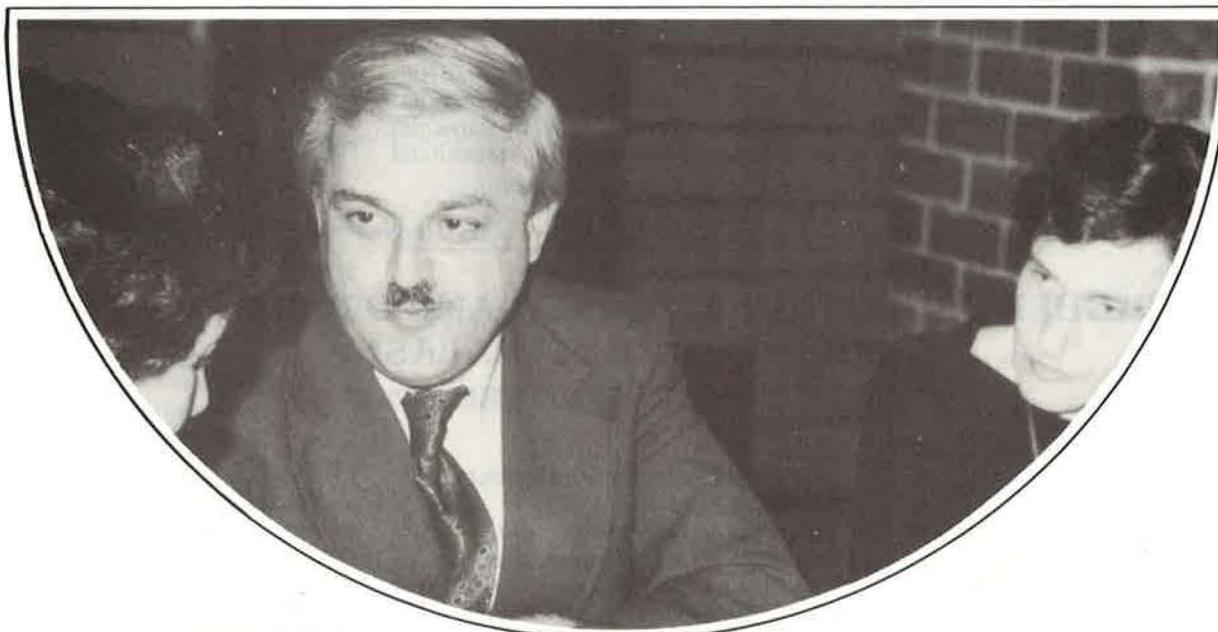




# HERDSA Newsletter



HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY OF AUSTRALASIA

VOL. 2.

SEPTEMBER, 1976

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# Transitions

Inevitably, this first issue of the Newsletter under a new Editor is something of a 'transitional' one: some features are already in evidence, including our abstracting service, and regular series of book reviews; others, as with 'research in progress', and issues with thematically related contributions are still gleams in the Editor's eye. The major item that appears is the report on the (fairly) recent HERDSA Conference, with a summary of the Annual General Meeting, and a commentary on some of the discussion groups. We also have the report of the Experimental *Confravision* Conference, and a timely piece from Clift Barnard on the work done at TERC on the effects of the abolition of fees on the social composition of students.

All we need now is some critical response! A second but certainly no less important introductory comment is a note of thanks, both on behalf of HERDSA, and personally, to Tony Dare for unstinting work on the Newsletter — and a happy 'retirement'!

Future copies of the Editorial page are intended to give leading figures a chance to let their hair down and air their views on current and possibly controversial issues. The first of these 'guest editorials' will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter,

but on this occasion you will have to be content with some thoughts from the Editor himself on student dropout.

Like many others who have looked at student attrition in tertiary education, I find the present situation a far from satisfactory one: despite a number of studies on attrition that have spanned 20 years or more, little has happened to change the picture of a steady and substantial dropout rate, with around 30-40% of initial enrolments failing to complete their courses in most institutions. The point to be made here, of course, is that we now know more than just figures, and should be actively refuting many of the prevailing myths. For example, as research has shown many times over, attrition is not just made up from people who have 'failed'. Many who dropout do not satisfactorily make the transition between school or work and tertiary study. Indeed studies suggest that there are two dominant and important features that relate to the high dropout rate, in that it is most evident in the first year of study, and that it is far more characteristic of part-time rather than full-time students. Neither of these familiar observations provide for ready cures, yet they suggest attention to transitional

problems is greatly needed. The importance of transition is shown in relation to another myth, that attrition is the necessary means to get rid of unsuccessful students, and that that as a result the rate is high here because of the relatively 'open' system of admission. This is readily dismissed by the observation that half or more of those who dropout had been successful up to the day they left. Of course, any large organisation must accept a degree of 'wastage' as people find its atmosphere uncongenial, and as staff find some students unreceptive to the interests and demands of education. Equally, we do not want to lose students well suited to tertiary study because they received inadequate counselling and guidance, or because the institution paid too little attention to the special needs of those who work as well as study. Indeed, with increasing part-time enrolments, I believe we have a special responsibility to the part-time student, and need to look again at the ways in which we can help — instead of hindering — her or his chances of success. Full-time students make a transition between school or work and study, but the part-time student is stuck in the transitional state, and it is one that many clearly find uncomfortable.

*Peter Sheldrake*

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# H.E.R.D.S.A. Third General Meeting

Abstracted Minutes of the Third General Meeting of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) held at International House, Melbourne, at 4.00 p.m., Sunday, May 9, 1976.

Approximately 70 members were in attendance with apologies from Mr. J. Akers, Dr. D.S. Anderson, Dr. W. Hall, Dr. A. Prosser, Dr. K.H. Star.

## REPORTS

### (a) *President's Report*

The President (Mrs. B. Falk) referred to the meeting of the Executive at Tullamarine Airport on April 9, 1975, at which 13 members of Executive from all over Australia were able to be present. It was agreed at that meeting that members unable to gain financial assistance for their travel to Tullamarine should be eligible for a subsidy of up to 30% of the air fare. (Only one person took advantage of this subsidy.) At the day-long meeting the Executive mapped out the HERDSA program for the year and asked the Treasurer (Mr. A. Lonsdale) to conduct a Delphi decision-making exercise to determine the discussion group topics for this 1976 Conference. HERDSA acknowledges its debt to Mr. Lonsdale for the valuable work he did in connection with the Delphi exercise. The Executive also approved HERDSA publishing Dr. Powell's bibliography on universities and university education.

The President referred to the Confravision Conference on laboratory work with groups in Melbourne and Sydney interacting via video link. The organizers of the Conference (Dr. Prosser and Dr. Bowden) were to be congratulated on the success of the venture.

The President announced that there were about 360 financial members of HERDSA. It was interesting to note that an increasing proportion of new members were from teachers colleges and specialist institutions and that there were a significant number of overseas members. There were rather more registered at the 1976 Conference (115) than at Canberra the previous year (approximately 100).

