



Monthly e-Newsletter – March 2008

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EDITORIAL

'In 1861, student disorders at several universities ... were treated as a mortal threat to social order. There were widespread arrests, popular professors were silenced, and St Petersburg University was closed for almost two years.' *Rethinking the Russian Revolution*, Edward Acton, 1990.

Fast forward to 2008 and the closure of the European University in Saint Petersburg, which some rank as one of the best postgraduate unis in Russia. Depends on who you believe – the closure resulted either from failure to meet fire regulations or because academic staff have openly criticised Putin's government. The university's website is here: <http://www.eu.spb.ru/>

I wrote to Mr Putin for clarification. Haven't heard back. You might want to drop him a line as well. There's a website drumming up support here: <http://euspb.blogspot.com/>

The Guardian has a story on the kerfuffle here: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/11/russia.hig>
[hereeducation](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/11/russia.hig)

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

AAIR FORUM 2008

19-21 November
Hyatt Hotel, Canberra

Hosted by ANU

The 2008 Forum website was officially launched last week. The address is:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aaair2008/index.php>

Our 2008 theme is:
Enhancing Quality Research:
a Global Perspective

The call for abstracts will be up soon.

AIN'T IT THE TRUTH

He brought books into the lecture theatre, but never looked at them, lecturing in an intimate, spontaneous way, as if his listeners were good friends, joined in admiration of the works and writers he spoke about.

'In Fealty to a Professor', Anne Sedgeley, in *The best Australian essays 2007*, edited by Drusilla Modjeska.

AAIR Committee members

President: Ivan Skaines, University of Western Sydney
Immediate Past President: Wendy Marchment, Griffith University
Vice President: Josephine Palermo, Deakin University
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Rob Sheehan, Sharp Words Editing & Writing Services (Victoria)
AAIR website: <http://www.aaair.org.au/>

Are you keeping up with the KJK?

Gee, this education revolution stuff is wearing me out. It's not just keeping up with the KJK (that's Kevin, Julia and Kim), it's keeping abreast of who else is saying what, to whom, why, when and figuring out whether it makes any difference. This is no time to keep your head down. Here's my short list of things worth noting.

We'd better get the names right. There's an overall revolution, and then there are the sub-revolutions. The Digital Education Revolution website is now up – you can also subscribe to the revolutionary newsletter at this address:

http://www.digitaleducationrevolution.gov.au/#Overview_of_the_Digital_Education_Revolution

What's neat about the Digital Education Revolution is that it tackles curriculum development, upskills teachers, involves parents, fixes up broadband speeds to schools, and provides the hardware. An integrated package.

In Parliament, there are Bills aplenty. A couple of the Deputy PM's Second Reading speeches are worth a scan. There's some politics, of course, but that aside, the speeches outline the purposes of the Bills concisely. More entertaining than the Explanatory Memoranda. Try these from *Hansard*:

- **Higher Education Support Amendment (VET FEE-HELP Assistance) Bill 2008** – p 4-5 (these are to Hansard Proof page numbers – you might have to check the index if it has gone into the final version): <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/reps/dailys/dr140208.pdf>
- **Skills Australia Bill 2008** – pp 186-189: <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/reps/dailys/dr130208.pdf>
- **Higher Education Support Amendment (Removal of the Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements and National Governance Protocols Requirements and other Matters) Bill 2008** – pp189-191: <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/reps/dailys/dr130208.pdf>

A VSU Discussion Paper – *The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation for Australian University Students* – was released in mid-February and submissions are sought until 11 March, so you'd better sharpen your pencils:

<http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/B5D454AC-1CBE-4E43-B3EB-4B6C3DDE5C56/20164/DiscussionPaperImpactofVSUFebruary2008.pdf>

Minister Carr has:

- launched a **Review of the National Innovation System**: <http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Pages/home.aspx>
- made clear that he **respects academic independence** and expects ideas and disagreements – see his speech to the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies Forum: <http://minister.innovation.gov.au/SenatortheHonKimCarr/Pages/RIGHTSANDOBLIGATIONSOFSCIENTISTSANDRESEARCHERS.aspx>
- announced the development of **Excellence in Research for Australia**: http://www.arc.gov.au/media/releases/media_26Feb08.htm

Now, let's see; there's the development of university compacts to come in the next couple of weeks; arrangements to be announced for the first 20,000 of the 450,000 new VET training places, which will rely to a considerable extent on private VET providers weighing in; there's the cranking up of the development of a national curriculum under the leadership of Barry McGaw; launch of the program to put trade training centres in secondary schools; ... did I miss anything?

