AJET in 2023: Reflections on educational technology, people, and bibliometrics

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In this editorial we reflect on the last three years of AJET achievements, challenges, and opportunities as we reach a time of transition in the lead editorial team. We also reflect on the key themes of 2023, especially the impact that the growing availability of generative artificial intelligence has had on research and practice in the tertiary education sector. We present our annual round up of bibliometrics, thank our hardworking editorial team, and acknowledge the contributions of those who are ending their service with AJET in 2023. In conclusion, we look ahead by outlining our goals for 2024 and discussing the themes and technologies that will be a focus for AJET in the new year.

Keywords: educational technology, generative AI, academic publishing, bibliometric data

Introduction

The end of 2023 marks the three-year anniversary of the current Lead Editor team's management of AJET. We think it would be fair to say that it has been a very interesting three years. Taking carriage of such an established and well-respected journal in the middle of a global pandemic was a unique experience, but also an amazing opportunity to engage with educational technology research at a time when it has never been more necessary. Our goal over this period was to continue to grow the impact of AJET as a quality venue for educational technology research internationally, not only from a researcher's perspective, but also for practitioners and policy makers looking for evidence to support their practice. We have immersed ourselves in the world of academic publishing, learning of the many challenges currently facing editorial teams in the form of increasing numbers of competing journals (not all with good intent), academic integrity matters, and emerging concerns relating to the integrity and quality of peer review processes. There have also been many wins along the way. The journal's impact factors have remained high. We have had opportunities to work with great academics in the field through our teams of Associate Editors, Guest contributors, Copyeditors, and Editorial Board. We have supported the work of interesting and innovative researchers from all around the world from submission through to publication, refining and introducing new processes along the way to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the journal. We have also connected with the ASCILITE community in an effort to provide professional learning opportunities for people across the field.

It is with this lens that we approach this year's final editorial in which we will present our recap of the year's activities, outcomes, and directions for the future. Before we do that, it is timely to mention the contribution of one of our Lead Editors who will be stepping down from her role at the end of 2023. Associate Professor Kate Thompson has made many contributions to AJET over the years, including reviewing, guest editing, as an Associate Editor, and then taking on the Lead Editor role. Over the last three years, Kate has been central to the organisation of the editorial teams' activities, overseeing the copyediting process, and making several significant contributions to the conversations about educational technology research we have been prompting through our editorials. It should be acknowledged that the role of a Lead Editor is a substantial commitment both in time and thought, and Kate has given her all in both areas. We wish Kate all the best in her future endeavours and are grateful for all the hard work she has contributed over all her years associated with AJET.

With Kate's departure, we are welcoming two new Lead Editors into the team. As a journal sponsored by the ASCILITE community, we have embraced the spirit of providing opportunities for people to grow and develop in a supportive and sustainable environment. As a result, we have amended our Lead Editor recruitment process to give first preference to those who have already shown a commitment to the journal in the form of being an Associate Editor. We are very happy to announce that Dr Feifei Han (Australian Catholic University) and Associate Professor Henk Huijser (Queensland University of Technology) will be moving from their Associate Editor role to join the Lead Editor team in the new year. We are very excited to be working with two such highly regarded researchers in the field and look forward to the new ideas and perspectives they will bring to the future direction of AJET.

Key themes in 2023

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus has been credited as the originator of the phrase "the only constant in life is change". Change has been the key theme of each of the end-of-year editorials we have written for AJET, and once again it has been a year marked by change, particularly in relation to the rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence (generative AI). At the same time, there has been a chance to revisit the idea of change through consideration of some of the fundamental ideas that underpin the field, with the help of important voices in the evolution of educational technology research. In this section we will unpack a range of topics that have been front-of-mind for the editorial team throughout 2023.

Generative artificial intelligence

Due to its prevalence in tertiary education conversations throughout the year, generative AI has been the focus of two AJET editorials (Lodge et al., 2023; Thompson et al., 2023) as well as the themed, fifth issue of the journal in 2023. The introduction of 'groundbreaking' new technologies into education is something we have witnessed time and time again, and generative AI has also been hailed as a 'revolution' for tertiary education. However, the full extent of the impact of generative AI and the ways in which institutions can best respond is yet to be seen. We will not delve into more detail here as this is contained in the editorial for the most recent issue of AJET (see Thompson et al., 2023). It is, however, timely to remind readers of AJET's new policy for the use of artificial intelligence in publishing which can be found on the AJET website. It has been encouraging to observe, and participate in, generative AI becoming a driver for broader conversations about how students learn, how and what we assess, and how what we do in tertiary education prepares students for their future roles in industry.