### (b) *Treasurer's Report*

The Treasurer (Mr. A.J. Lonsdale) tabled the following financial statement:

<b>FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR PERIOD JANUARY 1, 1975 TO MARCH 31, 1976</b>			
1/6/73-31/12/74		1/1/75-31/3/76	
<b>INCOME</b>			
2,837	Subscriptions	2,342.12	
62	Interest	118.37	
	Deposits for 1976 Conference	402.00	
2,899	<b>Total Income</b>	2,862.49	2,862.49
-	Balance carried forward on 1/1/75		<u>2,038.08</u>
2,899			4,900.57
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
598	Stationery	134.89	
-	Postage, freight	153.72	
90	Newsletters	461.58	
86	1975 Conference	383.22	
55	Addressograph Plates	-	
-	Laboratory teaching workshop	300.00	
-	Travel	125.34	
-	Committee meeting	96.20	
17	Telephone	64.66	
-	Typing, Clerical	18.00	
-	Cheque book	4.00	
-	Presentation K. Star	10.00	
15	Petty Cash	2.98	
861	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	1,754.59	1,754.59
2,036	Bank balance Rural & Industries Bank, 31/3/76		
	(allowing for un-presented cheques)	3,145.03	
2	Petty cash at hand	0.95	
2,038	<b>Credit Balance</b>	3,145.98	<u>3,145.98</u>
2,899	<b>Expenditure Plus Credit Balance</b>		4,900.57

This financial statement was accepted by the meeting.

### (c) *Editor's Report:*

The Editor (Mr. A.J. Dare) reported that there had been three issues of the HERDSA Newsletter since the 1976 Conference. He also spoke of the new register of projects and how this needed to be supported with many more contributions if it were to function realistically.

The Editor spoke of the difficulty of obtaining contributions for the Newsletter and the delays caused by printing problems.

The Editor reported that the Executive had authorized expenditure of \$1,700 to publish Dr. Powell's bibliography and that this would be recouped over a period of time.

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## ELECTION OF AN EXECUTIVE FOR 1976/7

The meeting elected the Executive which will serve until the fourth General Meeting. Details of names and addresses are given on the Editorial Page.

## 1977 CONFERENCE

There was debate as to whether the link with the ANZAAS Congress was to be retained. The ANZAAS Congress was to be in Melbourne in August 1977 and it was probably unwise to have the HERDSA Conference in Melbourne two years running.

The Executive later determined that the Third National HERDSA Conference was to be in Sydney in May, 1977.

## 1976/7 ACTIVITIES

Dr. L. West (Monash University) suggested that HERDSA could develop policy statements on various matters affecting higher education, e.g. tertiary entrance.

Mr. J. Malley (RMIT) suggested that a publications committee might publish expert papers.

Mr. I. Dunn (University of NSW) recommended that specialist interest groups like the laboratory work group should be given opportunity to meet the day immediately preceding the 1977 Conference.

Another suggestion was for HERDSA to accept responsibility for some appropriate activity within the States when a distinguished overseas speaker was touring the country.

These suggestions were referred to the incoming Executive.

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# Discussion Group Reports

Somehow the reporting back on Discussion Groups has always been rather haphazard, and attempts to get reports on all the groups proved quite unsuccessful. However, three did appear: the first, on Group I, whose topic was 'Critical review of new approaches to teaching and learning in higher education' is by Harry Stanton; the second, Group 4, was concerned with 'Issues relating to practical/laboratory work — the sequel to the HERDSA teleconference' and is from Jean Clark; and the third, from Group 5's convenor, Jack Williams, deals with 'Decision-making in tertiary institutions — power patterns and policies'.

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## GROUP I

Leaders are notoriously inaccurate in gauging whether their groups were effective but my own feelings about the functionings of Group I are that participants were enabled to enlarge their perspective of what tertiary teaching is about and perhaps to have some insight into approaches to teaching which were different from their own. Several participants felt that their greatest gains tended to come more from the way the group functioned, the processes that were going on, rather than the actual content which was discussed, although much of this was also very pertinent to their own needs. However, I shall attempt to give in this report some indication of the range of topics we discussed although this may, as I have just indicated, not embrace the things of most importance.

Overall, this was a very free-flowing group which gave the opportunity for members to talk about their own approaches to teaching, the problems they may have encountered with course design, choice of

instructional method, and problems with students' attitude to learning. There was no attempt made to contribute towards a formal end of group report; rather we concentrated on the experiences of the participants and the material they brought along with them to share with the group. Although the group did have the general theme of "a critical review of some of the new approaches to teaching and learning in higher education", because it tended to follow rather experimental lines with individual participants feeding in the results of their own teaching innovations, the structure was rather loose and it is difficult to formulate the end result of our interactions. Not that this need necessarily be seen as a particularly bad thing for as the Zen buddhists are fond of saying "It is the journey that is important rather than the destination at which one arrives."

At times practical problems of particular interest to an individual group member provided the focus of discussion. Some of these involved course planning, tutoring a disinterested group of students, using particular varieties of instructional media, etc. These were, perhaps, peripheral however to the main areas of discussion which focussed primarily on broader philosophical issues. Considerable attention was paid to the Rogerian concept of "facilitation of learning", in which the importance of instructing as we know it is considerably reduced. A number of approaches based on the concept that it is up to the student to decide what is important for him to learn were discussed and the whole idea of group and self-assessment was also explored. At the opposite pole of this philosophic continuum, systematic course design and Keller plan approaches were also considered at some length.

Motivational issues seemed to emerge with great frequency, both in terms of lecturer motivation and, more particularly, in terms of students' attitude to learning. Student personality characteristics were seen as so variable that the most effective

method of catering for their needs seemed to be to present courses in a variety of ways. It was agreed that some students would prefer a highly structured environment with regular lectures, tutorials, assignments, etc., while others would thrive on virtual absence of contact with the lecturer so long as they knew what end product was expected of them. Between these types, that is independent learners and the "lovers of structure" would fall the majority of students who shared characteristics of both.

As the basic purpose of the group was to provide an environment in which participants could share their experience, a wide variety of different approaches to teaching were presented. These included various ways of using the computer to assist instruction, a look at different types of audio visual presentation, the use of market research approaches to tapping student reactions to the courses they took, a learning skills approach which was used with students to guide them in learning how to learn, and a painstaking example of instructional design in which the individual skills required by a lawyer were identified and embodied in specific objectives, planned student experiences, and evaluation methods. Attention was also paid to the detailed step-by-step manner in which courses could be structured.

The above report, reconstructed from a memory which has grown increasingly hazy as a function of the time that has passed since the Conference was held, may appear virtually unrecognizable to participants in the group. If this is the case, it might be very helpful if they would contribute their own impressions to future editions of the newsletter. One of the great virtues, I feel, of loosely structured groups of an experiential nature is that participants can draw from them different things meeting their own particular needs. Therefore, the perception of one person of what happened in the group is likely to vary quite dramatically from that

of another. Therefore, it would be very helpful to have a number of versions of what actually took place for, as I mentioned in opening this report, a leader is often not the best person to sum up the result of a group's discussion.

#### GROUP 4

The topic was not discussed in any detail at the May HERDSA conference due to the apparent lack of interest from participants. After the topic was cancelled late enrolments would have made this a viable group.

