



Monthly e-Newsletter – September 2009

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EDITORIAL OF SORTS

RMIT brought me a Poem of the Day, each day, during the Melbourne Writer's Festival. Short poems. Seven wee parcels to unpack and wonder with. Do yourself a favour:
<http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=ur1595mtuyu8z>

We have two job opportunities in Sydney running in this month's newsletter, at UTS and Sydney Uni. Mosey along to page 6 and have a look. Job ads and other contributions are welcome. Please feel free to contact me by email:
rob@sharpwords.com.au

I aim to get the newsletter out 'around' the 5th of the month. But no guarantees, I'm afraid. In fact, next month, October, you might be waiting until around the 10th due to other moons entering the orbit of my world.

If you are receiving a copy of this newsletter and would prefer not to, email me and I'll scrub you from the distribution list. My email address is:
rob@sharpwords.com.au

**7th Annual
 Australasian Higher Education
 Evaluation Forum**

**Byron Bay Community Centre
 21-23 October 2009**

This year the Forum will be hosted by Southern Cross University at the Byron Bay Community Centre.

The 2009 Forum is an ideal opportunity for academics, administrators, managers and practitioners from domestic and international institutions to gather and share knowledge and understanding in the discrete discipline area of evaluation in the higher education context.

The Forum allows participants to present the breadth and depth of evaluation practices.

The theme for 2009 is:

Evaluation in a changing higher education landscape: Bradley and Beyond.

There are three presentation strands for the Forum:

- Refereed papers
- Non-Refereed papers
- Workshops focussing on praxis.

These strands offer participants the chance to engage in scholarly discourse, discussion and exchange of practical understandings.

Further information can be obtained from the Forum website:

<http://www.scu.edu.au/aheef/index.php>

Online early bird registrations are currently open.

Hosted by Southern Cross University

19TH ANNUAL AAIR FORUM

11-13 November 2009

Hyatt Hotel, Adelaide

The theme for this year's AAIR Forum is:

Turning water into wine: Institutional research as an essential ingredient in strategic decision making for tertiary education.

The Forum will focus on strategic priorities in the sector, including:

- supporting strategic planning
- adding value to measuring and predicting
- responding to skills shortages
- environmental and economic sustainability.

DRAFT PROGRAM NOW AVAILABLE

It's all beginning to take very fine shape. You can check on papers, presenters and SIG scheduling right here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2009/program.php>

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION CLOSES ON 15 SEPTEMBER

As I write, there are just 67 days or so to go until the Forum gets underway. Registration details are here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2009/downloads/AAIRRegistrationV5.pdf>

VENUE

The Forum will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Adelaide. You can kip there, or at a number of other hotels offering special deals for Forum goers:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2009/accommodation.php>

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Emeritus Professor Denise Bradley AC

Dr Gavin Moodie

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/vc/ate/moodie/>

Nick Palousis

<http://www.sbpractices.com/nick-palousis>

CONFIRMED SPONSORS/HOSTS/PARTNERS

**UTS UniSA RMIT QUT Flinders ANU
Adelaide Uni**

The 2009 AAIR Forum is organised via a partnership of staff from UniSA, Adelaide Uni and Flinders' Uni.

Climate Change @ Work Brisbane

29 October 2009

Ship Inn, South Bank, Brisbane

Okay, so this isn't focussed on the education sector. But Griffith Uni is supporting the event. Will that do? The conference is put together by Sydney Uni's Workplace Research Centre, which is going north of the border from 9am-5pm on 29 October to dip into a range of things, including a session on 'Environmental up-skilling: implications for skills and the labour market'. The details are here:

<http://www.wrc.org.au/event-details.php?eventid=78>

Teaching and Learning for Employability in a Global Economy

12-13 November 2009

University of Nottingham Ningbo, China.

