



**Monthly e-Newsletter – February 2008**

**What's in this edition?**

AIR Summer Data Policy Institute –  
 AAIR Fellowship .....2  
 It is Written.....3  
 Places to Go – Things to Do.....3  
 AAIR 2008 Forum – Canberra.....3  
 For the Poddies, Voddies & Bloggies.....4  
 Newsletter Notes ..... 4-7  
 Listservs for the likes of you .....8

**EDITORIAL**

A reminder that the November 2007 issue of the *Journal of Institutional Research* is online at the AAIR website:  
<http://www.aair.org.au/jir/Nov07/Index.html>

Also on the website are papers from the 2007 AAIR Forum:  
<http://www.aair.org.au/jir/2007Papers/Index.html>

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

Your contributions to the Newsletter are warmly welcomed. Mostly what you get is a list of things I've read, planned to read, or listened to. That's a pretty limited outlook on the world. Broaden our vistas – drop me a line.

Subject to space and relevance to members, the newsletter can run job vacancies and items on upcoming events.

Contact me at: [rob@](mailto:rob@sharpwords.com.au) with [sharpwords.com.au](http://sharpwords.com.au)

**POSITIONS AT CURTIN UNIVERSITY**

Curtin University is currently recruiting:  
• a **Market Analyst** and  
• a **Surveys Officer**  
to assist with the marketing and institutional research activities of the University.

For more information, please contact:

Alice Tsang  
Associate Director  
Market & Institutional Research (MIR)  
Office of Strategy & Planning

Alice's phone number: (08) 9266 7692

Alice's email address: [a.tsang@](mailto:a.tsang@curtin.edu.au) with [curtin.edu.au](http://curtin.edu.au)

**AIN'T IT THE TRUTH**

Only if the student experiences how easy it is to err, and how hard to make even a small advance in the field of knowledge, only then can he obtain a feeling for the standards of intellectual honesty, a respect for the truth, and a disregard for authority and bumpiousness.

- Sir Karl Popper  
*The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol 2, 1945.

**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/>

# AIR 2008 SUMMER DATA POLICY INSTITUTE WASHINGTON, DC – 8-15 JUNE

## AAIR Fellowship available Applications close on 29 February

AAIR is seeking expressions of interest for the following development opportunity to advance your (or a staff member's) statistical analysis skills, and to extend your networks in the USA.

AAIR has received one Fellowship for the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) 2008 Summer Data Policy Institute. More information is available at: <http://www.airweb.org/?page=1084>

The Institute is scheduled for 8-15 June, 2008, in Washington, DC.

Thanks to a grant from the US National Science Foundation (NSF), all expenses in Washington will be covered and up to US\$700 towards airfare costs is provided.

The Institute is an intensive, hands-on experience. Institute participants receive hands-on training from the directors of national surveys and databases. Participants also partake in policy seminars led by experts in postsecondary education policy analysis.

The criteria the AAIR Executive Committee will use to assess applications are as follows:

1. Current membership of AAIR.
2. Demonstrated high level knowledge of statistical methods and experience in the use of statistical software packages (ie, SPSS, SAS).
3. Demonstrated knowledge of data analysis related to educational statistics and/or other evidence that shows you would be able to contribute effectively from an Australian perspective.
4. Evidence of support from your institution and/or other source of funding to cover airfare and incidental expenses above US\$700.
5. Willingness to make a presentation (in person or in writing) to the 2008 AAIR Forum in Canberra concerning the experience at the 2008 Data Policy Institute.

To apply please send a brief (3-4 pages) proposal to Ivan Skaines, AAIR President at [i.skaines@withuws.edu.au](mailto:i.skaines@withuws.edu.au) by COB Friday, 29 February 2008.

Applicants should address both AAIR's criteria (1-5) above plus the Data Policy Institute instructions for submitting proposals available at <http://www.airweb.org/?page=1084>

Previous recipients of the fellowship were:

- Bono Poon (ECU) in 2005
- Andrew McCann (UTS) in 2004
- Rob Rispoli (ECU) in 2003.

## IT IS WRITTEN

Doris Lessing was awarded the 2007 Nobel Prize for Literature. Her Nobel Lecture makes a feisty pitch for the value of education for all, and education that is generous, uplifting, rigorous and puts great store in the art of reading.

And there must be libraries, and houses with books.

She tells the story of an African woman lining up for water and reading the tattered pages of a sundered copy of Anna Karenin. It put a lump in my throat.