The group did however meet on the Sunday morning during the time set aside for Special Interest groups, and 15 people attended this special session. The main points of discussion are summarized below:

#### NEWSLETTER:

Roger Landbeck agreed to collate and edit information for a newsletter to be distributed to all interested members of HERDSA.

Newsletter to include short items on:

1. Innovations in lab. work.
2. Experiments tried and failed.
3. 'Materials' Register.
4. Names of contacts and particular interests.

Newsletter to be distributed quarterly via the 'lab group' correspondents. Number 1 to come out in June 1976. (And did! Editor.)

Ian Dunn agreed to request financial support from HERDSA for the venture. Venture to be reviewed at the end of one year.

#### LABORATORY AREAS:

Most of the science areas were represented (Biology, Chemistry, Physics); some representation from Engineering; some representation from Educational Research Units. Other laboratory areas, such as Psychology, Language, Arts and Crafts were not represented, and it was agreed to try and bring in people from these areas.

#### SPECIAL INTERESTS:

The areas of special interest for participants at this session listed below. Anyone wishing to make contact with others interested in any particular area can do this via me or via the Newsletter.

#### Self-paced Laboratories

Problem solving approach to experimentation.

Assessment and Diffusion of Information Aims and objectives

External Laboratories

Assumptions made in Laboratory teaching Project experiments

Long experiments

Demonstrator/staff education

Cost benefits

Computers in laboratories

Creativity laboratories

Staff/student interactions

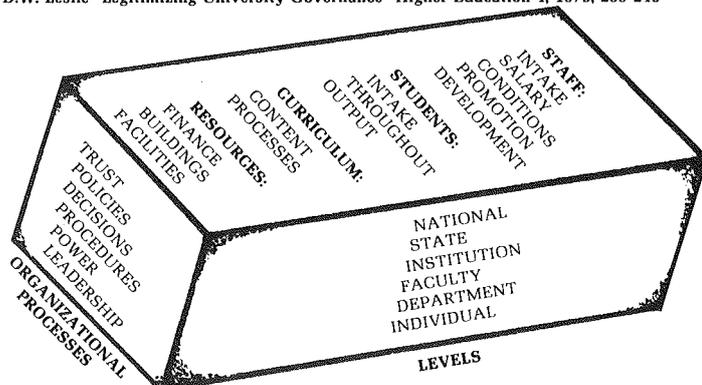
Choice of teaching methods.

#### LABORATORY GROUP MEETING OF HERDSA:

Agreed that the major value of the annual HERDSA Conference was meeting with people outside one's immediate area and in "lateral" discussions. Laboratory work does not fit immediately into this mode. Hence, the group decided to investigate:

1. the holding of a special interest group meeting on laboratory work outside the annual HERDSA conference.
2. the use of confravision for such a meeting (both ends working on same

Adapted from D.W. Leslie "Legitimizing University Governance" Higher Education 4, 1975, 233-246



The whole immersed in an atmosphere of individual and institutional striving for self-actualization.

## The Social Composition of Tertiary Students and the Effect of the Abolition of Fees.

What is the social make-up of the Australian student body, and how has it been changed, if at all, by the abolition of tuition fees in 1974? Are there significant differences between students in different types of institution? If so, can we describe these differences and measure them? It is possible to speak of a 'typical' student, or at least to define a fairly homogeneous student population?

These questions have been the object of a research study in progress at T.E.R.C. since 1974. The project, which is the first national study of its kind, aims to survey all students commencing tertiary education, and this year takes in all the universities and nearly sixty Colleges of Advanced Education, teachers' colleges, agricultural colleges and other tertiary institutions.

Students are given a questionnaire, usually during enrolment, which included items on age, sex, faculty and course details, bursaries, previous schooling and work experience, residential information, and social background (parents' education, income and occupation). One question also asks them what type of course they

- topics; time to exchange video tapes).
3. the most suitable time and venue(s) for such a meeting — (Sydney/Melbourne; November/December; January/February; one day before HERDSA)
4. the format of such a meeting (workshops, material display, poster sessions, visits to local institutions of interest)
5. Regional meetings.
6. Major topics (lead sessions) for such a meeting (most interest in Self-paced laboratories and external laboratories).

#### GROUP 5

Discussions of this group may be best summarised in the attached diagram adapted from D.W. Leslie. In various ways, the group tried to come to grips with decisions concerning staff, students, curricula and resources; found itself considering different types of organizational processes; and got itself mixed up with several distinct layers or levels of governance in tertiary education. The diagram is coffin shaped to indicate that the whole system is very human. It floats in a fourth dimension of continual striving by individuals and institutions for self-actualization. This invisible atmosphere ensures that the system will be self-perpetuating, but polluted, i.e., often fouled up.

would have taken if there had still been fees, and analysis of responses to this item including crosstabulation of the responses with other items, has yielded a good deal of information on students' perception of their pattern of enrolment. There is no doubt that a good many students feel the abolition of fees has affected their type of enrolment. In 1975, about 74% of students were full-time and about 20% part-time. When asked what type of course they would have taken if they had had to pay fees, only 51% said they would be full-time, 22% said they would opt for part-time study, and 21% said they would have had to defer or not enrol at all. This last group numbers more than 8,000.

There is some difference between faculties

in this respect. For instance, medical students, who more often come from the higher socio-economic strata, say they would be less affected, and more able to maintain their present studies. Arts and commerce/economics students, who often come from more modest backgrounds, thought that they would be much more likely to switch from full-time to part-time study, or defer or not enrol at all.

Recently, the study has shown significant differences between different types of institution, as well as between students in comparable institutions. For example, a greater percentage of students is enrolled full-time at non-metropolitan colleges than at metropolitan colleges or universities. Yet the non-metropolitan students expected to be more affected by having to pay fees than students in the other two groups.

In this comparison between groups, other interesting distinctions have emerged besides the fee issue. Non-metropolitan students tend to be younger than those in the other groups, and hence to be more likely to have come straight from school and not to have worked before. Metropolitan college students (a majority of whom are women) are slightly older on average, and have often worked in business before enrolling. University students, not surprisingly, come from more "professional" backgrounds, and, if they have worked before, have more often been professional workers than those in the other groups.

A long-term study, such as the one being carried out at Melbourne and Monash Universities, would obviously give much harder data on the social composition of the tertiary student body, and in particular on any changes brought about by the abolition or reimposition of fees. However, the T.E.R.C. study,\* which only runs for three years, has provided a national data base for those interested in studying the social characteristics and enrolment patterns of Australian students. The project committee hopes that the information provided by the survey will lead to further investigations outside its scope: questions have been raised about age-composition and the growing interest in mature students, deferment, and related issues such as the need for more flexible, part-time courses. There also seems to be a link between the type of institution attended by parents and their children's choice of institution. Finally, if we are going to see a more mature, possibly more vocationally-oriented type of student entering tertiary education, what changes will we have to make in the type of courses and the number of places we offer/

Further information on the project can be obtained from the project officer, Clift Barnard, at T.E.R.C.

\*Initiated and originally funded by the A.V.C.C., now jointly sponsored by them, the E.R.D.C. and the Commission on Advanced Education, and supervised by Professor Don Anderson, Professor Peter Fensham and Dr. John Powell.