This is a Universitas21 event, being held in Ningbo, just across the bay from Shanghai. And it's limited to U21 staff. Pity – with a conference title like that, I'm sure there would have been lots of other takers. But if you're in the U21 cabal, here you go: <http://www.universitas21.com/event/091112TandLConference2.html>

ANZSSA CONFERENCE 2009

6-9 December 2009

**Queensland University of Technology
Gardens Point Campus**

The Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA) conference will, the website tells me, 'examine how Student Services participate in global education, with a focus on student engagement and long term sustainability.' Looks like a terrific program with plenty of attention on strategies for student success and engaging both tertiary teachers and students. The drum on the conference is here:

<http://www.anzssa.qut.edu.au/index.html>

emtacl10

26-28 April 2010

Trondheim, Norway

emtacl10 sounds like something to do with fishing lines, doesn't it? The acronym stands for 'emerging technologies in academic libraries'. The conference is organised by the library of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Here's the deal:

<http://www.ntnu.no/ub/emtacl/?home>

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE INAUGURAL LM SIG?

Jeff Holmes from QUT wants you to know...

QUT hosted the inaugural Load Management Special Interest Group (LM SIG) on Wednesday 26 August. The SIG was very well attended with 40 staff from 19 unis engaging in vigorous and entertaining discussion. After the welcome from Mr Stephen Pincus, Executive Director Finance & Resource Planning at QUT, the SIG looked at the interesting results of the load management survey, particularly items concerning who does load management, how many staff build projections, and how prepared universities are for staff turnover. Differences and similarities between the university sectors in New Zealand and Australia was a highlight, with significant input from staff from eastern side of the Tasman.

Professor Michael Lavarch, Executive Dean of QUT's Faculty of Law, spoke about what load management meant to him as a Dean – it's very important. This led into the session on load management, budget and planning. Michael Rothery, Reporting and Analysis Coordinator from UTS led a discussion on the issues and challenges for modelling and the different planning cycles we work in.

There was an involved debate centred on the targets and setting of acceptable ranges. With changes in government funding in Australia and New Zealand, more water will pass under this bridge in the months and years to come.

Finally the SIG looked at its own future. AAIR SIGs have a short meeting as part of the Annual Forum: the 2009 Forum runs 11-13 November in Adelaide. Options were discussed for future meetings outside the Annual Forum. The LM SIG was held the day before the Data Warehousing SIG hosted by Griffith Uni. Around half of delegates attended both, it was felt a similar arrangement for 2010 would be the way to go. Watch this space for details.

For more information about the Load Management Special Interest Group, please contact Jeff Holmes at QUT:
j.holmes@qut.edu.au

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Counting right

The International Statistical Institute (ISI) has been working away at a new Declaration on Professional Ethics. The Declaration covers all manner of things, including:

- Pursuing Objectivity
- Assessing Alternatives Impartially
- Avoiding Preempted Outcomes
- Exhibiting Professional Competence
- Maintaining Confidence in Statistics
- Preventing Misinterpretation or Misuse.

The draft Declaration is here:

<http://isi.cbs.nl/ethics/ISI-2009EthicsDeclaration.pdf>

Just out of interest, one of the ISI VPs is Len Cook from NZ, and Susan Linacre, Deputy Australian Statistician, is a member of the ISI Council.

2. Framing those qualifications

The Australian Qualifications Framework Council has delivered unto us the analysis of the 84 submissions received in response to the Council's consultation paper, *Strengthening the AQF: a proposal*. As I read it, the views are mixed about exactly how to proceed with renewing the AQF, though there is more agreement about what it should try to do. No doubt the AQF will have a role to play in the coming debate about standards in tertiary education. The analysis of submission is here:

<http://www.aqf.edu.au/Portals/0/Report%20on%20Strengthening%20Consultation%20Aug%202009.pdf>

3. Student-focussed pathways

I'm waiting on the outcomes of the AQF Council's Pathways Project. As the AQF website notes: 'In March 2009, the Deputy Prime Minister commissioned the AQF Council to "improve the articulation and connectivity between the university and the VET sectors to enable competency-based and merit-based systems to become more student-focussed".'

