Welcome to Australian Educational Computing Vol 24 No 2. The editorial team would like to apologize for the late publication of this edition (Vol 24 No 2 was to be published in December 2009). Our excuse is that we have been busy preparing for ACEC2010 in Melbourne in April. This event has been two years in the planning and it is shaping up as a fantastic opportunity to not only visit Melbourne in Autumn, but to learn about the fantastic work of educators across the country and internationally. A highlight for me will be Adam Elliott. I am anticipating that it will be a joy to hear his story and learn more about how he goes about his work. You may be interested to know the thinking behind choosing Adam for this conference. The program committee wanted a keynote who did not focus on the technology per se, but for whom the technology was ubiquitous in his/her work or creative pursuit. For me, one of the main aims of ICT in education, is for learners to use digital technologies as an extension of their thinking in order to solve all sorts of problems – a bit like a mechanic uses as spanner as an extension of their arm. So the focus is not on ‘teaching’ the technology as an added extra but helping the learner to develop an array digital thinking tools that can be called upon to solve more and more complex problems. In the industrial economy it is plant and equipment that drives the engine, in the knowledge economy it is the clever and innovative use of ICTs. In Adam’s case (and we did think about other artists, performers, professionals), we have a great example of someone where the technology is a means to an end, and, he’s a Melbourne boy who just happens to have won an Oscar!

While I am on the conference theme I would like to thank all of the generous people around the country, and a few internationals, who assisted with the review of conference papers. This work is voluntary – as is the editorial and reviewing work for this journal, and your time, effort, and dedication to task is greatly appreciated.

The National Curriculum

In March I attended a National Curriculum Symposium organized by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education just prior to the release of National Curriculum drafts. Speakers included Robin Alexander, Director, Cambridge Primary Review; Joseph Lo Bianco, President, Australian Academy of Humanities; Barry McGaw, AO Chair, ACARA; and many of the lead writers of the national curriculum. The body responsible for the development of the national curriculum is ACARA. The symposium was an opportunity to feedback to ACARA our first reactions to the drafts. However delegates were not given an opportunity to see the documents, only to hear short presentations from key people involved in the writing. There was certainly robust debate around issues such as access and equity, building teacher (and preservice teacher) capacity, assessment, and the apparent lack of trans-disciplinary curriculum design.

The document guiding the design of the national curriculum is ACARA’s Curriculum Design Paper. ICT is listed under “General Capabilities” and the paper states: Information and communication technologies (ICT) skills and understanding are required for all learning areas. Some aspects of ICT competence are as much about information management as about the use of technology, so an important aspect of competence is the ability to evaluate the source, reliability, accuracy and validity of information that abounds in cyberspace. New digital technologies are used in creative and artistic pursuits, and in civic and political activities. These opportunities for private and public expression, unimaginable half a generation ago, will make up important elements of the national curriculum. (ACARA 2009, p13)

This does not fill me with confidence that ACARA will deliver a 21st century curriculum that meets the needs of 21st century learners. At ACEC2010, and at the Leadership Forum I am sure the National Curriculum and the place of ICT will be a hot topic of debate – why not join us and have your say.

The Cambridge Primary Review

The first keynote speaker at the National Curriculum symposium was Robin Alexander, Director, the Cambridge Primary Review. The Cambridge Review is an independent review into the condition and future of primary education in England - the first such review since the 1967 Plowden report. This is a comprehensive report of high quality and scholarly excellence. Many of its findings and recommendations (for both policy and practice) will resonant in Australia. A succinct summary of the report’s findings and recommendations can be found at the website. The report places ICT in the Language, oracy and literacy domain and rejects the notion that ICT should be established a separate core of skills, knowledge and understandings. The Review’s reasons for this is quite interesting (see pp 24-25 of the summary). I highly recommend reading the report (the Readers Digest version at least) it presents an interesting and compelling framework for organising teaching and learning in the primary years.

Vale Dr Glen Russell

We would like to acknowledge the work of Dr Glenn Russell, Monash University, Faculty of Education academic, colleague, AEC Editorial Board member, and friend, who passed away peacefully on Aug 31, 2009. Glenn had been battling illness for quite a number of years but he was always positive, and maintained his sense of humour and commitment to his students and his scholarship. Glenn made valuable contributions to national and international knowledge in the area of ICT in Education. He taught in country and suburban schools in Victoria for nearly twenty years before becoming foundation lecturer in Computer Education at Griffith University, where he developed undergraduate and graduate courses. He joined the Faculty of Education at Monash University in 1999. He had an international reputation in virtual schoolg, cyberspace, and educational uses of hypertext. In recent years his research also included ethical uses of information and communications technology in school education, educational futures in globalised environments, and responsibilities in online schools.

Again, thanks Donna, Nick, Michelle, Suzanne, and reviewers.

Geoff (ed)