



Monthly e-Newsletter – August 2008

What’s in this edition?

Position Vacant – La Trobe University1
 It is Written.....1
 Ain’t it the Truth2
 Places to Go – Things to Do.....2
 For the Poddies, Voddies & Bloggies.....3
 Newsletter Notes 4-6
 AAIR 2008 Forum – Canberra.....4

EDITORIAL

This is a time for AAIRies everywhere to hang on to their hats. Compacts? Innovation strategy? The future for CRCs? Contestable funding in VET? HECS in VET? What and how we measure is a foundation issue in all these reviews. What and how we strategise and plan is front and centre.

A stray stat you may have marked. In 2007 the total number of students in higher education passed the million mark:
<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/OConnor/Releases/Universitystudentnumberspasstheonemillionmilestone.htm>

Are you devouring the Bradley Review submissions – my pick for a sleeper issue is embedded in submission 106. In case you haven’t got round to it yet, the first 200 submissions are online at:
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/policy_issues_reviews/reviews/highered_review/submissions_1_100.htm

I’m always grateful for any items you think will be of interest. Feel free to contact me at: [rob@](mailto:rob@sharpwords.com.au) with sharpwords.com.au

JOB OPPORTUNITY

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

Manager, External Reporting and Modelling (HEO 8)

Primary responsibilities of this role are to:

- manage the student and staff component of the Uni’s data collection to ensure both internal and external requirements are met
- develop models for projecting student load to assist with target setting.

Closing Date: 5 September 2008

Further information will be posted on the Uni’s website from 22 August 2008 at:
www.latrobe.edu.au/jobs

Enquiries to Lyn Rose, Manager, Management Information Unit on (03) 9479 2029.

IT IS WRITTEN

I’ve just finished Jesse Pentecost’s novel *The Con*. You might want to read it if you have a vague interest in any one or more of love, sex, relationships, musicianship, undergraduate music education or coming of age tales. I got a little peeved at the narrative voice, but hung in there to find out what happened to Derek, the star of the show. The publisher’s blurb is here:
<http://shop.abc.net.au/browse/product.asp?productid=164965>

AAIR Committee members

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AAIR website: <http://www.aair.org.au/>

AIN'T IT THE TRUTH

... until the 12th century, Roman law divided human interaction into two basic categories. In exceptional cases legal protection was granted to limited social engagements (*socius*), such as business ventures and military expeditions, the point of which was to achieve goals set out by the people involved in them. Mission accomplished, the partners reverted to their default category of existence as members of particular families (*gens*) which were the means by which status and wealth were reproduced across generations. What had been lacking was a third category that would enable both individuals to acquire social identities other than the ones they inherited and collectives to pursue goals that transcend the interests of their current members. This third category came to be known in Roman law as *universitas* which ... contained universities amongst its earliest exemplars – along with craft guilds, churches, religious orders and city-states.

- Steve Fuller, 2006, *Kuhn vs. Popper: the struggle for the soul of science*, Icon Books.

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

Apprenticeships: Sustaining Australia's skills base

Friday 15 August 2008
Telstra Dome, Melbourne

This forum has a line up of fine VET expertise and intends to 'explore the contribution apprenticeships make to Australia's skills base, and highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the current system to set the stage for a dialogue on the best way forward.' You have but hours to register! Go here:

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/sustaining/forum.html>

The Oxford eResearch Conference 2008 **11-13 September 2008** **University of Oxford**

E-research is the wave of things to come so we'll need you to nip over to the Old Dart for a couple of days to get a handle on how it will affect multi-disciplinary research. Thanks for putting your hand up – here's your itinerary:

<http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/microsites/eresearch08/>

AAIR e-Newsletter – August 2008

ascilite 2008

30 November-3 December

Deakin University
Burwood (Melbourne Campus)

Add this to your acronym primer if you can never remember what ascilite stands for: Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education.

The 2008 conference theme is: 'Hello! Where are you in the landscape of educational technology?'

On the conference website the dot points that point us to the conference fare include:

- Leading for unknown futures – who leads and for what purposes in the changing landscape?
- The emergence of Web 2.0 in the educational technology landscape - everybody's talking, is anyone learning?
- Who owns educational technology in the changing landscape - closed systems, open source, many agendas?
- What does it mean to be an online scholar in the educational technology landscape?
- What are the changing relationships between people, the virtual and the physical, and objects in the educational technology landscape?
- The internationalisation and globalisation of the educational technology landscape.

More dot points, reggo details etc here:

<http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/melbourne08/>

Open Access and Research Conference 2008 **24-25 September** **Stamford Plaza Hotel, Brisbane**

You'll see a theme developing in my conference postings this month. The Open Access and Research Conference dabble in evolving publishing models, repository management, e-research, policy development, and legal and technical issues. More: <http://www.oar2008.qut.edu.au/>

As part of the conference, but on the afternoon before it starts, there's a seminar at QUT's Gardens Point campus. It's titled: What is "Open Education" and what does it mean for the future of learning? What role can Australia play?