## Some notes on the Experimental 'Confravision' Conference held on 6th, 7th November, 1975.

By

John A. Bowden and Barbara Falk

HERDSA members may recall the brief report (Newsletter 1/76) of a conference on the teaching of laboratory work. The conference made use of a television link between Sydney and Melbourne and we are currently writing a paper evaluating the conference format. To bring HERDSA members up to date the following notes describe how the conference was organised and run and mention some pros and cons of the use of a confravision link.

### WHY WAS SUCH A CONFERENCE ORGANISED?

In January, 1975, HERDSA held its first annual conference in Canberra.

Each participant chose to be a member of one or six topic-oriented working groups. One of these working groups discussed the topic "Practical work. Why laboratory classes?"

This group consisted of eleven teachers from a variety of tertiary institutions and a spectrum of scientific disciplines. A few of this group had participated, during the previous year, in another conference on laboratory teaching which had been held under the auspices of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee.

These participants expressed the view that, while the efforts of the current working group proved to be most rewarding, the HERDSA meeting in no way built upon work carried out in the 1974 conference. A suggestion was made (and it was enthusiastically supported) that efforts should be made to bring together at some time late in 1975 those who had participated in either the HERDSA or the AVCC conference. The purpose of such a meeting would be to build upon and extend the work already done at the other two conferences.

Some months later, when the organisation for this follow-up conference was begun, it became apparent that all of those interested in the topic could not be brought together in one place. Many potential participants were junior staff with limited conference leave rights. Others had used up whatever entitlements they possessed in attending the HERDSA or other conferences early in 1975. For these reasons, it was proposed that there be two

groups, with one meeting in Sydney and the other in Melbourne.

After much work, Dr. Alan Prosser of the University of New South Wales established a list of some fifty interested tertiary teachers who were able to attend one or other of the proposed conference centres and a date for the two-day conference was established. Dr. Prosser also suggested that some link between Melbourne and Sydney via telephone or television be established. Hence this experimental conference was born.

### HOW WAS THE CONFERENCE RUN?

By the first day of the conference, about twenty participants had enrolled in each of the two groups. The participants included a large number of junior staff directly involved in laboratory teaching as well as senior staff, heads of department and others from education research units.

All participants in the two cities were asked whether they could have attended the conference if it had been held in the other centre alone. Fourteen of the 17 Melbourne respondents and 14 of the 19 Sydney respondents answered 'no' to this question citing, in most cases, lack of both time and finance as the reason for the inability to make the trip interstate. This information, gained at the end of the conference, confirmed the opinion formed by the organisers at a very early stage in preparation for the meeting.

On Thursday, November 6th the first concurrent sessions were held at the Tertiary Education Research Centre in Sydney and The Centre for the Study of Higher Education in Melbourne. The Sydney participants concentrated on objectives and assessment of undergraduate work while the group in Melbourne considered alternative ways of preparing, organising and conducting laboratory work.

At the end of this first day, summaries of the day's discussions were videotaped and the tapes exchanged overnight between the Melbourne and Sydney groups. Both the conduct of the day's discussions and the manner of production of the videotaped summaries varied between the two groups.

The Sydney participants formed interested groups very early in the first session and maintained those groups throughout most of the day. The videotaped summary thus featured about half a dozen representatives speaking on behalf of the groups.

On the other hand, the Melbourne participants were reluctant to break into small groups and the videotaped summary was recorded by just two representatives. One of us (JAB) who was involved in this recording believes that this segment of the operation was too rushed owing to "air-freight deadlines".

On the Friday morning, each group viewed the videotape sent from the other

centre. The material viewed was discussed and questions and arguments prepared.

It is interesting that in response to a question on the adequacy of the videotaped summaries, nearly all the Melbourne participants indicated that a printed summary was needed in addition to the videotape from Sydney because the tape contained too much detail. Not surprisingly, the Melbourne tape was criticized by the Sydney participants for both its lack of detail and small number of performers. A few Sydney participants also suggested however that printed materials, in addition to the tape, would have been beneficial. Given that more time was available for the preparation of these summaries, most of the criticisms could probably be met.

At Friday lunch time Dr. Prosser and JAB conferred by telephone and exchanged lists of questions each group wished to discuss during the confravision link that afternoon.

At 2.00 on the Friday afternoon, after most of the Sydney (19) and Melbourne (17) participants had assembled in the two Confravision Centres of Telecom Australia, the two-hour Sydney-Melbourne link was established. The discussion was chaired by Dr. Alan Prosser in Sydney who maintained a fairly firm control in order to give every participant an opportunity to play his/her part. When necessary (only occasionally), JAB acted as chairman in Melbourne. In one sense, such a close control was necessitated by the fact that 35-40 persons were participating in a 120-minute meeting — hardly enough time for all to contribute under any circumstances. More will be said of this later — especially since the Telecom advertisement talks of "up to six people on camera in each centre."

In each centre, the host university department had one of their technicians available to videotape proceedings. It is hoped that this recording, when edited, will be available to groups elsewhere to initiate further study.

#### **WAS THE CONFRAVISION LINK A SUCCESS?**

This report does not attempt to compare the Confravision session with a face-to-face discussion by a group of similar size as part of a conventional conference. The size of the combined Melbourne and Sydney groups was too large for sustained interchanges between all participants. In a face-to-face conference it is likely that such a group would be subdivided to allow freer discussion. The session can be described and attention directed to some of the advantages and problems.

First it is interesting to note that dividing up the aspects of laboratory work for preparatory discussion and the exchange

of videotapes set up a question and answer format for the shared session. Both groups had structured their participation to some extent. Questions and comments were shared out to allow everyone a chance to perform in the time available. The confravision discussion thus had some of the flavour of two debating teams. It does not follow that because this was so on this occasion a confravision session must be structured in this way.

The physical setting of the two studies was different, but in each the numbers could only be accommodated by having front and back rows. In the Melbourne studio, for example, 26 people could be seated, 10 could be seen all the time on screen and the remainder picked out by a roving zoom camera. The Melbourne group relied on a technical officer from the Educational Technology section of The Centre for the Study of Higher Education to operate the technical controls. The recorded session seen in Sydney therefore is in part selected by the cameraman. This is an additional reason for keeping the numbers small enough for sequential exchanges between people in either location and for all to have a full experience of non verbal communication. In the situation that has been described, it was natural that the Sydney chairman would chair the meeting fairly firmly and endeavour to give all participants at least one chance of being seen and heard on screen. This inhibited but did not entirely prevent exchanges between members of the Melbourne group or between members of the Sydney group. Several times, interruptions and contradictions and good-humoured jesting added life to the talk. The somewhat stilted discussion was not a consequence of the medium but rather of a first attempt to test its potential use. There were many instances of interchanges between Melbourne and Sydney with facial expression or the gestures or the visible hesitation while thoughts were reformulated or notes were consulted which could not be usefully distinguished from face-to-face academic discussion.

Another linked constraint which prevented the full development of the discussion was the time limit. Two hours was insufficient for the ground to be covered with the number of people present. The full advantage of the medium was seen when the company gave a free preliminary session for the organising committees in both states to have a joint discussion. During this time it was clear that the seeing and hearing at a distance was wholly adequate for easy discussion of controversial points.

