



Monthly e-Newsletter – December 2007

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EDITORIAL

The newsletter is a little late, for which I apologise. Attendance at the remarkable 2007 AAIR Forum took precedence over putting this missive together.

My reading and cybertravel has been more than usually eclectic over the last six weeks. Be forewarned – this newsletter is a real random read.

Ideas and content for the newsletter are welcome, as is your feedback. Please take the opportunity to share with your colleagues.

Subject to space and relevance to members, the newsletter can run job vacancies and items on upcoming events. Contact me at: rob@sharpwords.com.au

Back copies of Newsletters, from June 2007, are available on the AAIR website: <http://www.aair.org.au/Pages/Newsletters.html>

I'm happy to respond to queries about items in the newsletter. Sometimes I get a bit distracted by other things so it may take me a week or more to get back to you.

HAVE A TOP CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR BREAK



Thanks for reading. Be back in 2008.

SURVEY OFFICER POSITION AT UTS

In early 2008 the University of Technology Sydney's Planning and Quality Unit will be recruiting a Survey Officer to assist with the Australian Graduate Survey, internal surveys and other feedback mechanisms.

If anyone wishes to express interest in applying for this role they should contact:

Antoine Goarin
 UTS Survey Manager
 Tel: 02 9514 2607
 email: antoine.goarin@uts.edu.au

JOURNAL OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH (JIR)

JIR is back! It has migrated from hard copy to online format and the current edition is now available on the AAIR website: <http://www.aair.org.au/jir/html/Journal.htm>

Papers from earlier numbers are available at the same address.

Thanks to Josie Palermo, AAIR Vice-President, and editor Tina Thornton who dropped in a digital engine and pumped up the tyres on the environmentally sustainable and intellectually sustaining JIR.

Sharpen your pencil and submit your contribution!

AAIR Committee members

- President:** Ivan Skaines, University of Western Sydney
- Immediate Past President:** Wendy Marchment, Griffith University
- Vice President:** Josephine Palermo, Deakin University
- Hon Secretary:** Dean Ward, Edith Cowan University
- Hon Treasurer and Membership Secretary:** Marian Thakur, Monash University

General Committee:

- Bruce Guthrie, Graduate Careers Australia
- Don Johnston, Southern Cross University
- Dave Marr, Australian National University
- Andrea Matulick, University of South Australia
- Rob Sheehan, Sharp Words Editing & Writing Services (Victoria)
- AAIR website:** <http://www.aair.org.au/>

AAIR FORUM MAGNUM SYDNEYENSIS 2007

Forum Magnum: rough translation – a magnificent place to meet, learn, listen and chinwag.

The 2007 AAIR Forum in Sydney from 28-30 November was a glittering success. If you couldn't be with us, never fear – some of the info below may get you a little closer to the action.

Forum papers

About 25 papers from this year's conference are now accessible via the AAIR website – thanks to Nick Booth. If you couldn't attend, had to make an unenviable choice between three papers in the one session, or just slept in, you can catch up here: <http://www.aair.org.au/jir/2007Papers/Index.html>

Papers from earlier AAIR fora are available at: <http://www.aair.org.au/jir/html/Forum.htm>

Photographs

Stay tuned. Photos from the Forum will soon appear on the website.

The video

Don't fret; there wasn't a video of the Forum. But Kerrie Lee-Krause played one during her keynote address. It has spread like wildfire over the nation in the last month or so. If you haven't seen it, I think you'll find it a well-spent five minutes – titled *A Vision of Students Today*, it's also on YouTube: <http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/?p=119>

Thanks

There are many folk to dip our lids to.

Our keynote speakers, for pushing our buttons and our boundaries:

- Ian Hawke, Assistant Director-General (International, Non-State and Higher Education), Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and the Arts
- Kerri-Lee Krause, Chair in Higher Education, and Director, Griffith Institute for Higher Education
- Geoff Scott, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality), University of Western Sydney

Our workshop leaders and our presenters, for taking the time.

