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Competition: Survival of the Fattest?



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Commentaries

Essays from Cyberspace: Issues in undergraduate training and assessment

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Many tertiary students are regular and proficient users of the Internet and World Wide Web. A new phenomenon in student essays and assignments is the citation not only of on-line texts, conference papers and electronic journals but also news services, discussion groups and even e-mail as reference material. In some courses the use of electronic information is actively encouraged and it forms an integral part of assessment tasks. There is much to be said for the validity and usefulness of electronic material for research purposes, both within the academy and in the graduate workforce. However, its use in undergraduate assessment work raises two questions for tertiary instructors. These are first, what is to be regarded as a satisfactory academic training, and second, what are the ramifications of ready access to cyberspace for the assessment and authentication of student work.

Training

As was recently observed, electronic information and publications occupy their own distinct space and will not supplant traditional scholarly publishing (Greenhill and Fletcher 1996). If the academy is to provide basic training in the skills which are necessary for the advanced research of the future, students need to be able to manipulate information in its conventional scholarly form. This ability remains fundamental to most academic research and is what distinguishes it from information retrieval. It is in addition to, and not instead of, more traditional research skills that undergraduates need to develop their facility with electronic resources. Neither aspect can be neglected if Australian tertiary courses are to be on a par with the best international standards.

There are at present, however, no guidelines to the merit of different types of electronic information sources for the purpose of undergraduate assessment. In the case of scholarly electronic journals this is clearly not an issue: the merit of an e-journal rests, as it does in conventional periodicals, on the calibre of its editors and referees. The success of (for example) *Electronic Antiquity* demonstrates that the highest standards of scholarship and

refereeing can be applied to articles in an electronic format. In the case of news services, discussion groups and self-proclaimed information sites, the quality varies widely. Similarly, software manufacturers are continuing to produce a seemingly endless variety of CD-ROM reference works on all sorts of topics, the standards of which range from the excellent to the inane. Much of the available electronic information, in other words, does nothing to advance students' research skills and thinking abilities.

Let us assume we have received two pieces of undergraduate work of similar analytical standard on an international relations topic. One cites work from reputable electronic journals; the other cites no scholarly reference material at all, but a goodly number of Web news services and institutionally-based discussion groups. While one can mark the two pieces similarly for their understanding and analysis of an issue, how does one determine whether the latter student is concomitantly developing the skills to pursue an issue through a body of academic literature, electronic or not? The question as to what extent electronic may displace non-electronic sources as student reference material is more than a question about how one should assess the validity of the information which has been given. Students need to practise the manipulation of particular types of complex information. This cannot be done from an analysis of various points of view - even learned ones - which happen to have been encountered for example in an electronic discussion group.

Assessment

In a contemporary tertiary course it is not unreasonable to expect students to make use of information now available from cyberspace where access is provided by the institution and it is possible to establish that this use will not compromise other learning objectives. Yet how does one rate that part of a student's assignment which is based on an electronic refereed article against one who has cited a Web discussion group as a reference

source? It is no answer to say that each must be marked on its own merits. The question is not about grading particular assignments but about what constitutes an adequate tertiary training. Further, a marker cannot be expected to check undergraduate references by consulting whatever electronic source a student may happen to have used. Marking time is limited, and is most constructively employed in commenting on a delimited body of material in which an examiner is well versed.

The issue of authentication is also serious. If a student has incorporated electronically-sourced material into an assignment without appropriate acknowledgment, the fraud is unlikely to be detected unless either two students utilise the same source or a marker has happened across it in the course of his or her own activities. Given the proliferation of discussion groups and information sites on almost every conceivable subject, the chances of this are fairly low. There have been several well-publicised incidents of plagiarism from electronic sources by commercial writers, and it would be reasonable to conclude that the practice poses a real problem for the tertiary sector. A further problem is the transitory nature of some Web sites which have disappeared without trace, presumably due to lack of ongoing funding. A discussion group on Jostein Gaarder's philosophical novel *Sophie's World* recently vanished at some point between its being cited in a student's assignment and the assignment being submitted for assessment. Its existence was known only from the student's reference to it; if not for that honesty, any amount of material from the Web could have been incorporated and presented as original work.

Conclusion

Consensus on the use of electronic information in undergraduate assessment does not presently exist within departments, let alone universities. The best that can be done at the moment is for individual teaching staff to spell out what is or is not acceptable practice in their own courses, with the result that quite different criteria may be applied to supposedly equivalent courses at different institutions around the country. For example, students in one international relations unit may be invited or required to conduct essay or assignment work using foreign news services on the WWW, while they might elsewhere be expected to come to grips with a traditional historical or theoretical literature. In the present circumstances the development of some clear and generally accepted guidelines on the use of electronic information as source material in tertiary courses would be useful.

Such guidelines would at minimum have to take into account the quantity and quality of electronic information and reach broad agreement on referencing procedures. With respect to quantity, students might be required to use a minimum proportion of scholarly reference material as assignment resources, or a segmen-

tary form of assessment could be used which at some point requires students to demonstrate their ability to employ traditional academic skills in a substantial researched assessment task. With respect to quality, restrictions could be placed on the use of some classes of electronic information for assessment purposes. For example, a form of delimitation might be used whereby scholarly e-journals and some Web news services could be recommended for consultation whereas other services, discussion groups, and e-mail would be regarded as unacceptable. Yet this still requires that tertiary instructors maintain a high level of familiarity with both available and suitable on-line resources in addition to conventional printed literature, putting further pressure on staff time. A possible solution might be that recommendations be made by the various professional associations for the use of electronic sources in their own areas; such a move might produce a consistent national practice without creating problems of external imposition.

While guidelines have been established for the bibliographic citation of an array of electronic sources (see Okerson 1993, pp. 14-26), the problem of electronic pagination remains unresolved. Suggestions have included citation of the relevant screen numbers, lines, or paragraphs of an electronic document, but all are awkward and there is no generally agreed or authoritatively recommended format. This creates citation difficulties for electronic texts that are compounded by the need to assess student work which draws on these sources and for which some form of accurate citation should certainly be required.

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HECS and the farmer's son

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Several days before the changes to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) were announced, I read with great interest Bruce Chapman's article in the *Australian Universities' Review* presenting the rationale for HECS. In reading the article, I was reminded of a cartoon I saw some years ago of a farmer and his son. The son who has just returned from university and with his diploma in hand, stands in a field of corn with his father. The farmer, clearly pleased to see his son return from university says, 'Good you're home. Grab a hoe'. (More of this later.)

In his article, Professor Chapman states that HECS is generally accepted in Australia as a fair method of charging university fees. He concludes there is sufficient evidence to support the notion that HECS has little impact on participation rates among Australian students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. To support this conclusion he presents results from several government commissioned studies which indicate that the demand for a university education in Australia is relatively inelastic. This means that as the cost of a university education increases, the participation rate falls by a smaller percentage than the increased cost. This would allow HECS fees to be increased each year by an amount exceeding the rate of inflation in Australia, thereby, marginally increasing the user's contribution and reducing the taxpayer's contribution to the cost of the student's university education. Over a period of years, the real cost of a student's university education would become more accurately reflected in HECS fees. This would have little, if any, negative impact on participation rates. This is not a novel or even particularly radical suggestion. It is in line with the economic and social policies of user pays and privatisation which have, in recent years, gained increasing favour in Australia.

There are also other changes to the HECS structure including a three-tiered, differential fee structure based on discipline groups and a reduction in the income threshold for compulsory repayment of HECS. These, however, do not change the essential structure of HECS. They are designed to increase the users' contribution to the cost of their university education and to recover

additional HECS fees from graduates. This is an obvious example of the acceptance of a user pays philosophy.

If I were to question the desirability of the HECS changes it would only be to question the choice of such a large, one-off increase. The end result will be the same as I have suggested, but increasing fees slowly over a period of time would likely be less contentious and disruptive than such a large, one-off increase. Although, knowing the public propensity to criticise 'the Government', I'm prepared to accept that a 'bite the bullet' approach may have been considered by the Government as their most politically attractive option.

How does all this affect the farmer's son or daughter? Does the decision to attend university stand or fall on the level of HECS? Does a Year 12 student seriously consider the deferred cost of a university education a barrier to participation? I suggest it is not considered a significant barrier, if in fact it is considered a barrier at all. The key word is deferred and the key factor is being 18 years old. The decision by a Year 12 student to attend or not attend university depends on a number of factors other than the level of HECS. Remember HECS is a deferred cost. At 18 the focus tends to be on immediate or short term problems. Certainly, most teenagers are not focused on 10 or 20 years into the future. A young student would tend to view the deferred payment of HECS in a similar light as a superannuation payout. It is simply too far into the future to be of great concern. Surely, it is not so long ago that the reader was a teenager and can appreciate this outlook.

