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HERDSA NEWS

FEATURES

REGULAR ITEMS

From the Editor's Desk

I'd like to start this page with an acknowledgement of the
hard work and dedication of Margaret Buckridge, the
previous News Editor. I believe she has served HERDSA's
interests exceptionally well over recent years, and set a
standard that I will have to work hard to maintain.

In her last editorial Margaret raised the issue of accredita-
tion of teaching preparation courses in higher education,
and then considered the problematic suggestion that some
institutions might employ people as "teaching only" aca-
demics. She saw this as an attack on the core of what a
university is, and concluded: "Surely on this topic there
will be views." She invited people to deluge me with letters
- I regret to say that to date they have not reached me! Since
members did not respond, I shall lead off with some very
brief comments about the New Zealand academic scene,
especially my corner of it - perhaps that will encourage
people(especially Australians) to supply me with more
News material.

I have a major interest in qualifications for teachers in
higher education, because I work in an academic develop-
ment unit that has since 1990 moved into offering a
Graduate Diploma and Bachelor of Education for teachers
in tertiary education. At the same time we have had to
increase our involvement in research, to meet NZQA's
approval and accreditation requirements for offering a
degree. Some New Zealand university academic develop-
ment units are also developing qualifications for teaching
in HE, for example at the University of Otago. I hope this
will be a topic for continuing discussion in future issues.

Other current issues in higher education in New Zealand
concern funding, both of institutions and of students; the
relationship of university qualifications to the National
Qualifications Framework; academic freedom and institu-
tional autonomy. The language of delivery, providers,
clients and quality assurance has descended upon us.
These changes in post-compulsory education and training
stem from the Education Amendment Act (1990), and are
supposed to achieve increased educational excellence,
equity, efficiency and accountability.

I apologise that this issue of the News has appeared late. I
undertake to speed up the next issue, provided members
send me contributions, and hope to be back on track by the
July issue.

Please be sure to read the first column of our new regular
series, *Idea Dossier*, on page 10, and do start those letters
and articles coming. Over the next two years I understand
the Executive will be considering whether the News might
move to electronic distribution rather than being paper-
based, and whether it should continue to feature articles, or
become more simply an information vehicle run from the
HERDSA Office - so please give those ideas some thought,
too. (I won't mind being deprived of the editor's job!)
Alison Viskovic

Ernest Boyer: An Appreciation

HERDSA News reprints this essay to mark the passing of one of the "big picture" thinkers in higher education. Ernest Boyer's ideas are of particular moment for us as members of HERDSA as we strive for a compelling account of the relationship between teaching, scholarship and research.

Ernest Boyer, who died in December 1995, was the most influential spokesperson on higher education in the United States. His ideas about the undergraduate curriculum, the role of research in academe, and the reform of higher education had a significant impact on the direction of American higher education. He was influential not only because he headed the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the nation's oldest education-oriented 'think tank,' but because he had a unique ability to translate controversial ideas about education into understandable language. He also had a tremendous commitment to his ideas and to education - and put time into communicating these ideas far and wide. He was willing to go to small colleges or into school classrooms to discuss education. Indeed, he was as at home in the classroom as he was in giving testimony before Congress. Education, to Ernest Boyer, was a calling that he saw in almost religious terms. Strongly influenced by the pacifist and socially active Church of the Brethren and the Quakers, Boyer was an evangelist for education.

Relatively few have the ability to take complex ideas or abstract data and immediately get to the heart of the matter. Ernest Boyer had that gift, and that is one of the reasons why he was so often able to communicate so effectively. He could make ideas come alive, and could explain their importance not only to specialists, but to wider audiences as well. He was widely respected by his peers in education, and at the same time was able to interact effectively with policymakers and the public. His books are characterized by a clarity of expression.

His ideas have helped to shape the debate on the future of academic work, the role of teaching, service and research in higher education, and the future direction of American higher education.

Ernest Boyer's work in education was also infused by a commitment to values. He was convinced that education - from specialized graduate mentoring in the nation's top universities to preschool education - was an extraordinarily powerful force for good, not only in society but in the lives of individuals. Ernest Boyer was committed to education, not to training. His focus was on learning as a liberating experience for people. Education also contributes to a more effective workforce, but Ernest Boyer was most interested in how education could contribute to bettering the minds, and the lives, of people.

In the past few years, Ernest Boyer took the Carnegie Foundation in an entirely new direction. He began to focus on international education, recognizing that the United States is increasingly linked with other nations and that understanding education abroad can help shed light on domestic issues. A long-term exchange with the State Education Commission in China resulted in several seminars on both sides of the Pacific, and a continuing relationship between the Carnegie Foundation and key education leaders in China. The Foundation's sponsorship of the first international survey of the academic profession was a logical step following its several surveys of American academics. That study yielded original insights into how professors think worldwide, and has implications for the improvement of higher education in the United States and abroad.

Relatively few have the ability to take complex ideas or abstract data and immediately get to the heart of the matter. Ernest Boyer had that gift.

My own involvement with Ernest Boyer and the Carnegie Foundation was limited to these recent international initiatives. I always found him to be intellectually stimulating, insightful, and full of enthusiasm for the project at hand. I was always amazed by his energy, his willingness to travel to the ends of the earth to further the cause of education, and his ability to balance a myriad of different projects, people, and ideas all at the same time. Ernest Boyer's energy and commitment to education were infectious.

There is no doubt that Ernest Boyer's impact on higher education will be lasting. His recent *Scholarship Reconsidered*, to be followed soon by a new report on the assessment of academic work, is tremendously influential. His ideas have helped to shape the debate on the future of academic work, the role of teaching, service and research in higher education, and the future direction of American higher education. *Scholarship Reconsidered* is typical of Ernest Boyer's work - it is clearly written, cogently argued, and highly relevant to contemporary concerns.

Philip G. Altbach

Editor, *International Higher Education*.

A Report From the United States:
The American Association For Higher Education's Project "From Idea To Prototype: The Peer Review Of Teaching"

Dr. Kathleen M. Quinlan has worked with the AAHE Peer Review of Teaching Project since its conception, after collaborating on other AAHE Teaching Initiative projects, including the development of teaching portfolios and the use of cases in academic development. In July 1996 she joined the staff at the Centre for Educational Development and Academic Methods at the Australian National University. This is the first instalment of a two-part article by Kathleen, in which she introduces the Project, discussing its wider context, the goals, and the initial project design phases.

INTRODUCTION

The American Association for Higher Education peer review of teaching project has generated much interest and attention in the United States. Academic developers in Australasia may also be interested in the parallels between the activities on the AAHE project campuses and their own situations. In both places I find similar conversations - concern about rewarding and recognising university teaching and learning, a desire to develop greater collegiality around teaching and learning issues, and government pressures for quality and academic accountability.

CURRENT AMERICAN CONTEXT

Over the past several years there has been increasing attention focused on faculty roles, responsibilities and rewards in the U.S.. Academics are working in a climate of growing public distrust of universities and the professions more broadly, (Bok, 1992), manifested in part by state governing boards calling for greater accountability for faculty time, productivity and quality of undergraduate education (Ewell & Boyer, 1988; Marchese, 1994; Terenzini, 1993). Several leaders of major research universities have made strong public statements about the centrality of teaching to the university mission (Bok, 1992; Kennedy, 1991; Langenberg, 1992), and a number of professional and disciplinary societies have prepared reports re-defining scholarship in ways that allow the scholarly aspects of teaching to be documented and rewarded (Diamond & Adam, 1995). In this context, more and more universities are issuing task force reports recommending or mandating the peer review of teaching as a way of both improving teaching and learning on their campuses and responding to the need for more rigorous quality assurance.

WHY PEER REVIEW?

First, disciplinary peers offer a unique perspective on the teaching/learning process. Drawing on Ernest Boyer's notion of teaching as "scholarship", teaching, like research, is seen as rooted in academics' understandings and conceptions of their subject (Boyer, 1990). Faculty members' choices of goals for courses, readings, student assessments and examples are all shaped by how they view and approach their own discipline in other aspects of their scholarly life. Yet, the most common type of teaching evaluation - student course evaluations - does not assess knowledge of or orientation to the discipline. While student evaluations offer a good way of evaluating some aspects of teaching such as clarity and rapport, they do not provide a good assessment of other dimensions of teaching such as how accurate, up-to-date or appropriately balanced the content is. Academic peers - colleagues in the same field - are in the best position to comment on these aspects of teaching practice, just as they are in the best position to collaborate on and critique a colleague's research.

Disciplinary peers offer a unique perspective on the teaching / learning process

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Second, peer review is highly valued in academia. Research gains some of its respect from being peer reviewed; grant proposals, books, papers and presentations are all assessed by colleagues who are knowledgeable about the field. When faculty members come up for tenure or promotions, their research papers are sent to peers at other institutions for outside reviews. Applying the principle of peer review to teaching may be a way to accord pedagogical activities and accomplishments greater respect and status.