#### **SHOULD "CONFRAVISION" LINKS BE USED FOR FUTURE CONFERENCES?**

Given that the number of persons involved was suitable to the Confravision facilities and that time was available for

argument and counter-argument, we believe that there could be proper academic discussion. Variations in procedure such as having time-breaks between a number of "Confravision links" during a day and reducing the number of areas discussed in order to avoid superficial treatment of important topics are strategies which would facilitate this.

All of these activities are time consuming. The latter strategy, for instance, would require perhaps a few days or perhaps a week's separation between the concurrent discussion sessions and the Confravision links.

Whatever the deficiencies of the conference held last year, however, we believe that the overall format is a useful one especially when the thousands of dollars involved in transporting and accommodating 20 or more interstate participants in a normal conference is compared with the \$250 cost of the Confravision link.

## **Project Register**

*To date, about 40 projects have been entered on the HERDSA Project Register. In view of the membership of the Society (about 350) this seems a small number. Probably almost every member would know of at least one project in research and development in tertiary education which would make an appropriate entry. Projects such as the development of new styles of teaching or of new curricula or materials would be very suitable for inclusion, as well as more formal educational research projects. (A Project Register form is enclosed).*

*At the moment the register has not been put onto computer storage. This will be done in the next two months. Meanwhile, members are welcome to make requests for entries from the register, on a subject area basis, and photocopies of the relevant entries will be sent. ALL REQUESTS FOR EXTRACTS FROM THE REGISTER SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY A NEW ENTRY FOR THE REGISTER. We see this as a device for ensuring that the register grows as its usage increases. We will not turn away a request which is not accompanied by an entry; nevertheless we would like members to acknowledge the mutual advantage of complying with this request if they can.*

*You can contact with the co-ordinator of the register, Tony Dare at the following address:*

**PROJECT REGISTER**  
c/-Education Unit, RMIT  
Box 2476 V  
Melbourne 3001

# Abstracts

*HERDSA Abstracts* will be published in each issue of the Newsletter. The abstracts are based on a regular survey of relevant literature. They are intended for use by tertiary teachers, research workers, students, administrators and librarians. The abstracts are classified into the same groups used by the Society for Research into Higher Education in their quarterly publication, *Research into higher education abstracts*.

There will be little duplication between *HERDSA Abstracts* and the SRHE abstracts. The latter attempts a coverage of work in the United Kingdom together with a selected coverage of appropriate overseas work. The *HERDSA Abstracts* will attempt a complete coverage of current publications in Australasia — Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. Publications describing research, teaching, administration, staff and students in higher education will be abstracted.

Authors or editors who would like abstracts of articles, books or monographs to be included of their work to the *Abstracts* editor, particularly if the work appeared in an overseas publication.

The *Abstracts* are edited by **Robert Cannon**, Advisory Centre for University Education, The University of Adelaide.

## A GENERAL

1 Beswick, D.G. and Harman, G.S. (eds.) *Survey instruments in the study of regional colleges*. Canberra, Education Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1975. viii, 382p. diags., tables.

This book is a companion volume to the three volume report by D.S. Anderson, *et al*, entitled *Regional colleges ...* (see abstract this issue). The purpose of this work is to make available copies of survey instruments and other materials used in the college research project.

2 Cannon, R. (illustrated by Zig Kapelis) *Learning spaces for higher education. Programmed Learning and Educational Technology*. 13, 2, May 1976: 13-24.

Effective teaching and learning in higher education are often restricted because of the nature of available learning spaces. Both the planning and the use of learning spaces needs careful attention. Contributions from architects, users, educationalists and students can be helpful in formulating decisions regarding the physical facilities for presenting information, for teacher-student interaction and for other learning activities considered desirable in higher education.

(Journal abstract).

## B ECONOMICS AND MANPOWER

3 Burke, G. The economics of bonded service: the case of graduate secondary teachers in Victoria, Australia. *Higher Education*, 5, 1, Feb. 1976: 35-47

In the six Australian states the main form of recruitment of teachers for government schools has been through the award of teacher scholarships or "studentships" to entrants to teacher training. The teacher trainees in return have "bonded" themselves to undertake a period of teaching. The object of this paper is to measure some of the costs and benefits of the scheme that has operated in the state of Victoria.

A range of present values of the cost of training a "cohort" of male university entrants and the subsequent salary bill in teaching of the survivors have been estimated with the aid of a Markov chain model. The estimates are based on data on survival in training and in teaching, and salary and allowance data at the turn of the decade. Alternative estimates were made of the salary bill at higher salary rates which might be offered in place of the studentship scheme and which could be considered likely to yield at least as large a quantity of teaching service. Even under the tight labour conditions at the end of the sixties the studentship scheme appeared to be a very expensive method of recruitment. When consideration is given to other costs and benefits in teaching and to society generally the case against the studentship appears even stronger.

(Journal abstract).

4 Williams, B.R. Resources per university student 1957-75. *The Australian University*, 14, 1, May, 1976: 7-14

The Sixth Report of the Universities Commission contends that there has been no increase in command over resources per student since 1964. General Fund Expenditure (which excludes capital and research grants) gives a better view of resource allocation than Total Expenditure. Depending on how General Fund Expenditure is indexed, the Commission's contention is supported or can be shown to be slightly less favourable than the situation actually is.

## C ADMINISTRATION

5 Anderson, D.S., Batt. K.J., Beswick, D.G., Harman, G.S. and Selby Smith, C. *Regional colleges: A study of non-metropolitan colleges of advanced education in Australia*. Canberra, Education Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1975.

*Volume I* xvii, 646p. map, tables  
Contents: Part I, Introduction and background. Part II Objectives, programmes and awards. Part III Students. Part IV Facilities, open education, teaching. Part V Economic aspects.

*Volume II* xiv, 580p. diags. tables  
Contents: Part I Academic staff. Part II Organization.

*Volume III* xiii, 396p. maps, diags., tables.  
Contents: Part I Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education. Part II The State College of Victoria, Bendigo and the Bendigo Institute of Technology. Part III Conclusions.

These three volumes constitute the main report of the Regional Colleges Project, a multi-disciplinary team study undertaken by members of the Education Research Unit. The task of the study is described in the report as:

1. to provide a detailed picture of regional colleges;
2. to investigate four key issues or themes related to colleges (size, location, faculty mix and administrative arrangements);
3. to explore the higher and post-secondary education context of colleges.

## D HIGHER EDUCATION IN SPECIFIC SUBJECTS INCLUDING CURRICULUM

6 Hill, B.V. Multi-disciplinary courses — mush or muscle? *The Australian University*, 14, 1, May 1976: 48-57

Hill argues that "...the objective of inter-disciplinary education is (a) to enlarge the students awareness of the many forms that disciplined enquiry and interpretation can take, and (b) to help him explore their inter-relations; in order (c) to encourage him to regard his own more specialized studies in a larger and more humane socio-cultural perspective". The success of inter-disciplinary education will be enhanced by agreement on unifying themes and objectives, providing tangible evidence of integration, determining valid assessment procedures and by evaluating courses.

