



# AARE News

## **President's Report**

**AARE NEWS No. 50**  
**April 2005**  
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As many of you will be aware, issues of research quality and impact are heating up in the Australian academic community. By the time you read this issue of AARE News, responses to the DEST Issues Paper (located at [http://www.dest.gov.au/resqual/issues\\_paper.htm#4](http://www.dest.gov.au/resqual/issues_paper.htm#4)) will be due or will already have been submitted. Along with other associations, institutions and individuals, AARE is preparing a response and intends to argue the particularities of education research, which is not simply about the application of knowledge produced within other disciplines.

In brief, a central theme in our thinking is that education is a field with significant differences from some fields and similarities with others, implying similar understandings of research quality. In making such claims, we are seeking to raise a number of questions about research, including: what counts as research?; who counts as researchers?; what are the conditions under which they conduct research?; and what are the contributions anticipated from research? Disciplines with a particular professional focus can provide quite different answers to these questions compared with the sciences and even from some in humanities and social sciences. This also has relevance for how research impact might be assessed. In asserting this position within our response, we hope to offer principles to inform ways of making meaningful judgements on quality and impact in relation to education research.

Barbara Preston (Executive member) is leading the writing of AARE's response, supported by the Executive and other members who are contributing their comments into the process. (See Barbara's item in this issue outlining the range of issues in the RQF with relevance for AARE.) AARE members have also provided feedback into the DEST process through the consultation forums held around the country (see <http://www.dest.gov.au/resqual/forums.htm>) and AARE has been invited to attend the National Stakeholder Forum, to be held in Canberra on 2 June 2005. In writing our submission, we have

benefited greatly from the input of members and from discussions with other groups with similar interests. Please continue to feed your comments into the process through Barbara or others on the Executive.

***we are seeking to raise a number of questions about research, including: what counts as research?; who counts as researchers?; what are the conditions under which they conduct research?; and what are the contributions anticipated from research?***

However, in all of this, it is important to keep sight of the big 'Q' picture of Quality research (see last issue of AARE News) and not allow our vision to be narrowed by the politics of quality (ie. small 'q' quality research). Any new system of assessing research quality and its impact will encourage certain practices more than others but this should not be taken to mean that issues of quality in research have been resolved. Irrespective of any new system, we are obliged as researchers to engage with the quality of our work and the extent to which it makes a contribution to the field. Indeed, we should welcome an emphasis on quality in research. Further, there are issues about how we engage with these systems in ways that encourage quality.

The *Review of Australian Research in Education* (RARE) to be published later in the year (see last AARE News for details) is one way in which AARE is attempting to encourage members and others to focus on this broader agenda around Quality in education research. The *Quality in Educational Research: Directions in policy and practice* focus conference in Cairns (4-5 July), convened by Rob Gilbert, is another. These are initiatives of the Executive but they do not have to be the only ones by AARE. Our Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are other possible forums for exploring these matters. I look forward to your participation in these and other ways of engaging with the broad agenda of quality in research.

Trevor Gale  
President 2005.

***Don't be out of FOCUS!***

## The DEST Research Quality Framework initiative

Within a week of you receiving this newsletter the main opportunity will have passed for AARE to have input into the development of a Research Quality Framework (RQF). The framework may significantly influence the nature of educational research and the work-lives of educational researchers (especially, but not only, in universities).

Last minute input to AARE's submission is invited from members who have not yet contributed, especially those who are familiar with the issues, or have time early this week. Academic members may also have input through their universities and organisations such as ACDE, and nonacademic members through the organisations in which they work or their professional associations.

***Last minute input to AARE's submission is invited from members who have not yet contributed,***

In general, shared understandings and complementary positions will benefit us all, and benefit the quality of educational research and the positive effects it can have on society. AARE is uniquely placed to represent diverse views of researchers and other stakeholders in educational research.

Ideas and documents should be passed on to me (or to other AARE Executive members) within the next few days so that we can finalise AARE's written submission (due by 2 May).

There are a number of issues that seem to me (at the time of writing this in early April) to be of particular relevance to AARE. As we work further on this over the coming weeks such a list may well change, but the following is a start:

- exactly what purposes will the RQF be put to? the Minister has said it will be involved in funding decisions, but which decisions, and how? What other purposes?

- the place in a RQF for research for professional (in contrast to technical) practice
- the place in a RQF of research students who are primarily concerned with enhancing their professional practice outside universities
- the place on expert panels for external experts including representatives of professions (not just of 'industry' and government departments/ school authorities)
- should there be a distinction between research for professional practice and other research in much the same way as there is (according to the *Issues Paper*) a distinction between research in the humanities and in the physical sciences?
- the paucity of education-specific schemes on the Australian Competitive Grants Register (ACGR)
- the implications of the notion of 'less research intensive' universities
- the implications of choices of particular units of assessment: whether the university, the faculty, the research team, etc – including what may this mean for cross-disciplinary, cross-university or university/non-university collaborations
- how (educational) research is understood – as a discrete commodity or product, with its outcome defined by means of a patent, definitive article, performance or exhibition, or as something manifest in the complexity of professional judgements and the impact of which is diffuse and often over an extended period of time, or as something different again

- how (educational) research *quality* is understood, including in terms of methodologies, topics, practitioners, scale, and styles and media of dissemination.

Background information about the RQF initiative, the *Issues Paper* that is the basis for consultations and written submissions, membership of the expert advisory group, timetables events during this year, and other material are to be found at: <<http://www.dest.gov.au/resqual/default.htm>> .