Thirdly, the culture of peer review is a culture of collegiality and publicness, through which scholars learn from and with each other to advance their collective understandings. Through established systems of public documentation of research activities and peer critique, academics have created communities which grapple with intellectually stimu-

lating questions, share findings, build on each others' work and monitor their own members. By developing genres and prototypes for documenting and discussing teaching, the project aims to create a similar culture of collegiality and publicness about teaching and learning. Together, within scholarly communities, academics can also benefit from others' pedagogical wisdom and experience by raising and pursuing substantive, intellectual issues about teaching and learning, engaging with the methods and results of instructional activities, and collectively assuring the quality of education their students are receiving (Shulman, 1993).

Lastly, involving academics in the documentation of their own teaching activities and in the review of colleagues' teaching work, puts them in an active role regarding the evaluation of their work. While some university and state mandates have been put in place, there is still much leeway for academics to collect their own documentation and make choices about what evidence is presented to which peers. Peer review, then, rather than being an instrument of control from external bodies, is meant to be owned and managed autonomously by academics themselves. This analogy between peer review of research and teaching, like all analogies, is imperfect. However, it highlights the similarities between research and teaching as substantive, intellectual activities worthy of discussion and critique among a community of scholars, a core assumption of the project.

The most common type of teaching evaluation - student course evaluations - does not assess knowledge of or orientation to the discipline

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GOALS

The intent of the AAHE project is to involve a group of interested academics in developing and piloting potential schemes, processes and "prototypes" for capturing the scholarship in their own teaching and increasing collegial interactions about teaching in their departments, disciplines and campuses. The project encourages academics to experiment with and take ownership over a broad range of approaches to the evaluation and improvement of teaching, looking beyond the typical student course evaluations and one-time classroom observations. The AAHE coordinates forums for project participants to come together and supports the dissemination of project findings.

PROJECT DESIGN

Funded for a two year period with grants from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, the project was officially launched in January 1994, under the direction of Patricia Hutchings and Russell Edgerton of the American Association for Higher Education in partnership with Lee Shulman and myself at Stanford University. During the first semester, twelve research and

comprehensive universities (1) became involved in the project; three departments on each campus were chosen to participate. Representation was sought in the sciences, humanities and professional fields on each campus, with a focus on the fields of chemistry, mathematics, English, history, music, business, engineering and nursing. A team of two academic staff lead the initiative in each of the pilot departments and maintain contacts with the academic team leaders in other departments.

The project was designed to provide a critical mass of support both on participating campuses and in selected disciplines. Thus, team leaders across pilot departments on the same campus meet periodically to collaborate in disseminating their work locally. Departmental teams also work with other team leaders in their own discipline from other universities, sharing ideas, exchanging expertise and making presentations at disciplinary conferences. For example, the project brings together history and mathematics team leaders at Temple University, while also facilitating collaborations among historians at Temple and at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. A project coordinator on each campus (typically a member of a staff development unit) serves as a liaison between the AAHE and campus, coordinates public occasions, convenes meetings among campus participants, supports local initiatives and acts as an adviser to the national project coordinators. The chief academic officer is committed to the ideas of the project and participates in both campus-wide and project-wide activities. The project was kicked off with a meeting of all of the academic team leaders, project coordinators and chief academic officers from the twelve universities at a week-long Faculty Institute at Stanford University in June 1994. At the Institute, participants explored various approaches to the peer review of teaching, discussed their own teaching in structured conversations, and developed plans for promoting peer interaction in their own departments during the coming year. After a year of adapting their plans and experimenting with prototypes, all of the participants reconvened in June 1995 at Georgetown University in Washington DC to take stock, share and examine findings and plan for a next round of activity.

Involving academics in the documentation of their own teaching activities and in the review of colleagues' teaching work, puts them in an active role regarding the evaluation of their work

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Disciplinary societies such as the Joint Policy Board for Mathematics, the American Chemical Society and the American Historical Association are also collaborating on the project. Representatives from these professional asso-

ciations are invited to attend each of the project-wide meetings to seek feedback from and provide input to the project activities and plans of the team leaders.

REFOCUSSING WITH RENEWED FUNDING

After two years of activity, the funders approved a second round of funding, taking the project through January 1998. There are four main aims of this second phase of the project.

• Firstly, the scope of the project is expanding. More departments on participating campuses have become involved and new campuses have joined. In particular, four year liberal arts colleges have been invited to participate at this stage. The AAHE reasoned that liberal arts colleges, as institutions that have historically valued teaching, have a special interest in the documentation and discussion of teaching and learning and could contribute experience and perspectives which would enrich the project.

• Secondly, the continuation of the project is designed to pursue promising lines of work - two particularly fruitful "prototypes" - which emerged during the first two years. Working groups have been formed to further develop the idea of course portfolios and pedagogical colloquia, both of which I will explain in more detail in a later section.

• Thirdly, dissemination of project findings has become an integral part of this stage of project work. Support from campus administrators and project coordinators has ensured that project activities are made visible locally. Several edited volumes and short papers have been published and numerous conference sessions and workshops have been presented in national forums. Commitment from disciplinary societies to dedicate portions of conferences and journals to teaching and learning related issues has already contributed to dissemination achievements within the disciplines while the project's second phase places further emphasis on this mode of dissemination by including a small grants program to support discipline-based activities. National Panel Meetings in three disciplines are planned for September - November 1997. Fifteen key people in each of the disciplines will convene to review, grapple with and explore the implications of the work of the project for their fields. By firmly situating work in the disciplinary communities, these activities are expected to extend the impact of the project.

• Finally, this second phase of work will address some of the intellectual and strategic challenges uncovered in the first two years of the project. Some of these issues, including formative-summative debates, the question of standards and a focus on student learning, are discussed in a later section on ongoing challenges. Thus, as the project has matured, participants have begun showcasing the project in public occasions, expanding the circle to include additional departments, refining strategies for the peer review of teaching and sharing their findings with their disciplinary communities.

Footnote:
1. Original participating campuses were: Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, Kent State University, Northwestern University, Stanford University, Syracuse University, Temple University, University of California-Santa Cruz, University of Georgia, University of Michigan, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of North Carolina at Charlotte and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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Part Two of this article will appear in the next edition of HERDSA News. It will discuss some lessons learned from the project, promising directions, and on-going challenges.

A lesson in evaluating

A story by Kate Beattie,
Teaching and Learning Unit,
Southern Cross University

I was gazing vacantly from my office window, rain pouring from a gray sky, when the phone rang. It was a man from the local agricultural institute, writing a pamphlet for farmers.

"I want to know if they'll be able to understand it. A mate here's told me about readability indexes. Flesch and Dale-Chall were the names he mentioned. Can anyone at the uni there tell me how to get hold of something about these ... ... indexes? How do I calculate them? And what do I do *after* I've calculated them?"

Being an evaluative sort of person, I liked the last question best. My inquisitor was street-smart.

I'd been a librarian long before becoming an evaluator. I'd learned two things in the information business. There's always something there if you look long and hard enough. And, the first time round, people never ask what they really need to know.

"Why do you think your farmers might not be able to understand your pamphlet?" I was looking for the real problem.

"Average age of the group we serve is fifty-three," he said. "Limited education, most of them."

I gazed at the gray streaming window and the dripping scrub beyond. No inspiration there. I needed time to think.

"I'll see what I can find out. Ring you shortly." I hung up.

It's a long time since I've read anything about readability formulae. Maybe there's software available now.

I resisted the urge to type 'Flesch' into Netsearch. Even if I found formulas, got hold of his pamphlet and worked out some numbers for him, what would that tell him about his farmers? He still wouldn't know their reading level. Whatever level he chose for his pamphlets, he was unlikely to get it right, shooting in the dark.

Poor bloke. Like the rest of us, he wants a number that tells him he's doing the right thing. Good thing it's not that easy, otherwise I'd be out of a job.

I rang him back and explained the problem. He was disappointed, but could see the point.

"Look," I said, sounding what I hoped was encouraging, "why don't you try your pamphlet out with a small sample of your likely readers? Flash it past them. You might learn a lot about the pamphlet from that." Nothing quite like a pilot study with your intended audience to discover how they react to the product.

He sounded dubious. "I want to get it pretty well right before I show it to farmers."

He didn't like taking risks. "I can understand that." I otherwise ignored his comment—he had to get his hands dirty if he was going to succeed at what is essentially a messy business. "This is a good way to go. I'm talking about a small sample here, just a couple of farmers. See how they take to it. They'll probably be only too willing to help if you explain that you're just testing it out on them."

Silence at his end. It dragged on. What was I doing wrong? Maybe I was asking the impossible. Did he even know any farmers? Perhaps he did and didn't like them much.

