President's Column

As 2002 draws to a close, I want to take advantage of being able to share three themes; one of course is to report on the matters of ACCE, the second is to share some visions for the national organisation and its member associations, and the third is very personal.

ACCE's 2002

This year ACCE has had an active year and one quite remarkable, given it is a volunteer organisation with such a broad brief.

Journal

There are the usual responsibilities of producing the peer-reviewed journal in ICT in education in this case to Australian Computers: Education, in conjunction with Computer Science Teachers Association of Victoria and Sue Trindall for their relentless support and hard work. Thanks also to referees who continue to be part of the Editorial Board.

The journal is a major coup for the organisation, but one which is necessary to support the ever increasing community of teachers seeking further education and beginning research careers. The journal also provides our leadership research community with a service to share their work and findings with the teachers of the country who benefit from their knowledge.

I encourage the research community to support this National journal for our teachers and support DESE to set policies for research funding in the country, that support sharing the results of Australian research with local teachers. Publishing for the international audience of researchers is not as important to grasp root teachers, as getting access to local knowledge about local research.

Conference

The ACCE 2002 conference in Hobart was an outstanding success. Not only did the hard work of TASTE pay off with a great roll up and excellent production and organisation, several important agendas moved forward. The conference was a pivotal point in the ACCE project on Computer Studies with a forum for standards for teaching IT and the beginning of a mapping of "excellence" in IT teaching. This work has continued since then. Thanks to ACS for continuing support of this agenda and the forum at the conference.

The opening by Martin Forrest, illustrated that ACCE and the family of CEGs is seen as the key voice for leaders in IT policy in the country. Several up meetings with DEST have occurred. ACCE continues to be represented, vocal and forward thinking, in national projects and national forums advancing DEST. We set the agenda and should keep doing so.

Gilly Salmon, from the UK helped map the land for leadership in ICT and the characteristics needed to help the critical mass of teachers use ICT in meaningful ways. Her "people" metaphor has stuck with me. Given the amount I need to travel to work, I dread a future of intergalactic travel. It’s hard enough for me to remember what my car is now. If you are undertaking a professional development role in your school, you must check out her valuable contribution on the conference web site: http://www.acce.edu.au. It may help you understand the characteristics of the "beings" on the planet and find cool ways to work with the "beings".

The conference also gave me the chance to speak on my work in North Queensland in Indigenous schools. This is certainly a highlight of my professional career. I valued the opportunity to talk about Indigenous education, the significance of communication technologies and the remoteness of the Indigenous communities and the importance of the CEGS community as work directly for Indigenous students as well as mainstream students. I urge CEGs to assist teachers in remote and Indigenous communities are not only supported but celebrated, as their achievements in using technology to engage these children in education and shaping their future culture is remarkable and leading edge, globally.

Computer Studies

This year ACCE began a project to map out Computer Studies in this country, identify the key documents for Computer Studies teaching and work towards a set of standards for Computer Studies teaching. As the project unfolded, under the eagle eye of consultant Ray Kennedy from Central Queensland University, it became obvious that understanding excellence in Computer Studies teaching and to plan professional development for teachers based on that definition was most important. It is also apparent to us now that identifying case studies of excellence will be a strategy to elevate the quality of Computer Studies professional development.

This work computer studies co-operative study and examination in all states will participate in workshops which identify case studies and learn from them. I do hope this project matures to develop a set of standards for computer studies teachers.

A significant component of this year's project is the inclusion of the Victorian Information Technology Teachers Association (VITTA) and the NSWD Computer Studies Teachers Association in this project. This is a vital step in ensuring the agendas for computer studies has one voice in the halls of Commonwealth and State systems of all sectors and Boards of Studies. Thanks to all management teams for the professional integrity you exhibit through your determination to work together.

International Focus

There were two new achievements for ACCE in international terms. Don Kerscek, the Chair of the ISTE Board, visited Australia and spent a week supporting our efforts. Don hosted a forum for DESE, met CEG teams in two states, spoke at the NSW CEG conference and spent two days with the ACCE Board. Don's work on teacher standards, his leadership in national educational directions and his unflagging support for professional activities ensured he inspired our Board and all the people he met. Most importantly from our perspective, it also meant that ISTE is increasingly aware that Australia is a leading contributor to global understanding of ICT in education. The invigorated relationship between all CEGs, ACCE and ISTE will directly result in some spawned conferences on Australia's broad e-horse technology in the first half of 2003. The relationship with ISTE is important and direct for all members.