Barbara Preston, AARE Executive member,  
[barbara.preston@netspeed.com.au](mailto:barbara.preston@netspeed.com.au), 02 6247 8919.

***AARE is uniquely placed to represent diverse views of researchers and other stakeholders in educational research.***

### AARE 2005 Doctoral AWARD

The Chairperson of AARE Doctoral Awards Committee will be writing to all academic institutions asking them to select and nominate one doctoral thesis for the award.

**Nominations close  
31<sup>st</sup> May 2005.**

If you are interested in this award contact the Dean of Education or equivalent in your institution.

Full information is available on AARE website. Use the sitemap to navigate to AWARDS.

***Be in FOCUS at Cairns!***

***See AARE website for the latest info on the Research Quality Conference.***

## **The Australian Educational Researcher - AER** **[AARE's journal]**

After four years at the University of South Australia under the leadership of Jane Kenway, the AER has relocated to James Cook University. The JCU team was awarded the editing role following a call for submissions to the AARE Executive. Annette Patterson is the new Managing Editor.

Annette Patterson and the incoming team extend their thanks to Jane Kenway and her team at the University of South Australia for their outstanding work in managing the AER. Significant achievements of their four-year term include the expansion of the research focus of the journal, indexing AER content with Ingenta and elsewhere and placing the journal online with open access. The online decision was informed by the rapid development of digital scholarly publishing; the increasing move by academics to the use of a 'desk-top library'; and the need to increase the Journal's national and international visibility and distribution. The impact of the decision to go online is being monitored and reviewed this year.

We also would like to thank the many authors who choose the AER as an appropriate research forum and the many academic reviewers of papers received each year by the AER. If you would like to become a peer reviewer for the journal please forward your details to [aer@jcu.edu.au](mailto:aer@jcu.edu.au) or send to [Annette.patterson@jcu.edu.au](mailto:Annette.patterson@jcu.edu.au) Please include your name, email, institutional affiliation and areas of expertise.

***The Editorial Team would like to invite expressions of interest in guest editing one issue of the journal in 2006 and 2007.***

The incoming editorial team (see list below) includes researchers located within universities and education agencies. The team has a wide range of research expertise including measurement,

evaluation, assessment and quantitative methodologies (Trevor Bond, Peter Boman, Gabrielle Matters), curriculum theory, development and implementation (Kim Bannikoff, Maree Dinan-Thompson, Rob Gilbert, Mary Klein), policy and qualitative methodologies (Nola Alloway, Rob Gilbert and Robin McTaggart), new technologies and ICTs in education (Neil Anderson and Colin Lankshear), VET and post-compulsory education and training (Angela Hill), Indigenous education (Jeannie Herbert), curriculum history, reading and literacy (Annette Patterson), special needs (Paul Pagliano). All levels of education are represented by the editorial team – early childhood, primary, middle school, secondary, tertiary and higher education.

### **Aims**

The AER aims to:

- Promote understandings of educational issues through the publication of original research and scholarly essays.
- Inform education policy through the publication of papers utilizing a range of research methodologies and addressing issues of theory and practice.
- Provide a research forum for education researchers to debate current problems and issues.
- Provide an international and national perspective on education research through the publication of book reviews, scholarly essays, original quantitative and qualitative research and papers that are methodologically or theoretically innovative.

Contributions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives on any level of education are welcome.

### **Editorial Team**

Annette Patterson, Managing Editor, School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville.

Josephine Balatti, Book Reviews Editor, School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville.

Nola Alloway, Professor, School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville.

Neil Anderson, Associate Professor, School of Education, James Cook University, Cairns. Kim Bannikoff, Director, Queensland Studies Authority, Brisbane.

Peter Boman, Lecturer, School of Education, James Cook University, Cairns.

Trevor Bond, Associate Professor, School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville.

Maree Dinan-Thompson, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, James Cook University, Cairns. Rob Gilbert, Professor, School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville.

Jeannie Herbert, Professor, School of Indigenous Australian Studies, James Cook University, Townsville.

Angela Hill, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville.

Mary Klein, Associate Professor, School of Education, James Cook University, Cairns.

Colin Lankshear, Professor, School of Education, James Cook University, Cairns.

Robin McTaggart, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic, James Cook University.

Gabrielle Matters, Director, Assessment and New Basics Branch, Qld Department of Education and the Arts, Brisbane. Paul Pagliano, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville.

### **Advisory Editors**

The editorial team is in the process of appointing international and national advisory editors.

**Editorial Support** is provided by:

Office Administrator: Woendi Hampton, School of Education, James Cook University.

Desktop Publisher: Linda Burges, Above All: Art, Type and Design.

AARE Office: Ruth Jeffery  
AARE Executive – Web Manager and Newsletter editor: Peter Jeffery

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**Restore your FOCUS in Cairns!**

The first issue of the AER for 2005 has been compiled by the previous editorial team. The new editorial team is working on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> issues for 2005.

The Editorial Team would like to invite expressions of interest in guest editing one issue of the journal in 2006 and 2007. Please forward expressions of interest to the Managing Editor, Annette Patterson by email at [Annette.patterson@jcu.edu.au](mailto:Annette.patterson@jcu.edu.au)

The editorial team encourages submissions for guest editions by AARE SIGs.