Perhaps he just didn't like people. Including me. I don't have to do this, I thought. It's not really part of my job. If he was an academic writing distance education materials or designing software to teach something, it would be a different matter—I'm paid to help those people.

A gutter gurgled somewhere nearby. "Well ...". I fancied I could hear him, above the sluicing outside my window, squirming in his office chair. "As it happens, a coupla blokes are coming in tomorrow. Problems with their dam—the water's not drinkable, nearly killed their dog last week." His laugh was hollow.

"It'll be freshened up after this rain" I commented dryly, surprising myself. My knowledge of agricultural matters was limited.

"I'll get them to look at the pamphlet. Thanks." He hung up before I could warn him.

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The phone rang.

"They took a look at it, and said they liked it. Said it was handy, would help them. They said they needed a pamphlet on the topic. They were pretty keen on it really. Thanks for your advice the other day."

The sun shone on the carpet of honeysuckle on the hillside outside my room and the sweet scent drifted in. I really should have warned him.

"One thing, though. Do you think that's enough? Have I tested the pamphlet enough?" He sounded sceptical. I warmed to his doubts.

"Do *you* think so?"

"Well, I suppose so. They seemed to like it. Pretty chuffed with it. It was good they liked it. There's definitely a need for it ... ..." He trailed off. "I still want to test the readability," he launched in again. Continuing to search for magic numbers to reassure himself.

"Why?"

"I'm still not sure they could read it." He sounded frustrated now.

"Why not?"

"Well, after they looked at the pamphlet and we started to tackle their dam problem, they didn't know what to do about that. The pamphlet explained some of it to them but they didn't seem to have picked it up."

I heard joyful bird song. A butcherbird swooped across the honeysuckle and disappeared into the eucalypts on the hilltop.

"Great! You've spotted the main problem. I meant to warn you yesterday not just to ask them if they liked it. Most people in that type of situation will agree just to be helpful, especially if they think you're a nice bloke or if they need your help. I'd have been very surprised if they'd said anything but that they liked it and would find it useful."

"So? Where do I go from here? Don't I still need to measure its readability?"

"Hang on. What've you learned about your pamphlet so far? It sounds to me as if, firstly, at least a couple of farmers might like the idea of a pamphlet but, secondly, they probably couldn't understand the one you've written. Or, thirdly, perhaps they needed more time to digest it. A fourth option is that maybe they chose to talk their problems out in your office, and would only use pamphlets and written materials if there was noone to talk to. Maybe phone advice would serve them better."

"We already offer phone advice for major problems. They need a pamphlet so they can have it to consult whenever they need to. And it'll be cheaper than a phone call to us."

Suddenly he was airing some underlying assumptions. All at once life wasn't so cut and dried. Dragonflies buzzed, the honeysuckle glittered and another bird fluted. I wasn't sure he needed to write a pamphlet after all.

He interrupted my musings. "I know what you're going to

say. But we've already tested that. Believe it or not, a good percentage of our farmers collect our pamphlets and file them. We did a survey last year. Found out that they like pamphlets on specific problems to call on when the need arises."

I was greatly relieved. At least he knew there was some call for his product and didn't simply believe it was a good idea. This time round, I needn't feel I was devoting effort to something that nobody except he and me was going to care about.

Of course, all good ideas are just ideas at some stage, but this one had already been tested with the market. Further development was warranted.

"So that's a place to start, isn't it?"

"Where?"

"The pamphlets they use now. What have they read and found helpful? Do they ring up and ask for particular pamphlets? Do any of your colleagues report feedback on which pamphlets are useful and, presumably, clear?"

"Right. If they can read those, then I can get an idea of the level of material they're dealing with already." He sounded excited, in a quiet sort of way.

This time I did remember to warn him. "Motivation's a big thing. Their reading level will rise if they're very interested in a topic or perhaps desperate to solve a problem. You're dealing with something quite complex here."

"But I'll get an idea. Won't I?"

"Yes, an indication." I warned him about another thing. "This is just one slant on your problem—we need to look at it from several angles. When you've looked at your pamphlet again in light of what you're about to find out, give me a ring and we'll work out what to do next."

"Okay. Thanks."

What was the pamphlet about, anyway? I didn't really care. He was the content expert, not me.

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His office had a better view than mine, more expansive, down a valley and across a distant plain. The sky looked big from where I was sitting.

He was stepping through what he had done.

"I uncovered a couple of pamphlets that we already knew farmers found helpful. I rewrote mine at the same reading level, as best I could. Then I tried it again with another couple of blokes who dropped in one day, but this time, like

you'd suggested ...", he looked triumphant, "I talked them through it. Asked them questions as they read. It helped me to diagnose what needed improvement. I found out exactly where they needed more explanation. And that the diagram should be simpler.

"I also added an encouraging sentence asking anyone with queries to be ring us. Useful feedback for us." He paused, looking somewhat smug.

"Then we distributed the pamphlet and waited awhile. Only had one phone query. But in a follow-up last week two field officers did a check of several properties on their regular visits, to see whether they were using the method spelled out in the pamphlet. As well, I rang properties that I knew had had a major problem to find out how they were coping. It turned out that sometimes only one local farmer had read the pamphlet but he passed our solution onto his neighbours ... I guess that doesn't matter. The pamphlet's still working—not necessarily the way we expected, but it's working."

He looked at me with a huge grin.

"And, notice, the field officers took care to find out what farmers really *were* doing about the problem, not just what they *said* they were doing. Now we've really got a feel for what's going on out there. *And* I've got some new ideas about building up a network of key contacts among local farmers."

I glanced out at the nearby cattle and the green fields shelving off into the distance. Somehow, he'd forgotten about readability indexes and worked out that observing how his clients used prototypes, really getting in tune with his market, was what was important if he wanted to write instructional pamphlets that would hit home.

Now, if only I could get those academics and courseware designers to be so smart about assessing *their* clients' needs.

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Idea Dossier

No. 1

A column dedicated to raising questions, disputing, provoking and generally annoying readers who have nothing better to do with their time than think. The writer wishes to be known only as Eidos.

Some things really bother me about higher education research, and this is no reflection on my researcher-colleagues, what they investigate, or how they report it. It's the way the *rest of us talk about* research - the discourse we construct.

First, I doubt we have any coherent notion about what *our kind of research is*, why we do it, how to judge it. Second, I think we talk nonsense by using "research findings" to inappropriately justify claims we make - to one another, colleagues, and clients.

I attended a HERDSA branch event - to hear one author of an influential book most of us use and like. After a minor skirmish I kept my cool and settled down to receive the guru's wisdom. Stupidly, I thought anyone who could co-author a great little book might also be able to talk well about education.

Had come to the wrong venue? The presentation was akin to a Buddhist mantra (no offence - I'm of that inclination myself but it wasn't what I had come for). Virtually every claim, every point, was rhetorically clinched by the incantation "Research tells us ..." Alarm bells rang.

I doubt we have any coherent notion about what our kind of research is, why we do it, how to judge it.

Here were people from the natural and social sciences, humanities, diverse professions. What sense can they possibly be making of these claims? What's going through each of their minds when they hear the mantra? What does this guy mean when he says "Research?" Does *he* even know what he means?

Here were all these different disciplinary mindsets trying to make sense of his claims. Does he mean law-like generalisations? Statements of scientific "fact"? Reliable predictions about teaching and learning? Is he invoking more complex, subtle, cautiously qualified understandings of research into the human condition? (Machiavelli gave *fortuna* a role - does this speaker also?) Does he merely

mean he read it somewhere in an (unspecified) journal? Why should *I* believe *his* research?

Call this the problem of research-quackery; the snake-oil syndrome; the "You'll believe anything as long as I make it sound scientific" problem. It's bad enough; the second is tougher still.

How many of us could describe just which of the claims we want to make about teaching, learning or higher education, are the kind that "Research" (however defined) is the *appropriate justification* for? Do some of us hold that *everything* we believe in and try to promote is "proved" by appeal to some kind of "Research"? Or only *some* of the things? Okay - which ones?

If that appears an odd concern, try a concrete case. In what way does (or could) some kind of "research" provide me with justification for whatever I believe "good teaching" or "good student learning" comprise? Personally I think research (as I define it) has little or nothing to tell me about that question; it is mostly irrelevant. Others will certainly differ and want to shoot me down.

Perhaps we should talk about these things sometime? At a conference? Or in our Journal? I think they're centrally important to HERDSA - hard, but absolutely necessary. Do I have any takers out there?

Editor's Note:
Eidos offered *Idea Dossier* as a regular column for HERDSA News, and I very rapidly accepted the offer.

