



Monthly e-Newsletter – January 2009

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EDITORIAL OF SORTS

Except for one tangential reference, the newsletter is Bradley-free, Cutler-free, and COAG-free. I figure you need a wee break from all that before all hell breaks loose in a month or so.

I apologise for the late arrival of the January edition. With Christmas and New Year, and several unanticipated tasks to come to grips with, I'm afraid I couldn't get the newsletter on top of the priority list long enough to make a difference. Nevertheless, here we are at last.

A reminder that the papers/presentations from the 2008 AAIR Forum are now on the AAIR website: <http://www.aair.org.au/2008Papers/index.htm>

The team at ANU Statistical Services, who did such a sterling job as our Forum hosts, recorded the event in their newsletter: <http://unistats.anu.edu.au/Pubs/ItFigures/200811/aair08.html>

I look forward to your feedback and contributions during 2009. Subject to space and relevance to members, the newsletter can run job vacancies and items on upcoming events. And always keen to include items you think will be of interest to others.

Please feel free to contact me by email: [rob@](mailto:rob@sharpwords.com.au) with sharpwords.com.au

AAIR Committee – 2009

The AAIR Committee was elected at the Canberra Forum in November 2008.

President:

Josie Palermo, Lecturer, School of Psychology, Deakin University

Vice President:

Dave Marr, Manager, Statistical Services, ANU

Treasurer:

Joseph Bevitt, ERA Liaison Officer, Research Office, University of Sydney

Secretary:

Dean Ward, Manager Strategic Information Services, ECU

Immediate Past President:

Ivan Skaines, formerly Manager of Strategic Planning and Review, UWS

General Committee members:

- Bruce Guthrie – Research Manager, Graduate Careers Australia
- Bob Hall – Director, Planning, Information and Reporting Unit, University of Canterbury
- Don Johnston – Institutional Research Officer, Southern Cross University
- Andrea Matulick – Project Manager, Cognos Migration, UniSA
- Rob Sheehan – Editor, writer, consultant
- Vivienne Watts – Vice President - Administration & Research, Avondale College

Welcome to new Committee members, Joseph Bevitt, Bob Hall and Vivienne Watts.

Special thanks to outgoing Committee members Marian Thakur from Monash, and Wendy Marchment from Griffith University. Wendy, as many of you know, has been rattling around AAIR for yonks, and has been an invaluable contributor to the Committee, including a stint as Prez, for about the same number of yonks. Top job.

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

The hows and whys of process mapping

Friday 13 February 2009

UTS Broadway Campus

Dave Marr from ANU suggests we give our regards to old Broadway Campus at UTS on 13 February when ATEM provides chapter and verse on process mapping. Presenter Grisel Carreira is a consultant working with UTS Student Administration Unit on a process review across five student centres and seven faculties.

You sign up for either the morning session or the afternoon session, or for both:

- The morning session considers how to think about processes in a structured way, and how a process should be evaluated and improved.
- The afternoon hands on workshop deals with process illustration and shows you how to use Visio to produce process diagrams ranging from high to detailed levels of representation.

Registration and background info here:

http://www.atem.edu.au/assets/ProcessMapping13Feb09_pub_0001.pdf

National Symposium on Student Retention

September 30-October 2, 2009

Buffalo, New York

Lachlan Murdoch at Macquarie Uni suggests we all shuffle off to Buffalo for this gig. Retention is an important aspect of access and participation, upon which we will all be focussing more fiercely in the next little while. There's a presentation track just for AAIRies dealing with Data, Technology, and Methods. The track will share 'analytical methods, or technology that is useful in the study of student retention issues. Specific topics of interest could include assessment methodologies for identifying at risk populations, data mining techniques, and evaluation of retention initiatives.' Here you go: <http://csrde.ou.edu/web/symposium/index.html>

3rd International Conference on World-Class Universities

2-4 November, 2009

Shanghai, China

Why did I tell you it was bye-bye for Shanghai when Sharon Kitt at Swinburne suggests we hit the Bund for a conference outing. The blurb tells me

the conference focus is on institutional perspectives in managing and building world class universities. Among the issues for consideration are a number that fall squarely into an AAIRies bailiwick, like:

- Strategic planning and leadership of elite higher education institutions
- Quality assurance in the context of undergraduate and graduate education
- Institutional responses for accountability: internal evaluation and benchmarking.