## E TEACHING METHODS AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

7 Hall, W.C. with Cannon, R. *University Teaching*, Adelaide, Advisory Centre for University

Education, The University of Adelaide, 1975. 164p. illus., diags., tables.

*University teaching* is an edited collection of occasional papers published by the Centre between 1973 and 1975. The papers (and therefore the sections of the book) are described as an "...attempt to distil available knowledge in a particular area..." The twelve sections of the book discuss the curriculum process, aims and objectives, teaching methods and media, assessment, course evaluation and learning spaces.

8 Nunan, E.E. Educational technology: the means to a technology of teaching. *Unicorn* 2, 1, Mar. 1976: 24-29.

Beginning teachers and heads of schools generally regard pre-service preparation as unsatisfactory. Calls for courses in a "technology of teaching" reflect a concern for the provision of relevant pre-service education. A technology of teaching is contained within the concept of educational technology which attempts to define the more explicit factors associated with learning and teaching.

9 Packer, J.S. *A teaching aid for physiologists: simulation of kidney function*. Research Report No. 1, 1976 Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Melbourne. 22p. tables, diags.

The mini computer used in conjunction with a visual display unit offers a convenient medium for simulation studies of physiological systems. Because of the interactive, time scaling and display facilities of such a computer system, it can be used to advantage as a teaching aid for physiologists. The main difficulty encountered in setting up a simulation of a system such as the kidney are the complexity of kidney structure and the lack of certainty in the understanding of its operation. In this sense the modeller may assist experimental physiologists by testing various hypotheses.

(Report summary)

10 Roe, E., *Using and misusing the materials of teaching and learning: studies in efficiency of communication in higher education*. Canberra, Education Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1975. xiii, 292p. tables.

Investigations reported in Parts 1, 3 and 4 reveal serious inefficiencies in the use of teaching/learning materials and in communication between lecturers, students and librarians. A 'descriptive profile' is discussed in Part 2. The profile is a materials selection tool that may contribute to easing the plight of teaching/learning materials useage in higher education.

11 Stanton, H.E., The use of slides and the blackboard to illustrate lecture material. *The Australian University* 14, 1, May, 1976: 43-47.

Blackboard illustration is at least as effective (and possibly more so) than that provided by 35 mm slides (as measured by a multiple-choice test). However, students enjoyed the slides and felt they assisted their learning. The study replicates an earlier British investigation.

## F STAFF

12 Miller, A.H., The preparation of tertiary teachers. *The Australian University*, 14, 1, May, 1976: 33-42.

An increasing number of tertiary institutions are offering courses designed to improve the quality of teaching. This is evidence that universities recognise the need for lecturers to possess educational qualifications as well as expertise in their discipline. Tertiary teacher preparation is described in the U.K., the U.S.A. and Canada, and in Sweden and Australia.

13 Fallon, B.J., Academic recruitment in Australian universities in the 1970's. *The Australian University*, 14, 1, May, 1976: 15-29

The general question asked in this study was "from where do Australian universities get their staff?" The major findings of the investigation are:

- There was increased reliance on overseas recruits in the 1960s and this has continued into the 1970s.
- There was an increase in the 'professionalism' of appointees, that is, fewer appointees coming from non-academic positions.
- There was an increase in the appointment of staff already at the particular university.
- The older universities recruited proportionately more in the Professions rather than the Sciences, and the Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Appointees to the Professions were recruited more from Internal sources.
- Appointees to the Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences were recruited more from other Australian universities and overseas.

## G STUDENTS—GENERAL

14 Barnard, P.D. and Boyles J.R., Dental services for Australian university students. *The Australian University*, 14, 1, May 1976: 65-68

Stratified random groups of students from the Australian National University were selected for a dental examination and then asked to fill in a questionnaire. Questionnaire results show that 52% of students had no expenditure on dentistry in the previous year; the average length of time since the last visit to a dentist was 6.8 months for females and 11.7 months for males; and that

reasons for avoiding dental treatment included cost, expecting trouble to disappear, lack of time and fear of pain. Dental examination showed that 75% of students required treatment and that an average of 2.2 teeth were decayed in each student.

15 Carpenter, P and Montgomery, A. The occupational background of intending Queensland teachers. *The Forum of Education*, 35, 2, Jan. 1976: 17-26

The occupational background of a sample of 3116 student teachers who had proceeded through Kelvin Grove College in the period 1950-1975 were examined. A degree of consistency in student occupational background over the 25 year period was noted. The major occupational categories represented were professional workers, administrative/managerial workers, tradesmen/process workers and farmers.

## H STUDENTS — SELECTION AND PERFORMANCE

16 Baumgart, N. Study of discontinuing students at Macquarie University. *The Australian Journal of Education*, 20, 1, March 1976: 105-106

In a study of discontinuing students at Macquarie University major analyses were based on a sample of 444 students divided into four categories: students still persisting in Term 3 of second year, students who discontinued during first year, students who voluntarily discontinued after first year, and students excluded because of failure at the end of first year.

Multiple discriminant analyses were used to relate potential predictors to category membership. Predictors included both entry and process variables. Results are reported separately for full-time and part-time students, and for males and females within these categories. The major findings carry implications for those who need to make management decisions in relation to higher education. Additionally, the paper attempts to highlight some of the design problems inherent in correlational studies and to present selected methodological strategies used in this study to minimize the effects of these problems. (Journal abstract.)

17 Docking, R.A. Intellectual and academic achievement at tertiary level. *The Australian Journal of Education*, 20, 1, March 1976: 100-101

In the search for determinants of academic success at University, many attempts to determine the effects of intellectual, social and physical environment on achievement in education have been hampered by the lack of theoretical framework, inadequate experimental design or analysis, and invalid

measures of environment and achievement. The study reported in this paper, conducted with Physics students at university, attempts to overcome each of these problems. This has entailed the development of new measures of the environment, the adaptation of models of interaction and learning to the University situation, and the use of an unusual research design.

The major hypotheses are tested, one related to the impact on achievement of staff/student congruence in student goal orientation, the other to the impact of congruence in staff role orientation. Data supported the first but not the second hypothesis in all groups of students. (Journal abstract.)

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18 Hall, W.C. and Veale, J.L. Students' ability to predict examination performance. *The Australian Journal of Education*, 20, 1, March 1976: 102-104

It is sometimes assumed that students (a) know which questions they will be best at answering in an examination, and (b) know how well they have performed after completing an examination. These two hypotheses were tested for 50 third-year dental students who completed a six-question essay examination in Human Physiology and Pharmacology.

A questionnaire was administered after the students had read the examination questions but before they attempted to answer them. A second questionnaire was administered after the examination.

The tentative conclusions from the study are that students are unable to predict the questions they will be best at, do not know how well they have performed, and generally answer questions in the printed order on the examination paper. (Journal abstract)

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## I STUDENTS — CHOICE OF SUBJECTS AND CAREERS

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19 Young, P.L. Academic guidance: a brief comment on the state of the art in tertiary institutions. *The Australian University*, 14, 1, May, 1976: 58-64

Academic guidance is provided to help students make informed decisions about the planning of their progress in academic institutions. Guidance must convey the maximum possible options (without confusing the student) so that knowledgeable decisions can be made. To achieve this the academic guidance officers requires certain basic skill and commitments.