Our sponsors – UWS, GCA and COGNOS – for seeing the value.

You know at a symphony concert when the conductor enters stage left – you know how the string players tap their bows on their stands? Well I reckon that on 14 December at 2.00pm AEST we should all tap the bottom left hand corners of our computer screens for the four maestri from UWS who gave us the 2007 Forum:

- Ivan Skaines - Forum frontman and AAIR President
- Helen Angelakis and Kim Jarvis – who spent weeks and weeks planning the Forum's three days
- Geoff Scott – who let the other three maestri do their thing.

Next year

Yes, Virginia, there will be a Forum in 2008. More about the 2009 Forum in Canberra will appear in next year's newsletters.

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES & BLOGGIES

To blog is to learn

Two liberal arts college teachers in the US – Barbaras Ganley and Sawhill – have written a marvellous paper (deep breath): *How did a couple of veteran classroom teachers end up in a space like this? Extraordinary intersections between learning, social software and teaching*. You have a choice – download them reading the paper, or read the paper at the link below. You ought do both.

It's a great excursion into open social software, affirming that the digital isn't just a tool for learning and teaching; it's a way of learning and teaching. It's also an antidote to the notion that 'young people today have stopped relating to people in favour of relating to the net and mobiles' – the paper says loud and clear that young people today are using Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, texting etc not as a way to limit relationships with people but as a way of extending the circle of relationships. From the Knowledge Tree e-journal: <file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/wxp/My%20Documents/My%20Received%20Podcasts/Other%20pods/28xhcq.htm>

Blogging in second year (that's primary school, not university)

Blogging is second nature as a way of learning to the kids who will arrive in vocational education and training, and in higher education, over the next few years. Here's an example from six and seven year old students at Nelson Central Primary School in New Zealand: <http://room9nelsoncentral.blogspot.com/>

Their teacher has a video presentation on why she uses blogs, linked from the address above, but in case it slips past you, worth viewing: <http://rachelboyd.blogspot.com/2007/04/why-let-our-students-blog.html>

Should public schools be privatised?

Andrews Norton and Leigh – who both run their own blogs – have just finished a blogbate, taking different sides to this question: Norton from right and Leigh from the left. Fascinating. You can find the debate posted on either blog: <http://andrewnorton.info/blog/2007/12/02/should-public-schools-be-privatised-day-1/> or <http://andrewleigh.com/?p=1728>

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

The 6th International Conference on Imagination & Education – 29-31 January, 2008

Should be a conference on the links between imagination and education at least once a year in every school, TAFE and university across the globe. If you've only got three spare days to investigate the symbiotic link, then drop in on this digital link and arrange a trip to Canberra – the conference theme is *Imaginative practice, imaginative inquiry*: <http://imaginativeeducation.org/conferences/index.php/2008/index>

Australian Higher Education Congress 2008 – 17-18 March, 2008

This conference has a strong cast of VCs, business leaders and CEOs of this and that. It's endorsed by HERDSA and the Go8. Sydneyside, it will cost you either \$1094.50 or \$1,424.50 to go along for the two days. A mite pricey, don't you think? Or am I the bloke who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing? Conference topics include: post federal election keynote address; agenda for HE in the next decade; changing business models used by universities; fairness, fees and equity in HE; international education opportunities for Australia – a business perspective; the 2020 manager. Details: <http://www.acevents.com.au/education2008/>

IT IS WRITTEN

But is it read?

Serge Herzog (Director, Institutional Analysis, University Nevada) bowled along to the AAIR Forum in Sydney. He steered me towards this volume – *To read or not to read: a question of national consequence*, which reports on a US National Endowment for the Arts study. I found it a bit scary. Doesn't beat around the bush – the three main findings were:

- Americans are spending less time reading
- Reading comprehension skills are eroding
- These declines have serious civic, social, cultural and economic implications.