If you're feeling a little jaded with the education gig, this story alone might put zest in your day: [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/lessing-lecture.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/lessing-lecture.html)

---

## PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

### OPEN YOUR DIARY FOR THE ...



**2008  
AAIR FORUM –  
ANU, CANBERRA  
19-21  
NOVEMBER**

The 2008 AAIR Forum will be in Canberra from the 19-21 November 2008 at the Hyatt Hotel.

This year's theme will be 'Enhancing Quality Research: A Global Perspective'.

Conference website details will be in the next Newsletter.

The call for papers will be out soon – let us all know what you've been doing.

If you'd like further information about the Forum, please drop a line to Dave Marr at ANU – [dave.marr@with.anu.edu.au](mailto:dave.marr@with.anu.edu.au)

## AND WHAT'S MORE ...

### **ATEM NSW Branch – Professional Development Workshop – UNE Sydney Centre – 7 March**

ATEM is running a PD workshop called 'Writing and Presenting Conference Papers for Maximum Impact'. For AAIR members, the price is right – ATEM offers you the member rate. At \$154.00 for both Gavin Moodie and Aggie Lim, this is a steal: <http://www.atem.edu.au/assets/1WritingAbstracts7March08.pdf>

### **ATEM NSW Branch – Professional Development Workshop – UTS – 13 March**

A week later, ATEM is running another PD workshop you'd better get along to. Dunno what you're going to tell the boss. Maree Conway will take you aboard the time machine for 'Thinking Futures in Tertiary Ed'. Get your ticket at: <http://www.atem.edu.au/assets/ThinkingFutures13March08.pdf>

### **Australian Education International Industry Forum – Melbourne – 8-10 April**

The Forum theme is 'Globally connected'. Day 1 is general background and strategic context. Days 2 & 3 are comprised of 15x45 minute market info sessions by country/region/ continent. Details: [http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/Events/AEI\\_Industry\\_Forum08\\_About.htm](http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/Events/AEI_Industry_Forum08_About.htm)

### **International Meeting of University Administrators – Vancouver – August 17-21,**

The Conference theme this year is 'Globalization' – that's a North American 'z' – globalisation doesn't get its way on everything! There are four sub-themes, to wit:

1. Evolution of Learning (international context; impact on resources)
2. Research Commercialization
3. Sustainability
4. Leading & Organising Academic Institutions of the Future

There's just time to make a submission – the call for papers closes on 15 February. Get the good oil on the IUMA conference here: <http://www.imua2008.ca/>

## FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES & BLOGGIES

### **A pod about blogging**

Sam Roggeveen is editor of the Lowy Institute's blog – *The Interpreter*. The Institute's brief, as an independent think tank, is to come up with new and improved ways of dealing with Australia's national interests and international responsibilities. Roggeveen spoke at the Lowy's regular Wednesday lunch late last year. His reflections on the blogosphere – what it's good for, who's blogging and why – seemed relevant in parts to the educational context. Download the podcast here: <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=737>

### **Three sweet pods**

You can listen to these three podcasts with your feet on the desk and your eyes closed and rightly claim to be working. Each runs for an hour so you can work right up to lunchtime. The Association of American Colleges and Universities focusses on undergrad liberal education. It has posted podcasts from its 2006 and 2007 conferences on its website. I haven't listened to all of them – skipped a couple that didn't work for me. Let me recommend three that did work. I know there are big differences, but there are enough similarities and good thoughts in this trio to do some recontextualising.

First, Herman Blake (Uni of Southern Carolina) who makes no bones about the central importance of high expectations. He presses the need for academic/general staff partnerships. The cleaners reinforce the message, too. His talk from Nov 07 is 'Intellectual Community/Diverse Academy': [http://www.aacu.org/Podcast/sharing07\\_podcasts.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/Podcast/sharing07_podcasts.cfm)

Second, the well-known Derek Bok from Harvard offers a general survey of what we know about learning, discusses the purposes of undergraduate education, and outlines his three-point plan for improving that education. His April 06 talk is called 'Improving Undergraduate Education'. Here 'tis: [http://www.aacu.org/Podcast/GenEd06\\_podcasts.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/Podcast/GenEd06_podcasts.cfm)

Third, a panel of folks who were involved in a study of high performing institutions. They identify the similarities. AAIRies will be pleased that one of the common features of these institutions is that change and practice are data-driven. It's a bit poorly edited, but worth persisting. The presentation is called 'What You and Your Institution Can Do to Promote Student Success': [http://www.aacu.org/Podcast/GenEd07\\_podcasts.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/Podcast/GenEd07_podcasts.cfm)

## NEWSLETTER NOTES

### **1. The price of knowledge**

The latest *Arena Journal* has Simon Cooper of Monash Uni coming out of left field with an article titled 'Academic Darwinism: The (logical) end of the Dawkins Era'. Is knowledge just another commodity for the capitalist marketplace? Are universities selling off the cultural inheritance?