I look forward to working with authors, book reviewers and peer reviewers over the next three years and will endeavour to maintain the high standard of the journal established by previous editorial teams. As a new editorial team we also are committed to ensuring high levels of accessibility by scholars, educators and policy developers world wide to original, innovative and rigorous research published by the *Australian Educational Researcher*.

Annette Patterson  
Managing Editor  
*Australian Educational Researcher*.

***We also would like to thank the many authors who choose the AER as an appropriate research forum and the many academic reviewers of papers received each year by the AER.***

We are still chasing 20 people who registered for the AARE 2004 Conference as members when they were not. Six registrants at AARE 2004 Melbourne have not paid any registration charges. They are being chased as bad debtors.  
**It is AARE policy that people who have not settled past debts will not be admitted to Association events until the debt is cleared.**



### **Postgraduate Students Research Works-in-Progress**

In this edition of AARE News, our postgraduate representatives 'get the ball rolling' on a new section featuring the works-in-progress of AARE members that are currently engaged in Postgraduate Research.

If you are a student member of AARE, and would like to share your research work with the wider AARE community, please send a 150-200 word description of your research, along with your name, degree, email address and thesis title to either Sue or Kelli (addresses listed below).

### **Innovation and change in the 1999 HSC English syllabus: Challenges and problems**

This thesis explores the ways in which the HSC (year 12) English syllabus in NSW has been shaped by particular beliefs about literature teaching and learning, and how it has been interpreted by practitioners and public commentators.

Contention over text selection and a continuing political focus on literacy have resulted in changes to the way we perceive and approach the subject 'English'. What constitutes a 'valuable' text? How do we balance the need for authentic assessment with the demand for measurable increases in literacy scores? What actually defines the subject English anyway?

In an examination of the development of and reaction to the 1999 HSC English syllabus, this study will focus its enquiry around three key issues. Firstly,

how the syllabus is *historically* positioned in relation to the development of previous English syllabi and changes in literary theory. Secondly, the ways in which the development of this syllabus was influenced by *contextual* factors, such as political pressure and stakeholder input. And lastly, using evidence gathered from fieldwork and professional journals, the thesis will explore issues that have arisen regarding the *implementation* of the syllabus in real classrooms, in real schools, with real students, teachers and communities.

**Kelli McGraw**  
PhD Candidate  
University of Sydney  
[k.mcgraw@edfac.usyd.edu.au](mailto:k.mcgraw@edfac.usyd.edu.au)

### **What does it mean to be a volunteer in a community of practice: Perspectives of volunteer breastfeeding practitioners within non-profit organisations**

This research seeks to understand the professional development of volunteer breastfeeding practitioners and their concerns as they participate in community adult education. The community education undertaken by the volunteer breastfeeding practitioners as members of communities of practice is situated within the public/private sphere of volunteering. It seems a climate of 'economic rationalism' and population changes within the volunteer or third sector of the economy are creating tensions.

The health benefits of breastfeeding, for babies and their mothers, are widely acknowledged around the world. However, breastfeeding does not come naturally to most mothers, it is a skill that is learnt and depends on a supportive society (NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition, 2004). Renewed interest in the promotion of breastfeeding through the World Health Organisation policy guidelines and Australian government initiatives are increasing.

As such, the purpose of the study is to understand the role of volunteer breastfeeding

practitioners, through an investigation of their experiences and beliefs. To understand their professional development, how mentoring contributes to their role and the concerns they have in volunteering in community education. Data collection is nearing completion with an investigation by the researcher of reflexive methodologies adapted from the "voice-centred relational method" by Mauthner and Doucet (2000) and the multi method of Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000).

**Sue Smith**  
PhD Candidate  
University of Technology, Sydney  
[Suesmith2122@yahoo.com.au](mailto:Suesmith2122@yahoo.com.au)

**Don't forget – you too could see your work in print! Student members of AARE are invited to write about their works-in-progress for future issues of the AARE News.**

**Please email all submissions or enquiries to Kelli (or Sue)**

**Focus on research quality issues in Cairns - July 3rd to 5<sup>th</sup> 2005.  
Register now.**



To mark the occasion of our 50<sup>th</sup> newsletter the current editor has approached the first Hon. Secretary of AARE and nearly all the editors OF AARE newsletter over 34 years. In this section we have short items from all these people.

It is important to build and maintain institutional ethos and

record for the benefit of new members particularly the voluntary work that many people do because they "support educational research". First we get a perspective from Mick Dunkin AARE's first Hon. Secretary in 1971.

## **AARE AND ITS NEWSLETTER**

*There is sadness in my heart as I reflect on the fact that I am the last surviving Foundation Office-Bearer of the association that struggled into existence in 1970. There were just 100 foundation members, all of them invited, who assembled at the Newport Inn on Sydney's northern peninsula on 15 -17<sup>th</sup> November, 1970. They were a select bunch but by no means exhaustive of the "pool of talent" in educational research at that time, as demonstrated by the fact that the membership grew by more than 50 percent in the first year. My sadness is alleviated by the news that the association now has over 1300 members.*

*One of the reasons for the success of AARE has been the publication of what started off in July, 1971, as the "AARE Newsletter" but is now called "AARE News". The newsletter was an initiative of my good friend and colleague, David Cohen, who struggled against a less-than-cooperative executive for several years to achieve proper support. Anyone who goes to the trouble of digging out copies published in those early years would be aghast at their appearance, especially in comparison with the beautiful AARE News No. 49 that I received a couple of days ago. Yet the contents of those early numbers were just as important to the association as those of the latest bulletin.*