Meanwhile, back at the farm. Does the farmer really believe his tax dollars are wisely invested in higher education? Does he recognise the benefits which accrue to him through his support of the Australian higher education system? If given a choice, I wonder what he would do with his tax dollars. Would he continue to support our universities; or would he invest his tax dollars in the farm, say on a new piece of equipment? Which would he see as the more attractive or desirable investment? Not being a farmer, I can only speculate.

Articles

Competition and contestability in Australian higher education, 1987-1997

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Abstract

The reforms of 1987-1989 restructured Australian higher education as a quasi-market with expanding zones of commercial activity. It was expected that competition, by making higher education more contestable and contestable, would lead to improved efficiency, customer responsiveness and rates of innovation. However, these imaginings reckoned without the segmented or 'positional' (Hirsch, 1976) character of education. A culture of competition was established, yet competitive pressures and the increasing reliance on private funding tended to strengthen the dominance of the leading institutions and forced a greater conformity with established models of the good university. Incentives to improve customer responsiveness, efficiency and innovation were reduced rather than enhanced. In the more marketised regime created by the reforms of 1996 the degree of protection afforded to the leading institutions was further increased. Overall in the 1987-1997 period it appears that in the higher education market the eight strongest universities ('Sandstones') were strengthened in relative terms, the four leading universities of technology ('Utechs') moved up the hierarchy, but most of the other ten pre-1987 universities ('Wannabee sandstones') lost ground.

Introduction

During the last decade in Australia, one of the purposes of government-driven reforms in sectors such as education has been to install or enhance relations of competition. Higher education serves many purposes and houses many and contrasting forms of subjectivity. The behaviours of people and institutions are not predestined to be competitive, or for that matter 'economic'. But in competition reform, the market and competitive aspects of higher education are brought to the forefront. Competition is seen at one and the same time both as an end that must always be striven for, and an ever-existing natural state of affairs ('human nature').

The desire for this game of battle and defeat is joined to grand claims about its benefits, which seem infinitely fecund. 'Competition is the key to improving performance, flexibility and productivity across the economy', states the Productivity Commission. 'It provides enduring incentives for firms to lift their performance and serve their customers well' (PC, 1996, p. 59). 'Enhanced competition' is an unambiguous good, states the Hilmer report. It puts producers on their mettle; it improves efficiency, productivity and service; it reduces prices; and makes the economy competitive. 'The committee is satisfied that the general desirability of permitting competition ... [is] so well established that those who wish to restrict or inhibit competition should bear the burden of demonstrating why that is justified in the public interest' (Hilmer, 1993, pp. xv-xxxix, 1, 18 & 26).

In these statements competition is an end in itself and the creation of a culture of market competition becomes a fundamental objective of micro-economic reform in higher education.¹ Increased competition is meant to improve responsiveness, flexibility and rates of innovation; to increase the diversity of what is produced and can be market-chosen; to enhance productive and/or allocative efficiency; to improve the volume and quality of production; and to strengthen accountability to student-customers, employer-customers, and (where competition is for government funding) to governments. There are more indirect objectives, such as fiscal reduction, university-business links, internationalisation *via* international marketing, and so on. But it is this imagined line of causation from competition to consumer sovereignty to better efficiency and quality that is the virtuous ideal glowing at the core of micro-economic reform in higher education.

The assumption behind this strategy is when higher education becomes contested, rather than operating cartel-fashion as a process of collaboration between the universities, then the effect of market pressures on producer institutions will be to generate these desired

effects automatically. In all industries competition reform is designed to increase contestability - the capacity for new producers to enter the game, create new approaches and place more pressure on the existing producers - by dismantling what the Hilmer committee called the 'excess power' of certain existing producers (though it must be stated that in the university context the definition of 'excess' has never been clear). Thus one key question in analysing the effects of competition reform in higher education is whether the strong producers *are* contested so as to experience the pressures imagined by competition reform, whether by existing producers or by new producers.

Forms of market and competition

'Marketisation' is the introduction or extension of some or all the forms of a competitive economic market. The main elements of economic markets - whether in the private sector, public sector or both - are as follows: a defined field of production coupled with producer units (in this case higher education); the production of scarce commodities; monetary exchange between producer and consumer; competition between producer institutions (in education there is also competition between consumers, as is discussed below); contestability, the capacity for new producers to enter the market; and market subjectivities, the attributes and behaviours needed to succeed in production, consumption and exchange (Marginson, 1997b). Markets are 'social settings that foster specific types of personal development and penalise others' (Bowles, 1991, p. 13).

All of these characteristics are necessary to fully developed economic markets. Newly marketised services such as education usually exhibit some characteristics but not all. 'Quasi-market' describes this intermediate zone. In a quasi-market in higher education there might be competition between institutions, corporate-style management, and some commercial activity, but the number of student places is affected by factors other than supply and demand - for example public funding of tuition costs, and the planning of student load - and degrees and academic standards are regulated by universities, by public authorities or by custom and decree. Most OECD higher education systems, the national training market in Australia, and some State and Territory government school systems in Australia are now organised in the form of quasi-markets.²

The installation or the enhancement of quasi-market competition in education is more than a merely economic move: it also has implications for the system of government-institution relations, and the role of education in distributing social rewards. For example, in the market framework - in contrast to a system of direct public service administration - governments can steer education institutions from a distance by setting the

conditions within which the autonomous institutions are in competition with each other. The installation of a market also encourages the development of market subjectivities, thus triggering an upward spiral of market formation in which structure and agency, the structure of market competition and the attitudes and values needed to make competition work, tend to catalyse each other. Hayek, doyen of market reformers, remarked that the introduction of relations of competition made it 'necessary for people to act rationally in order to maintain themselves. Competition is as much a method for breeding certain types of mind as anything else' (Hayek, 1979, pp. 75-76).

The qualities that enable 'competitiveness' are unequally distributed. 'Competitiveness rests not only on attitudes but on material resources. Not all parties enter the contest with the attributes needed to compete successfully, and the game of competition between institutions tends to reinforce inequalities. The operations of any competition must favour the interests of some and harm those of others. Competition also constitutes a *post hoc* defence of hierarchical starting points and hierarchical outcomes. Once competition is accepted as a fair and neutral process - as a signifier of justice - the outcomes of competition are easier to defend than are the seemingly more arbitrary and interest-ridden decisions of state officials, representative assemblies, or professional educators. It seems that this virtue of competition (if virtue it is) applies no matter how unequal, how unbalanced, are the starting relations between the parties to the contest.

All competitions share common features, such as rivalry, combat, the existence of rules of combat, and the rank ordering of outcomes. Most competitions are also subject to a primary ordering of the outcomes which is binary in character (win/lose). On the basis of these common features, there are many variations, many kinds of competitions. Competition can be more or less intense or relentless in character. It can be more or less 'pure'; that is, it varies in the degree to which competitive behaviour is 'uncontaminated' by other purposes, such as altruism, or cooperation to achieve common goals. It can be more or less 'perfect'; that is, it varies in the degree to which the competitive market is subject only to voluntaristic choice-making that is unconstrained by government intervention (Waters, 1995, p. 410).

Competition is not always associated with economic markets. All economic markets involve actual or potential competition to some degree, but the reverse is not the case. Competition played a role in pedagogies and student ordering long before economic markets entered education. This history of competition between students smoothed the way for the extension of relations of competition in and between institutions. It provided a training in the attributes of mind necessary to sustain a

more broad-based, more intense and 'purer' struggle for supremacy.

Positional competition in education

However, micro-economic reformers have not reckoned with one crucial feature of education, with the potential to divert competition reform. That is the *positional* character of modern educational systems and institutions (Hirsch, 1976; Marginson, 1997a and 1997b). Education produces positional goods. These are status goods, places in education that provide students with *relative advantage* in the competition for jobs, income, social standing and prestige (Hirsch, 1976, pp. 20-22). Education institutions and systems select people for social positions, including the upper reaches of the professions and management. These status goods tend to be largely monopolised by people from social groups with the best capacity to compete for them. The effects of competition reform are articulated with the already established practices of positional competition.

In orthodox neo-classical economics, competition and monopoly are seen as mutually exclusive. But in *Competition* (1988) Auerbach finds that in the real world, this dichotomy breaks down. Modern capitalist economies have seen both the extension and intensification of competition, and the centralisation of capital through mergers and the creation of oligopolies and monopolies. At times, strong producers use reductions in competitive pressures to protect their interests. Yet when competition becomes fiercer, it is often again the strong players who benefit. (More convincing egalitarian moves can only be made by going outside the economic framework altogether). This general point about the co-existence of economic competition and economic concentration has a special resonance in education.

Places in elite schools and sought-after university faculties are the most desired form of positional good, because these places are associated with a high probability of career success. Many other places in education confer more modest competitive advantages. Whether positional goods add value to the social advantages already possessed by elite students is something research has not settled. However, what matters is that positional goods are generally *seen* to constitute relative advantage for those who acquire them.