I had a notion that a report was due in September. But the snazzy new website only says 'towards the end of 2009'. You'll just have to keep checking the very snazzy new AQF website to be there when it turns up, just in the nick of time:

<http://www.aqf.edu.au/>

IT ISN'T OVER YET

We've just passed the tenth anniversary of the vote by the East Timorese for independence. A plucky effort in the face of extraordinary intimidation. The extract below was written by a journo who went with INTERFET forces into the countryside to quell the ugliness that went swaggering abroad after the vote.

'The next morning I travelled with an armoured convoy out to the seminary of Dare, high in the hills above Dili. Dare is East Timor's Oxford, or its Sorbonne, a famous Jesuit institution where many of Timor's leaders had studied. During the fortnight of anarchy and isolation, some the most disturbing stories had come from there. Tens of thousands of refugees had fled to Dare from the towns. In the face of such numbers, the protection provided by the [Jesuit] fathers was entirely symbolic but, because it was a relatively easy journey from Dili, there was a higher than usual proportion of the old and the very young, the sickly and the pregnant. A couple of the priests had mobile phones, and early on, before the batteries died away, they put through desperate calls to Australia describing night-time attacks by the Indonesian army, old people scrambling through the jungle to escape bullets, encirclement operations, imminent starvation. Food had been air-dropped, a few parcels of biscuits launched into a jungle ...

'The road to Dare rose through hairpin bends with dry, scrubby jungle on either side ... The convoy slowed almost to a crawl, the road bent sharply again, and suddenly we were among them – thousands of men, young and old, all cheering and singing ...

'*Viva Timor Leste!*' people shouted. '*Viva independenciac! Viva Xanana Gusmão!*' A sheet was being held aloft, bearing the words 'Welcome to the New Nation – you are saving a people from destruction'. These were the lost people of Dare, about whom so many terrible things had been heard and, for now at least, every one of them had a smile upon his face.'

- *In the time of madness: Indonesia on the edge of chaos*, Richard Lloyd Parry, London: Random House, 2005.

4. Summer research jobs in NZ

The Global Financial Stuff-Up has prompted lots of innovative ideas. Here's one I like, and one I hope goes beyond the GFS-U. About a month ago, NZ's Minister for Tertiary Education, Anne Tolley, announced 1600 on-campus summer research scholarships. The idea is that summer jobs will be harder to come by thanks to the GFS-U. Unis are being asked to fund half the cost of each \$5000 scholarship. But that aside, what a great way to bring learners into the wider university frame. Here's the announcement:

<http://beehive.govt.nz/release/1600+summer+scholarships+students>

5. A textbook demise

For some time I've watched the demise of the textbook come closer. Textbooks are pricey, often of limited use or used in a limited way, and they are high margin items for publishers in a captive market. There are better ways, especially with ubiquitous access to learning technologies.

Course Smart promises to shave about 50% from the cost of textbooks through offering e-textbooks, but with greater access to a range of textbooks at the same time for the money outlaid:
<http://www.coursesmart.com/>

Cengage has come up with renting e-textbooks – it's a bit limited in operation, but it joins Cengage's other options like buying stand alone chapters:
<http://www.cengage.com/press/release/20090813.html>

Flat World Knowledge looks good. From the website: 'Flat World's textbooks are written by the world's leading subject matter experts. The books are peer reviewed, professionally edited, and made available for free online to educators and students. Educators have the freedom to use the books as-is, or to mix, mash or edit them to suit their unique classroom requirements. Students can access the books for free, or purchase alternatives from print-on-demand versions of the books, to audio versions, to downloadable versions and more at a fraction of the cost of traditional textbooks..'

More about Flat World here:
<http://www.flatworldknowledge.com/>

And thanks to the GFS-U, for a two year period in the US, student can claim a tax for textbooks and other course materials:
<http://www.textbookaid.org/Summary.aspx>

IT IS WRITTEN

‘Some Australians ... argue that we are behind in the most accepted measures of innovation because of our industrial structure. That is, we are heavily involved in industries that are low and medium intensity in terms of their use of technology. According to Professor Keith Smith of the University of Tasmania, this is a comfortable myth. He analysed like for like industries and found that, whether low or high technology, Australian business still spends at a lower rate than the rest of the developed world.