If you are a taker for talking about the ideas *Eidos* has raised, we suggest two routes for you to use: one on paper through letters to HERDSA News, and another electronically through the email listserv of ADSIG, HERDSA's Academic Developers Special Interest Group. The latter can take place much more quickly, and then perhaps be summarised in later editions of the News. Do please join the debate!

We should talk about these things sometime? At a conference? Or in our Journal? I think they're centrally important to HERDSA ~ hard, but absolutely necessary.

The Experience of Academic Conferences: Developing More Than a Couple of Good Ideas?

Lesley Willcoxson
Academic Services Unit, Murdoch University

I may have been insufficiently observant, but if asked I would have to report that the Australian academic conferences I have attended in recent years have not been characterised by the libidinous desires and fractious behaviour of the academics who attended David Lodge's (fictional) conferences in "Small World". Rather, the desires I have heard expressed have been primarily for intellectual engagement with peers working in cognate fields, for debate and sifting of new ideas and practices, and for the opportunity to reflect on and perhaps change one's own ideas and practices as a result of this contact. The behaviour I have observed has been restrained, with personal avoidance rather than confrontation being the more likely response to intellectual disagreement. The comments I have heard after most of these conferences indicate that they generally provided participants with "a couple of good ideas" and the opportunity to meet again colleagues from different parts of the country or world.

While not denying the importance and pleasure of spending time with colleagues/friends away from the usual workplace, I am nevertheless moved by recent experiences to ask whether we are getting as much as we should be getting from conferences.

Clearly, beyond purposes related directly to the intellectual content of the academic programme, conferences fulfil purposes related to maintenance of professional associations, initiation and renewal of contact between members of a discipline or association, the gaining of status and reputation by presenters and hosting institutions, and the defining of personal research territory. But should the primary outcomes of conferences be such that they are largely incidental to the organisation and formal structure of the conference itself?

Is "a couple of good ideas" a sufficient intellectual outcome for the expense of time and money involved in attending a conference? Is the level of debate and discussion sufficient for our growth as researchers and practioners and if not, why not? What can be done to ensure that conferences provide the intellectual stimulation and exploration of possibilities that will really contribute to development - personal, professional and of our academic disciplines?

The concept and conduct of conferences

Although there exist several collections of practical tips for conference organisers, literature related to strategies for enhancing participation in the academic programme conferences is scarce (Andresen, 1981). This is perhaps because the formal programme of most conferences is organised primarily to provide opportunities for reference - "a direction to some source of information" - and it is left to the informal part of the programme to provide true opportunities for conference - "a meeting for consultation or discussion" (Macquarie Dictionary, 1987). Conferences, contrary to their linguistic roots, tend to be fora for the presentation of research findings. In general, this presentation takes place in two forms: in plenary sessions presented by recognised researchers and in paper sessions presented usually by less recognised researchers, most of whom have secured funding for conference attendance through the "invitation" to present a paper.

> *I am moved by recent experiences to ask whether we are getting as much as we should be getting from conferences.*

In the plenary sessions I have attended, most commonly a speaker has lectured the audience for between 50 to 90 minutes, providing little or no opportunity for audience interaction or action and in defiance of all that research tells us about concentration spans and the learning value of non-interactive lecturing (Bligh, 1972; Gibbs, 1982). Audience participation, when it has occurred, has usually been confined to the few minutes allowed for questions at the end of the speech. Paper sessions have mostly mirrored the plenary session format, albeit in a shorter time frame, with delivery of "the paper" followed by questions from the audience. Often, in both plenary and paper sessions, the presenter has either read the written paper verbatim or presented it without extension of the ideas explored in the written paper.

In some conferences alternative workshop or discussion sessions have been offered, but my own attendance at these tells me that most conference participants eschew hands on or discussion sessions in favour of the paper sessions. In conferences where no alternative to discussion sessions have existed, I have been surprised to observe the extent to which participants have adhered to the suggested discussion topics, refusing the invitation to explore issues in line with their needs and volunteering only what they know, not what they don't know or what they need to know. In conferences where workshop sessions have existed, I been surprised to discover the preference of many teachers for discussion of, rather than involvement in, practical learning activities that some of their peers use in the classroom.

In presenting the above descriptions of conference sessions, do not mean to disparage the efforts and intentions of conference organisers and participants. It may be that, unlike colleagues I have talked to, the majority of organisers and participants are quite satisfied with the inputs and outcomes of conferences (even those independent of the inevitable by-product described as "networking"). For those who are not satisfied, however, I offer the following tentative interpretations of and possible solutions to the scenarios I have described above.

Plenaries: preparing the conference ground

Unless it can be demonstrated that academics do not go to conferences to learn something and that the range of their learning styles is totally distinct from that of their students, at the very least it might be expected that conference organisers would organise plenary sessions with reference to what research tells us about the promotion of effective learning in large group contexts. Thus they might, for example, encourage speakers to provide their audience with breaks for clarification, with the opportunity to talk amongst each other to develop questions, or they might ask several speakers to present briefly different perspectives on the one topic. The common model of the opening plenary expert informing rather than engaging the audience or exploring with them unresolved issues initiates a pattern of passivity and distance in conferences which ensures that only the self-assured or foolhardy venture to ask questions for which they do not already have answers.

Papers: a basis for exploration and learning

There appears to be an underlying assumption that conference participants won't or can't read papers and thus conferences are organised and used as opportunities for reading papers rather than pursuing challenges raised in papers. Remedies for this are not hard to develop and have been tested recently with success: publication of the detailed conference programme and papers prior to a conference provides participants with the opportunity to read papers in advance of the sessions they wish to attend; participants will generally read papers in advance if informed that this is a conference expectation; and over time many such statements will create a different culture of expectations in relation to appropriate preparation for conferences.

Currently the papers presented at conferences are often accounts of practice or research rather than of the challenges, questions or uncertainties arising from that practice or research. Were conference organisers to ask presenters to write papers that presented challenges for discussion, on the assumption that session participants would have already read the paper and have a grasp of the background details, we might begin to move away from papers which are re-tellings of a story towards papers and paper sessions which not only tell stories but also throw out genuine problems and challenges.

Were this to happen we would have to organise paper sessions not as presentations with a few questions at the end, but in ways that provided for real discussion and debate and for real explorations of the unknown. We would establish varied presentation/discussion formats and seek to explore and use creatively the experience of session participants, for the purpose of extending everyone's understanding. In such a context of genuine exploration of uncertainties the insights of someone with a general knowledge of an area might prove to be just as valuable to further development of ideas as those of someone with a more circumscribed perspective born of long acquaintance with the area.

The common model of the opening plenary expert informing rather than engaging the audience or exploring with them initiates a pattern of passivity and distance

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Creating a safe space for exploration and learning

For understanding to grow through discussion of real and unresolved problems, however, academic conferences would need to provide all participants with an environment in which it was safe to admit uncertainty, mistakes, or ignorance. Currently, conferences are constructed and perceived as places where people describe only what they know, not what they don't know or what they need to know, and reputations are built upon the provision of answers, often informed by a single theoretical perspective.

In small group work in other teaching/learning contexts, especially when people don't know each other or are predicted to have very different behaviours and levels of understanding, it is common to set ground rules to govern group interactions, protect individuals and create a safe environments for exploration and learning. In conferences, however, little attention is given to the establishment of safe learning environments and I have never seen ground rules for interaction set in any conference I have attended. I have realised through private conversation, however, how little we have learnt and how much we might have learnt had we all felt safe enough to admit publicly our mistakes or uncertainties rather than hide and dismiss them as indications of failure or folly, and had we all had the generosity to provide for and support the learning of others rather than focus upon our own achievements.

Learning from diverse experience and practice

It may be that fear of public disapprobation contributes to presenters' reluctance to present in modes other than paper sessions, even when their papers focus on descriptions of

practice that could be better understood if demonstrated. Certainly in workshops the exposure of the presenter is greater than in paper sessions, for in paper sessions the presenter tells participants what worked and how it worked whereas in workshops participants have a very personal opportunity to experience, question and judge the usefulness of an idea or strategy.

We might begin to move towards paper sessions which not only tell stories but also throw out genuine problems and challenges

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It seems more likely however that the preference for papers over other forms of presentation arises because even in societies such as HERDSA, as well as in many other professional societies, the experience and practical exploration of practice is not valued to the same extent as is the reporting of research. The valuing of research is perhaps to be expected in a comparatively new discipline which is seeking to establish academic credibility or in a funding climate which rewards research over teaching/practice. However, when research and researchers are valued to a greater extent than practice and practitioners in a discipline which derives its purpose and focus from (the investigation of) practice, it is the discipline which ultimately suffers loss. Under conditions of such research hegemony, at conferences good practitioners present their practice as "research" and many opportunities to learn about and experience good practice are lost to those who are good researchers but may perhaps be comparatively unsophisticated practitioners. A more balanced approach to research and practice, a willingness to talk about why we chose to use specific research or practice strategies in preference to others, and more openness to learning and teaching through each of these modes would be likely to benefit not only conference participants but ultimately also their students.