Positional goods have two unusual features, which shape the character of competition in education. First, positional goods are not only scarce, like standard economic commodities, they are scarce in the *absolute* sense. The number of positions of social leadership is inherently limited by factors outside the control of the education system. When the size of the elite is limited, person A gains admission only at the expense of persons B, C, D etc. This is a zero-sum competition. Only certain places in education can provide superior opportunities,

or those opportunities would cease to be superior. Thus if the number of high-status degrees in medicine and law increases, their average value tends to fall. Positional goods cannot be expanded infinitely to meet demand, even high fee demand. Second, therefore, education is as much a competition between student consumers, as a competition between institutional producers. High value positional goods are always sold in a sellers' market. Markets in education operate like markets in other positional goods, for example masterpieces by a dead artist, or waterfront properties on Sydney Harbour. As demand increases, the number of the goods is constant, competition intensifies and prices rise, often spectacularly.

Positional competition is not about the intrinsic content of education, but its symbolic value. The quality of teaching and learning is incidental, except as a *post hoc* rationalisation of elite placement. In most people's eyes educational 'quality' is determined by where the status goods are found, rather than status being determined by quality. 'Quality' education tends to be associated with the leading schools and university faculties, with sandstone and ivy, rather than literacy rates or student evaluation of teaching. This does not mean that elite institutions do not provide good education. Rather, the point is that in elite institutions, good teaching and learning are produced not by competition *per se* but by other factors. For example, there is a concentration of private resources and education competent families in these institutions.

Positional goods are not the only social goods or individual attributes produced in education, far from it. But the more competitive that education becomes, the more that it tends to be determined by the dynamics of position. When the private cost of fees rises, families want to secure maximum economic value, and in this context the goal of improved learning achievement in itself (whereby everyone could be a winner) becomes less important than it might otherwise have been. Instead where that learning takes place tends to become more important. The elite institutions become more sought after and more elite, and attract a growing proportion of total educational resources.

The theory of positional goods suggests that if the competition is directed towards the allocation of positional advantage, an increase in the role and intensity of competition tends to *weaken* the extent to which strong producers are contested, and thus also weakens the pressures for improved product, efficiency and consumer response. As competitiveness is ratcheted upwards, the sellers' market is enhanced. The leading schools and university faculties have long waiting lists. These institutions choose the student-consumer, more than the student choosing them. They do not need to become cheaper, more efficient or more responsive to gain

support, and to expand would reduce their positional value. The waiting lists become longer. Excess demand for high value positional goods increases, but the top segment of the education market is not contestable. Here the barrier is not economic so much as social-cultural. New institutions might claim that they are genuine elite producers, but such claims are unconvincing no matter how good the marketing campaign. This is because there is no room for growth in the size of the elite, except in the distant future; and the already existing elite institutions block the entry of would-be new elite producers. The existing elite institutions have established their credentials in a long, slow accumulation of social investment, reputation and cultural authority, and they are not about to vacate their hard-won ground. Nor are people from the most powerful and wealthy social groups and professions likely to welcome the devaluation of their past educational credentials.

It is only at the bottom of an education market-system that competition operates as the textbook suggests. Institutions that have difficulty filling their places are contestable, and tend to compete on the basis of efficiency and consumer focus. They spend more on marketing than successful institutions. Nonetheless, they are constantly undermined by the flight of students to more prestigious competitors. Further, real improvements that they might make in learning and efficiency will tend to be under-recognised. However good the educational programs offered by these institutions, they are constantly being stymied by the popular consensus that institutions with low positional status do not provide a good quality education.

Thus educational competition is segmented. The vertical divisions between the segments are maintained by the character of positional goods. In the upper segment, the market is not contestable. The leading institutions are market immune. The laws of supply and demand do not operate. The lower segment is tied to low positional value and low social support, with inevitable effects on the potential for teaching, learning and research. Thus when competitive pressures are stepped up, there is no necessary tendency to across the board educational improvements. Adam Smith's invisible hand does not work. The benefits of market reform that were imagined by market reformers 'mysteriously' fail to appear.

The Unified National Market

The inter-related processes of competition reform and the positional factor in higher education will now be examined in the context of the two waves of reform in Australian higher education - the Labor Government reforms of 1987-1989 and the Liberal-National Government reforms of 1996.

Before the formation of the quasi-markets in higher education and training by Labor's John Dawkins, posi-

tional competition in Australian education took an economic market form only in elite private schooling and commercial training. In universities there was competition for status in research and professional courses, but tuition was free except for international students, student numbers were set by government, and public funding was distributed *pro-rata* on the basis of enrolments and discipline mix.

From the mid 1980s onwards there was a general international movement towards a more American model of higher education, based on market competition between institutions, mixed public and private funding of a mixed group of public and private institutions, and a *de facto* 'Ivy League' group of elite institutions. All the features of this model except for government-supported private institutions (Marginson, 1997c) were introduced by the Australian Government into the pre-existing higher education system, re-shaping its form and character. Here the outcomes of market reform were shaped not only by the dynamics of market competition itself but by the circumstances in which competition was installed: on one hand the pre-given positional hierarchy between institutions, on the other the accompanying government policies such as the 42 per cent enrolment growth 1987-1992, the abolition of the distinction between universities and CAEs in the new Unified National System and the creation of 18 new universities alongside the 18 existing universities, the decline in *per capita* public funding, and the corporatisation of institutional management.

In forming a quasi-market the then Labor Government translated the positional competition between individual students - grounded as it was in an informal pecking order of courses and institutions - into a formalised national economic-positional competition between the universities. The Unified National System was explicitly designed as a competitive market. 'Institutions will be able to compete for teaching and research resources on the basis of institutional merit and capacity' stated the Government (Dawkins, 1988, p. 28). The Relative Funding Model used to distribute Commonwealth funding was designed to establish a standardised funding base, 'a "level playing field" to allow institutions to compete on an equal basis' (Milligan 1990). Institutions were encouraged to sell courses to international and vocational postgraduate students, and raise more research funds from industry. Following the introduction of the visa charge for international students (1980), the \$250 Higher Education Administration Charge (1987), and full fee international marketing in higher education (1987), the commencement of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) at \$1800 per full time student was the first universal charge at a substantial level. The HECS legitimated a general 'user pays' regime. The mergers of 1988-1990 led to a re-forming of institutional missions and structures, quickened the growth of commercial activi-

ties, and encouraged a new layer of entrepreneurial managers to emerge.

The Government stimulated the development of the culture of competition by increasing its own use of national competitive mechanisms in research funding, and creating special funds subject to competitive tender for new initiatives and investigations, and improved university teaching.³ One-off initiatives such as the piloting of Open Learning Australia were also subject to tender. The rank ordering of institutions in the three rounds of quality assessment in 1993-1995 made official the practice of a pecking order in higher education and further entrenched competitive behaviours.

The capacity to raise commercial income was more crucial to some universities than others. The Australian National University enjoyed high public research funding and only 25 per cent of its 1993 income was from non-government sources, compared to 45 per cent at Macquarie University. The older universities, with positional standing and large alumni, raised more non-commercial private income in endowments and donations. Nevertheless, the proportion of total funds that was subject to competition increased quickly. Between 1983 and 1993 the government share of funding of higher education fell from 91 to 60 per cent. The HECS provided 13 per cent of income, and commercial fees more than 7 per cent, including almost 6 per cent from international marketing and 2 per cent from postgraduate and upgrading courses. Adding industry investment to this, the strictly commercial element was 10-12 per cent, and rising (DEET, 1996b). Adding non-commercial research and special Government funds, the proportion of all income subject to direct competition was about 20 per cent.

Effects of the Labor reforms

The Labor reforms were successful in establishing a culture of competition (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Bessant et al, in progress). While there was little evidence of consumer activism - consistent with the weakness of consumer sovereignty in a positional market - there was a pronounced increase in competitive producer behaviours. Competitive behaviours were more pervasive than were relations of economic exchange. Institutions had become defined as self-supporting economic agents rather than government-dependent, but their evolution was only partly determined by textbook economic logic. This was not only because reform had stopped at a quasi-market rather than a fully fledged economic market: even if higher education had been made a full fee economic market in 1987, positional factors would have shaped the character of that market, especially at the top of the hierarchy.

Within the quasi-market, in which non-market public funding remained the largest element, the commercial

markets in international education, postgraduate and continuing education, and research and consultancy operated as expanding 'islands' of capitalism. These activities were mostly linked to global markets (international education, postgraduate business training, research and development) with open-ended potential for growth and market share. Prices were affected by supply and demand; and there were some market perfectionism and consumer sovereignty. Scarcity was economic, not administered, being regulated by price. In his study of commercialisation in Australian science Leslie (1993) finds that market competition generated a 'new ethos' and a 'great excitement' despite the often low levels of income it generated. The new ethos was spread through devolution reforms which allowed departments and centres to retain part of the income they generated. The ethos was stronger in Australian than American higher education because of the aggressive commercial tone to much of the international marketing in Australia.