*David wrote in Vol. 1, No. 1, "This Newsletter aims to promote communication between AARE members, and to promote the extension, dissemination and application of high quality research in education" and that aim, doubtlessly, still applies to the AARE News.*

*After David resigned from the editorship of the newsletter there was an attempt to convert it into a*

*journal and its name was changed to "Australian Educational Researcher", initially under the editorship of Shirley Smith. As we now know, the publication of that name took off in a somewhat different direction as time passed and for many years now it has occupied the status of one of Australia's leading education research journals. Its role as a disseminator of association news disappeared.*

*But the need for a publication to fill that role remained until 1989 when Leo Bartlett took on the job and produced AARE newsletters for 1989, 1990 and 1991 when he was at University of Queensland. The following year Beryl Evans [Queensland University of Technology] was Editor of the newsletter. In 1993 Peter Jeffery was elected Editor of the newsletter. In the following 12 years Peter has directed the publication of 45 issues at an average rate of better than four a year. It took poor David Cohen, through no fault of his own, the best part of three years to produce the first four issues of the newsletter! Clearly, conditions have improved since 1971.*

**THREE CHEERS FOR ALL THOSE WHO OVER THE YEARS HAVE SUPPLIED AARE WITH NEWS!**

*Mick Dunkin,  
Honorary Life Member.*

**Sorry to confuse all those who say "See you at AARE", meaning see you at AARE Conference.**

**Which one or both?**

**AARE has two conferences this year. Two chances to network with academic colleagues from all over and hear top speakers and researchers in our vital industry.**

**AARE Conference will re-introduce POSTER SESSIONS in 2005 but only for fully refereed papers and under special conditions.**

**Read about this development below.**



## OUR 50<sup>TH</sup> ISSUE

### IN THE BEGINNING: A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT THE AARE NEWSLETTER FROM ITS FOUNDING EDITOR

*In the beginning, it was decided by its founders that the principal office-bearers in the foundation year (1970) of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) would be staff members at Macquarie University. With my experience and roles then as editor of both the Australian Science Teachers Journal and of the ICASE (International Council of Associations of Science Education) Newsletter, the founding AARE President Professor Hugh Philp appeared to assume that I would add any new AARE publications to my existing portfolio of editorships.*

*The initiation of a new education research journal was in some ways left totally to me as its editor. However, there were also some key restrictions, which affected the nature and frequency of any publications by AARE. First, there was the perception that the major responsibilities for publications which disseminated research belonged to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) as the major national research organization in Australia. Secondly, criteria for membership tended to be fairly strict, which helped to restrict paid AARE membership to a mere 94 subscribers by 1974, so that there were tight financial stringencies placed upon publications.*

*My view of the role of the AARE Newsletter (as I named it) was that it should provide opportunities for the dissemination of research findings. As recorded in*

*Reflections on Educational Research in Australia (1995), "From the beginning until May 1973 the Newsletter was 'virtually the sole responsibility' of David Cohen then at Macquarie University, who 'acted as editor, gatherer of material, advertising and business manager and receiver of brickbats'." (p. 116) The editor's functions also encompassed all negotiations with the printer and packing and distribution of the printed newsletter.*

*A major difficulty in fulfilling some of these roles was the fact that the AARE editor was not in those earlier days invited to attend executive meetings. My reports as AARE editor to the executive and to the Annual General Meetings gained three advances in 1973. There was the formation of an Editorial Committee, the cooption of the editor to the executive, and, thirdly, the regularisation to a minimum of four issues of the newsletters per year (to satisfy a taxation office requirement for tax exemption).*

*Early newsletters were professionally printed with shiny pale blue stock used as covers, because the printer could provide these inexpensively. The newsletters contained information about executive decisions, membership, conferences, research grants and details of ongoing research studies, together with a column from the president of the day.*

*My early optimism that AARE publications would come to be used to disseminate education research strategies and findings to help enlighten the decisions of educators, including more than "our 120,000 teachers" (p. 115), seems to have been well exceeded, with the 500,000 "hits" on the AARE website last month far outnumbering any similar searches about research at universities or other education organisations!*

*David Cohen  
Honorary Life Member*

The Editor regrets that although contact was established with Leo Bartlett in Florida, we have not received an item from him in time for publication.



## 1992: A TIME FOR CHANGES

*While the AARE newsletter was published from 1971 to 1973 with David Cohen as Editor and in 1989 to 1991 with Leo Bartlett as Editor, in 1991 the members of the Executive decided that the position of Editor should be an elected one and that there should be three issues per year.*

*These recommendations were implemented and I became Editor in 1992. As editor I recommended that the format be changed. This was accepted and the first issue for that year, which was designated Issue 1, was professionally produced on recycled paper with a four-page two-colour fold out format.*

*During this year, the ARC published an Interim Report of the Strategic Review of Research in Education and Jim Walker prepared a response for the AARE executive. The Executive was broadly supportive of the main thrust of the ARC report, which recognised the diversity of educational research but suggested the research should cohere around a set of common issues. However, the AARE raised additional concerns – practitioners' perception that much research was irrelevant to their practice; inadequate research funding; little planning for training; and lack of support to researchers from government and higher education sectors.*

*In Issue 1 of the newsletter [1992], this response was circulated for the member's information, as was a piece from the President, Richard Smith, who wrote "Educational researchers require a new vision and a new language to operate in the environment in new ways". There*

were also reports on special groups, conference fellowships, and thesis awards. A brief summary of the 1991 conference was provided and arrangements for the 1992 Conference were foreshadowed.

