prices for both categories. All include web access and a search facility, although only in AJET’s case is web access free to any reader (after three months).				

Table 1 appears to indicate that economies of scale are not obtained. AJET compares very well indeed. Therefore the advantages of publishing with a large scale publisher must lie elsewhere, for example in higher quality printing and binding, or increased circulation, or increased numbers of readers per copy distributed, or enhanced status for the journal, improved search tools, or time savings for the society members who would otherwise be concerned with subscription management, promotion, correcting and formatting documents and the many other tasks arising in non-academic aspects of scholarly publishing.

ASET 2002

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How can we evaluate the basis or bases for “outsourcing” and its success or otherwise? Unfortunately, the most important kind of primary data, circulation numbers before and after outsourcing, isn’t usually available. Thus we have to look at other kinds of data, such as frequency of citation of a particular journal, but that involves a longer term kind of study.

In my background reading for this issue I noted that the Association for Tertiary Education Management is especially considerate towards its volunteer editors: “Editors receive an annual honorarium of \$500 each per issue.” (ATEM 2001). Wow! Such largesse! However, please be re-assured that AJET’s editors are not considering a defection to ATEM....

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<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/>)

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