Nevertheless, as Leslie notes, most universities tend to be 'prestige maximisers' more than 'profit maximisers'. One vice-chancellor told Leslie that in relation to market activity that 'it's not the money, it's to make your mark as a university'. At the same time, academic prestige provided universities with an advantage in the commercial markets. The traditional academic activities and the newer commercial activities tended to feed each other.⁴

The heightened contest between universities and the entry of 18 new players in the market might suggest that performance pressures on the existing universities were much increased. This reckons without the primacy of positional factors in a segmented market, in which the leading universities monopolised high value education while protecting themselves from the sharp end of competition. The formation of the Unified National System led to a sorting out period in which a new market segmentation was established, but the position of the leading institutions was unchanged and, except for one group, new institutions remained low in the pecking order.

Symes (1996) maps the 'more aggressive promotional strategies' introduced by institutions in the wake of the Dawkins reforms. There were two imperatives: to position themselves in the mainstream, and to differentiate themselves from each other. The new marketing strategies, expressed in student prospectuses and advertising in newspapers and magazines, television, cinemas, billboards and even buses, were 'designed to create an unambiguous image profile of a particular university ... a brand name for its educational approach'. Increasingly, university advertising provided less information to aid student choices, and more statements about positional value. Some institutions began to claim that not only did they provide career opportunities, their graduates had an advantage over graduates from elsewhere (Symes,

1996; Kenway et al, 1993). At the same time, there were no prizes for being unique. The Government's requirement that comprehensive universities enrol at least 8000 students, coupled with the need to compete successfully for students and corporate funds, forced a higher level of conformity with recognisable models of the good university.

Institutions defined themselves within three segments, rooted in the pre-1987 positional structure. First, the older '*Sandstone*' universities in each State and the Australian Capital Territory: Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Adelaide, Western Australia; plus the first three modern universities, NSW, Monash and the Australian National University (ANU) which were similar in role. The University of Tasmania was a weaker '*Sandstone*'. The Labor reforms had the effect of forcing these universities to modernise their internal operations in order to retain their existing position, but all did this to the degree necessary except Sydney, which was perhaps so strongly placed that it was able to forgo a thoroughgoing modernisation. The '*Sandstones*' claimed leadership in research, the academic disciplines and professional training. Their marketing emphasised cloistered campuses and academic values. The University of Melbourne's motto was '*More than a degree*'.

The other ten pre-1987 universities trailed after the '*Sandstone*' group: Macquarie, New England, Newcastle, Wollongong, La Trobe, Deakin, Griffith, James Cook, Murdoch and Flinders universities. These can be designated the '*Wannabee Sandstones*'. The '*Wannabees*' drew back from a distinctive pitch of their own, either individually or as a group. They made the same claim to social prestige as the '*Sandstones*', but with less plausibility and conviction despite their academic achievements. Some had been founded in a determination to be different to orthodox universities - for example Murdoch, Griffith and La Trobe - but the competitive national market forced on them a new conformity. It was not so much that competition penalised institutional innovation, as that it valued innovation only within the terms of the market and penalised other forms. Competitive markets are not kind to innovations from '*left field*'.

The second segment was the four strongest of the new Universities of Technology in each State, based on the largest former CAEs, each of which had a long history as a leading institute of technology: the University of Technology in Sydney, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) in Melbourne, Queensland UT and Curtin UT in Western Australia. These can be designated the '*Utechs*'. The University of South Australia was marginal to this group: it faced certain difficulties not shared by the others, partly because of the size of the former teachers' college activities it had absorbed. The '*Utechs*' had strong reputations in business training, the technologies, and applied research in industry. They

emphasised the employability of their graduates. Queensland UT's slogan was '*A university for the real world*'.

The third segment was the other post-1987 universities: those of Western Sydney, Charles Sturt, Southern Cross, Victoria, Ballarat, Swinburne, Southern Queensland, Central Queensland, Edith Cowan, Canberra, Northern Territory, Australian Catholic University and Sunshine Coast University College. These '*New Universities*' were grounded in smaller CAEs and not able to compete on the basis of cloisters, research or ultra-employability. They emphasised access, teaching quality, customer friendliness and regional factors. The University of Southern Queensland called itself '*A university for students*' (Symes, 1996, pp. 137-138).

In one respect the market had become more contestable. The four '*Utechs*' strengthened their role and moved above the pre-1987 universities outside the '*Sandstone*' group. The '*Utechs*' competed with the '*Sandstones*' in some areas such as Engineering, Business, Computing and Communications, but overall the '*Utechs*' were lesser players in research and the non-vocational academic disciplines, had no presence in Medicine and were less important in Law. Overall, the formalised competition had probably strengthened the relative position of the '*Sandstones*'.

Why? Competition naturally favoured those institutions which entered the Unified National System with the capacity to compete. In 1988 only 10 universities had significant research libraries and nine had two thirds of all research students (Karmel, 1992). The former colleges received some funds for research infrastructure, but otherwise research grants were distributed on the basis of quality of proposal and track record. In 1992 90 per cent of Australian Research Council project funding went to pre-1987 universities. In 1993 the ANU, NSW, Melbourne, Sydney and Queensland accounted for 48 per cent of funded research activities, as measured by the Commonwealth (DEET, 1995a). Funding for research infrastructure and the research quantum were linked to competitive research performance; so that success bred success and failure bred failure. Commercial research also gravitated to the most prestigious institutions. The '*Sandstones*' actually enjoyed a higher proportion of the commercial research income than they did of the Commonwealth-provided research income.

The Liberal-National Party reforms

The first Liberal-National Party budget (Vanstone 1996) changed the settings of the quasi-market, with effects on both the character of competition and the position of individual institutions. The economic market aspect was enhanced. The slope of the hierarchy was steepened. Although it is still too early to be conclusive about the effects, it appears that the relative position of the '*Sandstones*' and '*Utechs*' again improved.

Competitive position, individual higher education institutions ^a 1993/1995, five different measures						
University, and ranking in first assessment by Quality Assurance Committee (1994) # = pre-1987 university	Enrolled students 1995	Share of research spending 1993	Research quantum funding 1995 ^b	1994 income per 1995 unit student load	Fee-paying overseas students 1995	Entrants in top quintile 1993 ^c
		%	\$million	\$s		%
Australian National [1] #	10 150	11.5	n.a.	35 265	949	74.8
NSW [1] #	26 534	9.5	23.065	20 016	3 594	31.6
Melbourne (1) #	29 905	9.4	26.643	19 163	1 725	47.3
Sydney [2] #	29 600	9.3	24.924	20 849	1 667	36.3
Queensland [1] #	24 891	8.4	20.616	18 605	1 233	74.5
Monash [2] #	38 998	7.2	17.235	15 902	4 431	34.8
WA [1] #	12 516	5.4	13.112	17 901	1 286	86.2
La Trobe [3] #	20 429	4.6	5.513	13 263	450	6.3
Adelaide [1] #	13 127	4.4	14.148	20 435	1 002	61.4
Macquarie [4] #	17 370	3.9	5.544	11 992	1 289	8.8
New England [5] #	13 815	2.9	4.822	15 366	477	0.5
Flinders [3] #	10 919	2.2	6.864	14 870	594	16.5
Griffith [3] #	18 135	2.1	3.040	13 262	1 053	5.2
Tasmania [3] #	11 892	2.0	5.396	13 971	982	n.a.
Newcastle [5] #	17 047	1.8	5.390	13 443	623	5.7
Technology, Sydney [4]	20 706	1.1	2.250	11 312	794	15.7
Murdoch [5] #	8 128	1.4	3.393	14 094	898	12.1
Queensland UT [4]	27 097	1.7	2.668	11 313	1 435	9.3
James Cook [5] #	7 859	1.6	3.345	15 453	355	5.5
Wollongong [2] #	11 641	1.5	3.311	13 386	1 539	0.2
Curtin UT [5]	20 104	1.3	3.663	12 992	3 123	n.a.
South Australia [5]	22 185	1.3	2.173	11 725	1 118	22.2
RMIT [3]	25 669	1.2	3.490	12 054	4 431	5.8
Victoria [6]	14 494	1.0	0.625	11 319	1 700	0.5
Deakin [4] #	24 856	0.6	1.525	11 361	983	1.8
Swinburne UT [6]	8 919	0.5	0.711	10 917	867	1.3
Edith Cowan [6]	17 546	0.5	0.306	10 478	964	1.7
Western Sydney [6]	22 803	0.4	1.319	11 367	1 540	1.2
Central Queensland [5]	8 357	0.3	0.384	13 322	609	1.8
Canberra [5]	8 477	0.2	0.522	11 131	663	25.2
Charles Sturt [5]	18 483	0.2	0.509	10 138	945	0.1
Northern Territory [6]	4 132	0.1	0.812	21 808	110	n.a.
Ballarat [6]	4 160	0.1	0.163	11 017	116	0.6
Australian Catholic [6]	8 868	0.1	0.140	9 470	174	n.a.
Southern Queensland [6]	13 692	0.1	0.325	9 300	2 024	3.7
other		0.0	0.000		169	
total	604 177	100.0	212.878	14 716	46.520	

a. Minor institutions excluded. b. Additional Commonwealth grants allocated according to the quantity and quality of research outputs. The ANU Institute of Advanced Studies is not funded as elsewhere. c. commencing students only: universities where a high proportion of entrants are school leavers are advantaged by this measure. Sources: DEET, 1994; 1995b; 1996a; 1996b