In the June 1992 newsletter, instead of the President's Report, a new feature Quality Educational Research described the work of young researchers who had won the Doctoral Thesis Awards, on the lead page. The recipients were Lyn English (University of Queensland), Alison MacKinnon (University of Adelaide), and Ilana Snyder (Monash University). Their theses were on mathematics learning, life histories of woman graduates, and the use of computers for writing for secondary students, respectively. As well as the usual training reports, there was a call for nominations for the Executive the following year and the program for the second Joint Conference of AARE and NZARE at Deakin University. The program listed 16 symposia and 7 seminars as well as individual papers and poster sessions. This was also the year in which the revised Code of Ethics for the Association was produced, so that in the newsletter, Martin Bibby asked for input from all members.

The October 1992 newsletter returned to the usual format with the President's report on the lead page. Richard Smith again stressed the fact that AARE as an educational research interest-based organisation had reached a point for re-assessment of its vision for research in and about education and training. A profile of the membership of the association was provided, as was a paper by Millicent Poole "The ARC: Performance and Possibilities for Education".

Today, just over 1300 members' interests are still being served by the publication, now called AARE NEWS. The tradition of providing the President's Report to the members as well as information about training, awards, and conference continues. Now, however, the AARE website also provides research information to all members. While each newsletter focuses on issues relevant to the context of education at the time, it is obvious

that the tradition of providing members with information about the association, its agenda, the conference and research issues and priorities remains.

Beryl Evans  
April 2005.



### **A review of AARE newsletter No.5 1993, to No.50 2005.**

AARE NEWS' current Editor has never written an editorial in it believing that it was more important to give space to Association matters. What follows is an exception of sorts where I put down some thoughts about the publication that I have managed for quite a while. But I start from what has been published rather than theorising.

The content of AARE newsletter No.5 included a President's message indicating a review of the roles and functions of AARE and a government Strategic Review of Educational Research. In 2005 another government review [RQF] is in train and so is a review of the roles and functions of AARE. The President's message in this issue calls on all AARE members to make submissions to the latest government review just as the President in 1993 did back then.

There was a call for members contributions for the newsletter in 1993 so that the publication is not only from the AARE Executive. That request echoes down the years with little change. The Editor is still underwhelmed with contributions from members, contributions are almost solely from AARE Executive members in 2005. Also in No.5 was a notice about changes to the AER Editorship and the AARE Constitution. In 2005's No. 50

you can read details of the new Managing Editor for the AER. RARE got a mention in 1993 as did research training workshops held around Australia and the first effects of AARE publishing conference papers on-line for access by northern hemisphere colleagues [provided they could do FTP]. In 2005 we announce the posting of over 500 more conference papers from Melbourne 2004 on AARE website bringing the total papers available on AARE website to over 5,000. In 1993 we published a call for nominations for the Executive Committee and announced AARE conferences just as we are in 2005.

Now I'm sure that you will not be bothered to read a similar comparison between every issue 6 - 49 to establish that our newsletter has continued to inform our membership about changes in their organization, announcements of projects and events and document AARE achievements. So, from my archive copies I will simply note any deviations from these functions. Post Graduate Students travel awards are mentioned in 1993 [newsletter #4] so that initiative has been running a long while. In NEWS #50 there is similar PG Students News including a new section on their research in progress. Also in 1993 we announced a system called AARENET to facilitate contacts with our members. AARE Office still maintains this service in 2005! In #7 we announced electronic access to forthcoming conference abstracts. This service is continuing to this day. Check out #50 announcing 2005 Focus Conference abstracts and 2005 Sydney [Parramatta] Conference abstracts. We also announced in 1993 contacts with ERIC and in an interesting turn of events I have just finished checking the legal agreement offered by [the new] ERIC to AARE for 2005 plus.

Awards available from AARE are frequently mentioned in our newsletter. In a RARE ceremony within AARE, #7 newsletter accidentally gave two highly notable members, both former Presidents, the same surname. This accidental 'marriage' was terminated in a following issue with great embarrassment to the

Editor. They both still speak to me! In early days it was necessary [without our website] to tabulate membership statistics in our newsletter. We had 389 financial members in 1994. Our new look homepage on our website links members and anyone else to data tabulating AARE current membership at 1326.

In 1994 #9 John Knight started a regular section of the newsletter called "Reporting: Particularly heavy Diplomas" which celebrated and highlighted recent PhD graduates. The first entries included Erica McWilliam, Robert Lingard, Parlo Singh and Daphne Meadmore. Where are they now? Renamed "Recent Doctoral Theses in Education" and compiled by Trevor Gale, this section ran nearly unbroken till #45 2003. In March 2004 #46 the section recommenced with Valerie Harwood compiling it. There has been continuous feedback applauding and supporting this section.

During 2000 the Editor briefly flirted with two new newsletter formats. A very brief AARE NEWS [using the new name started in March 1995 #12 the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year for AARE] was intended to simply point readers to the AARE website to read the full detail. They didn't. Also about that time under pressure from various people including an economy minded Executive, we published an on-line only edition which utterly vanished into the ether with no readership. We rapidly went back to print, ears ringing with abuse from the libraries of the world!

