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## Contents

Editorial 27(6): ascilite's Executive Committee initiates its review of AJET ..... iii-x

### **Tertiary sector**

Using learning styles data to inform e-learning design: A study comparing  
undergraduates, postgraduates and e-educators ..... 863-880  
*Julie Willems*

Student team projects in information systems development: Measuring  
collective creative efficacy ..... 881-895  
*Hsiu-Hua Cheng and Heng-Li Yang*

A flexible, extensible online testing system for mathematics ..... 896-906  
*Tim Passmore, Leigh Brookshaw and Harry Butler*

Using multimodal presentation software and peer group discussion in  
learning English as a second language ..... 907-923  
*Mei-jung Wang*

Measuring creative potential: Using social network analysis to monitor  
a learners' creative capacity ..... 924-942  
*Shane Dawson, Jennifer Pei Ling Tan and Erica McWilliam*

Are secondary preservice teachers well prepared to teach with technology?  
A case study from China ..... 943-960  
*George Zhou, Zuo Chen Zhang and Yueke Li*

The use of a visual learning design representation to support the design  
process of teaching in higher education ..... 961-978  
*Shirley Agostinho*

Implementing clickers to assist learning in science lectures: The Clicker-Assisted  
Conceptual Change model ..... 979-996  
*Yi-Chun Lin, Tzu-Chien Liu and Ching-Chi Chu*

Self reflection and preservice teachers' technological pedagogical knowledge:  
Promoting earlier adoption of student-centred pedagogies ..... 997-1013  
*Ping Gao, Tan Seng Chee, Longlong Wang, Angela Wong and Doris Choy*

E-learning interactions, information technology self efficacy and student  
achievement at the University of Sharjah, UAE ..... 1014-1025  
*Enas Said Abulibdeh and Sharifah Sariah Syed Hassan*

Designing an e-portfolio for assurance of learning focusing on adoptability  
and learning analytics ..... 1026-1041  
*Beverly Oliver and Barbara Whelan*

### **Schools sector**

Relativity in a rock field: A study of physics learning with a computer game ..... 1042-1067  
*David Carr and Terry Bossomaier*

The *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* (AJET) is a refereed research journal published 6 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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AJET is managed by a Committee comprising ASCILITE Executive nominees, the convenors or nominees from previous ascilite Conferences, and AJET's previous editors and current senior editorial staff. The 2010 Management Committee members are:

Professor Mike Keppell, Charles Sturt University, ASCILITE President  
Dr Philippa Gerbic, Auckland University of Technology, ASCILITE Executive  
Professor Geoffrey Crisp, University of Adelaide, ASCILITE 2003 Convenor  
Dr Rob Phillips, Murdoch University, ASCILITE 2004 Convenor  
Professor Peter Goodyear, University of Sydney, ASCILITE 2006 Convenor  
Dr Dale Holt, Deakin University, ASCILITE 2008 Convenor  
Professor Ron Oliver, Edith Cowan University, AJET Editor 1997-2001  
Assoc Prof Catherine McLoughlin (Editor), Australian Catholic University  
Dr Roger Atkinson (Production Editor)

AJET's Editorial Board (see <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/about/editorial-board.html>) reflects the journal's commitment to academic excellence in educational technology and related areas of research and professional practice, our vision of an international journal with an Australasian regional emphasis, and our origins as a professional and learned society publication.



Australasian Society for Computers  
in Learning in Tertiary Education  
<http://www.ascilite.org.au/>

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## Editorial 27(6)

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### ascilite's Executive Committee initiates its review of AJET

This review was announced to ascilite members by email on 12 September 2011. The email advised members:

With a view to ensuring the quality and sustainability of the Australasian Journal of Educational Technology (AJET) a review of the journal is to be conducted from October 2011 to April 2012.