So if you are at a loose end between 2pm and 5pm on 23 September, bowl along:

<http://www.cci.edu.au/events/what-is-open-education>

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

Creating podcasts

This is a short article from *The Times HES* about why podcasts are a darned good thing, and what some of the potholes on the road to goodness might be. First went up online last month, but was in the hard copy of the *HES* a couple of years ago. It takes a sort of all-singing, all-dancing approach to podcast production. I think you can turn down the entertainment emphasis quite a bit without losing anything at all in terms of student learning or acceptance. But take a walk on Broadway anyway: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=403047&c=1>

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Curtin's T&L almanac

Curtin Uni's Office of Teaching and Learning has produced an 88 page orientation and reminder guide about T&L – from policy to tips for good teaching, from assessment design to nobbling plagiarism. It's disarmingly straightforward title is *Teaching and Learning at Curtin 2008*. Get your copy here:

<http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/publications/tlbook08.pdf>

2. Ako Aotearoa Good Practice Publication Grants

NZ's Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence – Ako Aotearoa – has pushed the envelope on how to develop a good quality good practice database. As the website explains, 'Thirty-five grants of up to \$5,000 are available to enable departments, centres, groups or individuals to obtain time and resources from their organisation to share their proven good practice, for publication on the Ako Aotearoa Website.' More here:

http://www.nctte.co.nz/good_practice_publication_grants.php

3. What do you expect?

This is a magical thesis. Christine Ruby submitted it to the University of Auckland it for her PhD, titling it *Expect the best: instructional practices, teacher beliefs and student outcomes*. It documents via a couple of neat studies the power of teacher expectations on student learning. It's worth

spending some time reading her methodology, too, rather than taking in just that last chapter. So go: <http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/bitstream/2292/28/9/02whole.pdf>

4. The higher education soviet

Macquarie VC, Stephen Schwartz, has taken several swipes in several newspapers at the very idea of university compacts. He brings his irritation to the pages of *Policy*, the mag produced by Centre for Independent Studies on whose board Schwartz sits. 'The Trouble with University Compacts' appears in the Winter issue of *Policy*, which you can buy at your newsagency for a tenner, or you can check out online for nix. To give you a flavour of where Schwartz is coming from, let me quote: Compacts are a form of central planning. They set out to engineer a university system by freezing the current arrangements in place while leaving room for politicians to interfere where they wish ... The alternative to central planning is competition. Allowing universities to compete will produce a more efficient, higher-quality outcome than any amount of central planning.' Full text: http://www.cis.org.au/POLICY/winter08/links/schwartz_winter08.pdf

5. The higher education nomenclatura

Compacts are one of the cards in play. Another is the idea reprising a body like the old Tertiary Education Commission, to stand between government and the sector. So maybe you'd like to read this *Guardian* story, 'Departure of chief executive prompts fears for Hefce' (Hefce being Higher Education Funding Council for England). The story just keeps us on notice that bodies like these sometimes have to stand aside if that's what governments want, so standing between government and the sector is okay for as long as it suits:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/jun/18/highereducation.uk1>

6. The business case for good T&L

In March this year ALTC (formerly the Carrick Institute) released 'Business as usual', a report on how to build sustainability in T&L in Australian business faculties. It's a clear statement of priorities for collaborative T&L development across the sector. Here 'tis:

http://www.altc.edu.au/carrick/webdav/site/carricksite/users/siteadmin/public/Grants_DBI_ABDC%20Freeman%20Business%20Final%20Report_March27_2008.pdf

AAIR FORUM 2008

19-21 November
Hyatt Hotel, Canberra

Hosted by ANU

***Enhancing Quality Research:
a Global Perspective***

Submission of abstracts has now closed.

We've had a great response to the theme with several papers from international contributors (UK and Asia) and from our research management colleagues. Topics range from research to survey management and statistical modelling.

Workshops and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) will take place on Wednesday 19 November. There will be the usual sessions for the DEEWR SIG, Datawarehouse SIG and Survey SIG.

There will be a group discussion on the Bradley Review and a workshop on Knowledge Management.

We expect a preliminary program will be on the Forum website around mid-August.

Early Bird registration closes on 30 September.

The 2008 Forum website address is:
<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aaair2008/index.php>

7. Language education

'Languages education in Australia in 2008' is a helpful summary of recent history about lifting the numbers of Australian primary and secondary school students studying languages. Written by Lia Tedesco, President of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, it has links to reviews projects and so on:
<http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/default.asp?id=23852&issueID=11456>

Tedesco's article appears in the June edition of *Curriculum Leadership*, an online journal from the Curriculum Corporation that pumps out an impressive 40 issues a year. More about the journal can be found here:
<http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/home,61.html>

AAIR e-Newsletter – August 2008

8. Blogs and PhDs

A nice paper on how the blog and the PhD go together. 'Blogging PhD Candidature: Revealing the Pedagogy' is written by a duo from Sydney Uni: PhD candidate, Mary-Helen Ward, and Sandra West, A/Professor in the Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery at the University of Sydney:
<http://www.swinburne.edu.au/hosting/ijets/ijets/vol6num1/pdf/Article4Ward&West.pdf>

9. Green work

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum is pursuing its new orientation to sustainability. Along with the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Forum commissioned CSIRO to come up with *Growing the Green Collar Economy: Skills and labour challenges in reducing our greenhouse emissions and national environmental footprint*.