Summary

In summary, I would suggest that through the failure to examine and reform our traditional practices we currently miss many opportunities that conferences might provide for intellectual vibrance, for personal learning, for professional growth and for growth of our academic disciplines.

We could and should be drawing upon research into learning in large and small groups to ensure that the plenaries we construct do provide for learning and that small group sessions are not only varied in format but also provide safe environments in which we can genuinely explore problems, uncertainties and admit ignorance or mistakes.

We should seek to develop paper submission guidelines which conceptualise papers as springboards for higher levels of (collective) exploration at conferences. We could,

and should, ensure that conference papers are read in advance so that we have a basis for exploration and the extension of ideas rather than merely a re-working or re-presentation of what has been written.

In disciplines which have strong practice components we could construct and contribute to conference programmes which provide practitioners with the chance to demonstrate practice rather than present it as research. We could ensure that we have sessions deliberately designed to help researchers learn from practitioners and vice versa, by exploring why they chose certain paths and not others.

Firstly, however, rather than accepting the tradition of conferences, we could begin by asking ourselves and others what we would like conferences to be and to achieve ... and then we could begin to use our own experiences as a basis for learning and change!

We currently miss many opportunities that conferences might provide for intellectual vibrance, for personal learning, for professional growth and for growth of our academic disciplines

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To: HERDSA MEMBERS
**From: Peggy Nightingale, President,
on behalf of the Executive**

NEW CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

On the 15th of December 1996 votes on the new Constitution were counted. A majority of voters were in favour of the changes, so a new Constitution is now in effect. The vote was 125 in favour, 29 against.

At its meeting in late November, the Executive decided to draft new By-Laws which would go into effect if the Constitution were accepted by the members. Below is the complete set of new By-Laws. I have added in italics some brief explanations of the changes and additions. Please note that the new By-Laws will be presented to the membership for approval at the AGM in Adelaide in July; under the new Constitution they are in effect as interim By-Laws until approved at a general meeting.

Copies of the old Constitution and By-Laws and the new Constitution and By-Laws are available from the HERDSA Office.

A consequence of the adoption of a new Constitution and By-Laws is that all current members of the Executive are retiring. (Some are eligible to stand for re-election.) You will shortly be asked to nominate persons to stand for President, Secretary and Treasurer, and for 10 elected positions on the Executive.

It is important to clarify one point. There are no positions reserved for Branch or Special Interest Group representatives at this time. The Executive circulated an idea about doing this prior to the last AGM, but there was not enough time for a meaningful discussion and we have not proceeded along these lines. It will be up to the new Executive to consider whether such representation would be in the best interests of the Society.

Finally, from me personally rather than on behalf of the Executive, I have served the three terms allowed under the old Constitution and so am not eligible to nominate for the Presidency. I want to thank you for supporting the changes we have proposed. I really believe the Society is in a strong position now to move forward with its Strategic Plan. This is a satisfying outcome on which to end my term. It is the result of extraordinary contributions from many members of the Executive, past and present, and of the work of our office staff, Coral Watson and Heather Koch. Thanks are owed to all of them.

BY-LAWS

Revised and adopted with new Constitution
on 15 December 1996

1. MEMBERSHIP
(a) Failure to pay the prescribed fees will automatically terminate membership.

This was l(c).
Old l(a) and l(b) are no longer relevant as dates of an individual's membership year are determined by date of joining, not by the financial year, and as joining no longer requires an application to the Treasurer.

(b) At her/his request and on payment of prescribed fees and any money owed to the Society, any person whose membership has been automatically terminated may be reinstated.

This is a modification of the old l(d) which required Executive approval to reinstate a member and which required payment of a reinstatement fee.

Old l(e) is deleted. Termination of membership for behaviour contrary to the interests of the Society is now covered by Constitution 3c.

(c) (i) The Society shall establish and maintain a register of members of the Society specifying the name and address of each person who is a member of the Society together with the date on which the person became a member, and the date, if any, on which they ceased to be a member.
(ii) The register of members shall be kept at the principal place of administration for the Society and shall be open for inspection, free of charge, by any member of the Society at any reasonable hour.

These were 1(f)(i) and 1(f)(ii) and are required by Incorporation.

2. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

(a) Membership of the Executive Committee is determined by a postal ballot. Each new Executive Committee will elect from its members a returning officer. At least three months before the end of term of the current Executive (normally the date of the AGM), the returning officer will send to all members:
(i) a list of the current Executive members eligible for re-election;
(ii) a call for nominations to be received by a specified date (normally one month from the posting of the call for nominations);
(iii) If the number of nominations exceeds the number of vacancies for any position, the returning officer will, after the close of nominations, forward appropriate voting papers to all members at least one

month before the closing date for the election (normally three weeks prior to the AGM).

(iv) Postal votes must reach the returning officer no later than two weeks after the closing date for the election and bear a date-mark prior to midnight on the closing date. Votes received after this time or bearing a later date-mark will be ineligible.

The old 2 (a) specified an election at the AGM and made provision for postal voting if an individual requested a ballot paper. The election will be by postal ballot now with no additional vote at the AGM. The schedule for an election will be normally determined by the date of an AGM and requires the returning officer to call for nominations 3 months before the AGM, to allow one month for nominations to be received, to get out the voting papers a week later, to allow one month after posting the voting papers to the close of the election, to allow a further two weeks to receive votes. He/she will then have a week to count votes prior to the AGM.

(b) Nominations must be made in writing to the returning officer by the due date. All nominations must have a proposer, a seconder and be agreed to by the nominees in writing. The proposer, seconder and nominee must all be financial members of the Society.

(c) The president shall appoint a Teller's Committee comprising the returning officer plus two or more members to count the ballots.

No change

(d) In the event of tied votes, the name of the person elected will be determined by lot by the returning officer.

Old 2(d) (i) and 2(d)(ii) specified that as many as 4 people could be tied and all declared elected; above 4 required a determination of the position by lot.

3. FINANCES

(a) All funds received by the Society shall be paid into Society accounts. The Society is to maintain an account or accounts at a bank, credit union or building society and/or similar financial institutions that are properly authorised under appropriate State or Federal legislation.

The original 3(a) specified that all funds went into one General Account. Our affairs are now more complicated and several accounts are maintained to receive funds from different sources.

(b) Funds of the Society may be invested with the approval of the Executive.

The approval used to be granted by President, Treasurer and at least five other elected members of the Executive.

(c) A copy of the budget as recommended by the Executive Committee shall be distributed at or before the Annual General Meeting for discussion and approval at that Meeting.

No change

4. POSTAL VOTES ON SOCIETY BUSINESS

(a) (i) At any general meeting the members present may refer by majority decision any of the business to the membership as a whole by way of a postal vote. In such cases a resume of the discussion at the general meeting shall be included with all materials sent to members for a vote. A motion requesting a postal vote is subsidiary and may be made and voted on while a principal motion is pending.

(ii) In the event of such a postal vote being decided upon, the ballot paper will be distributed within one month; the closing date for voting will be no more than one month after the distribution of ballot papers; two weeks shall be allowed for the receipt of votes which must bear a date-mark no later than midnight on the closing date for voting. Votes received after this time shall be ineligible. The result shall be reported to members within two weeks of the closing date.

The principles of the old 4(a) and (b) are unchanged, allowing business to be referred to the membership as a whole for a vote, rather than having controversial decisions taken at a meeting. There is also a guarantee that discussion at the meeting will be reported to all members. In the original By-Laws it was assumed that meetings were equivalent to the Conference, this is no longer true, so some re-wording was necessary.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

(a) Report of the Annual General Meeting.
   A report of the Annual General Meeting shall be submitted to members within six months of any AGM.

The phrase, "with a summary of any other material concerning the program of the Society" was deleted as we did not know what it was intended to mean. The President's report covers the activities of the Society and is automatically in the AGM Minutes.

(b) Common Seal
   (i) The common seal of the association shall be kept in the custody of the secretary.
   (ii) The common seal shall not be affixed to any instrument except by the authority of the Executive and the affixing of the common seal shall be attested by the signatures either of two members of the Executive, or of one member of the Executive and the secretary, or of one person nominated by

the Executive and the secretary.

No change in principle - allows for situation where executive members are not geographically close to each other by allowing executive to nominate a co-signatory.

(c) Custody of Books, etc

Except as otherwise provided by these rules, the secretary and/or the treasurer shall keep in his or her custody or under his or her control all records, books and other documents relating to the Society.

No change in principle - specifying secretary and treasurer's responsibility rather than "public officer" as there has been confusion about who is public officer.

(d Inspection of Books, etc.