The peer review process

In our second editorial of the year, we tackled the multifaceted topic of the peer review process in educational technology journal publishing. As pressure on academics to publish increases, the number of journals in the field rises, and competing priorities within academics' workloads remain high, journals are experiencing increasing challenges in reviewer availability and quality of reviews. Without timely and high-quality reviews, a journal such as AJET cannot maintain its high standards, and this is an area of significant importance to the AJET editorial team. In addition to our editorial highlighting the issues and considerations for future practice (see Corrin et al., 2023), the lead editors also ran a workshop for the ASCILITE community which proved to be a great venue for discussion and exploration of the assumptions, approaches, and concerns related to peer review. It was apparent that more development opportunities are needed in this area, and the editorial team intends to expand the support we offer for reviewers in 2024. To be alerted to these activities in the new year, please follow the AJET account on LinkedIn or X/Twitter (@AJET_eds).

Educational technology

As part of our third issue of the year, we had the great privilege to publish a guest editorial by Emeritus Professor Peter Goodyear (University of Sydney), a leading figure in educational technology research for many decades. In this editorial, Goodyear (2023) took us back, not only into the history of educational

technology, but also the role of AJET in this story. He defended the label of "educational technology" over more recent names such as "digital learning", and made a case for why it is an important field of research and practice. In particular, he commented on the role that theory and methodology can play in ensuring quality research and establishing researcher identity in the field. We thank Peter for this most stimulating editorial and look forward to including commentary from other significant researchers in the field in future issues of AJET.

Practical application of educational technology in tertiary education

Whether it was generative AI or blended learning, a key emphasis of AJET articles in 2023 was on surfacing the practical applications and considerations for implementing educational technologies in tertiary education. As a journal designed to appeal to a diverse audience, it is important to ensure that the practical implications of the research presented are clear and useful to researchers, learning designers, administrators, and educators alike. From the role of technology in research supervision, to practical uses of sophisticated technologies such as augmented reality and artificial intelligence, the 2023 collection of AJET articles addresses a wide range of practical uses of technology in learning environments, as well as the pedagogical considerations in such applications. Improving the accessibility of research outcomes published in AJET is a matter that the editorial team continually revisit in order to serve all the stakeholder groups that can benefit from this work.

Bibliometric data for 2023

In 2023 the topics addressed in AJET articles ranged from problem-based learning, open educational resources and practices, blended and flipped learning, to virtual and augmented reality. Several articles focused on the role of teaching-focused academics and/or learning designers in the use and design of educational technology in practice. After an increase in the number of articles published in AJET for the last two years, this year we saw a marked decrease from 72 to 43 (see Table 1). Despite a rise in overall submissions, the number of articles that were sent to peer review was fewer than previous years. This is largely due to a high number of submissions that were out of scope of the journal or that lacked sufficient potential for impact. We will have more to say about some of the main reasons that articles are not being sent for review in a future AJET editorial, highlighting the clear ways to ensure that an article will not be accepted in a high-impact journal.

Table 1
AJET Publication Summary

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Issues published	6	6	6	6
Articles published	59	67	72	43
Editorials published	6	6	6	6

In compiling the readership figures for this editorial, an error in the previous reporting method used to generate these figures was found. Therefore, we have revised the last three years' figures to reflect the more accurate method now used to calculate readership of abstracts and full article downloads. It was pleasing to discover that, contrary to our previous observation that access to full articles was declining (Corrin et al., 2022), there has in fact been a steady increase each year in both abstract views and article downloads.

Table 2
Readership interest in AJET

	2021	2022	2023
Access numbers to article landing pages (abstracts)	444,471	518,833	530,424*
Access numbers to full articles	356,779	369,418	385,133*

* These figures are calculated up to 28 December 2023, so do not include the last few days of the year.