I skipped my way through a lot of it – but I slowed right down for chapter 9 – reading civilises us, it seems: <http://www.arts.gov/research/ToRead.pdf>

Aussie PISA

I'm hoping that reading in the Antipodes isn't in quite such bad shape. The 2006 data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) might give some cause for optimism. PISA is an international (OECD nations plus a bunch of others) survey of 15 year olds that seeks to measure how well kids can apply their knowledge to live problems. The reading literacy data for 2006 shows the top five, in order as: Korea, Finland, Hong Kong, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Good. Good enough? The breakdown on these data is on the ACER website:
http://www.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/kf_read.html

There's a 16-page brief on Aussie PISA outcomes on the ACER website, titled *PISA in Brief: from Australia's Perspective*. The overview draws on the main Australian report – *Exploring scientific literacy: How Australia measures up. The PISA 2006 survey of students' scientific, reading and mathematical literacy skills*. The bird's eye view is here:
http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/PISA2006_PISAinbrief.pdf

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Channelling UNSW

UNSW set up its own YouTube channel a couple of months ago. I've cruised around it for a bit – 47 videos to consider: <http://www.youtube.com/unsw>

Good for a chuckle, with a serious environmental message:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVcZjEbNHm0&feature=user>

Serious environmental message:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kJqsDh8cs0&feature=user>

I'll leave the rest to you.

2. Working out

The Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council released in August – gee, that was a long time ago – a paper titled *Graduate Employability Skills*. Yes, we've been talking about this endlessly for years. In VET qualifications we now have employability skills embedded in units of competency. But the path in HE has been a stiffer

climb – how to teach, assess and report employability skills has led to some sheer cliffs. What I like about this report is that it provides a good review of where we've come from in the discussion, and it provides some practical thoughts about how to proceed. It's here:
<http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/E58EFDBE-BA83-430E-A541-2E91BCB59DF1/18858/GraduateEmployabilitySkillsFINALREPORT.pdf>

There was an article in the Fin Review's education supplement on 10 December looking at these giddy heights, with a brief pen pic of how Curtin, VU, UWA and Melbourne are reaching for the summit.

3. Speaking for all of us

The US Modern Language Association released a month or so ago a report on 2006 enrolments in languages in US HE. A rosy picture of growth and diversity, though it's perhaps not surprising that just over half of all enrolments are in Spanish with a big drop to second place-getter in French at around 13%. It's a bounce back from recent years, but still half the enrolment rate of the mid-60s. The report is here:
http://www.mla.org/2006_flenrollmentsurvey

On the languages front, it's clear that in Australia things are much worse. See, for example, the Go8 Discussion Paper *Languages in Crisis* released in June:
<http://www.go8.edu.au/policy/papers/2007/Go8%20Languages%20in%20Crisis%20Discussion%20Paper.pdf>

Also worth visiting the Modern Languages Teachers Association of Victoria (MLTAV) website for the take outs from a forum it ran in September where it asked the political parties to put their policies on the public record. Good format for reporting – not seen one like this before:
<http://www.mltav.asn.au/content/view/154/>

We wait to see how the new Commonwealth government will roll out its action plan for increasing the numbers of secondary school students studying Asian languages:
<http://www.alp.org.au/media/0507/msedutloo100.php>

Laurie Ferguson's speech – referred to in one of his answers at the MLTAV Forum – may give a tiny insight into the new government's thinking:
<http://www.laurieferguson.com.au/lf/filelibrary/files/Victorian%20Language%20Speech.pdf>

4. A year for tongues

Just as an aside, 2008 is UNESCO's International Year of Languages:

http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35559&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

5. First Sir Gareth Roberts Science Policy Lecture

In early November the UK Minister for Science and Innovation, Ian Pearson, delivered the first Sir Gareth Roberts Science Policy Lecture. I think it's pretty good. In part he talks about the role of public policy in building and maintaining trust between the science community and society at large. Read on:

http://www.dius.gov.uk/speeches/pearson_sirgarethroberts_061107.html

6. A conference for the animals

Sometimes an acronym is worth its weight in gold. This one is worth a pot of dubloons: ANZCAART is the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching. ANZCAART is holding a conference in Auckland, 29 June-1 July 2008. The conference title is 'Blue sky to deep water: the reality and the promise'.