Sandstones Older pre-198 units ^a	Utecs Largest former CAEs	Wannabee Sandstones Other pre-1987 units	New Universities Other post-1987 units
Sydney NSW Melbourne Monash Queensland Western Australia Adelaide ANU [Canberra] Tasmania	UT Sydney RMIT [Melbourne] Queensland UT Curtin UT [Perth] U South Australia	New England Macquarie Newcastle Wollongong La Trobe Deakin Griffith James Cook Murdoch Flinders	Western Sydney Charles Sturt Southern Cross Victoria UT Ballarat Swinburne UT Southern Queensland Central Queensland Sunshine Coast UC Edith Cowan Northern Territory Canberra Australian Catholic
a. Excluding UNE which was founded in 1954, before Monash. However, in other respects to the 'Wannabees'. Italics indicate an institution that is marginal to the group.			

If so, this outcome was the combined effect of three decisions. First, the new Government reduced operating grants and decided not to supplement those grants for expected increases in salaries, an effective 12-15 per cent cut in public funding over 1997-1999. Second, the level of the HECS was raised by 35-125 per cent, depending on field of study. In law, business, arts and social science the HECS was fixed at more than half average costs. The annual income where compulsory HECS repayments begin was lowered from \$28,495 to \$20,701. These changes reduced the cost differences between the HECS and up-front fees, and provided stronger economic disincentives to participation. All else being equal this was certain to lead to a decline in potential demand for higher education and, if the decline was large enough, in some institutions and some courses numbers would fall. Third, institutions were permitted to charge up-front fees to up to 25 per cent of students in any course, in addition to the fees already paid by international students.

These changes were bound to have differential effects on institutions, depending on one hand on the segment of the market in which they were located, on the other on particular circumstances affecting them, such as their course mixes, cost structures and the patterns of local demand. A decline in demand was unlikely to affect enrolments in the prestigious institutions, where in most courses excess demand would persist. Its impact would be felt disproportionately in the New Universities, especially those subject to regional demography. Further, income from fee paying undergraduates was likely to be concentrated in the two strongest groups of institutions, and especially in the professional and business faculties of the 'Sandstones'. Universities with difficulty filling their funded student load quota were effectively excluded from the market in fee-based undergraduate education. The Government specified that any institution that offered fee-based places and failed to reach its agreed

level of government-funded student load would be fined \$9000 per fee paying undergraduate.

In the Vanstone market, the status effects and economic effects tended to reinforce each other. The 'Sandstones' already raised the most dollars from private industry, postgraduates, undergraduate fee paying students, and alumni. The increase in tuition charges now emphasised the positional differences, while enhanced positional prestige could be expected to increase the 'Sandstone' share of all forms of private income. First, direct fee-charging for undergraduates created a new measure of elitism, the capacity to charge fees in what was still a largely HECS-based system. Second, the increases in HECS forced students and their families to focus more firmly on maximising value for money. In the longer term this was likely to lead to a 'flight' of students to what were perceived as the stronger and safer choices. There were early signs of this happening in the first year of the Vanstone market in 1997. For example in Victoria, applications for the University of Melbourne increased although overall State applications were down on the 1996 figure. Longer queues outside the 'Sandstones' could be expected to have feedback effects, again increasing both their positional status and their capacity to raise private monies. At the same time, in an environment in which public funding was falling it was possible that in future some 'Sandstones' might divest themselves of less prestigious courses heavily dependent on public funding, for example in Nursing and Education, and close those sites that were least cost-effective in corporate terms. The University of NSW's decision to divest itself of the St. George campus was a case in point.

In the new market it was likely that the 'Utechs' had also gained. They were already seen by many people as a superior vocational investment, and they had significant capacity to increase income from industry, from international students (for example RMIT), from postgraduates (for example UTS), and from alumni.

In contrast, the overall position of the 'Wannabee' group was likely to deteriorate. They had been developed as comprehensive universities with research and doctoral programs at world class levels. This profile was sustainable when universities were largely publicly funded, and on a common basis. But when direct fees charging and other private income became important, relative status came into play, and all else being equal the number of high quality high prestige institutions was bound to fall. Economic markets rank institutions in a hierarchy, and concentrate wealth and high quality goods on select groups of producers and consumers. To enhance the economic market was to enhance these effects. The pattern was unlikely to be uniform across the 'Wannabee' group. Some were better placed than others: for example Macquarie, Griffith and Flinders were very strong in certain areas of research; Wollongong was very effective in the commercial markets. Some faced a protracted crisis of role. As in the 'Sandstone' group, those 'Wannabees' that had absorbed large CAE populations often faced more difficulties than their compatriots. But for the group as a whole, their prospects of moving up the hierarchy, of entering the 'Sandstone' group, were now less favourable than before - not least because their capacity to build a reputation on the basis of innovations in disciplines and university organisation was circumscribed. As noted, economic markets mostly support only those innovations that generate direct returns, and tend to penalise bolder organisational changes that challenge the 'Sandstone' norms.

In the post-1996 system the 'New Universities' were confirmed in their junior status, and in many if not most cases their relative position was likely to deteriorate. These institutions were hard hit by the reductions in public funding. Some had yet to complete their early growth, while others had yet to consolidate. Few were likely to make much money from undergraduate or postgraduate fees. Some might need to work hard to maintain university status by grounding themselves in their localities while moving closer to TAFE, or developing niche specialities. Institutions in regional areas were likely to be in special difficulties unless participation in higher education was growing rapidly, as in parts of Queensland (UNE, the most regionally bound 'Wannabee', shared some of the difficulties of the regional 'New Universities'). On the other hand, some of the New Universities that rested on well-established CAEs had significant reputational assets. The outcomes were yet to be confirmed by empirical research, and it was likely some "New Universities" would do better than their compatriots, but clearly the overall settings had become less favourable. Again, this meant the market had become less contestable than before.

Conclusion

The problems faced by the 'Wannabees' in the post-1996 market do not derive from a decline in the quality of their teaching and/or research. These problems are the consequence of heightened competition within an already segmented market. By the same token, regardless of product quality, efficiency, or sensitivity to student-customers, the competitive position of the 'Sandstones' and the 'Utechs' appears to have improved simply as a function of system redesign. It is a striking illustration of the manner in which intensified competition - rather than placing the market leaders on notice and opening up the system in meritocratic fashion - instead tends to produce a 'flight' of students, money, and prestige to the top institutions. Because it is a zero-sum contest, these institutions are reinforced at the expense of other institutions, their staff and their students.

The full evidence is yet to be gathered, but there is every sign that in the Vanstone system, market segmentation in higher education is becoming more deeply entrenched. With direct fee charging of undergraduates, the leading institutions will start to function in the manner of elite private schools and orientate to a similar financially-selected clientele. In this context price and status barriers coincide, and the local 'Ivy League' becomes better protected from consumer sovereignty. Further down the track, competition will develop a global dimension, and it will be the 'Sandstones' and 'Utechs' that will have the best prospects of becoming global players, alone or in concert with other institutions. It will be increasingly difficult for the newer universities to challenge the top 12 institutions. The climate might be competitive but the market in high value education is scarcely a contestable market.

Research has yet to determine with precision the effects of reform on trends in efficiency and consumer responsiveness. What this article has argued is that if productivity, efficiency and consumer responsiveness in the leading institutions have improved, such improvements are *incidental* to competition reform - which suggests that any credit for such improvements should be claimed not by the Government but by the institutions. While the spirit and the mechanisms of competition have become entrenched, the automatic effects intended by reform have not. At the bottom end of the market, institutions find themselves cutting costs and marketing harder, but this does not lead to any improvement in their status and it probably takes place at the expense of teaching and learning quality.

What of the unintended outcomes of a decade of formal competition? The positional element has become more important than before in determining the quality of education. The social position of the leading universities is stronger, which will please some and concern others. Despite 18 new universities, with the significant excep-

tion of the 'Utechs' the meritocratic element in institutional performance is in decline. This parallels the history of competition in American higher education, where despite vast growth there has been little change in the composition of the Ivy League since the 1920s. These unintended outcomes are not incidental. They are *the direct and predictable result* of the splicing together of positional competition and market economy.