The submission and review statistics for AJET over the past three years are presented below in Table 3. After a slight dip in total submissions in 2022, we have seen these numbers rise in 2023 again. While this is something to celebrate, as noted above, there have been some scope and quality issues that have prevented many articles from reaching the review part of the process. We have also noticed an increase in the expectations of quality and rigour held by many reviewers. In the editorial for the second issue of 2023 (Corrin et al., 2023), increased critical review of research was found to be a trend that has been observed more broadly in academic publishing in recent times (D'Andrea & O'Dwyer, 2017). Ensuring balance between critical reviews and the expectations of the journal is an important role the Associate Editors play in the AJET peer review process. However, as also noted above, we intend to run activities in 2024 focused on conducting reviews that are critically constructive and include the provision of developmental feedback to authors.

Table 3
AJET Submission and Review Statistics based on submissions per year

AJET Submissions and Reviews	2021	2022*	2023*
Total submissions	767	618	695
Declined at editorial screening (percentage of total submissions)	597 (78%)	473 (77%)	576 (83%)
Peer reviewed (percentage of total submissions)	170 (22%)	145 (23%)	119 (17%)
Declined at peer review (percentage of peer reviewed)	106 (62%)	109 (75%)	66 (55%)
Accepted (percentage of peer reviewed)	64 (38%)	37 (25%)	23 (19%)
Declined (either at editorial screening or following peer review, percentage of total submissions)	703 (92%)	580 (94%)	642 (92%)
Accepted (percentage of total submissions)	64 (8%)	37 (6%)**	23 (3%)**

* These figures are calculated from 1st December to the 30th November as per our new reporting period.
** Some articles are in the process of peer review, which is why the total declined and accepted does not equal the total submissions.

In Table 4 the most frequently downloaded articles for each issue of 2023 are presented. Not surprisingly, articles about generative AI were very popular this year, with the editorial of the first issue achieving more than 3,000 downloads, the highest number of downloads of any first issue article in the year of release. However, it should be noted that the editorial by Emeritus Professor Peter Goodyear has already achieved over 1,000 downloads in just over two months. The continued impact of AJET editorials to broader conversations around educational technology is encouraging and has inspired the lead editor team to ensure that future editorial topics align with the current needs and trends of the field.

Table 4
Top 2023 AJET Articles per Issue by Full Article Downloads to 28/12/2023

Issue	Article	Authors	Downloads
Vol 39, No 1	Mapping out a research agenda for generative artificial intelligence in tertiary education (*Editorial*)	Lodge, J. M., Thompson, K., & Corrin, L.	3,048
Vol 39, No 2	Defining an effective approach to blended learning in higher education: A systematic review	McCarthy, S., & Palmer, E.	934
Vol 39, No 3	An education in educational technology (*Editorial*)	Goodyear, P.	1,005
Vol 39, No 4	ChatGPT and its impact on research supervision: Insights from Australian postgraduate research students	Dai, Y., Lai, S., Lim, C. P., & Liu, A.	277
Vol 39, No 5	Academics' perceptions of ChatGPT-generated written outputs: A practical application of Turing's Imitation Game	Matthews, J., & Volpe, C. R.	180

The 2023 Special Issue theme focused on "Technology-enabled undergraduate and postgraduate research supervision" overseen by Associate Professor Kwong Nui Sim (Central Queensland University), Professor Maria Northcote (Avondale University), and Professor Cher Ping Lim (The Education University of Hong Kong, China). The articles in this issue focused on a wide range of aspects related to the use of technology in research supervision including research systems, feedback provision, and learning management systems. Two of the articles explore the potential role of generative AI in research supervision, offering insight into research students' perspectives, and considerations for leadership in how generative AI can assist in research supervision activities.

In addition, we also published a themed issue on "AI in tertiary education: impacts for research and practice" in response to the increasing conversations around generative AI across the sector. The articles explored the use of generative AI from the perspectives of learners and teachers, its impact on learning and design, and the role of different stakeholders in informing the creation of government policy. This issue is timely in providing initial evidence to inform researchers' and practitioners' decision making about generative AI as the tools and applications continue to develop.

The 2024 special issue will focus on "Advancements in Technology-Enhanced Assessment in Higher Education". The goals of this special issue are to introduce innovative approaches to technology-enhanced assessment, encourage collaborative discussion around assessment design, and embrace diversity. The guest editors for this issue will be Dr Daniele Agostini (University of Trento, Italy), Associate Professor Alexandra Lazareva (University of Agder, Norway), and Federica Picasso (University of Trento, Italy).