Under similar pressures in 2004 the Editor conducted some simple research on readership by making some free book offers exclusively in the on-line version and other offers exclusively in the same print edition. Sold out on freebies from the print edition - still have the freebies offered in the simultaneous on-line edition! It seems we may conclude members like and read the print edition for preference. [Incidentally all members were notified by broadcast email of the emergence of on-line issues.] The NEWS was published both on-line and in print from #30 March 2000.



The size of the AARE NEWS has grown from 6 pages to 12 or even 20pp. Issue #44 was a monster 32 pages. An effort has been made since then to not continuously re-publish notices in full but to "push" members towards the website for full text of procedures for awards, lists of Executive, membership details, details of conferences and research training schedules, etc. In this way we should get the advantages of print [readership] and save resources as well. AARE NEWS # 36 in August 2001 caused a bit of a stir though as it featured coloured photos of the President and other members interacting at the then annual Research Directors Forum in Canberra. Issue No.49 introduced the latest re-design of AARE NEWS. We have sublimated the traditional "AARE blue" [derived from the Gestetner ink colour used at ACER in the early days] to give us some red and orange tones - earthy shades of Australia. But the blue is there still for the body text. With occasional exceptions the newsletter is produced four times each year.

The NEWS continues to provide information to members on education research happenings in Australia and sometimes overseas and it promotes AARE as the premier education research association in Australia. No longer do we have to explain to government authorities the AARE stands for The Australian Association for Research in Education. Only last week I was able to call DEST's RQF project and simply say that I was calling from the AARE to get immediate access. [Incidentally, several members of DEST are members of AARE and some presenters at AARE's forthcoming Focus Conference will be from DEST]. So, perhaps there is a possible

relationship other than "them and us".

The editorial policy of AARE NEWS is implied from the title - primarily news of AARE and its activities. Also included is news of education research judged as being of interest to AARE members [all 1300 of them]. That membership covers just about every possible dimension of education research for content. We continue to call for items written by members about research of members [not adverts of faculties] even though we are certainly not swamped by members submissions. That hasn't changed in 50 issues.

**What has changed is that the NEWS is now the only regular printed communication reaching members and via "pass-on" many others. What has changed is that every year we have about 300 new members who need to see something from AARE to begin to understand us.**

I would especially like to thank all the editors of AARE newsletter over the years [the masochistic three before me] for pressing ahead with the Association's "organ" despite tribulations. I hope you enjoy and find useful OUR 50<sup>TH</sup> ISSUE perspectives.

Peter Jeffery  
AARE NEWS Editor



**AARE Focus Conference is different. Check-out the draft program to see how it will be focussed and discussion loaded. This is not the vast smorgasbord of copious research that we have at our annual conference -- this is ...focussed!!**



## **The WEBEX Project at Monash Education: Exploring web based real time multi-media connectivity for distance learning and research.**

WEBEX is a frontier technology, a real time meeting and interactive training system that provides a web based convergence of digital technologies for interactive multi-platform media use. While WEBEX is well established as the world wide provider of choice for web meetings and training sessions within the corporate sector, its application within tertiary education is in the relatively early stages of development.

My first direct exposure to WEBEX occurred during a webcast of the AARE sponsored lecture we received in the comfort of the Dean's conference room. [AARE WebEx Workshop 2004, Ed.] The Monash Education "WEBEX Project-2005" is now an internal Monash grant-funded initiative but it didn't start out that way. We first introduced the system as an experiment in real-time connectivity among on-campus and distant learners across Victoria who were part of a DE&T scholarship-supported cohort in our new Master in School Leadership course for aspirant principals.

I am very grateful to Kevin Mackin and the entire WEBEX Australia team in Melbourne who generously provided their services for three initial trials of the system during the inaugural delivery of the first MSL unit: *Inner Leadership: Understanding Self and Others*, in semester two of 2004. These evening sessions were complicated by the need to integrate power point and pre-recorded video elements within student group presentations, for group members who were both 'here' and 'there'. We were determined to try out this new toy to see what it could do. Working closely with Kevin and his WEBEX team we were very gratified by the results. The feedback we received from participating instructors and

students who were presenting and learning in these sessions, led us to conclude that we were learning the system and improving it for this application with our various sound and video experiments. A continued trial was definitely in order.

WEBEX conjures up dreams of connecting people, 'as if they were really there'. With telephone and internet browser, local and worldwide participants can application share, interact on a virtual white board, video stream from and to each other, text chat in real time, and audio connect. Ports are purchased in lots of 10, for a fixed period of time. Anyone in your organisation can be given access to the system for multiple uses. And the system is fairly easy to operate if you are working alone and trying to access only a few distant users. However, there are unique challenges - pedagogically/andragogically, technologically and structurally - when one is trying to integrate the system's functionalities with the needs of a large class on campus and at the same time, trying to facilitate on campus learners and their widely dispersed peers to engage in interactive learning. Additional training, technical and human resources are needed.

In our first trial using Voice Point teleconference equipment, we immediately confirmed the importance of top audio quality to maintain engagement in learning. You need high fidelity sound both 'in' and 'out'. We have since used wireless microphones, sound mixers and an independent PA system. For simple meetings one-to-one or one-to-a-few or a-few-to-a-few, standard requirements include telephone hook ups and broadband internet connected computer technology with a browser. In a classroom of 30 students, with 10 of their colleagues 'out there somewhere' though, one also needs a digital projector preferably two computers for first monitoring and then selecting elements and the human resources to upload applications for sharing (preferably ahead of time). Eventually we used two video cameras with operators, a professional sound technician. We also tried the new Squiz Biz wireless video cam for greater mobility. Kevin has done all the

selecting and mixing of these elements so far. Essentially we were creating a television studio in a classroom. It was pretty complicated. We had to learn to pass the mikes among us promptly and remember not to speak until it was in our hands. Presenters use the lapel mike. Our objective over the long run is to simplify the system and its additional components for use by one support person and one instructor. Two automatic zoom and pan sound-sensing video cameras - one facing presenters and the other the 'audience' - would help. We are considering the TX 1000 wireless multi-mike sound system, but haven't trialed it yet.