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/events/current.html>

7. US Council on Undergraduate Research

The US Council on Undergraduate Research – unhappily known as CUR – lists a set of 'how to' publications I'm way too lousy to buy. But if you know of these and they are any good, let us all know. The list is here:

<http://www.cur.org/Publications/Howtoseries.html>

8. Doctor who?

Liverpool Hope University puts the names of its recent doctoral students up in big red letters. Good thing. I'm dismayed sometimes at the lack of public recognition of this kind that doctoral students get. Here's the list, along with the titles of their theses, and one or two that have morphed into books:

<http://www.hope.ac.uk/research/doctorates.htm>

9. Macquarie Uni – e-newsletters

Amongst the postgrad e-newsletters around the traps, there are two from Macquarie that strike me as wised up to their audiences.

They're both called *Postgrad and Beyond* – yeah, that's a bit confusing. But one is for the HDR contingent:

<http://www.postgradandbeyond.mq.edu.au/enewsletter/research/index.html>

... and the other is for the coursework mob:

<http://www.postgradandbeyond.mq.edu.au/enewsletter/coursework/index.html>

10. Measured readings

Universities UK released in November a report titled *The use of bibliometrics to measure research quality in UK higher education institutions*. In part a contribution to what comes after the Research Assessment Exercise (and maybe an inadvertent contributor to the Australian debate about the future of the RQF that almost was). I dunno who did the art work for this little tome, but it must have been awfully dark the day it was done. But that's got nothing to do with what's within – for example, that bibliometrics work fine if you are looking at the world from the global management parapet, but you have to be pretty careful if you are going to use them as a way of sorting out what's happening streetside in each of the disciplines. For the upsides and the downsides:

<http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/bibliometrics.pdf>

11. Measured research

Also in November, the Higher Education Funding Council for England released its consultation paper on the development of the RAE replacement – the Research Excellence Framework. I haven't read it yet, but I will:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_34/07_34.pdf

12. A science teacher's delight

MIT has an open course ware site where it has collected a bunch of resources suitable for use in secondary schools. I've perused a couple of these – there are some courses designed by students at MIT included.

<http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/hs/home/home/index.htm>

13. Tasmania Tomorrow

David Bartlett – Tassie’s Minister for Education – released in November the government’s Consultation Response to the proposals contained in *Qualifications and Skills for Tasmania Tomorrow* – this is exciting stuff which integrates the management of education policy and operations across the secondary, VET and higher education sectors. There will be more of this, methinks: <http://tomorrow.education.tas.gov.au/home/Consultation-Response.pdf>

14. Fee refunds to HSC students in NSW TAFE

The NSW government is going to refund TAFE fees to students who study HSC at a TAFE Institute, provided they complete the HSC. Seems like a sensible incentive for the 7,000 students who do their HSC at TAFE, and at \$2m it’s a steal: <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/newsroom/yr2007/oct/taferefunds.htm>

15. NCVER’s VET atlas

This is brilliant. NCVER has created a VET atlas that allows you access to data on students, courses and apprenticeships in publicly funded VET – and you can burrow right down to Statistical Divisions, as well as state and national numbers. Just the beta version so the best is yet to come! Have fun: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/resources/atlas/intro.html>