In terms of bibliometrics, AJET has continued to perform strongly across the board (see Table 5 below). The JCR impact factor continued to rise to 4.1 with a five-year impact factor of 4.4 which maintains AJET's Q1 status. AJET's Google Scholar H5 index rose again from 49 to 51, and AJET retained its 13th place on Google's top 20 educational technology journal list. A similar rise was observed in the Scopus Citescore increasing from 5.9 in 2021 to 6.9 in 2022.

Table 5
AJET Bibliometrics

AJET Bibliometrics		2020	2021	2022*
JCR	JCR Impact Factor	3.067	3.73	4.1
	JCR 5-year Impact Factor	3.507	3.865	4.4
	JCR journal ranking in Education category based on 5-year Impact Factor	77/265 Q2	58/270 Q1	45/269 Q1
Scimago	SJR Impact Factor	1.397	1.249	1.104
	SJR ranking in Education	Q1	Q1	Q1
Google Scholar	H5 index	39	49	51
	H5 ranking within Educational Technology category	15/20	13/20	13/20
Scopus	CiteScore	5.5	5.9	6.9
	Journal ranking in Education	69/1319	92/1406	95/1469
	SNIP	1.95	1.948	1.728

* 2023 bibliometric data will be available in 2024

The AJET lead editorial team are proud of this continued strong performance across international bibliometric measures and recognise that this is only possible as a result of the hard work of our authors, reviewers, copyeditors and Associate Editors.

The AJET team

In 2023 the AJET team of Associate Editors, copyeditors, and reviewers have continued to provide fantastic, voluntary service to the journal which had been vital to its ongoing success. In particular, we would like to acknowledge our team of Associate Editors who include:

- Dr Thomas Chiu, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Dr Simon K. S. Cheung, The Open University of Hong Kong
- Associate Professor Thomas Donald Cochrane, The University of Melbourne, Australia
- Associate Professor Chris Deneen, University of South Australia, Australia
- Associate Professor Rachel Fitzgerald, The University of Queensland, Australia
- Professor Teresa S Foulger, Arizona State University, United States
- Dr Feifei Han, Australian Catholic University, Australia
- Associate Professor Henk Huijser, Queensland University of Technology, Australia
  Associate Professor Chien-Ching Lee, Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore
- Professor Stephen Marshall, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
- Associate Professor Kwong Nui Sim, Central Queensland University, Australia
- Professor Jerry Chih-Yuan Sun, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan
- Professor Joke Voogt, University of Amsterdam/ Windesheim University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands

We would also like to particularly thank Associate Professor Matthew Kearney (University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Australia), who ended his term with AJET in 2023, for all his service over the last five years.

The AJET copyeditors Antonina Petrolito and Kayleen Wood have worked closely with the Lead Editors throughout 2023 to ensure a high standard of published articles is maintained. We wish Kayleen all the best in her future career after she stepped down from the role in March. While too many to name individually, we extend heartfelt thanks to our international team of reviewers who perform an invaluable service to the journal.

Future directions for AJET

As we welcome two new Lead Editors to AJET in 2024, we are looking forward to incorporating their fresh ideas and perspectives into future plans for the journal. We are committed to continuing our focus on publishing quality articles that are impactful while providing practical support to the field. We will ensure that the sustainability and reliability of the peer review process remains a high priority and this will be supported through professional learning activities throughout 2024. Additionally, we aim to further improve processes and communication around the journal and its activities to alert readers, reviewers, and authors to new articles and opportunities for publication with AJET.

We will also continue to monitor the impact that the emergence of generative AI has on academic publishing, and adjust our policies and practices as appropriate. Generative AI can provide researchers with opportunities to take much of the busy work out of the research process (Stokel-Walker & Van Noorden, 2023), but also challenges the ways we have considered research contributions in the past (Conroy, 2023). We will also continue to monitor the responses of other journals and institutions to the acknowledgement of work undertaken by generative AI tools (e.g., Kaebnick et al., 2023). The increase in articles focusing on the uses of generative AI in tertiary education submitted to AJET has also been noticeable this year, continuing beyond the call for the themed issue. We expect this to continue into 2024 and we are keen to publish work that helps researchers and practitioners navigate this uncertainty. As always, we end 2023 with optimism and curiosity for how the field of educational technology will continue to evolve.

Author contributions

Linda Corrin: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review and editing; **Kate Thompson**: Writing - original draft, Writing - review and editing; **Jason Lodge**: Writing – review and editing.

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