‘Clearly, it is difficult to mount an argument that Australians are particularly innovative ... It may be more accurate to say we are highly innovative when we have to be ... Britain gave us all her innovations and her technology. We imported trains and exported wool and gold. Where we had to innovate – to support wool and gold – we were highly innovative. We developed the merino, the flotation method of separating materials, and the combine harvester, for example...

‘Today we are still the technology supplicant. We are highly innovative where we have to be – in mining, for example. We are clearly highly innovative in banking and finance – just look at Macquarie Bank and the compulsory superannuation levy. But otherwise, we are happy importing other people’s technology.

‘Perhaps life is too easy for us and we needn’t try too hard to be wealthy. We must ask how long this can last, and whether we can change.’

- ‘Foreword’, by Peter Roberts, in *Measured success: innovation management in Australia*, edited by Peter Cebon, Melbourne University Press, 2008.

6. ESOS Review – the Discussion Paper cometh

There’s a lot of hard thinking going on about how to do a better job of supporting, and protecting the interests of, international students. The ESOS Review will be an important part of the hard thinking – the Review will issue an issues paper sometime in September, so keep your eye out for it here:

<http://www.aei.gov.au/Aei/Default.aspx>

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7. USQ/CAG pathways

USQ and Careers Australia Group (CAG) have entered a partnership that will offer pathways between VET and higher ed. The first students are expected to articulate in 2010 from CAG’s College of Healthcare into USQ’s Bachelor of Nursing. The announcement is here:

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

And just out of interest, The CEO of CAG, Patrick McKendry, sits in two chairs that influence the broader VET system: he is Chair of the National Quality Council, and Chair of TVET.

8. Kettering co-op program

Kettering University is in Flint, Michigan. Once upon a time, Kettering was called GMI, or General Motors Institute, cos once upon a time General Motors was an upstart start-up outfit in Flint. These days Kettering boasts that it has the best co-op, or work integrated learning, programs in the whole of the USA. I can’t judge the claim, though the *US News and World Report* ranks Kettering’s engineering program amongst the best in the States. The information about the co-op program is scattered across the website, but worth a cruise:

<http://www.kettering.edu/>

9. Innovation: speed consultation

If innovation is your bag, you’ve probably already read *Powering ideas* inside out – Kim Carr’s ten year plan for doing innovation better. Unis figure large in the innovation agenda because, as *Powerful ideas* points out: ‘An internationally competitive economy begins with an internationally competitive innovation system – and that begins with internationally competitive universities.’ You can get your very own copy of *Powerful ideas* here:

http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Documents/PoweringIdeas_fullreport.pdf

That wasn’t really my main reason for this Note. My main reason was that one of *Powerful idea*’s promises was to establish the Commonwealth Commercialisation Institute, and so a Discussion Paper was duly issued on 14 August. You had just two weeks to get your comments in, but I guess the Discussion Paper was only two and a bit pages long and there’s only nine years and nine months to get the innovation plan done and dusted:

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Innovation/Documents/CCIDiscussionpaper.pdf>

JOB OPPORTUNITY

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Data Analyst Strategic Planning Office

The University of Sydney's Strategic Planning Office is seeking to appoint a Data Analyst to provide statistical information and reports across a broad range of areas, especially management reporting and regulatory reporting, to assist the University to realise its planning goals.

You will need to demonstrate strong experience in the collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of statistics to a diverse audience using SPSS or a similar application. This should ideally include familiarity with SPSS syntax (or similar, e.g. SAS) for file handling, data manipulation, production of tables and reports. In addition you will need a proven ability to write reports for senior academic and administrative staff.

Degree qualified, you will need strong analytical, problem solving and conceptual skills, with a proven ability to handle complex data queries. In addition, you must be familiar with the DEEWR Student or Staff Data Collections, or similar legislative data collection. Excellent computer skills, particularly in the areas of spreadsheets and web navigation are essential.

The position is full time continuing subject to the completion of a satisfactory probation period for new appointees. Membership of a University approved superannuation scheme is a condition of employment for new appointees.

