AUSTRALASIAN SOCIETY FOR COMPUTERS IN LEARNING IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT 1999

Please feel welcome at the 1999 Conference of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education. The Organising Committee has arranged an excellent range of Keynote Speakers, Symposia, Workshops and Parallel Sessions. If you are a presenter, you have a special responsibility, because presentations at the ASCILITE conference have a reputation overseas as being of a higher quality than other, similar conferences, elsewhere. I am sure you will live up to these expectations!

During 1999, ASCILITE has strengthened its position as the foremost professional society involved in the educational use of information technology in tertiary education in Australia. The Society continues to provide valuable services to members, through the Australian Journal of Educational Technology, its web-site and new Virtual Conferencing System.

It also completed a government consultancy report and coordinated a successful bid for a national staff development grant.

The Society currently has a membership of 419, a marginal increase from the membership of 408 in 1998. At the time of writing, 36 new members had joined as part of their conference registration. As shown in the table below, ASCILITE is represented in 11 countries, although the majority of members are in Australia. Without wishing to preempt the result, we are excited that a member from a non-Australian institution is standing for election to the executive.

Table 1: Distribution of ASCILITE members by country and state.

Australia		Other Countries	
ACT	8	Canada	1
NSW	146	China	2
NT	5	Fiji	1
QLD	55	New Zealand	19
SA	31	Scotland	1
TAS	3	Singapore	2
VIC	107	South Africa	1
WA	32	Sweden 2	2
		USA 2	2

Total: 419

The Australian Journal of Educational Technology (managed jointly by ASCILITE and the Australian Society for Educational Technology) has continued to prosper, under its editorial board, managed by Ron Oliver and Roger Atkinson. The volume and quality of articles submitted for publication has increased, and the number of issues in 1999 was increased from 2 to 3. A total of 16 articles are expected to be published in 1999, to a print-based readership of 830.

The online version of AJET continues on an encouraging growth path. AJET's home page logged 21802 hits between 11 Dec 1996 and 1 Nov 1999, and has a current hit rate of 300 per week. Table 2 details hit counts on the last three volumes since April 1999.

Table 2: Hit counts on the AJET web site since 1996

Date	Home page	Volume 15	Volume 14	Volume 13	Search
1 April 99	13533	-	3183	4029	-
3 Aug 99	18146	1921	5173	3981	1058
1 Nov 99	21802	3615	6094	4615	1809

Financially, the Society's net worth at 30 June 1999 was estimated to be $65,933.51 (awaiting confirmation by the Auditor). This represents an increase of approximately $13,500 over the last year. As in the previous two years, the conference result was very favourable. The University of Wollongong organising team was able to return a surplus of $29,854.87, a substantial improvement over the budgetted profit of $16,000. ASCILITE is now able to comfortably withstand unforeseen setbacks to its financial situation, such as a poor conference result.

In 1999, ASCILITE revamped its web-site and made a trial implementation of the new Virtual Conferencing System (VCS) to replace the former ASCILITE mailing list and provide significant extra functionality. The VCS contains a range of special interest 'streams'. Each stream has an associated asynchronous discussion list (web and email-based), synchronous chat facility and an area for shared resources. Further development of the VCS in 2000 will give ASCILITE members a very powerful tool for collaboration.

Several members of the Executive, particularly Carmel McNaught, expended substantial effort over the year in compiling a report for the Australian Government's Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs Evaluations and Investigations Programme on the topic: "Developing a Framework to support the Adoption of Computer-facilitated Learning and Support Materials in Australian Universities". The

200 page report is complete, and awaiting release by the Minister. The results will be of interest to the entire sector, and help to consolidate ASCILITE's role as an adviser to government on relevant policy matters.

ASCILITE also gained recognition by the Australian Government's Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD). The Society coordinated a consortium of eleven universities in a successful application for a staff development project entitled: "Staff Development in Evaluation of Technology-based Teaching Development Projects: An Action Research Approach". More information about this $101,740 project will be available at the annual conference. Many ASCILITE members have been saying for a long time that there was a paucity of skills in evaluation of student learning using information technology, and this project will help to address this deficiency.

During 1999, arrangements were made with the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) in the UK, establishing closer ties between the two bodies. Agreements were made for sharing information between the respective executives, and that members be given discounts to events run by the other organisation.

Last year I predicted that ASCILITE was a Society in the right place at the right time with technological and political factors pushing tertiary teaching towards the use of Information Technology. The year has confirmed my belief. ASCILITE is a practitioner's Society, but is increasingly able to influence policy issues, and attract relevant funding. The expansion in our role, while exciting, also places extra demands on an increasingly busy, volunteer Executive. During the next year, the Executive will be considering plans for its future directions, and how to attract the funding to move in those directions.

Dr Rob Phillips
President