The songs

'Give my regards to Broadway', was sung by Jimmy Cagney in the flick *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. There's a weird sort of rendition by an Al Jolson impersonator here:

<http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=2EhVxqMY0p4>

'Shuffle off to Buffalo' was a song from that grand old musical, *42nd Street*. There's a brief clip here:

<http://www.trainweb.org/wnyrhs/Shuffle.wav>

... and a more extended big band rendition here:

<http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=l5mcNUrxh0k>

Listen here to Doris Day's 1951 megahit, 'Why did I tell you I was going to Shanghai':

<http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=dVD9JiomwtM>

IT ISN'T OVER YET ...

The Network of Concerned Historians (NHC) provides 'a bridge between international human rights organizations campaigning for censored or persecuted historians (and others concerned with the past) and the global community of historians'.

In some countries, history can be a dangerous pursuit – history wars can involve bullets and gaols rather than be limited to willing public debate about the national narrative. The NHC keeps watch over historians in frontline positions, as well as archivists, archaeologists and repositories: <http://www.concernedhistorians.org/>

NHC publishes reports about bad behaviour towards history and its practitioners, like this one about the raid on the Memorial Research and Information Center (one of the world's most complete archives on Stalinist crimes) in Saint Petersburg on 4 December last year:

<http://www.concernedhistorians.org/images/ca/58.pdf>

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Research red cards

A group of French life science PhD candidates has set up a website called 'Scientific red cards'. It's a repository of published research papers that involve some elements of academic fraud. The aim is to promote integrity in research, I guess by invoking the threat of public exposure: <http://www.scientificredcards.org/>

2. A picture paints a thousand words

Digital storytelling is generating some thoughtful pedagogy. You can see a use for it in everything from history to auto mechanics.

The Centre for Active Learning at the University of Gloucestershire has a website with resources that deliver insights into using digital storytelling in educational contexts: <http://resources.glos.ac.uk/ceal/pedagogictoolsguides/digitalstorytelling.cfm>

Andrew Middleton at Sheffield Hallam University produces podcasts on all manner of learning and teaching practices, and in March last year produced one titled 'Digital storytelling in HE'. A lecturer in OT, Julie Coleman, talks about her very structured approach to incorporating digital storytelling into her practice. You can access the podcast here: <http://teaching.shu.ac.uk/podcast/08-03-19-connected.mp3>

3. Doing teaching well

Can't recall if I've previously listed the Griffith Good Practice Guides. A set of two-pagers from Griffith Institute for Higher Education on:

- Developing effective assessment
- Documenting evidence of good teaching practice
- Research-based learning
- Blended learning
- Internationalising the curriculum
- Enhancing student engagement in the first year.

You'll find all six of them linked from this page: <http://www.griffith.edu.au/gihe/learning-teaching-resources/good-practice-guides>

4. Doing teaching suddenly

NZ's Ako Aotearoa has put online *Signposts: a professional development resource for new teaching staff in the tertiary sector*. Ten briefs of one page each that would help to get you going if you unexpectedly found yourself being a teacher: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/projects/signposts-professional-development-resource-new-teaching-staff-tertiary-sector>

5. Doing research supervision

Also from Ako Aotearoa is *Developing research supervision skills: understanding and enhancing supervisor professional development practice in the Aotearoa New Zealand context*. For me, the value in this document was that it caused me to think about how delivery of PD to supervisors might be organised and integrated, rather than just concentrating on skill sets. Covers both universities and polytechnics, and supervision for postgrads, undergrads and pre-degree students. And yeah, worth a read: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/sites/default/files/ng/group-1614/n1622-full-project-report.pdf>

6. Doing IR

Universities in Australia tend not to make available on the web, in readily accessible form, lots of data about student demographics or aspects of institutional performance. In that light, it's interesting to look at the swathe of data available from some US colleges. My for example is the City University of New York's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment website. Its student data book is here: http://owl.cuny.edu:7778/portal/page/portal/oira/OIRA_HOME

