Editorial

Welcome to Volume 25 No 2 of Australian Educational Computing - a special themed edition highlighting the research work of SiMERR – The National Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology, and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia, and its associated hubs. SiMERR’s vision is to work with rural and regional communities to achieve improved educational outcomes for all students in the areas of Science, ICT and Mathematics. Its mission is to support student achievement and enhance teacher growth through research, pre-service, in-service, community and overseas programs by working collaboratively with communities, educational authorities, professional associations and industry groups to develop solutions to the problems faced by teachers, particularly those who are professionally isolated. SiMERR was established in 2004 at the University of New England, and was built on the expertise and professional reputation of the Centre for Cognition Research in Learning and Teaching (CriLT) within UNE’s School of Education. Its current director is Professor John Pegg, associate directors are Assoc Professor Lorraine Graham, Dr Chris Reading and Dr Terry Lyons.

With the assistance of Chris Reading, the idea of this special issue was to identify a SiMERR venture in as many states as possible and ask project coordinators to write about the project. As a result Chris Reading presents a national project where ICT is used to connect teachers in remote locations and assist with developing a sense of community. From Queensland, Neil Anderson and Lyn Courtney present quantitative and qualitative evidence indicating that home-based ICT usage is considered more interesting by students and is preferred compared with school-based ICT usage. From Victoria, Peter Hubber Gail Chittleborough, Coral Campbell, Wendy Jobling and Russell Tytler discuss two professional learning programs designed to support ICT-based pedagogies in teaching science in Victorian rural primary and secondary schools. From Northern Territory, Greg Shaw examines approaches being taken in developing ICT usage in Northern Territory schools for teaching and learning. In Western Australia Sue Trinidad and Tania Broadley describe projects that focus on the use of technology to enhance both teacher and student learning; and assist with Indigenous education and teacher professional learning. From South Australia, Bruce White investigates the strategies used by schools and teachers to enhance curriculum opportunities for students whose teachers are at a different campus or different school, or who are out of the school for extended periods of time, and finally from NSW, Sue Gregory, discusses the use of IWBs in rural and remote primary and secondary schools.

Overall the seven articles present a good overview of the work of SiMERR and I am grateful to Dr Chris Reading – University of New England and associate director of SiMERR, for her assistance in helping to compile the stories from across the nation. If readers would like to learn more about SiMERR - www.une.edu.au/simerr/pages/index.php

Teaching Teachers of the Future (TTF)

This project is a stroke of good fortune for the ICT in Education community in 2011 and comes at a time when Faculties and Schools of Education across the country are keen to build capacity in this area. The TTF project is an $8 million project that will be delivered by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council in partnership with the Australian Council of Deans of Education, the Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leaders, Education Services Australia and the Australian Council for Computers in Education.

All 37 Australian universities that provide teacher education courses will be involved in the project. It is aimed at enabling all pre-service teachers to become proficient in the use of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) in education. The Minister for School Education, Peter Garrett, announced funding for this and four other projects recently, under the Digital Strategy for Teachers and School Leaders fund. Over the next 18 months the project will:

- Second highly accomplished educators to work in universities and change how the use of ICT is taught to student teachers
- Design and develop digital resources for training new teachers in the effective use of ICT – including lesson plans, videos of exemplar practice, advice on the use of technology, research articles and tools to support collaboration
- Restructure professional learning experiences for student teachers to ensure they can use a range of digital technologies effectively in the classroom to support student learning and the National Curriculum
- Establish an ongoing National Support Network of ICT and curriculum expertise
- Develop a framework to describe the ICT skills, knowledge and understanding required by graduating teachers
- Support an estimated 55,000 student teachers in Australia to map their level of ICT in education proficiency against the new National Professional Standards for Graduate Teachers.

Bringing all the universities together along with ALTC, ACCE, ESA and AITSL has been a remarkable achievement and this will be a project of national significance. The project will kick off in February 2011. More information here - www.altc.edu.au/november2010-teaching-teachers-future, and if readers would like to contribute in some way please contact the editor at geoff.romeo@acu.edu.au.

Thanks Donna, Nick, Suzanne, Michelle and all our reviewers. Wishing everyone a happy and productive New Year.

Geoff Romeo (Ed)