In a WEBEX session, as the convening moment approaches, distant participants connect via telephone using 1-800 numbers provided by Telstra conference call services. An alternative is voice over IP. Distant participants log in to the password protected private site by going to the designated URL address that has been e-mailed to them. Once everyone is online, monitoring and coordinating the various elements needs to occur in a way that enhances and does not distract or detract from the connectivity and learning. Control of these processes can also be assigned to remote participants. During one session we enjoyed webcam streamed video images of a student presenter in Mildura who was operating his part of the group's power point as we were viewing it and hearing and seeing him and he was seeing and hearing us. The projected WEBEX template provides spaces for simultaneous display of Power Point slides, live webcam and pre-recorded video feeds - in and/or out - real time chat for silent inquiries by distant learners, a 'hand up' icon for distant learners to request audio time, and a virtual white board sharing functionality. It is pretty exciting. The students were rapt! Indeed the possibilities are enticing but not straightforward. The system itself and all of the equipment have other costs attached. The setup and at-the-time 'hands on deck' readiness requirements have human resource implications. While WEBEX like systems have the potential to transform tertiary

education delivery, their adoption needs to be considered carefully. We believe that advantages, workload impacts and operating costs for faculties need to be studied together. For this trial period, the adjustments by academic and general staff and necessary infrastructure support will require a considerable amount of goodwill, time and energy. We are keeping track of these impacts.

In addition to learning about the technology and finding and training the human resources to get things up and running smoothly, we also need to discover how all learners are experiencing the real time interaction. What is involved for teachers and students to 'learn to teach and learn together' in this way? What effects on the learning occur when we are in whole class modality? How well does it work to cluster DE students for breakout group sessions? How hard is it for an instructor to develop WEBEX savvy? A variety of adjustments is essential if DE student engagement is to be achieved. These issues are true of asynchronous systems but even more critical in synchronous arrangements as the moments for interaction are fleeting, and opportunities for meaningful exchanges 'timing sensitive'. We are still working to build in the DE participation component more effectively. Webcams for all may help since we have found that 'out of sight is out of mind' can definitely become a factor.

The obvious fiscal appeal of WEBEX's potential for opening up new national and international markets by connecting us with students, research participants and our colleagues in far away places provides part of the impetus that propels us. However, our focus on sustainability will likely serve to curb any unbridled enthusiasm to which we might otherwise fall prey. Our research foci therefore, are three fold. 1) Cooperatively investigate WEBEX for its potential application in real time teaching and learning, research and professional collaborations; 2) Take stock of its various impacts and projected impacts on teaching and learning, the work of academic and general staff and the coffers of the Faculty of Education; 3) Examine

methods to optimise the WEBEX functionalities and uptake. It is important to realise that achieving the uptake of new technologies is not automatic. The provision of suitable and sufficient support as people experience initial exposure and develop sufficient confidence and skill to use WEBEX will be critical to its successful integration. This early uptake phase is an important focus of this study.

In the end I believe it will be the students, instructors and the infrastructure itself which will be 'on trial' as much as WEBEX, as the Faculty of Education explores its ability to achieve a sufficient level of uptake and to work collaboratively and cooperatively in studying our experiments with it. A constellation of ancillary individual and organisational cultural factors are bound to affect our success. Ideally, the study's results will provide the Faculty of Education and Monash University with much needed preliminary indications of the WEBEX opportunity/cost ratio. Meanwhile, other faculties including Law and Medicine are keen to experiment with WEBEX, and ICT central is supportive of further WEBEX explorations. Only time and a great deal of dedication will tell what the future of WEBEX across the university will be. It is clear though, that initiatives such as this project are part of a building momentum of inquiry into real time interactive distance learning at Monash.

Dr. Brenda Beatty, Director,  
Master in School Leadership &  
Senior Lecturer Monash  
Education

**Would you like to try WebEx  
free from the safety of your  
desk?**

AARE can facilitate meetings of two or more AARE members through the web. Initially you might try a meeting with Peter Jeffery to make sure you can do it, but then Peter can host meetings for you between you and any others with free local and international phone calls.

**Thanks to WebEx our  
sponsor.**



The news this month is that AARE website has a new front page that introduces the Association as it points visitors and members to various parts and functions of AARE. The previous Notice Board is just one click lower in the hierarchy. Users are advised to consider the site map as a quick way to parts of AARE too. There is of course the search facility to seek phrases and words including authors names. It is not as quick as Google's huge machines but AARE ISP's machine does a very good job of searching - better than mere humans in many ways.

Our website was included in a praiseworthy list of good sites by John MacArthur in Education and Training Newsletter Australia [ETNA]. So your editor invited John to "say a few words"!

**CAN WE DO BETTER  
THAN COBWEB SITES?**

Now that the internet has become a major part of life for most people who have access to a computer at work or home, I think we need to take a long hard look at the practices and processes associated with our local websites.