If that's not enough for you, AAIRies, you can put a submission to the Australia 2020 Summit chaired by Melbourne Uni's VC, Glynn Davis: <http://www.australia2020.gov.au/>

IT IS WRITTEN

Not just rhetoric

Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, USA, has announced the establishment of the Dartmouth Writing and Rhetoric Institute. Its clients will, by and large, be first year students across all academic departments. Its central task is to build critical thinking which supports the persuasive communication of ideas. Here's the announcement:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/%7Enews/releases/2008/01/30a.html>

The Writing Program, which will be rolled into the Institute, has a swag of writing resources online at: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/>

Year Book Australia, 2008

The *Year Book* has been around since 1908, and for its 100th anniversary it's online for the first time. You can buy a hard copy version for \$99 if you want. The education section gives you plenty of top level data across the sectors:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1301.0Main+Features12008?OpenDocument>

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

Australian Association of Career Counsellors National Career Conference Hobart, 26-28 March 2008

You've just got time to put your hand up for this one. Themes will cover work locations (rural, regional, urban and global), work patterns and work transitions. Quick sticks:

<http://www.abcon.biz/aacc08.html>

AVETRA Conference – Adelaide, 3-4 April, 2008

The Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association will be conferencing in Adelaide, with sponsorship from UniSA. The conference theme is 'VET in Context'. You've missed the early bird discount, so that's a \$200 blue. Ah well, no use crying over spilt milk – register here:

http://www.avetra.org.au/annual_conference/index-old.shtml

AUCEA Conference

University of the Sunshine Coast & Fraser Island 9-11 July, 2008

The Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance is running a conference with an interesting shift in venue halfway through, all in the name of exploring the conference theme, 'Engaging for a Sustainable Future'. Sign up, pack your togs/bathers/cossie and engage: <http://130.194.156.169:8080/traction/permalink/NationalConference1>

International Conference on Information Communication Technologies in Education Corfu, Greece – July 10-12, 2008

There are about a dozen themes so I'll leave you to chase the detail:

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

Second international DREAM conference University of Southern Denmark, Odense 18-20 September 2008

DREAM is a research consortium of Danish universities dedicated to building up learning resources in Danish. Don't worry – the conference language is English. The themes look pretty diverse. The conference title is 'Digital Content Creation: Creativity, Competence, Critique'. More here: <http://www.dreamconference.dk/>

Open Access and Research Conference Brisbane – 24-25 September

Things are moving fast in open access – you probably need to get along to a conference a month to stay on top. This conference will consider, *inter alia*, evolving publishing models, repository management, eResearch, and legal issues. QUT is doing the honours:

<http://www.oar2008.qut.edu.au/>

Australian Computers in Education Conference Canberra – 29 September-2 October 2008

The conference theme is 'ACT on ICT'. Again there is a long list of themes – a few at random:

- Innovation including the emergence of digital libraries
- Leadership and management
- ICT in curriculum & pedagogical transformation

Here's the good oil:

<http://www.acec2008.info/default2.asp?orgid=1&suborgid=12>

ISSOTL 2008

Edmonton, Canada – October 16-19, 2008

The International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning needs some marketing advice – ISSOTL isn't doing anything for brand or name recognition. But don't judge the cereal by its packet. 'Celebrating Connections: Learning, Teaching, Scholarship' is the conference title and the themes cover the field:

- Connecting through ideas, discoveries, inquiry and innovation
- Connecting through process, strategies & policy
- Connecting with our past & thinking about our future
- Connecting with each other.

Oh, go on – just go:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~issotl08/>

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES & BLOGGIES

A quiet chat about teaching

Luke Bennett is in his first year as an academic at Sheffield Hallam Uni in the UK. In this conversation he talks about a teaching strategy he used in his first semester teaching law to students enrolled in building and surveying. The strategy didn't go so well, but he reckons it could work with a tweak. It isn't the content that's worth tuning into as much as what comes of talking about teaching. His interlocutor, Andrew Middleton, does a great job of listening and tossing in an occasional comment and question. We should have more of this. Travel to the link below, scroll down to the entry from Wednesday, January 16, 2008 – titled 'Photographic Interventions' – and download the chat:

<http://ltapodcast.blogspot.com/>

Finding science

The Florey Institute in Melbourne – it does brains – has a lecture on its website by Peter Agre called 'My life in science'. Agre, now the VC for Science and Tech at Duke University, picked up a Nobel in chemistry for something I don't understand. The reason for listening to/watching the lecture is to know once again that people often stumble towards what they really want to do. Sometimes if you hurry, you miss the turn in the path. Lots of gentle reflections on science education: <http://www.florey.edu.au/about/news-and-events/events/peter-agre-lecture/>

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Graduates anyone?