Expressions of interest (EOI) are requested for an external evaluator with suitable experience and expertise with high quality educational technology journals including their editorial processes, core operational elements and quality indicators (internationally and in an Australasian context). It is envisaged that the external evaluator will provide an evidence-based appraisal of the core elements of AJET with a set of relevant recommendations for going forward. Ascilite has budgeted for a small remuneration of AUS\$5,000 for this work to be completed. Please find a Terms of Reference (TOR) for the review attached. [1]

Mindful of the much larger community encompassed by AJET authors, reviewers and readers generally, there are questions that will arise. What's going on, and why? These are not questions we can answer precisely, as communications between ascilite Executive and AJET's Editorial staff have been sparse in the past five years or so. An examination of the email archives does reveal much unfinished business, conversations that 'petered out'. For example, discussion of the formation of AJET's new Management Committee during August 2006 included the following exchange:

Perhaps if we could focus things down a bit, what we are trying to do at this stage is form a reasonably appropriate new management committee for AJET, rather than starting to make the new committee's decisions for it. For example, if the new Committee decides to increase the representation of editorial persons (currently Editor and Production Editor proposed) to include Assistant/ Associate Editors, that would be fine, and if it wants to specify particular durations of appointments, that's fine. However, we should avoid being preemptive before the Committee is even formed.

What we can do at this stage is announce that a new management committee is being formed and that over time its membership may evolve, its policies will be developed and refined, etc. [2]

... I agree that we should not be pre-emptive in determining what the management committee would decide. I think that was my concern with the original proposal and your response, but I think I am on the same wavelength with you now.

If we just announce that a "new management committee is being formed and that over time its membership may evolve, its policies will be developed and refined, etc" then that would negate any need to make any early decisions about the micro-management of the journal. Once the new management committee meet they can then examine some of the existing policies, processes and make decisions on the best way forward. This may include some of the topics we have discussed via email as agenda items. [3]

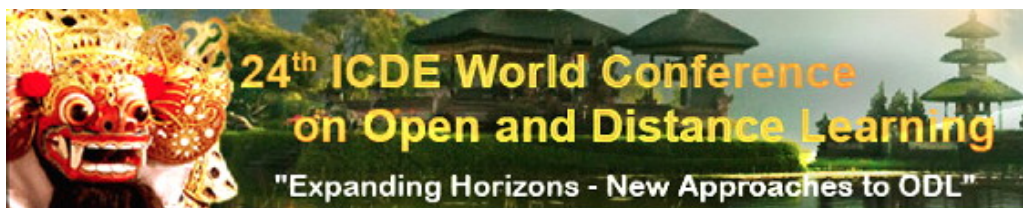


Hobart, 4-7 December 2011. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/hobart11/>

Regrettably, that conversation 'petered out' about five years ago. Another conversation that was not sustained was referred to recently in Editorial 27(4) [4], which contained our perennial lament about "AJET's Associate Editor needs", and described a 2010 plan for "a developing, testing and inducting pathway for associate editors to support AJET's growth" [4]. Again very regrettably, that conversation also 'petered out', and as receipt was not acknowledged, we guess it was not even discussed by ascilite's Executive.

Perhaps it's quite understandable that conversations like these just 'petered out', as time pressures seemed to have escalated so much upon everyone during the past five years. From AJET's perspective, more pressing matters became voracious consumers of time. We effected mergers with IJET (*International Journal of Educational Technology*) [5] and e-JIST (*e-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology*) [6], retired AJET's printed version [7]; promoted advances in AJET's profile with Thomson Reuters (the owners of *Impact Factor*), Elsevier's *Scopus*, ERIC, ERA (*Educational Research Abstracts*), Google, etc [8]; inaugurated an international Editorial Board [9]; attempted to counter the damage done by the ARC's ill-fated *Tiers* exercise [10]; sought to respond positively to the trend in submissions that was taking us in a more internationalised direction [11]; established Special Issues as a core activity [12] and tried very hard to accommodate the really big pressure, the rapid growth in the number of submissions per year [13].

To advance towards a deeper perspective, we need to look critically at the propositions that academic journals are "governed" and "given focus and direction" by their Editorial Boards and Editors, and that journals progress their esteem by becoming more highly selective with lower rates of acceptance. In the case of AJET, "focus and direction" was given very explicitly by the ARC's *Tiers* 2008 and *Tiers* 2010. From *Tiers* 2008, we got a directive to form an international Editorial Board, so we did as told [9]. From *Tiers* 2010 AJET received an even more compelling directive, demotion from *Tier A* to *Tier B* [14]. Given the normative nature of *Tiers* (A\*, top 5%; A, next 15%; B, next 30%; and C, bottom 50%) the only strategy open to AJET was to better emulate the *Tier A* journals that were potential demotions which could create a "vacancy" for AJET. In effect, *Tiers* locked us into that direction, with two main outcomes. Firstly, we proceeded to emulate the range of topics encompassed by the *Tier A* edtech journals [BJET, C&E, JCAL and ALT-J, 14]. Secondly, we sought to match at least partly the "growth spurt" made in recent years by the "edtech majors" [especially C&E, BJET and ET&S, 15] and to respond positively to increased numbers of submissions from countries that are the main contributors to this "growth spurt" phase [11, Figure 1 shows recent growth rates faster than Australia, for all regions except the Americas].



Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia, 2-5 October 2011. <http://www.ut.ac.id/icde2011/>

However, the main contribution to better emulating and overtaking certain *Tier A* journals in the last few years has been plain old fashioned hard work. The mentoring and coaching, the increased copy editing time, the long hours needed from reviewers and editors to help get submissions up to an improved and acceptable standard for publication. One dark and rarely discussed aspect of this hard work is the extra time needed to avoid any conceivable perception of an attitude that is discriminatory towards authors whose first language is not English. Of course ascilite does have a mentoring program, but it tends to be locally oriented (Australia and New Zealand) and small scale [16] compared with the work that has gone into developing AJET authors.

The rapid growth in the number of submissions per year [17] must be seen as a positive, not a negative (though it is quite "scary"). Based on the number of 2011 submissions to date (239 to 23 September, compared with 176 to the same day in 2010), we estimate that we will have a 36% increase from 2010 to 2011. Comparing with other metrics for ascilite, such as numbers of members, numbers of international members (i.e. members from countries other than Australia and New Zealand), articles published per year and their country origins (compared with ascilite's other publication, the *Conference Proceedings*), AJET is delivering growth [16]. Of course, much of this growth in AJET is due to hard work by authors from countries that count few or even no members of ascilite [11]. However, the growth pattern for AJET's peer journals [BJET, C&E, etc, 15] is very similar. It is quite understandable that the editors and boards of these journals are very aware that the proportions of authors and readers from different regions of the world are changing quite markedly, as some regions accelerate their transformations from peasant era agricultural economies to advanced industrialised, technological, urbanised economies, developing many new universities that are expanding their academic research capacities vigourously.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the review [1] contains a section titled "1.2 Document History", with the lines "AJET Management Committee/AJET Editorial Board provided feedback on these TOR." Actually, it was feedback from the Production Editor, provided on 14 July 2011 [18]. Rather surprisingly, the previous version of the TOR did not contain any of the key words "budget", "staffing", "associate editors", "evidence based", "bibliometrics", "benchmarks" and "peer journals". However, these words and associated phrases were duly included, though other matters that perhaps should have been included were not, for example whether ascilite could expand its range of publications to include a full scale newsletter (e.g. like HERDSA's *News* [19]) or *Guides* comparable to HERDSA's well-known series [20].



ePortfolios Australia  
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Curtin University, Perth  
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<http://eportfoliosaustralia.wordpress.com/conference-eac2011/>

The matter "\*\*\* Budget and staffing will report on previous years" referred to at the end of the TOR [1] can be put on the record very quickly. In 2011 and previous years the only expenditure on AJET (apart from printing and postal expenses pre-2008, as detailed in Editorial 24(1) [7]) was Conference Registration expenses for the Production Editor in 2005 and 2006, paid by ascilite Secretariat (excluding fares and accommodation; very economical!). To put another metric on the record, we estimate that AJET's current editorial work for review process and production activities amounts to 0.7 FTE (full time equivalent). More detail will be provided in Editorial 27(7), due late October-early November 2011.

With hindsight, perhaps one of our time-saving ideas adopted about five years ago was somewhat insensitive. We gave up on providing regular reports to AJET's Management Committee or to ascilite Executive, and instead we provided the equivalents in Editorials. Some readers do take the trouble to view these, as hit counts for Editorials do increment, though much more slowly than the average article's hit count. However, anyone can read the Editorials, and the Executive Committee may prefer to be in a more 'privileged' position, that is, receiving reports for consideration and approving, or not approving, publication. Perhaps some of the Editorial material would be better placed in *ascilite Newsletter*, but ascilite Executive discontinued it in mid-2009, no doubt owing to a lack of volunteers to undertake the editorship. We recognise that there is a "volume of reading" problem with Editorials, and therefore the Production Editor will set aside the time to create a web page indexing key words and contents (actually, at times we resort to *Google Scholar* searches to locate the Editorials in which a specific topic was discussed!).