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## J FURTHER AND ADULT EDUCATION

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# Book Reviews

Ernest Roe, *Using and misusing the materials of teaching and learning: studies in efficiency of communication in higher education*. Canberra Education Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1975. (Education Research Unit Occasional Report Series.) xiii, 292p. tables, 16cm x 24cm, paper cover, \$9.95.

Publications that set out to describe the use of materials in higher education usually focus on audio-visual materials (such as films, videotapes, slides or sound recordings) or on combinations of materials for student study in some kind of plan of individualized learning. These materials have potentially useful contributions to make, provided they are wisely chosen and used appropriately. They have been shown, for example, to be able to enrich the processes of teaching and learning, to make study more enjoyable, to provide welcome variety, and in some cases, to make teaching and learning more effective and efficient.

However, the real *practical* difficulties in preparing and using these materials or 'plans' are usually glossed over or ignored completely. Thus, some lecturers with sincere intentions of using audio-visual materials in their teaching, encounter unexpected logistic difficulties, technical problems, apathy (and sometimes hostility) from colleagues and students alike. Equipment, and the beginnings of a useful materials collection, often find their way to some out-of-the-way cupboard in these circumstances. The impression that audio-visual materials are infrequently used in higher education is reinforced by a summary in Part I of Professor Ernest Roe's book which shows the use of media and materials by lecturers during one week in seven different tertiary institutions. Of a total 170 classes recorded in the study, the blackboard was used in 73 classes, the overhead projector in 19 classes, and (at the other extreme) slides in three and video-tape in two classes.

Against this background, it is refreshing to find a book which looks closely at some of the more basic materials of teaching and learning. These include the blackboard, student notes, assignments and reference lists, all of which are widely used in most institutions. Professor Roe's book reports investigations into materials conducted over several years in a variety of institutions in Australia and Papua New Guinea. The book is divided into four main parts. Three parts report investigations into the role of teaching and learning materials and one part is con-

cerned with the development of 'descriptive profiles' of materials in all media.

Part 1 summarizes and discusses information gathered from an investigation into the interactions among lecturers, students and materials in eight tertiary institutions. Sources of information included student diaries, notes made in classes, handout materials, tape-recordings of formal classes and discussions with students and lecturers. This information is presented and discussed with the text (which includes three case studies of student experience with materials) and in appended series of detailed statistical tables.

The author himself criticises (rather harshly) part 1 in retrospective analysis. This part certainly contains some interesting insights into student and lecturer behaviour and attitudes and into the inefficiencies and failures in communication. The most worrying aspect of this investigation is to be found in the conclusion (p.79):

"It is often alleged that lecturing and attending lectures are inefficient methods of teaching and learning; attention span is brief, the material is mostly available and can be more efficiently learned elsewhere, the lecturer himself has shortcomings as a communicator. It seems, however, on the evidence of this exploratory study, that a higher proportion of student contacts with teaching/learning materials may be useless. It may be that even more time and effort is wasted by students in this way than when they are (however sporadically) listening to lectures or listening and talking at tutorials — and that even less learning takes place."

It is this conclusion that provides the author with the motivation to investigate assignment work and the problems of communication among students, lecturers and librarians reported in Parts 3 and 4. (Part 2, which reports on the problems of material selection, will be discussed later because it is entirely different in character to the other three parts.)

Part 3 reports a descriptive study of assignment work based on data collected from lecturers and students. Here is to be found a detailed discussion of approaches and expectations by lecturers and students to assignment work and to each other. A not surprising, but nevertheless disturbing finding is the very wide divergence of expectations, of assessment procedures and feedback to students in assignment work. Readers of the book, disappointed by the lack of practical suggestions emerging out of Part 1, will be pleased to find "Guide-

lines for assignments" and a "Checklist for assignments" between pages 220 and 223. The Guidelines and Checklist are distilled from the investigation and are viewed by the author as fulfilling an important function in his work at Queensland University's Tertiary Education Institute to take "... steps beyond simple description and analysis of what was going on so as to make specific suggestions for specific improvements in a specific context ..." (p.223)

The work carried out and reported in Part 3 is extended in Part 4. This examines the use of library facilities and the six channels of communication among students, lecturers and librarians. This part is prefaced by the same style of 'guidelines' that concluded Part 3, but here the guidelines are directed to students and librarians as well as to lecturers. Problems about the library, about using lists of references and problems of efficiency are each studied from the viewpoint of students, lecturers and librarians. The emphases in this part are clearly on co-operation and communication.

Part 2, the 'odd-man-out' part, is concerned with a descriptive profile of teaching and learning materials in all media. A classification of the kinds of information which might be extracted from many different teaching materials led to the development of a profile having seven main headings, under which information could be recorded about any print or non-print material. The seven headings are Basic data; Description; Content; Organization; Presentation; Accompanying material; and Orientation. It is doubtful if many people (other than the enthusiasts) would go to the descriptive extent described here, but the general concept deserves serious consideration by all lecturers when confronted with the regular chore of making book selections or when previewing audio-visual materials. Given the evidence presented in the other three parts of the book, the profile should prove to be a valuable tool for lecturers and for librarians involved in selection processes. At the very least, we have here a novel and constructive addition to the usual array of bibliographical tools commonly available.

Professor Roe's book is addressed to the problems of effective and efficient use of materials by students and lecturers in higher education. As such it will be of wide interest, especially to lecturing staff. Educational researchers and librarians will also find this book valuable. For the lecturer there is sufficient material of student and lecturer behaviour to maintain interest through to the more concrete guidelines on assignments (p.220) and the use of the library (p.240). The busy lecturer may wish to start with these two sections before reading the detailed discussions and studies leading up to them. The educational researcher will find Roe's

frank discussion of his methodology, the questionnaires and interview schedules (included as appendices) of interest. Part 4 will be of particular interest to librarians and deserves to find its way into the inservice courses for library staff being conducted in some institutions.

It is hard to be critical of this book: it is written in such an open, candid and conversational manner that one feels as though offence might be given to an author who has made a sincere effort to take the reader into his confidence. However, there are three critical points that should be made. First, the author ought to have used the subtitle of the book as the main title. The present main title is a little misleading because one expects to find more of the type of information contained in the guidelines of Parts 3 and 4. Second, despite the author's note on the sequence of sections, Part 2 should have appeared either at the beginning or the end of the studies. Third, it is a pity that some of the statistical material in the text of Part 1 was not presented in a more comprehensible graphical or diagrammatic manner.

However, these are relatively minor criticisms of a book that deserves to be read, studied and discussed widely among teaching staff in tertiary education (although in its present form the book appears to be aimed at too many audiences: lecturers, staff of teaching units, educational researchers, librarians and, possibly, students).

The nagging worry after reading this book is this: 'If we can't use handouts and reference lists effectively what hope is there for the more complex audio-visual materials now being produced in tertiary institutions?'

Robert Cannon  
*The University of Adelaide*

William C. Hall with Robert Cannon, *University Teaching*, Advisory Centre for University Education, The University of Adelaide, 1975. Soft cover recommended price \$1.50.