All applications must be submitted online. For more information and to apply, please use Reference No. 391/0809 and visit the following web link:
<http://usyd.edu.au/positions>

General enquiries can be directed to:

- Ugo De Gori on (02) 9036 7805, or
- Rebecca Astar on (02) 9036 7802.

Closing Date: 13 September 2009

JOB OPPORTUNITY

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

Survey Officer Planning and Quality Unit

UTS is recruiting a Survey Officer to join its Planning and Quality Unit. The job is classified as HEW 7 and is located in Broadway, Sydney.

The successful applicant will work with the Survey/Operations Manager to administer and coordinate surveys of students, graduates, clients and industry leaders.

The role also involves reporting survey findings to the university community and undertaking follow-up qualitative research (such as conducting focus groups).

For further information contact:

- Antoine Goarin on (02) 9514 2607.

Details are not yet on the UTS website, but they should appear here some time in the next week or so:

<http://www.hru.uts.edu.au/jobs/>

10. Everyone's library

I like this. The University of Worcester, in partnership with the County and City Councils, and the regional development outfit, is building a swank new Worcester Library and History Centre. It will contain:

- A fully-integrated public and university library
- Worcestershire Record Office
- Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service
- Worcestershire Hub Customer Service Centre.

Good, isn't it? It will have a big children's area, too. But they've just turned the first sod so you'll have to wait until 2011 before you drop in, pay your rates and borrow, at the same counter, *Green eggs and ham* and the latest number of the *BMJ*.

The architecture is terrific, too – click on the External Views tab and take a look:
<http://www.wlhc.org.uk/index.html>

11. Fixing international education

Michael Wesley is the new Exec Director of the Lowy Institute, and just a few months ago was Professor of International Relations and Director of the Griffith Asia Institute at Griffith Uni. And just a few weeks ago he stitched the old and the new threads together in a paper called *Australia's poisoned alumni: international education and the costs to Australia*. It's a pretty vigorous analysis, and comes with seven suggestions for doing it all better, including the notion of setting up ombudsmen for international students. Here you go:
<http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Search.asp?pubtype=10&process=search>

12. Ranking the minters of questions

The 'Philosophical Gourmet Report' is a ranking of graduate programs in philosophy in the English-speaking world. The rankings are derived through a know thyself methodology – philosophers are asked to rank other philosophers on a six point scale from inadequate to distinguished. In Australasia, only ANU figures among the top 50 faculties in the world:
<http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/overall.asp>

13. Asian university ranking

The QS.com Asian University Rankings were released a couple of weeks back. The methodology is different from the QS.com-Times Higher Ed Supplement approach, but you still end up with a list. You can also look at the rankings by broad discipline and by indicator:
<http://www.topuniversities.com/worlduniversityrankings/asianuniversityrankings/>

14. Green rankings in the US

GreenReportCard.org reports on the sustainability performance of North American higher ed institutions. So we're talking green performance in the broad, not limited to practices and designs for teaching and learning or research. The work is supported via philanthropic grants.

The 2009 College Sustainability Report Card tallies the performance of couple of hundred unis, and allows you to check on their individual performance, and to compare it with others:
<http://www.greenreportcard.org/report-card-2009>

15. European numbers

Eurostat is the statistical agency for the European Union. Amongst its nifty products are the Country Profiles, that offer you drop down boxes that allow you to customise data according to theme and EU member state. From the theme box you can select just education stats.

Also nifty is the way each of your queries is saved under separate tabs at the top left, so you'll always know what European numbers you have chased:
<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/gui/introAction.do?profile=cpro&theme=eurind&lang=en>

16. Digital Britain

The UK's new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (which also has responsibility for unis) has released *Digital Britain: final report*. I should warn you that it's 245 pages. I've limited myself to the Exec Summary and Chapter 6 – 'Research, education and skills for Digital Britain'. The report lays out a plan for ensuring that Britain has the digital smarts and infrastructure, all operating as part of a well-oiled innovation system, to cut it in the emerging global economy. The report is a mix of presenting/showcasing existing programs, drawing together ideas from reviews and commissioned reports, and offering tweaks and a few new ideas. That's all very handy given that the document looks at schools, skills and higher ed:
http://www.dcms.gov.uk/what_we_do/broadcasting/6216.aspx