Cooper's line in the sand is here:

[http://www.arena.org.au/Archives/Journal%20Archive/Journal%2028/Jnl\\_No\\_28\\_darwinism.pdf](http://www.arena.org.au/Archives/Journal%20Archive/Journal%2028/Jnl_No_28_darwinism.pdf)

### **2. Social sciences – how to count excellence?**

The scene is already being set for the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF) so far as assessing research in the sciences. The consultation documents reckon on three counts for science departments: citation rates, research income and postgraduate student numbers.

The social sciences, like the arts, haven't yet seen any proposals for how the REF might apply in those discipline areas. The UK Academy of Social Sciences has filled that abhorrent vacuum with a mid-January meeting on the use of bibliometrics to assess research quality in the social sciences.

The upshot of the meeting – as reported in *The Times HES* – seems to be that, at best, restricting the count to journal articles alone severely undersells the work of academic social scientists. At worst, bibliometrics is plain wrong-headed. The article is here:

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=400221&c=1>

### **3. Tracking R&D performance in Norway**

The organisation is called NIFU STEP, but I can't figure out what the acronym stands for – however, whatever it's called, it's a Norwegian Research Institute that studies innovation, research and education.

You could have a look at its R&D statistics bank which supports web access to R&D stats: <http://fostat.nifustep.no/nifu/?!language=en>

There is, too, the Report on Science and Technology Indicators for Norway – an 80 page review of how Norway's performance stacks up: [The link to this Norwegian Report with a terribly long url](#)

#### **4. What the paymaster says – employers' views of VET**

NCVER has published a summary of the outcomes from the 2007 Survey of Employer Use and Views of the VET System.

There weren't too many surprises. This caught my eye, though – about half of employers use unaccredited training outside the VET system. Why? The report explains: 'when selecting unaccredited training, 15.2% indicated that comparable nationally recognised training was available, with 27.0% not exploring the availability of comparable nationally recognised training ... of those employers who indicated that comparable nationally recognised training was available, the reason for choosing unaccredited over nationally recognised training was that 29.6% thought it was more cost-effective and 23.3% thought the time was more convenient or flexible'.

A message or two there.

The Summary is here:

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/surveys/seuv07/su07030.pdf>

#### **5. TAFE Institutes – 72 ways of being**

Another NCVER contribution. This one – A profile of TAFE Institutes – is from mid-2006. I rediscovered it last month. The data come from 2003, so it's starting to show its age given the extent of change in the VET sector over recent times. But it was a useful reminder of just how diverse our 72 TAFE Institutes are. We so often talk about 'TAFE', but it's probably wiser to talk about 'TAFEs'. This old chestnut is here:

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj2/sp417.pdf>

#### **6. The Commonwealth of Australasia**

The Creative Commons has a short history – around six years. It's been full pelt since. All power to it. In Australasia, QUT houses the Creative Commons Clinic, an offshoot of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation. If the Commons is a bit of a mystery, the Clinic website will deliver it into your grasp:

<http://creativecommons.org.au/node/74>

There's a natty animation on the website that helps to unravel the inner workings of the Commons:

[http://creativecommons.org.au/animation\\_train](http://creativecommons.org.au/animation_train)

#### **7. USQ Commons**

USQ now has 10 courses online as open course ware, available under a Creative Commons Licence.

Of particular interest may be access to the course titled 'Exploring Teaching and Learning in Tertiary Contexts'.

The list of courses is here:

<http://ocw.usq.edu.au/>

#### **8. Cape Town Declaration**

In September last year a meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, formulated the Cape Town Declaration. The purpose of the Declaration is to put even more steam into the engine of international activity that leads to open resources, technology and teaching practices in education.

The Declaration now has 1,235 signatories and growing. You might want to sign on yourself after you've read the Declaration:

<http://www.capetowndeclaration.org/>

#### **9. Supporting international students in Oz & NZ**

ISANA: International Education Association is an Australian and New Zealand body of professionals concerned with aspects of the learning and student experience for international students.