The message for VET and HE is encapsulated in this excerpt from the report: '... achieving the transition to a low carbon sustainable economy will require a massive mobilisation of skills and training – both to equip new workers and to enable appropriate changes in practices by the three million workers already employed in these key sectors influencing our environmental footprint. Current approaches do not appear sufficient for meeting these challenges.' The report is here:
<http://www.dsf.org.au/papers/204.htm>

10. Green unis

In the UK, a student run outfit called People & Planet has produced a ranking of universities according to their green credentials. An Oz version can't be far behind:
<http://peopleandplanet.org/gogreen/greenleague2008>

11. Greening Harvard

Universities are thinking about how to green up. Harvard is one. The *Report of the Harvard University Task Force on Greenhouse Gas Emissions* has set a target for the university: 'As an initial step in pursuit of its long term goal, Harvard should commit to an immediate goal of reducing its net GHG emissions resulting from existing operations and future growth by 30% relative to its 2006 baseline by 2016.' Read more:
http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2008/07.24/pdfs/GHG_TF_finalreport.pdf

12. Greening the US HE sector

The US Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education has released its Annual Review of Sustainability in Higher Education. The 2007 Digest is a 200 plus page whopper. What I liked was the use of lots of brief stories from dozens of campuses about very small and very large changes in behaviour and practice that all serve to make a difference:

<http://www.aashe.org/resources/pdf/aashedigest2007.pdf>

13. US academic libraries

The US National Center for Education Statistics released in July its two yearly data dump on 3,600 US academic libraries. *Academic Libraries: 2006*:
<http://nces.ed.gov//pubs2008/2008337.pdf>

14. VET reforms in South Australia

TAFE SA has had the future outlined for it in the *Review of skills and workforce development in South Australia: the challenge for the next decade*. The report makes it clear that TAFE SA staff will be 'offering more proactive workforce development services, including training needs analysis, skills recognition and workplace training, how work is organised to make best use of skills, career structures etc. The new approach would involve TAFE SA developing a partnership relation with a firm to develop its workforce, focusing on the outcomes being sought and the firm's needs rather than training input.' The full report is here:
http://www.workforceinfoservice.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/13700/keatingFullReport.pdf

15. RPL online

Given the plans to expand the number of VET learners who are existing workers, we need to quickly get to grips with all facets of RPL. To that end, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework has released *Processes, systems and tools supporting recognition of prior learning survey: final report*. It tells us where we are at with online RPL (and RCC/RIL as well), and what we yet need to do.
<http://e-standards.flexiblelearning.net.au/docs/e-standards-vet-rpl-survey-v1-0.pdf>

16. Accountable assessment in HE

The US Educational Testing Service has produced a 30 page report called *A culture of evidence: an evidence-centered approach to accountability for student learning outcomes*. The report focuses on

assessment practice and suggests ways in which accountability for assessment designs, systems and outcomes might be tackled. Good read:
http://www.ets.org/Media/Education_Topics/pdf/COEIII_report.pdf

17. The family life of academics

Maureen Baker from the University of Auckland presented a paper at the 10th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference in July. It has the intriguing title of 'The family life of academics: gendered priorities and institutional constraints'. I quote: 'Academic success still seems to require women to adopt "masculine" career patterns, to reduce their fertility, to protect their intellectual autonomy from male collaborators, and to work harder than men to embrace the challenges of balancing academic work with family responsibilities.' Here 'tis:
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/afrc10/bakerpaper.pdf>

18. ASEAN QA

In early July the members of ASEAN agreed to establish the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, with the intention of establishing greater QA capacity in HE throughout the region. The Declaration is here:
<http://www.lan.gov.my/berita/Julai08/Kuala%20Lumpur%20Declaration.pdf>

There's a little more detail to be had from The Star online:
<http://www.lan.gov.my/eng/index2eng.cfm>

19. VSU – the damage done

Back in February, Kate Ellis, Commonwealth Minister for Youth, kicked off a consultation intended to gauge the impact of Voluntary Student Unionism. The report is in. It's titled *The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism on Services, Amenities and Representation for Australian University Students*. Not pretty reading, but you should:
http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/0BC037DB-1F39-452D-8947-225E63A85DB1/22931/VSUSummaryReport_W2finalfromPublications3.pdf

20. What are we up to in Oz?

To find out, have a look at the ABS compendium, *Australian Social Trends, 2008*:
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4102.0?OpenDocument>

21. Jiao Tong rankings

The rankings for 2008 will appear online on 15 August at the following page:
<http://ed.sjtu.edu.cn/ranking.htm>

LATE ENTRIES

22. Innovation (1)

It's innovation season. The *Victorian innovation statement 2008* was released on 11 August. I haven't read it yet, other than the headlines that spruik \$300m in new funding:
http://www.business.vic.gov.au/busvicwr/_assets/main/lib60027/5039%20vis_web.pdf

23. Innovation (2)

I also haven't read the *Report of the Review of Cooperative Research Centres Program*. Released on 5 August:
<http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Documents/CRCReviewReport.pdf>