17. Grad Cert/Grad Dip in LL&N

We are inching closer to the having an accredited Vocational Graduate Certificate and a Vocational Graduate Diploma in Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LL&N). This has been bubbling away for a while, and I'm sorry to say that if you wanted to make comment on the final draft, you missed the deadline; that was September 4th. But we should watch how this goes – as existing workers come into the training system in greater numbers, and as we (hope to) engage more disengaged learners in the system, the role of LL&N becomes more prominent. And don't let the long url put you off – it leads to an IBSA webpage that's probably shorter than the hyperlink:
<http://www.ibsa.org.au/news-and-projects/news/tabid/112/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/17/Developing-a-Vocational-Graduate-Certificate-and-Vocational-Graduate-Diploma-in-Language-Literacy-and-Numeracy-LLN.aspx>

18. Literacy and productivity

The Australian Industry Group has so often of recent years been pushing the skills and training agenda just a little bit further beyond the resting places. Its newest push is on improving literacy and numeracy in workplaces. In a 31 August media release Ai Group announced that it 'has this month launched a national project – with the support of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations – to examine the impact on businesses of low literacy and numeracy and to road-test solutions.' The Commonwealth announced on the same day, via Mark Arbib, Minister for Employment Participation, that it was putting up \$400k for the AiG project.

If you thought the url at the bottom of the last column was a bit over the top, you really don't want to see this one from AiG's website, so I'll protect you:

[Media release with an excessively long url](#)

19. Skills tasters

In a related vein, a small amount of money – around \$1m – was included in the Commonwealth Budget for Foundation Skills Taster Courses. The intended outcome is improved language, literacy and numeracy, but the vehicles are informal short courses that build engagement with the learning context and the learning process. Here's the info: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/Pages/FoundationSkillsTasterCourseProgram.aspx>

20. Choosing from a distance

The College Choices for Adults website provide information about US providers of distance and online education programs for adult learners. It's just getting off the ground, so early days. Offers lots of metrics, and more to come, which can help in selecting where to steer your learning dollar: <http://www.collegechoicesforadults.org/>

21. Independent public schools in WA

The WA government has announced a new class of schools: independent public schools. Public schools can now apply for greater control over staffing and school policy. In broad it sounds like the arrangements that have applied in Victoria since the 90s. The media release is here: <http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/ByPortfolio.aspx?ItemId=132344&search=&admin=&minister=&portfolio=Education®ion=>

22. Science teaching in South Aussie

The Flinders Centre for Science Education in the 21st Century has released a report called *Who's teaching science in South Australia?* The investigation indicates that there are a lot of science teachers who haven't formally studied science in their post-school careers. The report states that there is Strong evidence that many secondary science teachers are required to teach subjects for which they are not qualified. This is particularly the case for teachers in regional areas who are twice as likely while those in rural schools are three times as likely as those in metropolitan schools to be teaching a subject for which they are not qualified.'

This was a disappointing finding: 'Essentially, 39% of teachers under 40 currently teaching senior classes of Physics are qualified to do so compared to 63% for those teachers over 40.' Not a good look.

Not sure that all the proposed solutions are on the right tram – a heavy emphasis on regulation which isn't enough in itself to bring about change. The report is here:

http://www.flinders.edu.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uid=5E1B44C9-CE1D-0D3B-67E7-7EFF37A39C7C&siteName=flinders

23. Teaching quality and the pay packet

Rewarding quality teaching: research report was released by Julia Gillard in mid-August, though dated 10 March. The report, despite its general tone, has a very specific focus – performance pay. It's a long tome at a tick over 100 pages and it's a dead boring read in lots of ways, with mountains of information about performance pay in other jobs and how different regulatory and professional registration systems describe quality. So I skipped those bits, and then it becomes quite lively.