16. Weaving the web for mature aged learners

This is an important report. Says me. And it’s only 13 pages long so it won’t take you long to check out whether I’ve made a fair call. The study was supported by the Australian Flexible Training Network – called *E-learning for mature aged learners*. Given the necessary focus in coming decades on reskilling and upskilling existing workers, it’s important to get a sense of how e-learning looks to the post-net generations. News is good: http://e-learningindicators.flexiblelearning.net.au/docs/Elearning_Mature_Aged_Learners_Report07.pdf

17. Get me a plumber!

West Virginia Uni couldn’t recruit people to a number of trades positions because of a skills shortage. So WVU looked to its existing staff and offered apprenticeships to a few 40 somethings: <http://www.hr.wvu.edu/apprentice/>

18. Education exports in the UK – a summary of the sums

The British Council released in September a report titled *Global value: The value of UK education and training exports: an update*. The title captures the content very neatly – covers schools, universities, consultancies etc. Only around 30 pages and some interesting cuts on the data, and a bunch of recommendations about data that needs to be collected. I think we could make similar calls: <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/09/17/britishcouncil.pdf>

19. Student engagement data in the hands of students

The pilot Australian Survey of Student Engagement (<http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse/index.html>) has now landed and the report is circulating within universities. Thought it might be interesting to see what can be done with the data. *USA Today* uses the US National Survey of Student Engagement to provide an interactive pick and choose across colleges. I haven’t described it well – better you just try it out: http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-11-04-nse-how-to_N.htm

20. Higher Education Policy Institute

Seems student engagement is the new black. The UK Higher Education Policy Institute released in September a report called *The Academic Experience of Students in English Universities* – a quick scan suggests this is part student engagement, part student experience. I’m putting this one aside for a slow day in January. You might want to jump on it sooner: <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/pubdetail.asp?ID=240&DOC=reports>

21. Another entrant in the rankings stakes

Dean Ward – the venerable AAIR Secretary – brought to my attention an article in *The Economist* about the OECD’s plans for issuing its own university league tables in 2010. The focus is on teaching and skills that are transferable to the workplace. Something else for us to argue the merits of: http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10143217

2007 AAIR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

In this report to the AAIR 2007 AGM the AAIR Executive Committee would like to give an overview of the activities of the Association in 2007 and some planned initiatives in 2008 and into the future.

Journal of Institutional Research

The *Journal* has been integral to AAIR's communication strategy since its establishment over a decade ago. In an important shift towards acknowledging reader needs and preferences, and considering the significant costs associated with printing a hard-copy journal, the Executive Committee took the decision that for the first time entered the digital age with the online publication of this issue. We hope this new format will ensure the continuing quality and accessibility of the *Journal*, increasing readership as we improve our online presence.

In particular the latest issue of the *Journal* comprises papers that demonstrate the breadth of interest and quality of scholarship of institutional researchers in Australia. These contributions in particular demonstrate the challenges Australian higher education faces in the global market place and provide important insights into the nature of the performance measures currently in use in the system.

We would like to acknowledge Josie Palermo, and of course all the reviewers who donate their time. We would also like to thank our technical editor, Tina Thornton, who has provided us with invaluable insights and technical competence, especially during this transition to the new format.

Newsletter

During 2007 the AAIR Newsletter was revamped and expanded by the editor Rob Sheehan. There has been a lot of positive feedback about the Newsletter from across the sector with a number of people reporting that it is the only newsletter they read or look forward to receiving. The Australian Universities Quality Agency has asked if it can use excerpts from the Newsletter for its own Newsletter with due acknowledgement of AAIR. The Committee thanks Rob for his considerable effort this year in taking the Newsletter in a new direction.

2007 Forum

This year's Forum has attracted more than 140 participants from New Guinea, Malaysia, Cambodia, China, Oman, South Africa, Canada, the USA, New Zealand and, of course, Australia. The Forum included three keynote speakers, approximately 40 paper presentations and ten workshops, and a varied social program.

AAIR Strategy workshop

The new AAIR Executive Committee met in Melbourne in February to develop a vision for AAIR's future and was informed by a survey of members carried out in early 2007. The workshop was facilitated by Maree Conway from Victoria University. Now that the 2007 Forum is over we need to distribute the actions from that workshop for comment by the members of AAIR.