It is encouraging to see a book produced which is primarily concerned with improving university teaching. This volume was produced by the Advisory Centre for University Education (ACUE) at the University of Adelaide. It consists of a collection of previous papers written by W. C. Hall, the Director of ACUE, and R. Cannon, Lecturer in Educational Technology at ACUE. The papers cover the topics: Curriculum Process, Aims and Objectives, The Lecture, Small Groups, Tutoring and Demonstrating, Individualized Learning, Audio-Visual Media, Assessment, Evaluating University Courses, and Learning Spaces. There is also an annotated bibliography of texts relevant to tertiary education.

A short introductory statement contains information about the aims and operation of ACUE. However, the aims of the book are not stated, although each section (paper) begins with an outline of its purpose. This is a pity because the importance of considering aims when deciding teaching approaches and methods of evaluation is emphasized throughout the text. The absence of a clearly stated purpose for the book also makes it more difficult to evaluate, especially as the volume lacks a clear structure due to its being made up of a number of separate, though related, papers.

The first section, Curriculum Process, is intended to be the focal point of the book. Its purpose is to show the relationships between the components of the curriculum process (i.e. aims and objectives, content, teaching, learning and assessment) in order that "...the concern which is being shown by university staff for the various parts can be co-ordinated to bring about effective changes to the whole of a teaching programme" (page 9).

A simple but adequate model of the curriculum is developed from an inadequate but popular model. Some examples of this simple model in use at The University of Adelaide are mentioned briefly and an outline of other curriculum models is included. A brief discussion of aims and objectives concludes the section.

Unfortunately, this section lacks the strength to stand as the focal point for the material in other sections of the book. The treatment of the curriculum model lacks depth and emphasis, and the examples of the model in use are too sketchy to be convincing about the applicability of the model or to promote a greater understanding of it. The reader is left with the impression that it would have been preferable to place more emphasis on the development and use of an adequate model of the curriculum, and to have referred only briefly to other curriculum models. The interested reader could then have been encouraged to follow up these alternative models through his own readings of the references provided.

The two sections Tutoring and Demonstrating and Audio-Visual Media are quite good value. In Tutoring and Demonstrating, the relationship between lectures and tutorials is discussed, together with some aims of tutorials. There are also some guidelines provided for small group work and some ideas for stimulating discussion and other activities in tutorial and laboratory-related sessions. Practical problems which are often encountered are identified and possible solutions suggested. A tutorial evaluation questionnaire produced by ACUE is included.

The section on Audio-Visual Media contains a useful summary of the range of Audio-Visual material available to tertiary teachers and the applicability of these

materials. There are three parts, concerned respectively with the selection, preparation and use, and evaluation of audio-visual media. The approach is a practical one and the important relationship between aims, teaching method and media is emphasized and several guidelines are put forward.

There are also useful guidelines and some food for thought in other sections, particularly the section on lecturing as a teaching method. The sections on Aims and Objectives, Individualized Learning, and Assessment all provide reasonable overviews of their respective areas. However, each of these, and especially the last two, could have been enriched by a wider use of illustrative examples. In the case of Individualized Learning, a more systematic pointing out of advantages and limitations of the various approaches would have been helpful.

The section on Learning Spaces is directed towards assisting those responsible for planning new learning spaces or for renovating existing spaces. Extensive use is made of illustrations of various arrangements of spaces, furniture, equipment and people. The section appears to provide a useful and comprehensive guide.

The strengths of this volume are that it

provides a source of guidelines and ideas for university (and other tertiary) teachers. Its weaknesses include the lack of structure already referred to, and a tendency towards a shallow approach, even in the treatment of key concepts, such as the development and use of a curriculum model. This latter weakness is aggravated by the lack of sustained agreement in most sections, and an excessive use of quotations which tend to break up the text. There seems to have been an almost artificial effort to quote research findings wherever possible. This is not always helpful. For example, it is difficult to see the use of including the isolated statement that "Beard and Bligh (1971) report that programmed learning is at least as effective as traditional methods for achieving certain objectives".(page 69).

Furthermore, apparently because the book is made up of previously published papers, parts of some papers are covered twice (e.g.: Aims and Objectives). At times this is rather disconcerting, even confusing, because the approach is not always consistent.

Despite its weaknesses, this book does provide some food for thought for tertiary teachers. However, one can't help drawing the conclusion that it would have been far more effective to produce a book that focussed clearly on certain key issues and

developed those, rather than binding together a collection of existing papers.

G.W. Beeson  
*State College of Victoria at Hawthorn*

*Also received:*

The Counselling Service of the University of Melbourne (Parkville Victoria 3052) has produced a series of occasional papers, which are of particular interest to those working on failure, dropout, or study problems. Titles include:

Group Help for Borderline Students at the University of Melbourne by Majorie Priestly and Jon Frederick, 1974

Examination Anxiety: An Increasing and Destructive Presence in the Educational Scene by Jon Frederick, 1974.

Developing and Fostering Effective Helping Resources for Students in Tertiary Institutions in Australia by Jon Frederick, 1974.

Parents Need Orienting, Too: An Experiment with University Students' families by Jon Frederick and Rosemary Nicholls, 1975.

More Miles to the Counselling Gallon by Jon Frederick, 1975.

## Student Workload Survey at CCAE

Surveys of students' workloads have been carried out over the last five semesters at the CCAE under the auspices of a committee of the Academic Board of the College. The method used has been, in the main, a one page questionnaire distributed and answered at classes near the end of each semester. The questions relate to the student's work in each subject being studied that semester and attempt to obtain the total workload over the whole semester in respect of both regular and irregular activities. Results are analysed by individual subject and by total workload for each student.

For each subject with a significant response, staff are supplied with the mean, median, range and standard deviation and, for larger subjects, a frequency distribution. These distributions typically exhibit positive skewness (tail to the right) with the mean exceeding the median by about 25% of the standard deviation. An analysis is also performed on the difference between the

actual and nominal subject workload.

For the surveys analysed to date 36% of subjects have been significantly below nominal, 51% have not been significantly different and only 13% have been significantly above the nominal workload.

Total workload for each student has been analysed both in terms of the actual total reported and in terms of that total corrected for the total nominal load undertaken by each student. By means of this correction, workloads for all students are compared as if they were all full-time students doing the College nominal workload of 720 hours per semester, i.e. 48 hours per teaching week.

Results to date are fairly consistent over time showing a mean total workload of about 46 hours/teaching week and a median of about 44 hours per teaching week. Uncorrected workloads are a little less than this as not all students take a full load. Variation between students'

workloads is high, (even when corrected) with standard deviations being of the order of 15 hours/teaching week.

In recent surveys, students have been asked their opinion of their workload and the College norm of 48 hours per teaching week. Responses showed that 45% of students regarded their load as 'reasonable', 33% said 'a bit heavy' and 14% said 'heavy'. Only 8% regarded their load as less than reasonable. Students surveyed regard, on average, a weekly workload of about 42 to 43 hours as reasonable.

The surveys have been well received and have resulted in action by staff to alleviate trouble-spots. Staff awareness of the issue has increased and student complaints can be judged against wider data. The surveys are continuing.

Further information on these surveys can be obtained from R.B. Mitchell, School of Information Sciences, Canberra College of Advanced Education, P.O. Box 1, Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616.