You might want to check out section 4.5: Issues in assessment of teaching quality, and Section 5, or Part C, which reports on perceptions of performance pay by the teaching profession. You might be interested because I suspect that over time we will see these notions emerge in the public VET and higher education spaces. The report is here:

http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/Rewarding_Teacher_Quality-Final_Report_-_GDA_2009.pdf

24. Assessment for learning and teaching

ACER's 2009 Research Conference billed itself as 'Assessment and student learning: collecting, interpreting and using data to inform teaching'. The Conference Proceedings are now online. I've only looked at a couple of the papers, but let me recommend them:

- John Gardner's keynote address, 'Assessment for teaching: the halfway house'
- Stephen Humphry's and Sandra Heldsinger's paper, 'Do rubrics help to inform and direct teaching practice?'

And it's a plain fact that what these papers have to say makes as much sense in VET and higher ed as it does in the school sector.

A quick scan of some of the other papers suggests AARies will find lots of interesting notions about how to turn statistics into information that informs learning and teaching practice. So, you really should download the Proceedings here: http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=research_conference

25. Grattan Institute

You may be aware of the establishment of the Grattan Institute, a new public policy think tank based at Melbourne Uni, but quite independent of the Uni. I've been watching and waiting for the Institute to start making splash, and I think its pretty close. In the last month or so it has announced a number of really good appointments. I think it will be an exciting addition to ideas marketplace. The Institute's website is here: <http://www.grattainstitute.edu.au/index.html>

As a start, John Daley, the Grattan's CEO, made an address to The Adelaide Festival of Ideas in July titled 'The 10 numbers Australian governments need to change'.

Daley focuses his address on school education as a prism for explaining the Grattan Institute's general approach to its role. He eschews the idea that more money will bring about the advances we need in schools. Instead, he zeroes in on the quality of teaching. A good read: http://www.grattainstitute.edu.au/publications/The_Ten_Numbers_Adelaide_Fest_Ideas%20.pdf

26. Tackling US high school dropout rates

The US House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee held a hearing way back in May this year to examine how policies for improving high school graduation rates could strengthen America's economic competitiveness. In the US, only 70 percent of students graduate from high school. The scary bit is that about 10 percent of US high schools produce almost half of the nation's non-completers.

There were several people called on to testify to the Committee. I read the written testimony or two of them, and you might want to do the same.

Vicki Phillips outlines the approach of the Gates Foundation to improving student performance through its funding programs. The Foundation's programs have three objectives:

- Improve teacher effectiveness and empowerment
- Support standards that are fewer, clearer and higher, and meaningfully assessing them
- Support breakthrough innovations & school models that dramatically accelerate performance.

Her written testimony is here:

<http://edlabor.house.gov/documents/111/pdf/testimony/20090512VickiPhillipsTestimony.pdf>

Also worth reading is the testimony of Robert Balfanz from Johns Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center. At one point he notes that: 'we have not paid enough attention to developing mechanisms to get the right reform and transformation strategies to the right school, with sufficient capacity building and technical assistance to enable effective implementation and to sustain it. Too often good reform strategies have been applied in the wrong places or without enough intensity and fidelity to succeed.' Here 'tis: <http://edlabor.house.gov/documents/111/pdf/testimony/20090512RobertBalfanzTestimony.pdf>

27. National curriculum position paper

Just quickly, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has released the *National curriculum in the senior secondary years position paper*. I haven't read it yet – that's a delight for next week, but thought I'd mention it as you can respond to it until 30 September: http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/ACARA_Senior_Senior_Secondary_Years_Curriculum_Position_Paper_v06.pdf

Reviewers wanted for *Journal of Institutional Research (JIR)*

JIR is seeking reviewers interested in serving on our volunteer Editorial Review Board.

JIR's role

Maintaining JIR as a quality journal depends on reviewers with a high level of expertise and an ability to be objective, fair, and insightful in their evaluation of manuscripts. Our goal is to explore ideas, share best practices and enable excellence in institutional research worldwide through publishing contributions by researchers, policymakers and practitioners from diverse international settings.

