Editorial

Welcome to this edition of e-JIST – the first and only edition for 2007. We have an excellent selection of papers for you to examine, covering a range of topics and issues which I know you will find useful. Thank you to all the contributing authors for their submissions.

The reduction of e-JIST's frequency to one issue this year occurs at a time when its prospects for resurgence have been seriously weakened by recently emerging forces affecting scholarly journals. We may expect a growing trend towards consolidation into a smaller number of larger sized journals, driven by new concerns about the ranking of journals for research quality assessment purposes, apparent declines in the amount of academic staff time available for honorary work upon journals, and an increasing concentration of journal publishing "power" in the hands of a small number of large multinational publishers.

Documentation about the ranking of journals ("Research Outlets" in the RQF 'newspeak) [1] has been provided by the Department of Education, Science and Technology's website for the Research Quality Framework [2]. For editors and publishers, the implications of ranking are illustrated starkly by the findings from the *Education journal banding study*, conducted by the Centre for the Study of Research Training and Impact (SORTI), University of Newcastle, Australia [3]. The SORTI survey's "EScore" ranking places e-JIST at 9th in a group of 15 journals in 'Area 20', 'Pedagogy & Curriculum/Theory & Practice'. If placed in a more appropriate area, 'Area 11', 'Educational Technology/ Computing/ ICT', then e-JIST would be ranked 28th in a group of 58 journals. Although it remains to be seen how well the SORTI rankings will correlate with the RQF processes, it's clear that e-JIST will be in a difficult position, as authors strive increasingly to have their work published only in a 'top tier' [1] journal. As to the possibilities for transitioning into a strong growth phase, the problem faced by e-JIST, in common with very many other activities that are competing for the academic's time, is that the available time seems to be decreasing rather than increasing. These days academia is 'time stressed' and it is becoming harder to find honorary workers for a journal. This factor, 'lack of time' is one of the reasons for the large scale transfer of journal operations from professional and learned societies to multinational publishers such as Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Blackwell and SAGE during the last 10 to 15 years, that has contributed towards their dominance of the journal market.

In these circumstances, the trend towards a smaller number of larger journals is likely to accelerate rather than ameliorate. What then is the best direction for e-JIST, with its record of eleven years of publishing work? Considering the interests of the authors of e-JIST articles, and a desire to contribute in a modest way to Australasian based journal publishing, we have decided to respond positively to a merger proposal from the *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* [4].

Placing a high priority on the interests of the authors of e-JIST articles, we appreciate that they would prefer to have their work positioned within an actively growing body of similar articles, in contrast to remaining on a completely static website. We want to avoid the perception that if a journal ceases publication, then the work contributed by its authors, and by its editors and publisher, also "dies". A second important aspect about the proposed merger is that e-JIST can make a very modest contribution towards developing the strongest possible Australian based, open access journal publishing effort in educational technology and related topics. An enlarged archive and wider "reach" for AJET will help develop its growth, search engine presence, abstracting journal presence, citation frequency, RQF presence, special issues scope, organisational relationships and related matters. With respect to practical aspects of the merger, we are still working on the details but we anticipate that the

merger of IJET (*International Journal of Educational Technology*) with AJET in 2007 [5] will be a good indicator for the style and process we will seek to achieve. We see that AJET's adoption of Internet delivery, dating back to October 1996, is very much in tune with one of the fundamental features behind e-JIST's establishment in October 1995: harnessing the new technologies to improve our contributions towards one of academia's most enduring activities, the publishing of scholarly journals.

I will, of course, keep you updated on how the merger process occurs over the coming months and invite you to consider AJET for your future submissions. Thank you to all those colleagues who have contributed to e-JIST over many years. You have left an important legacy to scholarship in this area. I wish you all well in your future endeavours.

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1. DEST (Department of Education, Science and Training) (2007). *Frequently Asked Questions: Bibliometrics*. [viewed 29 Nov 2007]
    http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/8F12ADCB-C221-421E-A128-2C344CD58BDF/18968/FAQBibliometrics_17October2007.pdf

2. DEST (2007). *Research Quality Framework: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia*. [viewed 14 Oct 2007]
    http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/research_quality_framework/default.htm

3. Centre for the Study of Research Training and Impact (SORTI) (2007). *Education journal banding study: A summary of methodology*. University of Newcastle, Australia.
    http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/Banding/mehtod.html

4. AJET. http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/

5. AJET and IJET: International Journal of Educational Technology: Archive Home Page.
    http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ijet/