The records, books and other documents of the association shall be open to inspection, free of charge, by a member of the association at any reasonable hour.

No change

6. BRANCHES AND INTEREST GROUPS

(a) The Executive shall have the power to establish a branch or an interest group of the Society.
(b) All members of a branch or an interest group must be financial members of the Society.
(c) A branch or an interest group may conduct such activities as are in accordance with the constitution and by-laws of the Society.
(d) A branch or an interest group shall regularly report on its activities to its members and the Executive.
(e) The Executive shall have power to dissolve a branch or an interest group at any time. In that event, all assets held by the branch or interest group shall be handed over to the Executive.
(f) The Executive shall report to the next AGM, for ratification, any action taken in accordance with (a) and (e) above.

The original 6 was a transition By-Law enabling a specific change to the old Constitution to be effected.

The original 7 (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f) become 6 (a - f) with the only change being the addition of the words "or an Interest Group" wherever the word "branch" appears. There were no SIGs at the time the By-Laws were last revised.

7. COOPTION TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERSHIP

When deciding how to fill coopted positions on the Executive, the Executive should take into account achieving a balanced representation of interests and groups within the Society.

This is a new By-Law. The principle was covered in the old

Constitution but with too many specifications to be workable in present context.

8. TRANSITION BY-LAW

This By-Law shall have effect for the year immediately after adoption of a new Constitution for the Society in December 1996.

For the first election under the new Constitution:
(a) the election will be held so that the new Executive may take office at the AGM to be held in July 1997;
(b) all current members of the Executive will retire;
(c) nominations for 10 elected members of the Executive will be received from the membership at large;
(d) any member of the current Executive who would have been eligible for re-election under the old constitution will remain eligible for nomination;
(e) if a member of the current Executive is re-elected, this term of office will be deemed their first for purposes of determining future eligibility for nomination.

This is obviously a new By-Law enabling us to put into effect the new Constitution. The final section (e) is for the sake of tidiness as we move from staggered turn-overs and annual elections to all positions being vacant every second year. We won't have to count half-terms, etc.

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In 1996 our theme was "Scholarship", with three well attended dinner and discussion seminars:
1. *Scholarship in Higher Education - Three partial views*
2. *Scholarship and Leadership*
3. *Scholarship in Practice*

At the last seminar, Graham Webb presented a plenary on *Getting Published: What do YOU do?* and Rod McKay, Alison Viskovic and Bill Jelks presented workshops entitled, in order: *Creating an Environment which Values Scholarship*; *The Little Department that Roared*; and *Boyer's Model of Scholarship: Providing a focus for classroom research.*

In addition we have had a "Pizza and Wine" evening with Prof. Bob Menges of North Western University in Chicago.

A friendly reminder: The 1998 HERDSA Conference will be held in Auckland

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An email conference on Evaluation in University Teaching and learning attracted 99 subscribers 20 of whom were international. The ACT HERDSA branch organised this in conjunction with the Centre for Educational Methods and Academic Development, ANU. Subscribers to the conference responded directly or indirectly to a notice posted on the HERDSA network. Six papers were distributed in anticipation of the three scheduled days of discussion. On the third day, requests were made for extra discussion time. The second round of discussions was scheduled for late November. Authors have been invited to take the discussion into account when/if revising their papers, and to consider re-submitting their revised papers for electronic refereed publication through CEDAM.

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The South Australian branch is organising the annual HERDSA conference to be held in Adelaide in July 1997 - see details elsewhere in this News.

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The year of 1996 saw an interesting program:
1. Seminar on *Reflections on the Links between Higher Education Research and Australia's Innovation System.* Summary: to rectify matters internally the Australian HE sector would need to address some obvious problems and questions:
- Does our internal and international competition with other Australian universities and centres inhibit the most effective achievement of our national goals?
- How can we develop greater synergy between industry, teaching and research?
- Generally how can the Australian higher education sector show greater coordination in its contribution to the achievement of national goals?
- How can our links with industry be increased within teaching and research?
- How can we use the small internal pool of research and teaching funds to promote a more effective sector within the global economy?

2. A Post Federal Government Budget Analysis seminar where members vigorously participated in an insightful and informative presentation.

3. Seminar on *Research Supervision of Students from Non English Speaking Backgrounds.* Attendees included

language and support services personnel, supervisors and potential supervisors.

4. The annual conference *Doing More with Less in Higher Education: Rigour Mortis?* was held in November - presentations, papers and discussions were knowledgeable, enthusiastic and creative.

A Victorian branch homepage is being developed and can be accessed through the HERDSA homepage: http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/education/herdsa/

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New South Wales, Tasmania, and Northern Territory do not currently have HERDSA Branches.

Doing More With Less in Higher Education - Victorian Style
A conference report by
Beatrice Hamilton,
Australian Catholic University, Ballarat

The 1996 Annual Conference the Victorian Branch of HERDSA was held at Tyabb on the 24th - 26th of November. The attendance perhaps reflected the fact that many staff are having to do more with less as fewer staff were in attendance than any of the previous five annual converences. A group of 25 professional development and teaching staff from all of Victorian universities and one New South Wales University gathered for two and a half days to grapple with the issues and answer the only slightly tongue-in-cheek conference theme, Doing More With Less in Higher Education: Rigour Mortis. Rigour mortis was definitely not present, however, as lively discussion ensued in both the formal and informal settings, helium balloons were released to lift our spirits, and collegiality strengthened.

The conference began with a discussion of the problems which staff were encountering, and the general consensus was that staff are finding life harder in academe now than ten, five, or even two years ago. (The front page article in The Australian on 31-1-97 entitled Academics see dark days for unis comes as no surprise to us.) The problems listed included:

• increased workloads, including the increased number of students per staff member, demands created by NESB students, the need to teach in new areas, quantity and quality expectations and conflicting reasearch and teaching expectations;
• infrastructure changes, including moving campus, lack of clarity of new staff roles, funding scarcity, and subsequent job insecurity;
• changes in student populations, including lack of purpose/motivation, students holding part-time jobs and the current decline in enrolments; and
• inadequate decision making, including lack of planning, decision-making based on economic factors alone, lack of leadership and slow reponse by universities to the need for change.

There was a consensus that morale has declined markedly in higher education, and this decline has accelerated proportionally to the rapidity of changes in the last few years. Many individuals felt disillusionment with the apparent lack of focus on the purpose of higher education.

A number of sessions followed, giving examples of how people were responding to the changes. Some excellent examples of positive reponses to various problem areas were shared, while brain storming sessions allowed for the development of other possible solutions.

The conference ended with a discussion in response to the question, Where do we go from here? Generally staff felt that academics will be more effective and better able to cope with the changes if they are both consulted on a more regular basis and better informed as to on-going events. With virtually every staff member stating that they had had an increase in workload and found themselves generally working many evenings and weekends, it was felt that the limits had already been reached. It ws felt there was a need to carefully redefine staff roles in terms of teacher, advisor, researcher and so on. Without such definitions it was seen as almost impossible to state what a reasonable workload was or to state during an appraisal whether staff were functioning adequately. The appraisal process was viewed as needing much better procedures and documentation and needed to be carried out from the bottom up as well as from the top down.

The value of the various roles of academics were also discussed, and one point highlighted was the need to reestablish self-esteem and recognition for teaching, not as a sideline to research, but as a vital to the purpose of the university. Despite various awards for recognition of good teaching, it was still seen to take second place to research rather than an equal but different position.

Conference attendees agreed that it was a successful conference, and because of its size there was increased opportunity for extended discussion. It was agreed that it was important to continue the discussion of these issues, and not lose sight of the need to aim for the real purpose of higher education.

HERDSA Victoria Branch Report

This active Branch not only sent the Conference Report on page 18, but also this planning paper. The editor would like to receive similar material from other Branches in 1997!

At the end of 1996 the HERDSA Victoria Branch executive met to discuss the future directions of the branch. We discussed the directions in the context of the purpose of the branch, the strategic plan for implementing the purpose and the role of the executive. As a result of that meeting the executive has formally stated the current branch purpose, strategic plan and role of the executive. We welcome feedback on the documentation below and we are keen to liaise with other groups where appropriate.

HERDSA Victoria Branch Planning Document
Statement of values

We, the 1996/7 executive, value working collegially and collaboratively within a supportive, non-threatening environment. We strive to be proactive, to provide high quality support and to promote scholarship and leadership by knowing the needs of members, empowering others to action, providing opportunities, facilitating communication within and between groups, and providing good stewardship for the branch.

Purpose

The overarching purpose of the HERDSA Victoria Branch is to encourage constructive participation in research and development of teaching and learning within higher education in Victoria.

