Welcome to Australian Educational Computing for 1998. I expect that this issue of the journal will follow the trend of its predecessors, contributing to the recorded history of educational computing in this country. This journal volume contains an index of the key articles in AEC’s 11 year history and reminds me of how the journal and the national conference proceedings record the best practice in computer education nationally. It is a history to be proud of. Since becoming president of Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE), I have become aware of how little members of Computer Education Groups (CEGs), know about ACCE history and purpose. I am hoping my first column can not only define ACCE’s place in people’s hearts, but also record its place in the historical archive we have been proudly building.

The Australian Council for Computers in Education was formed to give national status to computer education and to build a significant national professional association to complement the membership status within CEGs. Various boards of ACCE have earned a very high status in a range of forums. This was demonstrated recently, by being invited to help other national associations understand the importance of information and communications technologies for professional association work and for supporting teacher communities within the DEETYA-funded Natcom project. As you would expect of a national association, ACCE also provides input to national issues where possible and builds national frameworks and policies for advice to all systems and educational groups. I was not aware of the extent of ACCE influence until I became a member of the Board. Now in the president’s role I am reminded of it so often and hope though my writing and actions, that I can help members understand the importance and authority of our national voice.

Although the political position of ACCE is sufficient to cement its place in our computer education group structure, the council’s main roles are to support the work of state computer education groups and to provide national services for state members. The most visible services which states’ members see are the National Journal and a biannual Australian Computers in Education Conference, ACEC. Often specialist national conferences are hosted in the alternative year. Computer education groups gain opportunity to host events or manage the journal. Importantly, they can also use the ACCE structure to seek resources, gain professional development about managing the computer education group and directly take advantage of the expertise within the association’s executives to support their work, resolve issues and gain access to new ideas. This happens because CEG executives share their expertise willingly with their colleagues in a spirit you would expect from a collaborative council of peer groups. This is demonstrated clearly within ACCE efforts to help the Northern Territory Computer Education group redevelop and by providing consultancy to the New Zealand national and regional computer education groups. ACCE achieves a great deal within the resources it has available.

It is important for members of CEGs to understand the membership, groups and affiliations structure of ACCE and particularly to understand the difference between the Council itself and the Board. ACCE contains 9 members: each state computer education group and territory plus the Australian Computer Society (ACS). ACCE itself, is a member of the Technology Federation of Australia (TEFA), the National Education Forum (NEF) and the National Joint Council of Teacher Professional Associations (NJCTPA). ACCE is also an Affiliate of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). The Board contains 10 representative positions: one from each state and territory, a representative of the Australian Computer Society and a representative of the Technology Federation of Australia. The bottom line of
take advantage of the connectivity that is
naturally, the models and experiences
1998 that add to its usual business. Firstly,
national attention and helped groups like
membership at state level and provide
leading educators with recognition of their
contributions to this professional
community.

ACCE has a number of projects for
1998 that add to its usual business. Firstly,
ACCE has been involved in implementing
the NATCOM project, a project which
helps National Key Learning Area
Professional Associations learn how to
take advantage of the connectivity that is
becoming increasingly important to
educators in all spheres of our business. At
first this project helped associations deal
with the issues familiar to CEGs who
pioneered online environments and built
online communities like EChalk and
QSITE-community, rather than having built
look-up libraries. This approach has drawn
national attention and helped groups like
DEETYA and Education.au understand the
new professional development spaces we
are using. This project is now maturing and
in 1999, a number of national associations
will be hosting telecommunications
projects that model new pedagogies and
new curriculum interpretations using
naturally, the models and experiences
which we can draw on within our
communities of expertise. There is little
doubt that this work is directly adding
quality to the current projects of joint
councils nationally and in states and also
influencing how other groups, like the
national principals’ associations, build
online communities and mainstream
online services.

Secondly, ACCE is building a range of
tools that State CEG’s might use in helping
draw people together in associations. The
ACCE web site will be directly aimed at
collecting tools for CEG groups to use. For
example, CEGs will soon be provided with
the coding to build an online directory of
expertise and provided with a structure to
build a webiology of articles produced in
each CEG journal as well as AEC. As
opportunities arise, ACCE will promote
sharing of online tools between CEGs and
undertake development projects as
required.

Thirdly, ACCE is investigating the
implications of teacher learning
technology competencies within states.
Helping reduce the duplication of effort is
sufficient reason for this project. However,
helping define standards and then
building strategies for helping teachers
attain and demonstrate competencies
is directly related to CEG programs in
the immediate future. ACCE has
undertaken to collate data, collect
opinions and produce some working
papers and resources, to support CEGs as
they cope with these new pressures on our
members. This debate will be aired at the
National conference and in our various
online communities.

Lastly, professional development
for CEG management teams is part of the
new role of ACCE. This process begins at
the 1998 conference in Adelaide and will
continue throughout 1998.

Financial concerns are always at
the heart of questions from CEGs. ACCE
has three main sources of funding. Firstly,
each CEG provides a capitation fee to the
national body at the rate of $8.00 per
capita. Funds also derive from 4% of
registrations from profitable ACEC
conferences. More recently, major projects
like the Natcom project have enabled
ACCE to economise on meeting costs and
thus save expenditure. ACCE has a very
small operating margin and runs its
account very frugally. The financial
statement is presented at each ACCE
AGM and copies are sent to each
CEG and Board representative. The
financial management of ACCE is
extremely open.

The main two items of expenditure
for ACCE are the national journal and 2
Board meetings per year. There are also
some annual projects which have their
own budget. One of these is the $4000
conference seeding fund which is housed
by the CEG hosting the current conference.
Another is the payment for the ACCE
Educator of the Year award. More recently
an annual amount for web development
and maintenance has become a part of the
core business of the Council. Other
expenditure maintains ACCE Registration
with the securities commission,
membership of other national groups and
affiliate bodies and recovers the general
housekeeping expenditure. I think you will
agree that the $8 per member is well used
and complemented by occasional funds
from other projects.

In closing this column, I want to
draw attention to work of two CEGs.
ECAWA is currently hosting this National
Journal. Their volunteer work is appreciated by the
Board members and I am confident you
recognise the contribution of the journal to
our history and to the job it undertakes in
shaping computer education in the country.
It is the only internationally refereed journal
in computer education in Australia and an
important contribution to international
literature. It is wonderful to have this vehicle
to showcase Australian teachers and
researchers. Thanks to Jeremy Pagram, Paul
Newhouse and the editorial team from
ECAWA. I would also like to recognise the
work of CEGSA, who are hosting ACEC 98.
Their conference group has modeled expert
course management and like their
predecessors, CEGSA will have the
opportunity to consult with the next host
CEG. The development of the ACCE
Conference policies and procedures
documents has emerged from this
collaboration and I am confident
our documentation will continue to
improve. The results show in a great
conference. Thanks Ralph Leonard and the
CEGSA team.

Until next journal, I wish you well
and look forward to meeting with as many
management teams and CEG members as
possible. In the meantime I welcome your
comments, suggestions and ideas. Please
email me whenever you need.