The ISANA website is worth perusing:

<http://www.isana.org.au/Default.aspx>

Proceedings from ISANA's 18<sup>th</sup> annual conference are available online – the few I've read are thought provoking. You might find some to your liking in this eclectic mix of titles – for example:

- Lecturer communication in a multicultural higher education context
- Social Integration of International Students - encouraging the formation of friendships with local students in the mainstream secondary school context
- Student success: Bridging the gap for Chinese students in collaborative learning
- Moving towards independence: International student needs beyond the classroom

Important thinking just a click away:

<http://proceedings.com.au/isana2007/>

## 10. Internationalisation in Canada

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) released late in 2007 the results of its 2006 survey on internationalisation in Canada's universities. The report covers curriculum, study exchanges, international students in Canada, engagement with developing countries.

A lot of it sounds familiar, but I don't recall reading anything Antipodean that brings it all together in quite the same way. Just 27 pages, and lots of photos so it won't distract you for long:

[http://www.aucc.ca/\\_pdf/english/publications/aucc-scotia\\_web\\_e.pdf](http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/publications/aucc-scotia_web_e.pdf)

## 11. Education reform in the Middle East & North Africa

On 4 February the World Bank released *The Road Not Traveled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*. This is a heavy hitter at 399 pages. I haven't read it yet, other than to note that it covers all sectors – school, VET and HE. If you get through it, send me a 25 words or less summary, will you? Here you go:

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/EDU\\_Flagship\\_Full\\_ENG.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/EDU_Flagship_Full_ENG.pdf)

## 12. To be sure

I stumbled across the website for the All Ireland Society for Higher Education while looking for something else. Having stumbled, I stayed and read from the Readings page. I haven't read a lot, but I plan to return. There's some worthy stuff here on teaching portfolios, assessment and evaluating teaching:

<http://www.aishe.org/readings/>

## 13. Putting the weights on rankings

Late last year the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research at Melbourne Uni released a study by Ross Williams called 'Ranking Australian Universities: Controlling for Scope'. Williams has tackled the ranking task by weighting the research and L&T performance of Australia's public universities to account for the varied scope of their discipline coverage. Well written:

<http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/publications/reports/uniscope/mainpaper.pdf>

## 14. A dog's breakfast

I thought my failure to understand how Australia's primary and secondary schools are funded was related to the fear of numbers instilled in me by my Year 10 maths teacher.

Now that I've read the ACER report by Andrew Dowling – 'Australia's School Funding System' – I realise my failure to understand it is closely related to the funding system's utter incomprehensibility. It's so messy you wouldn't give it to the dogs.

These 12 pages are an object lesson in how not to do almost anything that really matters. Is anyone really in charge of this?

If you can stomach it:

[http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/PolicyBriefs\\_Dowling07.pdf](http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/PolicyBriefs_Dowling07.pdf)

## 15. Outback teaching – the best in the bush

The Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership – led by the indefatigable Noel Pearson – has worked with Macquarie University to develop a proposal that would see great teachers going to remote indigenous communities. 'Teach for Australia' is a call to arms – this is the right thing to do, morally and on the evidence.

It proposes a version of merit or performance-based pay approach – a Fellowship of \$50k on top of salary for qualified teachers, and a \$20k stipend on top of salary for associate teachers. Associates are top flight people not in the teaching profession.

The design includes the Teach for Australia Academy for Effective Teaching which would be established by Macquarie Uni.

Read the 23 page proposal here:

<http://www.cyi.org.au/WEBSITE%20uploads/Education%20Attachments/Teach%20For%20Australia1.pdf>

For a view on the potential of merit pay for teachers, you might like to read Andrew Leigh's article in The Melbourne Review from November last year. 'How can we improve teacher quality?' is here:

<http://www.mbs.edu/download.cfm?DownloadFile=5500BDB6-D60E-CDD8-89F8DAF2589262D4>

## 16. Student debt discounts as a recruitment and retention strategy

In Australia there is much debate about whether discounting HECS liability actually works to bring students into disciplines/professions that are under-subscribed and to encourage them to stay in those fields after graduation. For example, is there any virtue in the Rudd government's proposal to halve HECS payments for maths and science students, and to cut the debt in half again if they pursue science and maths in a teaching or other career? (For the policy announcement in Opposition days on this, see:

<http://www.alp.org.au/media/0107/dsi313.php>)

In December, the British Columbia Provincial government announced a similar strategy to encourage people to study, and pursue a career in, early childhood education:

[http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/studentaidbc/repay/repayme ntassistance/loanassistance\\_ece.htm](http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/studentaidbc/repay/repayme ntassistance/loanassistance_ece.htm)

## 17. More blurred boundaries

A few mentions in recent newsletters about how the boundaries between education sectors are blurring before our eyes. Here's another example.