While supporting the framework of the HERDSA purpose, goals and aims, the HERDSA Victoria Branch specifically aims to:

1) Contribute to the national HERDSA agenda;
2) Foster interaction between relevant interest groups in the Victorian higher education and associated sectors; and
3) Be responsive to the professional development needs of individual HERDSA Victoria Branch members.

Strategies

1) To contribute to the national HERDSA agenda
   a. encourage research and publications;
   b. make representation via Victorian members of Executive Committee to the HERDSA national executive and SIGs;
   c. continue to recruit members;
   d. seek recognition of significant contribution to Victorian higher education; and
   e. conduct a programme of relevant activities.
2) To foster interaction between relevant interest groups in the Victorian higher education and associated sectors

a. optimise use of email, workshops, web page, face to face and teleconference meetings, seminars, and conferences;
   b. contribute to newsletters of HERDSA, Learning and Language SIG, and others;
   c. network within and among institutions; and
   d. use publicity and invitations.
3) To be responsive to the professional development needs of individual HERDSA Victoria Branch members
   a. provide opportunities for members to indicate needs;
   b. implement the strategies identified in 2);
   c. draw on experience from our own networks;
   d. liaise with other groups.

Role of the executive

1) Annually monitor and revise as appropriate the statement of values, purpose statement, strategic plan and role of executive of the branch, in consultation with Branch members.
2) Meet at least quarterly to implement the Branch's purpose and strategic plan.
3) Fulfil the requirements of the HERDSA Branch and SIG Portfolio (eg AGM, balanced and audited budget, reports etc).
4) Liaise with other HERDSA branches and SIGs.
5) Document the process of implementing the statement of values, purpose, strategic Plan and make time to reflect upon it.

If you wish to make comment on any of the above, or on our WWW site:
http://www.ozemail.com.au/~amallett/herdsa/HomePage.htm
please contact the HERDSA Victoria Branch President, Di Thompson (diana@deakin.edu.au).

HERDSA Conference   8 - 11 July 1997
ADVANCING INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

**• Do you have a special interest
In Globalisation and
Higher Education?**

**• Do you enjoy energetic debate on
issues concerning International
Perspectives in Higher Education?**

**• Are you a creative thinker /
researcher in this field?**

**If so...
the HERDSA 1997 Conference
ADVANCING INTERNATIONAL
PERSPECTIVES,
at Adelaide , South Australia
from 8 - 11 July, is for YOU!**

• Cut your debating teeth on the first night symposium, "Globalisation and Higher Education".

• Sink them in deeper as the week goes on, chewing over everything from addressing assessment and accreditation, collaborative relationships, curriculum development, cross-cultural issues, ethics, evaluation of teaching, inclusive teaching approaches, indigenous issues, learning and teaching support, marketing and sponsorship, institutional, post graduate education, program evaluation, and quality assurance to student and staff experience and technologies for flexible learning.

• Feast your mind on a banquet of culturally diverse, challenging, disturbing, stimulating and entertaining papers, roundtable discussions, experiential workshops, large group symposiums (for arguments' sake!) and poster sessions which will give you the latest in research and creative thinking innovations.

• Meet like minded people and join a special interest group on the first day.

• Ponder the issues raised by keynote speakers from Indonesia, the United Kingdom and Australia, then take the opportunity to ride on the famous Bay Tram!
• All academics and post graduate students focusing on relevant specific issues in areas of particular

needs of special interest groups or countries, are encouraged to develop and send symposium proposals and conference scholarship applications.

• Email proposals to: herdsa97@flinders.edu.au by February 28.

• Applications for student scholarships close on March 29. Send to:
Associate Professor Keith Trigwell,
Centre for Learning and Teaching,
University of Technology, Sydney, NSW 2007
Tel. +61 - 2 - 93302200, Fax +61 - 2 - 93302217,
email clt@uts.edu.au

Register Early and Save!
Until May 2 1997, registration fees are:
HERDSA members $395,
Non-members $480 (includes one year HERDSA membership),
Students $195.
After May 2, fees increase to:
HERDSA members $445,
Non members $530, Students $220.

• Fees cover attendance at all sessions, the Welcome Reception on Tuesday July 8, breakfast on Wednesday July 9, Conference Dinner on Thursday July 10, lunch on Friday July 11, all morning and afternoon teas, and all printed conference material. Great value for money.

• The conference is to be held in the Stamford Grand Hotel, Glenelg, Adelaide.

• The 1997 Conference of the Australasian Higher Education Staff Developers (AHED) is also in Adelaide at Glenelg, 6 - 8 July, from Sunday afternoon to Tuesday evening.

**For updated information, access the
HERDSA conference website at:
http://www.roma.unisa.edu.au/herdsa97**

**Registration forms & information from
the conference administrative service:
ACTS, GPO Box 2200, Canberra,
ACT 2601, Australia:
Fax: + 61 06 257 3256**

REVIEW: The Research Student's Guide to Success

by Pat Cryer, Open University Press, UK, 1996.
Distributed by Allen and Unwin,
Box 8500 St Leonards, NSW 2065
Fax +61 - 2 - 9906 2218.
Price A$37.95 Paperback

Dr Pat Cryer, University College London, has conducted workshops with postgraduate students in several countries, including Australia, for several years now. This book is a distillation of the work strategies and study skills she had garnered from students themselves, and her own hard-won experience as a later-age postgraduate.

It is a welcome addition to the sparse commercially-available literature on research study, and joins the justly-praised Phillips and Pugh classic, *How to Get a PhD*, also Open University Press.

The book should be read by those about to embark on postgraduate study, but will be of significant benefit to students already enrolled, as it covers the various stages and potential problem areas of research study, including extremely useful sections on report writing and keeping records of work, meetings and literature references throughout candidature. Since the stages / problems are grouped in chapters, the book can be dipped into as needed, rather than read from cover to cover.

Among the useful tips for postgrads are the advice to start at the beginning of a semester so as to be able to take advantage of any induction / training programs offered by the enrolling institution: for obvious efficiency reasons universities can rarely offer such courses oin demand. Cryer suggest using pre-semester time to brush up or acquire technical skills that will be needed such as typing or spreadsheet manipulation. Eminently sensible - and so often students delay their projects while they learn the necessary software programs. (Of course this means thinking forward about what programs will be needed for the project.)

Although there are some Australian references, the book derives primarily from the UK situation, particularly in reference to funding and economic survival tips. And although there is no avoidance of the difficulties students may face with, say, inadequate institutional facilities, less-than-satisfactory supervision, clashes between supervisors, etc, there is a tendence to gloss over these difficulties rather than provide extensive advice on how to handle such matters. I suspect that difficulties occur more often than Cryer is prepared to acknowledge, and I'm sure that this is not merely an Australian phenomenon in supervision.

further, the focus here is definitely on the full-time research student, with advice for those who **must** work that they should not let work 'interfere' with the research. In Australia at least postgraduate research in increasingly undertaken by mature-age students who are in employment, often full-time, and retaining that employment is paramount - it will inevitably impair students' ability to focus exclusively on their research. Accommodating strategies might include using flexitime, early rises before the family, getting and Internet connection at home, and trying for short periods of unpaid leave if the employer is sympathetic.

Where Cryer has asserted some opinion strongly (e.g. her belief that co-supervision is not desirable, or that brainstormong is not a particularly useful technique for research students) it would have been preferable to have some reasons given for the belief. Some universities, for example, have deliberately adopted co-supervision as a model, and have sound arguments for their decision.

Notwithstanding these quibbles, this book is highly recommended for postgraduate students. Supervisors would do well to obtain a copy to give to prospective students and to order copies for their libraries and departmental collections. The price mat deter students from purchasing a personal copy, but the text is certainly a worthwhile investment over the period of candidature. I particularly like the reminder that it's important to recognise when it's time to complete the research and get on with the next stage of life!

Reviewed by Yoni Ryan
Academic Staff Development Unit,
Queensland University of Technology,
Box 2434, Brisbane, Queensland 4001.

Research in progress:

Project title:
Processes and practices of academic acculturation

Researchers:
Dr Peter Ninnes, Ms Shoba Kalos, Ms Claire Aitchison (Student Services Division, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur)

Abstract:
Differences in learning or knowledge acquisition styles across cultures are well documented, although recent work by Biggs and others has challenged many of the stereotypes of learning styles among students from various cultural groups. Despite the fact that changes in learning/ knowledge acquisition styles over time among international students have been documented, there has been little examination of the processes by which this occurs nor of the perspectives of the students themselves about the necessity or desirability of change. Within the context of

international students in Australian universities, this project examines the Foucaultian concept of the "technologies of knowledge"; that is, the means by which certain forms and aspects of knowledge become valued. In particular, the project uses case studies of seven Master of Business Administration (International Business) students from India to examine:

1) participants' perspectives on university learning in their home country and in their country of sojourn;
2) if, how and why learning / knowledge acquisition styles change over the duration of the participants' enrolment in the Australian institution.