Also with hindsight, we can describe more clearly the problem of two contrasting models for succession planning in a matter such as a journal's editorial staffing. The first model could be characterised as a "continuity model" or an "apprenticeship model" or a "self-sustaining" model, in which the current editorial staff induct a team of replacements - this was mentioned in Editorial 27(4) [4] and the full document is available to interested readers [21]. The second could be characterised as an "organisational contract model", in which the Society Executive calls for expressions of interest and selects a contract team, similar to (for example) governments considering tenders for a civil engineering project. For a convenient label, we could use "HERD model", after the procedure used by HERDSA to appoint the Editors and Associate Editors for HERD [22]. The "continuity/apprenticeship model" is very familiar in academia, most notably in higher degrees by research, whilst the "organisational contract model" is perhaps more recent and more in tune with current corporatisation trends in universities and societies. Thus in the issue of succession planning (which could be what the TOR is all about), there may be a clear difference between the recommendations from AJET's current Editorial staff and the



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Manila, Philippines  
27-29 October 2011

<http://glocal.org/>

ascilite Executive's predilections. We cannot be sure, for as we have indicated above, "communications between ascilite Executive and AJET's Editorial staff have been sparse in the past five years or so".

### Impact Factor revisited: AJET ranking improved

In Editorial 26(5) [23] we downgraded the correlation between AJET's *Impact Factor* ranking and AJET's *Tiers 2010* ranking from "reasonably good" to "moderately good":

In Table 1 in AJET Editorial 26(3) [24] we examined rankings for a number of educational technology journals, according to the Thomson Reuters *Impact Factor* (2008 values) and the ARC's *Tiers* list [25, 26]. With the recent publication of AJET's first *Impact Factor*, 1.278, we can move AJET up four places. [23]

Table 1 below revisits the correlation between AJET's *Impact Factor* ranking and *Tiers 2010* ranking. A further downgrading of the correlation from "moderately good" to "somewhat wonky" seems to be in order. For AJET, good news with the recent publication of our second *Impact Factor*, 1.655. On that basis we can move AJET up one more place (into third, a "podium finish", no less!). Table 1 provides an update.

Table 1: Comparing *Impact Factor* and *Tiers* rankings for some peer journals

| Journal                              | <i>Impact Factor</i> (a) | Rank order (b) | <i>Tiers 2010</i> (c) | URL for obtaining <i>Impact Factor</i>  |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---|
| Computers & Education                | Yes                      | 1              | A                     | <a href="http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/347/description">http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/347/description</a>                   |
| British J. of Educational Technology | Yes                      | 2              | A                     | <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1467-8535">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1467-8535</a>   |
| Australasian J. of Educ. Technology  | Yes<br>1.655             | 3              | B                     | <a href="http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/">http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/</a>   |
| Instructional Science                | Yes                      | 4              | A                     | <a href="http://www.springer.com/education+%26+language/learning+%26+instruction/journal/11251">http://www.springer.com/education+%26+language/learning+%26+instruction/journal/11251</a> |
| J. of Computer Assisted Learning     | Yes                      | 5              | A                     | <a href="http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0266-4909">http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0266-4909</a>   |
| Educational Technology, Res & Devt   | Yes                      | 6              | A                     | <a href="http://www.springer.com/education+%26+language/learning+%26+instruction/journal/11423">http://www.springer.com/education+%26+language/learning+%26+instruction/journal/11423</a> |
| Educational Technology & Society     | Yes                      | 7              | B                     | <a href="http://www.ifets.info/">http://www.ifets.info/</a>   |
| ALT-J: Research in Learning Technol. | No                       | Not ranked     | A                     | <a href="http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/09687769.asp">http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/09687769.asp</a>   |
| J. of Technology & Teacher Education | No                       | Not ranked     | B                     | <a href="http://www.aace.org/pubs/jtate/">http://www.aace.org/pubs/jtate/</a>   |
| Technology, Pedagogy & Education     | No                       | Not ranked     | B                     | <a href="http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/1475939X.asp">http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/1475939X.asp</a>   |

a. Based on statements appearing (or not appearing!) on journal websites; values from Thomson Reuters' 2010 *Journal Citation Reports*.  
b. Ranked according to *IF* values as published at the URLs listed in column 5 (21 Sep 2011).  
c. ARC *Tier* rankings may be obtained conveniently from [25].