In a recent editorial comment in my newsletter, Education and Training Newsletter Australia (ETNA), I aired one of my pet peeves. This was about websites that are allowed to become so out-of-date as to raise the question of why they exist. While praising some excellent websites, including that of AARE, which exhibit two basic features: ease of use and regular updating, I was quite critical of those of a number

of academic institutions and state education and training departments. The latter group are typically not user-friendly and are often some months out of date.

When thinking about the people associated with websites, leaving aside the bloggers, I usually categorise them into four groups. First, and by far the majority, are those who access them, genuinely seeking information that is as current and interesting as possible, and needing a minimum of effort and computer expertise. Many are still relative novices to computer use.

The second group is the web site designers. In contrast to the first group, these are relatively few in number, usually highly skilled in computer techniques, but not always totally in tune with the needs of ultimate users. They are often employed on short-term contract, probably out-sourced, or temporarily seconded from other duties for the task. Once their task is complete, such people often have little or nothing further to do with the site. One site development I was associated with a few years ago, resulted in a lovely web page created by a talented person, but about 75-80 percent of it was in black background and had only a limited approach to using links. Most people working with home computers don't want to download pages largely black, which rapidly eat up the ink or powder of their costly cartridges.

Third are those whose job is to maintain the site. They have a time consuming and thankless task. Large sites such as newspapers and radio and television stations obviously employ dedicated staff and salary time to do this. Cabinet ministers have media staff who routinely include this as part of their work. However, smaller sites must find the money and people from limited budgets to carry out this task. Some of the poorer sites that I regularly encounter obviously fail to recognise the need to, or do not, provide the necessary resources, either because of ignorance or intent.

Finally, the all-too often missing link comprises those whom the third group (the maintainers) rely upon. These are the providers of

information and articles, critical to the value of the newsletter. They also perform a very time consuming, usually voluntary function. This is often a spare time activity for them and low in terms of priority as a task. But their role is critical and can be a source of frustration to the maintainers of the site. It is not all that easy to regularly contact, often even nag contributors for their material, which many times also needs editing for errors and house style. The alternative is to download most information from easily available sources on the net. But these lack much of the value that attaches to personally written material, often a fundamental feature of communication.

My final comments follow. It is regarded as sort of glamorous or "in" to have a website. In fact, not to have a website is considered as not up with the times. But it is quite counterproductive to have a site that is not regularly updated and easy to use. My advice: brush away the cobwebs or else rethink whether you really need a website.

John McArthur  
Editor, ETNA



## POSTERS RE-INTRODUCED

The AARE 2005 Conference Program framework of multiples of 20 or 30 minute slots can be grouped in to blocks of 60 or 120 minutes for part of each day. There can be a possibility of groups of 4 or 6 presenters [who have passed full paper refereeing and wish to present via a poster] to be time-tabled into a largish room for 120 minutes to display their posters and answer questions. Passing the full paper refereeing requirement for a poster presentation lends weight to the emphasis on quality. The perception of low quality has

detracted from the concept of poster sessions in the past.

The [6] presenters in the group will be individually identified in the Conference Program and Abstract Book for their academic credit and visibility. We expect 40 such posters from the SELF Centre this year and we can manage more posters if other members want that mode of presentation.

Further details will be available on AARE website.

## NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUDIO-VISUAL PRESENTATION EQUIPMENT AT PARRAMATTA.

See the notice on AARE website for full details of a new system to allow those presenters who wish to use MS PowerPoint to present that way.

***Presenters MUST submit their PPT to AARE Office 10 days ahead of conference.***

## Invigilators for AARE 2005 Conference

Also new for 2005 will be the appointment of invigilators for every presentation room. These trained staff will collect info. for AARE [such as names of NO SHOWS] as well as guarding the equipment and assisting to make each room operate smoothly.

### **AARE 2004 CD IS FINISHED!**

**The "proceedings" CD of papers handed in at AARE 2004 Conference - Melbourne is compiled.**

**It is now being replicated 1100 times before posting to delegates who were at that conference.**

**The CD contains over 500 full text papers.**

**Don't miss out on the inside info. on Quality -- get to Cairns!**



**QUALITY researchers  
debating QUALITY in  
research.**

**All universities  
concerned with  
QUALITY will be there.**

**High level debate  
on new  
QUALITY requirements.**

**The Focus Conference starts with the President's Reception on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July. All delegates should try to arrive in time for Sunday afternoon.**

**Call for Nominations for the  
Early Career Researcher Award 2005  
and the Betty Watts Award 2005**

**Closing date: October 30**

To nominate for the Early Career Researcher Award or the Betty Watts Award, please send a hard copy of your paper with a covering letter to the AARE Office at PO Box 71 Coldstream 3770 Victoria. Also send an MSWord disk/digital copy attached to an email to [aare@aare.edu.au](mailto:aare@aare.edu.au) clearly identified **AARE AWARDS**.

Full details at [www.aare.edu.au](http://www.aare.edu.au)

*AARE NEWS 2005*

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All enquiries to [pieff@aare.edu.au](mailto:pieff@aare.edu.au)

Please send items on time so that members can receive the NEWS on schedule.

**AARE makes annual calls for nominations for AARE Executive positions, Life member Nominations and various awards. There is a section of the website devoted to awards. The Executive section has details of the nomination form to be sent to AARE Hon. Secretary. Members are advised to check these portions of the website and apply when necessary or desired. Alerts are sent by broadcast emails and in AARE NEWS but the calls for nominations are regular events not really needing special notices.**