Victoria's Office of Training and Tertiary Education dropped into the cybersphere an unexpected report – only unexpected because state governments don't seem to study very closely the universities they are responsible for. The report is *Industry demand for higher education graduates in Victoria 2008-2022: an identification of the higher education graduates required to meet industry skill demands*. Are you still with me? Good. It's awash with data & findings, like this on p13:

- Over 1.51 million Victorians—756,000 new entrants and 750,000 existing workers—need to acquire new qualifications or upgrade current ones from 2008 to 2022.
- About 46.1% of the qualifications acquired need to be at a higher education level—73.5% bachelor degrees, 21.8% postgraduate degrees and 4.7% graduate certificates or diplomas—and 53.9% at a VET level. This translates to more than 694,000 people completing higher education courses.

Forward ho!:

http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/voced/industry-demand-higher-ed-grad-vic-2008-2022_web_version.pdf

2. Everybody's doing the same new thing

This is a must read. When it comes to labelling generations as baby boomers, X, Y or Millennial, I get cranky. But cut me some slack; after all, I wear my confirmation bias on my sleeve.

The British Library, with a couple of partners, produced a report called *Information behaviour of the researcher of the future*. Bottom line is that kids aren't so IT literate, young upstarts and old fogeys like me have similar online browsing and research habits, and libraries have their work cut out. All the Gen Y sort of stuff just sounds to me like the older generation worrying about the new kids on the block. They look like us to me. Set aside half an hour for this:

<http://www.bl.uk/news/pdf/googlegen.pdf>

3. Facebooking for learned texts

Deakin Library is on Facebook. Not sure if this will take off, but it's worth a try:

<http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=6578931575>

4. Palpation of the bovine reproduction tract

Sorry if I startled you. Let me explain. UQ's Teaching and Development Institute – aka TEDI – picked up the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) President's Award 2007 for putting together a CD for vet science undergrad students. Top effort: <http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/edResources/what-cd.html#VETS4008>

5. Shakespeare in court

Right – back on familiar ground. Actually, nice twist on the familiar. McGill Uni in Quebec, Canada, runs Shakespeare Moots for students taking Law and English. The idea is that what's in the plays is taken as the law, and the learning sounds just magical. Words without thoughts never to heaven go: <http://www.mcgill.ca/shakespearemoot/>

6. Making the most of the sessional gig

UNSW produces, on an irregular basis, issues of the *Compendium of good practice in learning and teaching*. I had cause to go to the February 2007 Special Issue on Sessional Teaching. If sessional teaching is on top of your list of things to get sorted, this is a good place to start: http://www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/compendium_prac/compendium.cfm?ss=0#Issue4

7. Intelligent Island

The Singapore Ministry of Manpower is doing something about the government's latest strategic direction, labeled the Intelligent Island. The idea is to attract lots of uni students and young graduates to live and work in Singapore for six months. Australian and NZ students/graduates are amongst the chosen ones, to start with anyway: <http://www.contactsingapore.org.sg/whpsingapore/>

8. Go well

The US Forum on Education Abroad has just released a Code of Ethics for Education Abroad. They read well to me. Perhaps it wouldn't hurt to have an Australasian version. Perhaps we already do. Let me know. Here you go: <http://www.forumea.org/documents/ForumonEducationAbroadCodeofEthics.pdf>

9. Doing RPL privately

The attention paid to RPL – how to do it, doing it well – is expanding as upskilling existing workers establishes itself as a priority that isn't going away any time soon. The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) was funded to look at ways of improving the RPL capability of private VET providers. There's not an awful lot of research about private VET providers as a bunch, so the project report – *Quality RPL Project: Building private education and training provider capability* – is fascinating reading in several respects: http://www.acpet.edu.au/dmdocuments/Reports_Submissions/ACPET_Final_Report_on_RPL_Victoria_Dec_2007.doc

10. Industry expectations of VET assessment

The Australian government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has hired Precision Consultancy to investigate employer and employee views about the adequacy of VET assessment practice. DEEWR is managing the exercise on behalf of the National Quality Council (NQC).

Outcomes from this work will help the NQC to pursue more robust approaches to VET assessment.