Workplace Productivity Programme Project

As members will recall, last year DEST, via the Workplace Productivity Programme, provided to Edith Cowan University (ECU) funds to develop a National Benchmarking System for the Higher Education Student Collection (NatBes). Input into this development has been via a Reference Group of AAIR members and others, together with an open invitation to all AAIR members to review and make comments on the project. ECU would like to express their appreciation for the feedback provided by many of our members.

The completion of NatBes will represent a milestone in controlled access to detailed Higher Education data for benchmarking purposes, which to date has not been possible or has been difficult. Due to the workload within DEST, the data files required have been delayed significantly, which in turn impacted the completion of NatBes. As a consequence, ECU has rescheduled the Project's development consultants many times which has been problematic due to the shortage of IT consultants in WA given buoyant economic conditions and needs of other businesses. Completion is now expected in the middle of 2008, with a test NatBes being released progressively to the Reference Group, and then members late in the first quarter next year, for user testing.

Joint AAIR and ATEM Professional Development Seminar in Sydney

On 18 May 2007 ATEM and AAIR jointly hosted a professional development workshop titled Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement at the UTS. The seminar covered various aspects of strategic planning, including environmental and competitive intelligence scanning, and link in with other planning processes, including student load and workforce planning and the development of performance measures. The presenters were:

- Martin Hanlon, Director of the Planning and Quality Unit, UTS
- Sandra Harrison, Director of Planning at the University of Sydney
- Susan Hudson, Project Officer, and Ivan Skaines, Manager of Strategic Planning and Review, UWS

We hope to organise similar professional development opportunities, and through strategic partnerships with other associations and organisations promote institutional research and AAIR across the sector.

International Fora

As AAIR President, Ivan Skaines attended two fora in 2007: the European Association for Institutional Research in Innsbruck, Austria, in August, and the Southeast Asian Association for Institutional Research Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, in September. At the SEAAIR Forum Ivan was a member of a Panel discussion on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Australian Universities Quality Forum (AUQF)

AAIR continues as one of three higher education associations involved in the Joint Steering Group for the annual AUQF held in Hobart in July 2007 and to be held in Canberra next year. Our involvement in this initiative gives us a relatively high profile with AUQA and also with the higher education sector generally.

Meeting of Associations

In conjunction with the AUQF in Hobart in July, AAIR, ATEM (Maree Conway) and HERDSA (Shelda Debowski) organised and facilitated a meeting of associations in the higher education sector in Australia. Those attending included CAUL, CAUDIT, TEFMA, ARMS and, of course, ATEM, HERDSA and AAIR. A large part of the conversation was around how the associations could cooperate on an ongoing basis including opportunities for cooperating with professional development activities.

2008 AAIR Forum

Planning for the 2008 Forum is already well underway. It will be hosted by ANU in Canberra in November. The Forum Chair will be Dave Marr from ANU. The Forum Committee comprises staff from ANU and DEST.

2008 and beyond

Below are some issues of concern/interest to the Executive Committee. Comments and suggestions are welcome from AAIR members:

- Conduct regular webinars/virtual conferences to enable more people to be involved in the activities of AAIR (could include targeted training on issues relevant to institutional researchers)
- Provide grants for people from developing countries, students, others ?? to attend the annual Forum
- Commission research on "hot" topics of interest to institutional researchers. The findings of the research could be presented at forums/seminars as well as used in submissions to government etc
- Provide travel grants to Executive Committee members to represent AAIR at national/international events
- Representation from NZ, New Guinea and the South Pacific on the AAIR Executive Committee
- Upgrade the AAIR webpage including the *Journal* page.

It gives me great pleasure to provide this report to members on behalf of the AAIR Executive Committee.

Ivan Skaines
President, AAIR