7. Different takes

Some of you may have read the article in *The Oz* on January 14 titled 'The world warms to University of Melbourne's model': <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24909191-12149,00.html>

The article gives an airing to a number of views – laudatory, dismissive, and the 'so what?' perspective. But there's a better, longer article, with some of the same quoted sources and quotes, in the 8 January edition of *The Times Higher Ed Supplement* titled 'The wizards of Oz': <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=404898>

8. The rise and rise of e-learning

Towards the end of last year the Australian Flexible Learning Framework released the *2008 e-learning benchmarking survey – final report*. The survey is conducted with VET students and RTOs, but whether your field is VET, HE or schools, its 42 pages are worth dipping into. The race to make wider use of e-learning strategies and tools, we are often reminded, might just be running well ahead of what students really want in their learning lives. This is another cautionary note, though with a green light from learners provided the e-learning approaches used actually do the job. Here you go: http://e-learningindicators.flexiblelearning.net.au/docs/08results/2008_FinalReport_ElearningBenchmarking.pdf

9. Keeping track

You can while away the hours exploring all the data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), now online, along with all the research reports, briefings etc: <http://www.lsay.edu.au/>

10. Green trades

In December, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum released *Gen Green – What young Australian tradespeople think of green skills*. Respondents to the survey – all competitors in the 2006 and 2008 WorldSkills Australia National Competition – think green skills are important and they want more of them. But a third of them hadn't learnt anything about being green through their RTO or on the job.

That's about to change – the National Quality Council has a priority brief to introduce sustainability skills into all core competencies in apprenticeship qualifications. In the meantime, you might want to catch up with what some of our best young tradies think: http://www.dsf.org.au/papers/209/GenGreen_0.pdf

11. Confidence in VET assessment practice

Late last year the National Quality Council released *Investigation into industry expectations of Vocational Education and Training Assessment – Final Report – June 2008*. This is must read for VET practitioners – the implications for policy and practice change are substantial, particularly for classroom-based assessment for pre-vocational learners. Training packages have been under

pressure for a long time – this report isn't letting up on the case for change:

http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/46177/NQC_VET_Assessment_Report_-_V8_ONLINE.pdf

12. Where did we come from?

The Australian Education Union published in June last year *A chronology of TAFE*. It's a nice timeline that marks out the journey of public vocational education and training from the 1960s to April 2008. A reminder of constant change: <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Tafe/factsheets/2008/04%20ChronTAFE.pdf>

13. What are they doing over there?

In May last year a bunch of people from 10 TAFE institutes wended their way around North America, swapping yarns and scenarios with community college folks and others. The TAFE Directors Association has published the thoughts of those travellers – and some of their North American interlocutors – in *Global Themes in VET – Observations from the TDA delegation to USA and Canada*.

There's so much in this document (which was tricky to download, I have to say). Common problems canvassed, good ideas floated across a host of issues. This is a report you can dip into it as time permits – includes pieces on:

- Can international benchmarking improve RTO performance by broadening our experiential and institutional gene pool?
- Research and innovation
- Leadership and management development
- Regional and remote delivery of vocational education and training in the USA and Canada
- American Community Colleges working effectively with employers.

A good read to be had:

http://www.tda.edu.au/download_files/other/OccQ3.pdf

14. AQTF Quality Indicators

The AQTF Quality Indicators are now being rolled out. The resource package is on the ACER website, where you can also find the Learner Engagement Questionnaire and the Employer Satisfaction Questionnaire:

<http://www.acer.edu.au/aqtf/index.html>

15. What parents want to know about schools (1)

In November last DEEWR released *Survey of parents' attitudes to information about schools*. Presumably the report forms part of the argument for public release of comparative information on school performance.