In sites other than education, market competition is welcomed by liberals but opposed by many conservatives because of the potential of market relations to corrode tradition and property. There seems a paradox here, for in education, hyper-competition and market reform tend to be strongly supported by most conservatives. But this support is a paradox only if the outcomes of competition reform are seen as unintended. For classical conservatives, the conservation of hierarchy and social power are ends in themselves. This suggests that the paradox lies in the support of liberals and meritocrats for the competition reform agenda.

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Notes

1. It can be noted only in passing here that given the central role of higher education in allocating social rewards and forming subjectivities, the move to a competitive culture in the universities has immense long term implications for all social relations: see Marginson 1997b.
2. Niklasson (1996) defines quasi-markets in term of the degree of government intervention. By contrast in this article 'quasi-market' is understood as an economic rather than political definition: it is simply a market that is only partly formed. The problem created by Niklasson's definition is that governments may intervene even in fully developed capitalist economic markets: for more discussion see Marginson 1997b, chapters 2 and 8. In the real world there is no such thing as perfect competition uncontaminated by secular influences (and if there has to be an imaginary utopia it is not clear why anyone should prefer that one).
3. The Priority (Reserve) Fund, the Evaluations and Investigations Program, the Commonwealth Staff Development Scheme, and grants from the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching.
4. If HECS payments are counted as private expenditure, between 1975-76 and 1992-93, government final consumption expenditure per unit of student load fell by one third (Marginson 1997a, pp. 218-220). The average student staff ratio deteriorated from 12 to 1 in 1987 to 18 to 1 in 1994 (ABS 4224.0). Universities had to strengthen activities capable of generating commercial income, relative to activities that were not. "All production aimed at direct use value decreases the number of those engaged in exchange, as well as the sum of exchange values thrown into circulation", notes Marx. Hence the tendency of capital "continually to enlarge the periphery of circulation", and to 'transform it at all points into production spurred on by capital' (Marx 1973, p. 408).

Privacy issues and new technologies*

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Among the many challenges posed by new information and communications technologies is to address the question of what it all means for individual privacy. Far-reaching changes to the way we communicate with each other, with organisations and with the world at large are presently being ushered in, and some of these have quite significant implications for our personal privacy. While it is true that cultures are changing, I suggest there are parts of the present culture that we should aim to preserve. Personal privacy is one of these.

The right to privacy is such a basic, universal expectation, that it is rarely as clearly articulated as it is felt, and rarely more keenly felt than when it is threatened. But how do we protect it in the face of fundamental changes to our modes and means of communication? How can we avail ourselves of the best that the technology has to offer without at the same time losing autonomy, anonymity, and choice over who knows us and what we're doing? Privacy in the context of new technologies is very much about how we define ourselves as we interact with others via complex electronic systems and connections.

A conscious effort is required to ensure we do not gradually and unwittingly accept a diminution of our privacy rights. Universities, as significant users of new technologies, need to assess the privacy implications of using new technologies by asking: What does it mean for the individual? Does it reduce or support individual autonomy, choice, sense of security, trust? What information does it generate about individuals and how is it used? What controls exist to protect the integrity of the transaction?

Ideally, this assessment should take place before the event; if not there is a chance that any infringements on privacy will slow the pace and extent to which the new service will be embraced by the very communities they are designed for. In any case, the assessment should not take place only once, but be a continuing appraisal of the impact on our private lives. To quote David Flaherty, formerly a leading privacy scholar and now the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Province of British Columbia:

Users of telecommunications services and digital commerce need to reflect on a regular basis on the privacy implications of the technology that they happen to be

using in any aspect of their professional or personal lives (which technology, like the Internet, is in fact becoming more and more intertwined as the distinction between home and workplace becomes more blurred).¹

The need to protect our privacy, particularly in the light of the take-up of new technologies, is one of the reasons why the federal government has proposed to extend privacy protections to the private sector. In September 1996 the federal Attorney-General released a Discussion Paper, "Privacy Protection in the Private Sector", which sets out one possible framework for a private sector privacy regime. (The Discussion Paper is available on the Internet at <http://www.agps.gov.au/customer/agd/clrc/privacy.htm>.) Tertiary institutions, as significant users of new technologies and as holders of large amounts of personal information, will no doubt be interested in the outcome of this current review.

Public concerns about personal privacy

Opinion polls show that the public is increasingly uneasy about the effect of modern technology on privacy. In 1990, 67% of the people interviewed said privacy was a very important social issue. Four years later it was 75%. People feel that governments can learn anything about them. They also tend to have less trust in the way commercial organisations handle their personal information than government or professionals.

Among the reasons for the increased concern is developments in information technology. 6 in 10 people believe they have lost control over how their personal information is used and who it is passed on to. People resent unwanted intrusions from mail and telephone marketing companies. More than 9 in 10 think organisations should get their permission before passing on their information to somebody else.

Against this backdrop we need to consider the effects on personal privacy of new technologies and the way they have been applied to the services we now receive. Networked information and communications services, smart cards, calling line identification, and data warehousing are making possible new ways of personal and commercial interactions, the effects of which are still to be fully understood. Australians have been eager to take up electronic banking, new telecommunications services, EFTPOS, the Internet, and we can reasonably expect a strong take-up of the full range of interactive services promised by the roll out of fibre optic cable.

*This article is based on an address given to "New Technology and Tertiary Education: Changing the Culture" seminar held 11 July 1996, Storey Hall, RMIT, Melbourne.

Most of these provide a means of communication, or a means of accessing information. They generally require the user to identify themselves to gain access and records are usually generated about the transaction. People's participation and use, therefore, leads to a data trail about them.

Data trails

Most people are unaware of the extent to which their use of electronic systems is recorded. There are virtually no online activities or services that guarantee an absolute right to privacy. It is now possible to monitor people's use of the World Wide Web. A Californian software company is developing software specially for employers that will allow tracking of every WWW site, news group or file transfer location visited by employees, and record the size of each file downloaded. The company promotes the software in the following way:

*We're giving employers something like an itemised phone bill ... The spinoff is that they can see what the employees are doing.*²

There are also commercial incentives to record people's use of the Internet. Some companies are reportedly logging e-mail addresses to help gauge the effectiveness of advertisements they pay for on other organisations' web sites. At the same time they can chart how customers move through web sites and find out what type of computer they have and the speed of their connection.³ Qualitative information can also be obtained. Information generated as a result of people's visits to web sites enables quite detailed profiles to be compiled about users' needs, habits and purchases. Most people would have no prior notice that this occurred. Interestingly, some of the larger service providers are now offering on-screen notice and opt-out options for people who prefer not to be approached with marketing offers and the like as a result of their use of online services.

A new technology from Netscape, called Cookies, allows a server to download a cookie with a secret code into a user's web browser for storage on their PC. Web sites are thus able to mark their readers with what has been described as an indelible marker. "Each time you revisit the web site, the server will know that it's you."⁴

Expectations of anonymity and confidentiality

The capacity of new technologies to record our activities challenges our expectations of anonymity and confidentiality. Whereas new technologies are offered to us as new and better ways of doing essentially the same things we have always done, they are in fact changing the fabric of our communications.

Most of us have expectations that our private communications will remain private. However, how can we

know, now, what is private and what is public? While we may use e-mail in the same way as we pick up the telephone or write a letter, we cannot be sure that such a communication will be limited to the person of our choice. Electronic mail via the Internet is generally understood as being inherently insecure, as are the accompanying information storage systems. And contrary to many people's expectations, items posted to chat groups or newsgroups may not be anonymous. As noted by an international grouping of Data Protection Commissioners considering data protection issues on the Internet, "Never send or keep anything in your mailbox that you would mind seeing on the evening news."⁵ The growing use of the Internet and e-mail in universities, by both staff and students, would suggest that these problems will become of increasing importance for educational institutions in the future.

Even the privacy of our telephone conversations now seems to be at risk. A newspaper article in April 1996 heralded the arrival onto the Australian market of a telephone call recording device which could be activated by one of the parties at the push of a button, without the other party having to consent to the recording.⁶

An article in LASIE journal in 1995 raised the interesting scenario of the potential breach of confidentiality that can arise in connection with a library undertaking reference searches, using online technology, on behalf of a client. The writer noted that a librarian could breach a person's expectations of confidentiality by posting difficult reference queries over the Internet, thereby exposing the identity of the enquirer and the nature of their query.⁷ This is a good example of how the medium of communication can alter the intent and scope of the communication itself.

New services such as the Internet also challenge our notions of what is public and what is private information. An example was the issue reported in the press during 1996 of the making available of family court judgments over the Internet. Certainly, there are significant advantages to the community in making legal proceedings more open and accessible. However, the problem here, from a privacy perspective, is that making the information available over the Internet greatly increases the potential for the information to be searched, scrutinised and used for a much wider variety of reasons beyond the purposes for which it was published in the first place. This means that there could be a need to seriously consider de-identifying the information to protect the privacy of the individuals concerned, who otherwise could be targeted by Internet users for quite unrelated and unwelcome purposes.

