The theme for this issue concerns Computers and Classroom Change. As a starting point, it is worth-while to examine this very permanence of classrooms. Do we, for example, take it for granted that classrooms are a given—that they will always exist? And even if they do, will they function as they do now? Some have suggested that classrooms are surprisingly stable social structures. Despite successive waves of technological change, educational fashions and economic imperatives, many classrooms today are not very different from those of a century ago. Yet the world ‘outside’ has been transformed in some fundamental ways.

Those involved in educational computing might be particularly interested in two important issues that arise from an analysis of classrooms. We might be motivated to explain the inherent stability of classrooms, particularly with respect to technological change. An understanding of this aspect would appear critical in attempting to speculate on the future. This leads to the second issue: on what basis should we make decisions and respond to transformations of our own classrooms?

To address this last issue, we have gathered a range of views. Neil Postman provides a traditional account of classrooms that are firmly wedded to the technologies of books, paper and pens. This print-based classroom is under attack, but Postman believes that we should hold firm to traditional ideals rather than succumbing to the allure of the entertainment technologies.

At quite the other end of the spectrum (but curiously not a political spectrum!), Lewis Perelman offers a radical alternative. New educational technologies should be used to replace traditional notions of schooling, and the classroom in particular. He describes HL (hyperlearning) as a panacea for the ills that beset education (and for the economic decline of America). A contrasting view is offered by Hugh Kenner. He argues for quite a different conception of a classroom—one that evolves using careful application and experimentation. An example of a classroom based on network communication is used to argue for a discriminating approach to technology.

Chris Bigum and Bill Green present a wide-ranging discussion of computers and classroom change that is based on broad patterns of social movement. Beginning with a critical look at the views presented by Postman, Perelman and Kenner they provide a framework influenced by historical perspectives (classrooms as machines) and modern day challenges (post-modern thought). They ask what might happen when classrooms become unhinged from physical and temporal reality. More importantly, they ask what might happen if we interfere (using technological mediation) with the strong bonds that link classrooms with the curriculum.

One way to stretch the meaning associated with the term classroom is to consider the influence of modern communication methods. The ‘room’ in classroom can involve separate locations, yet the interaction can be maintained. John Schiller introduces the use of videoconferencing within higher education. Reporting on a recently completed project, he identifies changes and opportunities wrought by the application such a medium.

Adrian Brown describes how students in his classroom experimented with a variety of methods to create and present their historical inquiries. Video, photographic and print-based resources were combined with the aid of computers. It is a classroom that has moved beyond the dominance of the printed word—and one that Postman would see as dangerous! The question remains as to whether the dangers painted by Postman are relevant or if the students in this class have just discovered another way of creating and telling their ‘stories’.

In the Contributed Papers section Ron Oliver presents a study aimed at describing the perceptions of students, teachers and employers to information technology skills. Some interesting differences between the groups is revealed and are used as a basis for some recommendations for schools.

The challenge of providing instruction to teachers in technology-related fields is addressed by Brian Ferry. Reporting on a study of teachers attempting to implement a new science and technology syllabus, he draws attention to some important issues that teachers, in-service providers and curriculum designers would do well to address. In the light of the (possible?) implementation of syllabuses based on national guidelines, it is timely advice.

The next issue of the journal will focus on computer studies, particularly in the light of the national technology statement. And, looking forward to 1994, the editorial team would like to examine two major issues as themes. The first will concern ethics in computer education. Following from Roger Coldwell’s article last year (Do technology students develop ethical standards?), we would like to examine the form that such standards would ideally take, as well as how such standards might be fostered among students. The second theme will address the social dimensions exposed by application of communication technologies. What educational activities and learning can occur in ‘cyberspace’?

We would encourage contributions on these or any other topics within our refereed sections (Theme Articles and Contributed Articles). Alternatively, you may wish to contribute informally to our Short Communications section or present innovative practical experiences in our From the Classroom section.

Speaking of cyberspace, Australian Educational Computing has belatedly entered the world of electronic publishing (well, almost). For those who have access to AARNet, the text of this and subsequent issues will be available for file transfer (using FTP). See the text panel on the contents page for an address. Finally, as this is the first issue by the new editorial team, an apology. Despite our best efforts, all our contributors in this issue are male—we’ll try to do better, especially if you can help.