The second new achievement of the Board was the involvement of the New Zealand team from Auckland Computer in Education Society (ACES) in a joint Board meeting. Joint conferences are very much on the agenda now, and a renewed commitment to mutual support will continue. ACCE and ACES will continue to work together to continue to host a joint meeting once a year to maintain and grow this advantage.

In the last two years, an Australian has been the International representative on the ISTE Board and also served on the International Alliance Executive. This southern hemisphere representation is vitally important, in the last two years, serving in such high profile roles has noticed increasing awareness of ISTE for all things international and importantly a growing respect for Australia and New Zealand achievement.

As usual, through the work of Anne McDonald, ACCE continues to provide prestige through the IFTP International Conference. The 2003 IFTP Conference are being hosted in Australia. These showcase Australian work in the international arena and also draw new ideas into the country. The relationships between ACCE and IFTP and DESE are vital to maintain Australia's strong voice in international circles.

ACCE's Future

It seems to me that although ICTs are increasingly becoming integral to learning and teaching, there is a strong relationship between the talent, determination and vision of ICT leaders in schools and what we could call "leading practice" schools. When the ICT leader in a school at centres, moves their move to other positions, the school laches badly. Although there is a critical mass of excellent teachers, there is not a critical mass of excellent leadership (computer coordinators, learning technology HODs and all the other terms which I use). I believe that the future of ICT in schools is now, as it is always was dependent on the ICT Leadership in a school.

I believe that if governments can believe that the vision of CEGs and ACCE must change and the profession on ICT leaders in schools is if it is to continue to be the infrastructure for the future. There are two rationales for such a strong statement.

Less significantly for me, but important to many others, is the following argument about supporting all teachers using ICT in schools. The argument always is that teachers have a clear professional associations and as "all" teachers use ICT, the role of the CEG community is less significant. That’s a myth, as you and I would retract. However the declining numbers of members over the last 20 years needs an explanation. Other reasons for membership decline, such as redundant, it is rather crazy to think one organisation can help all teachers use ICT in their classrooms. If all teachers are indeed the target, partnerships with other teacher professional associations would be more strategic.

More importantly for me is that the ICT leader in schools do not have another association to work in. They have a unique role that involves professional development, innovative action learning, experimentation, school planning, resource management and project management. This class of fantastic teachers should NOT be seen as a group for whom ACCE and CEG need deliver services. They are learning leaders in a rapidly changing field. So they simultaneously need both opportunities for high quality, diverse professional learning, and values and strategies to share their leadership. The kind of professional community for teachers is different to that of teachers not yet advanced at their understanding of ICT in education. CEGs and ACCE need to develop new models of operation and new ways to nurture the professional exchanges which will continue to cultivate our leaders.

I encourage the ACCE and CEG family to focus on these leading and include them more holistically in the conversations, on the point that they AIRE the associations. (This will revolve the CEG associations, create new sustainable direction for the next 10-20 years and more than that ensure that ICT in schools continues to be exciting and forward thinking. Education needs to take a lead of innovation and ensure that creative thinkingcrosses new learning, rather than new toys and devices). CEGs comprised of ICT leaders, will have powerful synergy, that can make our combined visions for ICT in schools to be realised.

A personal point

Some of these President's column is very different to what I normally write. I guess it reflects my mood which seems to have resulted in a Flood of tears as I write this. I have made a difficult decision to not stand as a nomination for ACCE president in 2003. The reasons are all selfish. My work in the Cape York and Torres Strait communities ensures I travel constantly. I find I am out of touch too much, to be31 strongly visible and the increasing demands on physical time frustrate me when travelling and living in remote Queensland. I also value the opportunity to support ICT in the north too much, to be focused on one. I am also lucky that my three grand children, Nia, Ryan and Brooke will be close to you next year and it is their turn at attention.

The ACCE Board are special people who support me every way imaginative and are eternally forgiving when I need them to work with me at times that suit my travel. I need to tell you that their professional commitment and volunteer work for you is something. My personal thanks the Board and all the people I have worked with over 20 years. My thanks also to members of QSITE management teams, who support me to be out of ACCE. They have enabled me to try things first locally before I present ideas nationally and they always listen to whom my ideas. And my thanks also to the GSTE members who enabled me to participate in the GSTE and ISTE ACCE year after year. Your faith and trust in me to contribute your voice into the national and now international arena, is humbly accepted and gratefully fulfilled. I am forever rich in the personal and professional friendships from QSITE and ACCE communities, that will sustain me always.

I wish ACCE every success for the future.

Michelle Williams

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