Of course, it is not only our interaction with the Internet that raises privacy concerns. Intelligent systems used by libraries allow our borrowing histories to be recorded. Smart card technology which uses an in-built

computer chip, and which has been trialed in Australia on a number of occasions, has significant information storage capacity. If used in daily contexts such as shopping and using public transport, quite detailed pictures could be developed about those day to day activities we normally regard as private. Our preferences and choices can be easily recorded using such technologies. They result in identifying us when ordinarily we would be anonymous. This is not to say that there is anything inherently valuable about anonymity *per se*, but it could be argued that there is a certain freedom that comes from not having to identify ourselves before engaging in such basic activities as shopping, moving around, and other public interactions.

Anarchy on the Net

Another difficult issue surrounding the use of the Internet is that standards of behaviour and data management practices cannot be imposed by laws, nor, indeed, by any means. There is no overall responsibility assigned to a single body and there is no international oversight mechanism to enforce any legal obligations which might be directed to its use. Essentially, then, control of the Internet is left to whatever national controls governments can persuade users to accept and/or norms of behaviour developed by the users themselves.

It is clear, also, that the Internet poses special challenges to those who would seek to apply traditional privacy principles to it. Notions of responsibility, ownership of information, control over its dissemination, people's awareness of collection of personal information, knowledge and consent as to its use and disclosure sit uneasily alongside the operating environment of the Internet.

Security concerns

Security is a key feature of privacy protection in the electronic environment. Information systems need to be designed in such a way that they give effect to broader information handling policies. Questions about who has access to information, how it may be used, and whether it can be disclosed, need technical as well as policy responses. Also, people's willingness to embrace new technologies will largely be determined by their level of confidence in the security aspects of new systems.

As we use electronic commerce more and more we will need to develop trust in payment systems and how our private financial information will be protected against unauthorised access and use. Authentication techniques will need to be robust. Developments in digital signatures, iris recognition, retina scans, voice recognition and keystroke recognition are among the new ways of confirming our identity and protecting our information in the use of new systems. However, the ethical implications of these new-generation identification systems need to be kept in mind so that we don't become slaves

to them and, in the process, undermine fundamental freedoms.

Database developments

New database technology now makes possible the collection, aggregation, manipulation, massaging and disposal of vast quantities of information. When this is personal information, it threatens our ability to control what others know about us. It threatens our uniqueness. This could have various implications in the university context.

Student records are a potentially sensitive class of personal information. From a privacy perspective, they should not be used for any purposes beyond the purpose of collection.

An article in a privacy journal earlier this year noted that the University of Delaware in the United States has set up a system whereby any student by producing a personal identifying number, may access his or her grades, class schedule, financial aid information and unofficial transcript on a World Wide Web site created by the university. Digitised photographs of students are available online to administrators and to the individual students, but not yet to faculty members or fellow students. The data is encrypted and student ID numbers and PIN numbers are required to access individual records. Registrars and information specialists on other campuses have expressed concerns about the possibility for breaches of confidentiality or other misuse in such an environment and a task force is presently further studying the issue.⁸

An Australian university recently sought the advice of the Privacy Commissioner's office about the practice of publishing student results in a public place at the university showing student ID number. The practice raised privacy issues because students at the university were able to use the ID number to find out the name of the student associated with that ID number by using the university's e-mail facilities. This practice would not have been possible in the days when such technology was not available to students and others.

There are many other types of sensitive information in the possession of universities, and it does not take a great deal of imagination to understand the privacy implications of improper access to or use of such information when it is contained in databases and accessible through internal (and external) networks. Information likely to be collected includes:

- Academic records;
- Enrolment details, including previous education, employment, family information and financial information, including whether receiving government benefits;
- Times of classes and lectures attended and where;

- Records of involvement in extra-curricular activities and clubs, such as student union and political groups;
- Library records;
- Student counselling files;
- Records of access to online services, including the Internet;
- Health and medical records;
- Details of complaints or grievances which may be lodged by students;
- Personnel records and employee files, including details of contracts with academic staff.

Each of these categories of information may have been given or gathered free of privacy concerns, yet if all this information is brought together, it has the potential to create a very detailed picture of an individual that he or she would not have anticipated when the information was given. Also, people giving information have certain expectations about the way it will be used, and therefore these expectations must be recognised in a formalised way, for example in the form of an internal privacy policy within institutions.

Some readers may be aware of the controversy which arose in early 1996 surrounding the introduction of a smart card (the QuickLink card) by the student union at the University of Newcastle. The card served as the union membership identification card and also had to be presented to obtain discounts and privileges which are accorded to students as union members. Students expressed concerns, in particular, about the lack of choice in having to have such a card, and also about the implications of their personal membership details being kept on a database associated with the scheme (as reported in the press). The card has since been withdrawn from use.

What can be done to protect privacy?

Fair information handling practices of the type found in the *Privacy Act 1988* and in the *OECD Guidelines for the Protection of Privacy and Transborder Flows of Personal Data* provide a framework for developing information systems which protect individual privacy.

Organisations such as universities need to ask themselves beforehand:

- What information do we gather?
- Is it necessary?
- What do we do with it? For what purposes is it used? What controls/limits are there on use? Is use with the consent of individuals?

- What controls are there on improper or inappropriate disclosure of information?
- What possibilities are there to provide individuals with choice?

Overlaying these issues upon the technological environment, institutions should be exploring ways of offering better privacy protection around their use of systems. They include encryption systems, enhanced password protection, anonymous use of systems where possible, and clear separation of transaction data from content data.

Institutions should use privacy impact statements to assess the possible privacy implications associated with a new technology before it is introduced.

Importantly, good information handling practices need to be developed. Universities need to take active steps to encourage awareness among the community, students and staff, about privacy issues associated with their use of technology. If it is not possible to offer guarantees of confidentiality, people should be made aware of this so they can decide what kind of information they may communicate via differing media. Use of personal information gathered in the university context must be limited to the purpose for which it was collected and must not be generally disclosed without the individual's consent.

Issues to consider in establishing a privacy policy for online services

A useful set of standards to protect privacy in the online environment has been developed by a grouping of Data Protection Commissioners in Germany.⁹ They may provide a starting point for universities in addressing privacy issues within their own environment. The main aspects of that framework are reproduced below.

1. *Anonymous use or sparing use of data:* Online services should be designed so that as little data as possible is collected, processed and used. Anonymous use and payment forms should be offered. If completely anonymous use is not possible, the use of pseudonyms may be considered, and identifying the user should only occur if there is substantiated legal interest in the identification.
2. *Basic data:* This should only be collected, processed and used as necessary for the substantiation and management of a contractual relationship and for system maintenance. It can be used for advertising and market research if the individual has not objected, but can only be disclosed to third parties with express consent.
3. *Connection and billing data:* The use of this kind of information should be limited to the purpose of conveying offers and for billing purposes and should

be deleted when it is no longer required. Storage of billing data should not allow recognition of the time, duration, content etc of specific communications and connection and billing data may only be used for the purposes for which it is recorded, unless express consent is given.

4. *Interaction data*: Interactive data may only be collected with the knowledge and express consent of the individual, and may only be processed and used for purposes limited to the purpose for which it was collected. (Interaction data is data, for example, which is entered while searching encyclopaedias or in online games.) Similar restraints apply as above.
5. *Consent*: A contractual relationship must not be made dependent on the individual concerned consenting to the processing/use of personal data outside of the permissible purposes for which it was recorded. If any data is collected on the basis of consent, consent may be withdrawn at any time. A minimum standard of consent must be defined - including the consequences of consent and the right to withdraw consent and people must be able to access consents, conditions of service etc.
6. *Transparency of the services and control of the data transmission by the participants*: The automatic transmission of data is to be restricted to the amount necessary to fulfil the contract, and any transmission beyond that requires special consent. With this technology, participants must be informed that their data is to be transmitted and stored when using electronic services and be able to stop the process at any time. The user software must be able to be activated by the user to record the flow of data. Service providers must not use any recognisably insecure networks, and state of the art processes (e.g. in cryptography) are to be used.
7. *Rights of those affected*: Individuals must be given access to information, and to blocking, correction and deletion of information.
8. *Data protection inspection*: Effective, independent and permanent data protection supervision is to be guaranteed.
10. *Data protection regulation*. Regulation capable of dealing with cross-border services is necessary. In the short term persons affected must be given suitable means to uphold their data protection rights.

Interestingly, some of the overseas sources of advice on privacy protection also refer to the obligation resting on individuals in relation to protecting their privacy as they interact with new technologies.¹⁰ The Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Province of British

Columbia encourages individual users to become sensitive and aware users and to engage in self protection.