The Australian Science and Mathematics School is a public school that runs a specialist program from Years 10-12. Now into its sixth year, the School It sits within the Flinders Uni campus so the kids can go about their learning unconstrained by barriers without benefits.

The website:

<http://www.asms.sa.edu.au/Pages/default.aspx>

## 18. Thou shalt not Google for academic credit

Tara Brabazon is a professor of media studies at Brighton Uni in the UK, but hails from WA and a stint at Murdoch. She is decidedly unhappy with student papers that borrow heavily from the internet.

Her inaugural lecture at Brighton was called 'Google is White Bread for the Mind'. She is a booster for the virtues of the book. Couldn't find a copy of the lecture, but this report from *The Guardian* is pretty entertaining:

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/academicexperts/story/0,,2244467,00.html>

## 19. Put the hard word on 'em

In November last the Australian Flexible Learning Framework published a report on its campaign to encourage young people to ask more assertively for e-learning options in their education experience. The campaign was called 'Put the hard word on'em'.

The Report is short – 32 pages and enough bar charts to warm the heart of an Excel junkie. There's a lot of good info here. My take home was this: over 90% of respondents said they wanted more e-learning options AND over 80% said they favoured face-to-face interaction with their teachers. Quite right, too. The internet is not about replacing or minimising the interpersonal domain, but about extending it.

Read more:

[http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/flx/webdav/site/flxsite/shared/NCP/HARD\\_WORD.pdf](http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/flx/webdav/site/flxsite/shared/NCP/HARD_WORD.pdf)

## 20. European benchmarks

The development of benchmarks and performance indicators for EU universities is the focus of work undertaken by the European Benchmarking Initiative (EBI) in Higher Education. During 2008 the project aims to release a 'multidimensional online tool'.

By selecting the Symposium button on the top left of the home page you'll find links to long list of presentations and papers from the November 2007 EBI Symposium in Brussels:

<http://www.education-benchmarking.eu/spip.php?article1>

## Yellow Pages for Higher Ed policy research

The Australian Network for Higher Education Policy Research updated its *Directory* of members in October. You can download it here:

<http://www.une.edu.au/pdal/research/chemp/resources/project/anhepr/anhepr.pdf>

## Spend a penny

I just think you should read this:

<http://www.dailycamera.com/news/2008/jan/25/cu-bathroom-gets-a-namesake/>

## **LISTSERVS FOR THE LIKES OF YOU**

Wendy Marchment, Director, Quality, Planning and Statistics at Griffith Uni, and AAIR's Immediate Past President, suggests the following listservs for institutional researchers.

### **Unistats**

The Unistats mailing list was set up many years ago to facilitate discussion around issues concerning statistical issues in the higher education sector. The traffic on the list has petered off in recent years and that could well be attributable to new staff to the sector being unaware of its existence. So, let's kick off 2008 with a boost in subscribers to the list with the aim of generating some more regular discussion and sharing of information.

To subscribe go  
<http://lists.murdoch.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/unistats>

### **AAIR Data Warehouse Special Interest Group**

If you are interested in receiving information, or participating in comments and questions about data warehousing issues subscribe at:  
<http://lists.unisa.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/datawsig-l>

### **Higher Education Data Warehousing Forum**

Information about this US-based listserv, and subscription details, located at:  
<http://www.stonybrook.edu/offires/hedw/listserv.html>

### **Reshaping IR**

Another US listserv. This list is for sharing information about building a new institutional research office or expanding or reshaping an existing program. Topics might include, for example, specific, practical issues such as choosing appropriate analysis software, data access, staffing, reporting lines, scope of responsibility, disseminating information or evaluating an office, or practical but less tangible issues such as changing institutional culture, gauging and dealing with expectations, developing cross-divisional collaborations, communicating with executives, or demonstrating IR's value to the campus.

Any relevant issue that will assist IR professionals in building strong programs that meet the needs of today's higher education environment is encouraged.

To subscribe:

- send an e-mail to [LISTSERV](mailto:LISTSERV@LISTSERV.CSUFRESNO.EDU) with [LISTSERV.CSUFRESNO.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV.CSUFRESNO.EDU)
  - Leave the Subject line blank
  - In the message body, type: subscribe  
reshaping\_ir your name
    - Be certain the underscore is included in the listname.
    - Replace 'your name' with your name.
    - Hit the 'enter' key after typing your name and type in the word 'end' on the second line.
    - If you have a standard signature line in your e-mails, be sure it is **not** included when you send the subscribe message.
-