As a result of the research it is expected that a greater understanding will be gained of:

1) the processes by which learning/ knowledge acquisition changes; and
2) the nature of students' perspectives on the applicablity or otherwise in their new learning environment of learning styles honed during their undergraduate course in their home country.

Key Words:
Learning Styles; Knowledge Acquisition; International Students; India.

Name and Address for Correspondence:
Dr Peter Ninnes, Learning Development Centre, Student Services Division, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur PO Box 555, Campbelltown NSW 2560

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to HERDSA who have joined since September 1996:

Susie O'Brien	University of Queensland (student)
Kate Diethelm	University of Queensland
Bob Ross	Queensland
Lorraine Parker	University of Auckland
Peter Standen	Edith Cowan University
Ann Farrell	QUT
Janette Griffin	UTS
Lesley Parker	Curtin University of Technology
John Glass	RMIT
Betty Rohlehr	University of West Indies
Jack Frawley	University of Western Sydney, Nepean
Frank Archer	Victoria
Eileen Thompson	Edith Cowan University
David Cook	University of Melbourne
Jill Slay	University of South Australia
Anita Raspovic	La Trobe University
Debra Tedman	University of South Australia
Deborah Churchman	University of South Australia

John Ferris	TAFE Queensland
Angus Morrison-Saunders	University of Notre Dame
Alison Brown	University of Newcastle
Henk Eijkman	TAFE NSW
Patricia Cartwright	Australian Catholic Uni, Ballarat
Pauline Bunce	University of Malaysia
Mary Harvie	University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury
Linda Worrall-Carter	La Trobe University (student)
Linda Leach	Wellington Polytechnic
Suzanne Woolford	Australian Catholic University
Joan Smith	Australian Catholic University
Celina Pascoe	University of Canberra
John Reynolds	Auckland Institute of Technology
Jenny Wilkinson	Charles Sturt University
Christine Asmar	University of Sydney
Margaret Carmody	Australian Catholic University
Barbara Wake	University of Adelaide
Jenny Gardner	University of Tasmania
Anne-Marie Forbes	University of Queensland
Rob Wellard	Royal Aust College of General Practitioners
Andrew Scown	University of Melbourne
Sally Farrington	University of Sydney
Maureen Tam	Lingnan College, Hong Kong
Elizabeth Powell	Australian Catholic University
Gillian Best	Victoria University of Technology
Petrus Zeegers	Flinders University of SA
William Rifkin	University of Wollongong
Dai Hounsell	University of Edinburgh
Jenny Housell	University of Edinburgh
Margaret James	Manukau Institute of Technology
Eileen Piggot-Irvine	UNITEC, New Zealand
Anthony Coates	University of Queensland

News from the Executive

PROMOTING HERDSA

At their last meeting in November, Exec members brainstormed ideas for promoting HERDSA more widely. Our ideas are shown on the next page - and we'd really like to receive members' comments and suggestions arising from these. You know your membership fees have risen, so this is your chance as an individual member to give us some feedback - if you want to see changes we need ideas from YOU. Increasing HERDSA's visibility and membership can help to provide more services while keeping membership costs down.

Please email your comments to:
herdsa.office@anu.edu.au

EXEC'S BRAINSTORM:

PROMOTING MEMBERSHIP
Through
• academic development units (we have sent them brochures & publicity lists, conference registrations, etc - but do we need to have a more personal / interesting approach?
• staff inductions
• WWW (http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/education/herdsa) - HERDSA's Internet image and contact - we have a good presentation, but need continually updated good information, photos, events, members profile, contacts to convenors and office, etc
• letters to institutions - target small numbers
• ICED, IJAD

To recipients of
* internal university grants (members need to tell us who)
* staff workshops (you need to tell us when something is happening)
* awards (you need to tell us who)
* CAUT grantees - target them particularly

Other target groups
* TAFE
* target countries: eg Austria, Germany
* DVC s, Teaching and Learning
* specific groups, eg indigenous groups
* contact and profile teaching excellence winners, eg National fellows, and
invite them to join HERDSA
* graduate certificate (etc) students - advertise student rates
* particular countries, by year (eg "the year of India")

Use
• posters - bright, small, A$?
• increase social activities eg dinners
• merchandising - fridge magnets, bookmarks ,T shirts, wine glasses, wine
• templates for overheads - to be used by branches & states
• certificate of membership
• rewards for bringing in new members - eg prize of free one year membership for attracting five new members?
• advertise through university newspapers
• HERDSA lecture series
• video promo
• Powerpoint files made available to branches, presenters, etc
• HERDSA tablecloth and banner for special occasions
• co-membership with other associations - reduce membership fees - needs some some investigation
• HERDSA sports day

• providing old copies of News and journal to SIGs - free samples for membership promos
• old copies of conference proceedings - sell, use as gifts / prizes / donations to groups that need books, eg Fiji, then publicise this. Ideas here, please!
• promotional display with pictures, at our and other conferences
• HERDSA recipe book

Executive
* distribute membership brochures & publications lists to the exec for promo
* brochures to colleagues and students
* promo/recruitment pack to hand out

HERDSA Office
* lapsed members - follow up and why don t rejoin
* advertisements in magazines and journals
* revamp brochures
* clarify advantages of HERDSA

Information packs
• *membership drive pack*
• *increase overseas branches through promo packs, WWW, conferences being advertised overseas, use especially 97 conference theme, hand out members packs, including international numbers list*

Other
• Grant scheme
• Get into Wednesday Australian/campus review - your ideas please

Our corporate image
* revamp the covers of Green & Gold Guides
* survey - what do people want?
* lighten up the News, eg get it "Vanstoned" (you'll need to explain this to the new NZ editor!)
* request news from local and overseas members
* post-graduate competition
* profile members' achievements

Promoting HERDSA publications
• Green and Gold Guides, conference proceedings.
• Use the WWW
• through advertisements in magazines and journals
• profile our other publications in the News
• get academic development units each to have a set of publications in stock
• colorful covers
• increase librarians subscription
• members as Uni to subscribe

That's our starter list - now it's up to you to add to it, or tell us which things you think we should work on.

Conferences

Twenty-fourth Annual HERDSA Conference

Theme   Advancing International Perspectives
Place: Adelaide
Date: 8 - 11 July 1997
Information   ACTS, GPO Box 2200, Canberra 2601, Australia   Tel. +61 - 6 - 2573299.   Fax +61 - 6 - 257 3256
                WWW: http://www.roma.unisa.edu.au/herdsa97

22nd International Conference in Improving University Teaching

Theme: Technology in Learning and Teaching
Place   Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Date   21 - 24 July 1997
Information   Improving University Teaching, University of Maryland University College, 2252 Student and Faculty
                Services Centre, University Boulevard at Adelphi Rd, College Park, Maryland 20742-1659, USA.
                Fax: 301 - 085 - 7226; email: iut@umuc.umd.edu   WWW: http://www.umuc.edu/iut

The Postgraduate Experience 1997

Theme   Approach, Access and Management
Place   Capetown, South Africa
Date   4 - 5 December 1997
Information   Deborah McTeer, Postgraduate conference Division, UCT Medical School, Observatory 7925.
                Tel: 021 - 448 6348; Fax: 021 - 448 6263; email: deborah@medicine.uct.ac.za

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ABSTRACTS

This section of HERDSA News is missing at present! The News Editor is looking for someone to become HERDSA Abstracts Editor. If your job already involves keeping up to date with this literature, why not share your findings with HERDSA members? Please do consider offering to help, or suggest someone else!

HERDSA 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 (SRHE) in their quarterly publication *Research into Higher Education Abstracts.*

The Abstracts attempt a coverage of current English-language publications in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Hong Kong. Publications describing research, teaching, administration, staff and students in tertiary education are abstracted.

The group headings used include:
General; Systems and Institutions; Teaching and Learning; Information Networks, Students: General; Student Selection and Performance; Students: Careers and Employment; Staff;Continuing Education; Open and Distance Education; Costs; Evaluation; Research; Finance.

> **If you are interested in becoming the Abstracts Editor, please email the News Editor: a.viskovic@wnp.ac.nz**

Only one *Research in Progress* report reached the HERDSA Office for this edition of the News. We hope more people will offer their listings for the next edition - see details below.

Research in Progress

If you are doing research which other HERDSA members should know about, you are invited to send information about your research to:
   coral.watson@anu.edu.au
or: Coral Watson, HERDSA Office, PO Box 516, Jamison, ACT 2614.

Please use the following headings:
Title of project
Name(s) of researcher(s)
Funding body (if appropriate)
Short description of project (max 250 words)
Key words
Name and address for correspondence.

Abstracts may be forwarded at any time of the year. However the deadline for the next issue of HERDSA News is **21 April 1997.**