**10th Biennial Conference**  
*Forging New Directions in Academic  
Language and Learning*

  
**AALL**  
Association for Academic Language and Learning

Adelaide, 24-25 November 2011. <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/aall2011/>

Whilst all of our community - authors, reviewers, readers, Society members - could feel quite chuffed with Table 1, we cannot ignore the sobering thought that, although *Tiers* was abolished by a Ministerial edict [10], quite likely it is still lurking in the underground, a concern that we explore in the next section below.

We should note two significant differentiations in Table 1. Firstly, AJET is the only journal publishing statistics on acceptance rates. However, all journals that have an *Impact Factor* publish it prominently! Does that imply a general acceptance of the proposition that *Impact Factor* is more important in the "esteem stakes" than acceptance rates? Secondly, only three journals (AJET, ET&S, and from 2012, ALT-J/RLT also) are fully open access. There is also a notable 'non-differentiation': *all of the journals in Table 1 publish articles from all sectors of education* [27].

### **Draft ERA 2012 Journal List released**

The ARC's period of consultation on its *Draft ERA 2012 Journal List* has now ended, and the draft [28] is no longer available (if you did not keep a copy, or prefer an easier way to use the list, see John Lamp's service [25]). Nevertheless, the draft provides some interesting insights into the problem of deriving a research quality indicator for assessing publications in journals. To begin with the very obvious, the number of journals is very large, with 22404 listed [28]. We extracted a subset of these in order to update an AJET editorial staff reference page [29] used for several purposes - journals to "keep an eye on"; journals we may recommend to authors whose AJET submissions have been declined; tables of contents that we may need to search or scan; etc. This highly selective subset contains 89 journals, which is rather a large number to try and "keep up with".

But 89 is actually quite a small number. The FoR ('Field of Research') that contains AJET is 1303: *Specialist Studies In Education*, which contains 476 journals! AJET is listed also in 1302: *Curriculum And Pedagogy*, containing 417 journals! "Keeping up" or being even "moderately familiar with" must be like a mission impossible for the ARC's RECs (Research Evaluation Committees). How are we to be reassured that these Committees, faced with very large numbers, will not take a tempting short cut, namely look up the *Tiers* rankings? This may not arise, we do not know, but it is a problem for a journal that had an excellent case (in our humble opinion) for promotion from *Tier B* to *Tier A*. Is AJET forever locked into an "underground" *Tier B*?

### **AJET special issues: Correcting the historical record**

In AJET Editorial 25(5) [30] we recorded being "... pleased to announce that AJET has commissioned its first special issue". It was a successful special issue, and has been followed quite quickly by others [31], but it was not the first. That honour belongs to



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Chiang Mai, Thailand. 28 Nov - 2 Dec 2011

Asia-Pacific Society for Computers in Education

<http://www.nectec.or.th/icce2011/>





Singapore, 6-9 December 2011. <http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/tlhe/>

special issue 19(2) in 2003, *Technology-supported learning communities*, with Guest Editors Lori Lockyer and Mike Keppell [32].

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

## Endnotes

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## Learning Design for a Changing World

2011  
Sydney, Australia

### 6th International LAMS and Learning Design Conference

Sydney, 8-9 December 2011. <http://lams2011sydney.lamsfoundation.org/>

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## HERDSA2012

Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Inc.

Hobart, 2-5 July 2012. <http://conference.hersda.org.au/2012/>



10th International Conference of the Learning Sciences

The Future of Learning

International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS)

and

Centre for Research on Computer Supported Learning and Cognition (CoCo), University of Sydney, 2-6 July 2012

<http://www.isls.org/icls2012/>



Perth, 2-5 October 2012

ACEC 2012

Australian Council for Computers in Education and the Educational Computing Association of Western Australia

<http://acec2012.info/>