It's hard to get an overview of the exercise. The call for submissions (open til 17 March) from industry organisations is probably the best bet – the link is: <http://www.precisionconsultancy.com.au/CallforSubmissions.doc>

Precision Consultancy's home page is here: <http://www.precisionconsultancy.com.au/>

11. Research measurement in the UK

The Australian government's plans to replace the RQF with ERA have received a broad welcome. In the UK, the shift from the RAE to the REF is collecting broadsides. Research Councils UK – the peak body for the seven discipline-based research councils – has lobbed a cannonball amidships. Its *Response to Hefce's consultation on the new Research Excellence Framework* cites two major concerns: the narrow assessment of impact, and the proposed application of two different methods for dealing with science and non-science disciplines: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/consultations/ref.pdf>

12. Good NZ practice for PhD supervision

The New Zealand Universities Academic Support Unit – NZ's AUQA – has released *The monitoring of admission and supervision of PhD students: A report on good practice*. A sensible outline of what it ought to be like:

http://www.nzuaau.ac.nz/nzuaau_site/reports/PhDMonitoringGoodPractice.pdf

13. Evaluating HE outcomes in the OECD

The OECD is working away at the idea of developing a range of measures that pin down the effectiveness of HE in all its important doings. In Tokyo in January the OECD ministers with HE in their portfolios agreed to a feasibility study. You can read the notes from the meeting here:

http://www.oecd.org/document/45/0,3343,en_2649_33723_39903213_1_1_1_1,00.html

14. Fixed ranks

Strategic plans in HE often state an intention to climb the rankings in one of the league ladders, or at least to maintain their spots. An engineering academic at Duke University has applied a bit of physics – constructal theory – to the rankings. The upshot, it seems, is that unless you can arrange a cataclysm, the rankings won't change much:

<http://news.duke.edu/2008/02/rankbejan.html>

15. Top Ten

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities has issued its *Top 10 state policy issues for higher education in 2008*. A reminder (to me, at least) that while HE systems have a lot in common, context matters:

http://www.aascu.org/policy_matters/pdf/topten2008.pdf

16. World Education Indicators (WEI) 2007

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics has released *Education counts: Benchmarking progress in 19 WEI Countries – World Education Indicators 2007*. There are 19 WEI countries, from Argentina through India to Tunisia. OECD country data is included here and there, so you have comparisons across all education sectors across a host of measures. There are 145 pages in all. My plan was to filter out what wasn't immediately relevant – in the end, most of it was for one reason or another, so be warned:

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/wei/2007/WEI2007report.pdf>

17. Global Education Digest, 2007

Also from UNESCO's Institute for Stats is *Global education digest 2007: Comparing education statistics across the world*. It gives a lot of space in its 200 or so pages to primary education, but also covers the other education sectors. There are some fascinating data on international mobility of students (from p 134). Another time-burner:

http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/ged/2007/EN_web2.pdf

18. Anyone for a university?

The UK Secretary for Innovation, Skills and Universities is keen to expand the university sector and has asked cities without a uni to put in a bid. The aim is 20 new institutions in the next 6 years. The paper that goes with this is *A new 'University Challenge': Unlocking talent*:

<http://www.dius.gov.uk/policy/documents/university-challenge.pdf>

19. Australian peers

Given the Carrick Institute project to develop peer observation of teaching resources, and given that Maureen Bell is in the project team, it seemed a pity that her paper – 'Peer Observation of Teaching in Australia' – had disappeared from the Higher Education Academy's website. The HEA's Andrea Bowes has kindly put it back up for us:

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/Peer_Observation_of_Teaching_in_Australia

20. You're on air

USQ has established a community radio station in Ipswich – first broadcast in O Week this year:

<http://www.usq.edu.au/newsevents/news/radiostation.htm>

A trivia point, but by no means trivial, is that in 1972 the University of Adelaide set up Radio Adelaide. It was the first community radio station in Australia. Still going strong:

<http://www.radio.adelaide.edu.au/>

21. Two VC's a-blogging

Sandra Harding, VC at JCU, has taken to the blogosphere:

<http://jcuvicechancellor.blogspot.com/>

She joins Stephen Schwartz, Macquarie's VC:

<http://wpmu.innovation.cfl.mq.edu.au/stevenschwartz>

22. Asian University for Women

A newcomer to HE, the Asian University for Women opens this year. Based in Chittagong, Bangladesh, it's kicking off with an access program, a liberal arts undergraduate curriculum, and some in-demand activities in graduate education:

<http://www.asian-university.org/>

23. Locating the past masters

Every discipline should have one. Here's a link to a search facility that locates history departments around the world:

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/departments/>