However, the performance rankings weren't as important to parents as information about how the school approaches literacy and numeracy, how it communicates with parents and what the school environment and facilities were like. The report is here:

<http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/0154045C-ECBF-4E7D-A2D8-531B5CD1B5FB/24770/ParentsAttitudestoInfoonSchoolsNOV08.pdf>

16. What parents want to know about schools (2)

Jennifer Buckingham from the Centre for Independent Studies has written *Making the grade: school report cards and league tables*. She reckons: 'No school performance reporting mechanism is perfect, but some are better than others. Despite the inevitable imperfections, good information about schools must be made available to the people who have the most at stake – parents and their children – and the sooner the better.'

Buckingham lays out the argument for performance reporting here:
http://www.cis.org.au/issue_analysis/IA103/ia103.pdf

17. 1 + 1 = more teachers required

The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) has a bloody awful acronym. But it has a bloody interesting website:
<http://www.nasulgc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=183&srcid=584>

My reason for paying a visit was the November launch of the Science and Mathematics Teacher Imperative (SMTI). As you've probably guessed, the objective of SMTI is to recruit and prepare science and maths teachers who are in short supply. Eighty colleges have signed up to SMTI. One of them should point out that 'mathematics' on the first line of this webpage comes with an 'e', but that pedant's quibble aside, have a look:
<http://www.teacher-imperative.org/>

18. ACE

Some people attract work like windowsills catch dust. Hands up if you knew that Denise Bradley was also the President this year of the Australian College of Educators (ACE). Well done. Come and sit in the front row, right there beside my desk. Now, let me tell you there's not much that's free access on the ACE website, but it's important that you know ACE is there:
<http://www.austcolled.com.au/>

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

Thanks, Swinnie

This is a reminder, really, to check in on the growing number of Swinburne Learning and Teaching podcasts. Recent additions include:

- Using the formal and informal curriculum to improve the student experience of internationalisation
- Engagement in subjects from a student perspective
- Learning as an Outsider.

The last of these is a nice reminder of how disorienting you can find things when you are learning away from home. The pod suite is here:
<http://podcasts.swinburne.edu.au/podcast.php?ID=17&linktitle=Swinburne-Learning-and-Teaching>

An American in Canberra

Joel Klein's stewardship of the New York public school system has caught the eye of the Commonwealth government. Klein visited Oz last year at the invitation of Julia Gillard. In his interview on ABC Radio National's EdPod, Klein said: 'So we [in New York] have a system of rewards and consequences but the first part of the system and in my view the critical part and the part that the deputy prime minister and I focused on was to get the information publicly available so parents know, so that the school knows, so that the media knows, so that we can see how our schools are doing and what the differences are.'

You can download the full interview here:
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/edpod/stories/2008/2398285.htm>

Innovation from Mars

I read this blog now and again, and often ask myself why I don't go back more often. Sits on the MaRS website. MaRS is an innovation precinct in Toronto dedicated to medical and life sciences: <http://blog.marsdd.com/2009/01/14/the-key-to-innovation-less-genius-more-science/>

IT IS WRITTEN

Social democracy has much to say about higher education – there is no subject on which educated people have stronger views than education – but it would be better for all if it ceased to say it. The proliferation of opinions and controls, inside and outside higher education institutions, has made their effective management impossible. Higher education, like vocational education, flourishes in an embedded market in which government participates but does not control, financial incentives exist but do not predominate, structures are pluralist and evolving rather than directed,, and social norms secure compliance with a system of which the community feels justly proud.

- John Kay, *The truth about markets: why some nations are rich but most remain poor*, Penguin, London, 2004.

(I read this book a few years ago and in light of the old Global Financial Crisis was moved to take it off the shelf again. With some black amusement I read the back cover blurb which goes like so: 'Capitalism faltered at the end of the 1990s as corporations were rocked by fraud, the stock-market bubble burst and the American business model – unfettered self-interest, privatization and low tax – faced a storm of protest.' Hmm.)

A Christmas thought

This passage struck a chord as I negotiated my way through the myriad family events surrounding Christmas:

He had to get away. He had never been good at waiting. One of the few things he disliked about coming from a largish family was the seeming impossibility of leaving anywhere fast, the second you'd decided to go.

- Patrick Gale, *Notes from an Exhibition*, Fourth Estate, London, 2007.