Peer review

Peer reviewers are asked to provide feedback to JIR editors about the merits of submissions in terms of quality and contribution to the field. Peer review is very valuable and important in the overall publication process, for its ability both to enhance individual manuscripts, and to improve the journal's credibility and reputation. Reviewers are expected to write reviews in a timely, collegial, and constructive manner in line with supplied guidelines for feedback to authors.

JIR's peer reviewers

The role is unpaid but appointment can be cited on your résumé and the material you will be asked to review should be close to your own specialism. We are interested in individuals with strong statistical backgrounds as well as reviewers familiar with issues related to planning, coordinating, collecting, organising, compiling & disseminating information about the characteristics and performance of the institution.

What JIR publishes

Accepted for publication are papers on Institutional Research:

- Institutional Research planning and assessment activities
- Institutional Research educational and organisational studies, reports and summaries
- institutional studies, reports and databases designed to support recurring decision needs of the institution
- comprehensive and authoritative information about the institution

- techniques of institutional research, research methodologies and the design and execution of information systems and surveys

in at least one of the following categories:

- **Research:** Reports important results from own experience or research; describes problem clearly; provides baseline data; explains what researcher has done and why; and provides results.
- **Integration:** Integrates research of others in meaningful way; compares or contrasts theories; critiques results; and/or provides context for future exploration.

Matching manuscripts to reviewers

By filling out the information requested below, you will provide us with the data we need to accurately match manuscripts with appropriate reviewers. On average, manuscripts are about 5000 words. Reviewers are given four weeks to complete their assessments. We hope that by expanding our pool of reviewers each will not be asked to review more than two papers in any year.

If you are interested in joining our team of reviewers please forward the following information to Josie Palermo at:

josephine.palermo@deakin.edu.au

1. Name:

2. Address:

3. Telephone:

4. Fax:

5. email:

6. Education:

7. Names of institutions and degrees obtained:

8. Your areas of expertise/preferred topic areas – please indicate the top five areas in which you have sufficient expertise to review manuscripts

(1 = most expertise, 5 = least expertise)

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

Teachers! To the barricades!

This podcast will lift the hearts of classroom revolutionaries of the 60s and 70s. Ivan Illich and John Holt spoke to me across the decades in this CBC reprise of a show broadcast in the late 90s. The questions these guys raised still demand a bit of pondering. Pick up this blast from the past at: <http://castroller.com/podcasts/CbcRadioRewind/1092979>

Ear food

La Trobe has entered the podcast stakes with a raft of entries. I've downloaded a couple, but I'm still working my way towards them so can't tell you much. A few titles might whet your whistle:

- Future Teachers, Lorraine Ling: The future of teaching and the problems with schools
- New Media Teaching, Chris Scanlon: Twitter, iTunes, and blogs put to use with students
- Global Melting Point, John Russell: An engineer's view on how to heal the global climate
- Science Teaching, Vaughan Prain: Current approaches to developing deeper thinking in science in schools.

You can access the pods here: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/podcasts>

Ian Chubb at the Lowy Institute

The phlegmatic certitude of ANU's VC, Ian Chubb, is available to us via the podcast of his address to the Lowy Institute's regular Wednesday Lunch event. Chubb covers the panoply of policy changes in higher education, and makes a strong call for differentiation between universities which are international beasts by nature, recognising that everyone can't be good at everything. It's here: <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=1089>

And while we're at the Lowy, can I just put in a plug for the really excellent blog, The Interpreter. Sam Roggeveen started it a few years back, and the contributor list is now as diverse as the territory it covers. The blog is here: <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/>

There are very occasional references to education, but just to show I'm not entirely self-indulgent, try this post on international education: <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2009/07/30/Education-exports-Government-mute.aspx>

From whence the web

Oops. I'm obviously straying from task too often. First, The Interpreter blog. Now this.

I haven't really sorted out how this website comes to be, but you'll enjoy a visit, I'm sure. It's called 'History of the Australian Web'. You get a really great visual sense of how interactions with the web have changed in Oz since 2001. It is pretty startling to recall just how new this technology is and how quickly it has become part of the furniture. Check it out:

http://avant.interactionconsortium.com/australian_internet/#

AAIR Committee – 2009

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