*Individuals have to come to grips with the surveillance capacity of retail credit cards, automated teller machines, electronic cash transactions, various interactive services, telephone calling cards, cellular telephones, the proliferation of other unique identifiers, and smart cards.*¹¹

But he also says that the Internet community needs to promote even more of a culture in which the tracking of digital footprints, by whatever method, is illegal, immoral and unethical without individual consent.

We are all sailing on uncharted waters when it comes to finding ways to protect intangible values, such as privacy, in the equally intangible realm of cyberspace. But we should not be deterred from the attempt. It is vital to ensure that we as individuals control the social effects of these technologies and not the other way around.

Endnotes

1. David H. Flaherty, PhD, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Province of British Columbia, 'Some reflections on privacy in electronic communications with special reference to the Internet and the situation in British Columbia', *Special Colloquium on "The Internet: Beyond the Year 2000*, University of Toronto, April 28-May 1, 1996.
2. Quoted in *Privacy Times*, May 17, 1996, p.9.
3. See *Privacy Journal*, February 1996, p.5.
4. See *Privacy Journal*, February 1996, p.5.
5. International Working Group on Data Protection in Telecommunications, *Data Protection on the Internet: report and guidance*, 21 May 1996.
6. Reported in *The Australian*, April 16, 1996, p.49.
7. Pace, Leslie, "Privacy on communications networks", *LASIE*, Vol 25, Nos 4 & 5, pp 72-3.
8. 'Student Info in Cyberspace', *Privacy Journal* March 1996, p.1.
9. These standards come from Germany and are the result of a resolution agreed to at the Conference of Data Protection Commissioners of the Federation and the Laender. The standards were brought forward for discussion at a meeting of International Data Protection Commissioners held in Budapest on 15-16 April 1996. The resolution is entitled *Resolution of the Conference of Data Protection Commissioners of the Federation and the Laender of 29 April 1996 on key points for the regulation in matters of data protection of online services*.
10. See Privacy Working Group, Information Policy Committee, Information Infrastructure Task Force *Privacy and the National Information Infrastructure: principles for providing and using personal information*, June 6, 1995, particularly Principle IIIA.
11. David H. Flaherty, PhD *op cit*.

Long distance teaching: The impact of offshore programs and information technology on academic work

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Abstract

Australia's higher education system has become financially dependent on fee-paying international students and is constantly seeking ways to enhance its competitiveness in overseas markets. Offshore teaching programs have become an attractive strategy for institutions hoping to improve their profile and gain additional market share. Long distance teaching is also being undertaken via use of information technology. Academic staff are increasingly required to spend time teaching in offshore programs, and will be involved in greater use of information technology to deliver their services. These developments raise issues relating to quality control, curriculum development, increased workloads and job satisfaction. This paper overviews recent developments in these areas and discusses their implications for the future of academic work.

The internationalisation of Australian higher education

According to the Institute for International Education (IIE), the level of internationalisation within an education system can be measured by the proportion of international students to total enrolments (Davis, 1995). Using this criteria, Australia's university sector is one of the most internationalised in the world (Table 1). International students comprised a higher proportion of total university enrolments in Australia than any of the other leading host nations attracting international students. In 1993, these students comprised around 7.4 per cent of all undertaking higher education (UNESCO, 1996). In many Australian universities, international students account for over 10 per cent of total enrolments.

Following the decision by the Commonwealth Government to permit Australian universities to recruit full-fee paying international students in 1985/86, the numbers of international students grew rapidly. From 1980 to 1990 the average annual growth rate was 12.7 per cent (Kemp, 1990 :3, DEET, 1996).

Table 1: International student & total university enrolments - Major suppliers 1993*

Host Country	Foreign enrolment	Total enrolment	% of total enrolment
Australia	42,415	575,617	7.4%
France	139,562	2,074,591	6.7%
United Kingdom	95,594	1,528,389	6.2%
Germany **	116,474	2,033,702	5.7%
Canada	35,451	874,604	4.0%
United States	449,749	14,473,106	3.1%

* All figures for higher education only
** Figures for West Germany in 1991. Sources: (Unesco 1996)

Importantly, the Commonwealth gave the universities the right to retain the funds they generated from international student fees. Many universities now earn between \$28 and \$45 million per annum from this source. Any loss of such income would result in a dramatic shedding of both academic and non-academic staff and the reduction of numerous services (Mazzarol and Soutar, 1996).

Australia's university sector is therefore both highly internationalised and increasingly dependent on internationalisation for its long-term financial well being. The shift towards reduced levels of Commonwealth recurrent funding has coincided with these developments to promote an environment of competitive positioning and aggressive marketing among institutions.

Spatial pre-emption and forward integration

Education, like other professional services, suffers from several marketing related problems. By nature services are intangible; it is usually difficult to separate their

production from their consumption; they cannot be easily stored; and there is often considerable variation in the quality of service delivered from one supplier to the next (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1985).

A major problem associated with intangibility is the difficulty it creates for evaluation of the service prior to purchase. For professional services such as education, there is a higher perceived risk of making an incorrect purchase decision (Hill and Neeley, 1988). Most prospective students rely heavily on word of mouth referrals when making decisions on overseas study (Harris and Rhall, 1993; ELICOS, 1995).

Further problems arise from the difficulty associated with separating production from consumption in services. It is largely for this reason that the traditional approach to delivering international education has seen students travel overseas to study in the supplier country. Within other service industries the solution to the dilemma of inseparability of production and consumption has been to make the service available through delivery outlets (Allen, 1988). This explains the proliferation of fast-food outlets throughout most cities, and the growth of franchising in the services sector. Theories of competitive advantage suggest that service enterprises who are seeking to gain an edge in the market need to consider the placement of strategically located outlets as a key strategy. This concept is referred to as "spatial pre-emption", to describe the process of putting a service outlet in a location in advance of the competition (Bharadwaj, Varadarajan and Fahy, 1993).

In seeking to gain a competitive advantage in international markets, many Australian universities have established offshore teaching programs usually in conjunction with a partner in the target market. This process of "forward integration" has been identified in the literature as a means by which services enterprises can overcome the difficulties associated with being unable to separate production from consumption and the perishability of services (Nicouland 1989; Erramilli and Rao, 1990; Erramilli, 1991). The formation of a strategic alliance where an overseas college offers the degrees of an Australian university is commonly referred to as twinning. While the exact number of offshore programs is unknown, in 1993 there were an estimated fourteen Australian universities with such programs (Griggs, 1993).

The use of forward integration and spatial pre-emption via the establishment of offshore teaching programs appears to be a potential strategy for achieving a competitive advantage in international education (Soutar and Mazarrol, 1995). Its popularity has grown in recent years. In 1993/94, for example, there were at least twenty-six universities offering postgraduate degrees via offshore teaching programs in Singapore, and a further twenty-five universities with similar programs in Hong Kong (Hamill, 1994). These institutions were from Australia,

the United Kingdom, United States, Holland, Ireland and Portugal. In Malaysia, there are some 150 to 200 private colleges which have twinning agreements with overseas universities (Ng and Ho, 1995).

As a marketing tool, twinning offers many advantages. It provides greater accessibility to the education service, secures a regular supply of prospective students from the sister institution, and frequently lowers the overall cost of the education to the student (Smart, 1988: 28). However, a major problem with offering courses through such strategic alliances is the maintenance of the quality of the service. Locally hired teaching staff must possess the same qualifications and skills as the Australian academics, and course content and teaching materials should be of equivalent standard, although this can be difficult to assure (Nicholls, 1987).

The difficulties associated with maintaining service quality make exporting service a more complex than exporting goods. Due to the high degree of producer/consumer interaction in services such as education, there is a strong desire for direct control and presence by the producer during the early phases of export development (Vanermerwe and Chadwick, 1989). Many service exporters prefer to retain control over the export channel until their overseas market experience increases (Erramilli, 1991). This involves sending Australian academic staff overseas to teach on offshore programs, ensuring greater control over the operation.

An example of this is Curtin University of Technology, which in 1993/94 had one in three of its students from the School of Management and Marketing located offshore in twinning programs (Assael 1995: 749). Academic staff are required to travel offshore several times during the year to deliver lectures and liaise with locally employed staff. Staff are frequently required to work over weekends during these visits. This is a pattern typical of most of the other Australian universities which have offshore teaching programs.

Academic staff are usually paid for their teaching in offshore programs over and above their salaries for regular teaching loads in Australia. Staff who participate in such offshore programs can earn substantial additional income, and enjoy international travel. However, as this offshore teaching is undertaken separately from regular teaching and research activities, the prolonged absence from Australia can impose stress. Staff engaged in regular offshore teaching activities are less accessible for local students and have less time for research and publishing.

Many universities treat offshore teaching more as voluntary or optional, although the need to maintain the quality and viability of offshore programs has seen this change. Recent job descriptions in advertised positions for business schools mention offshore teaching as part of employment requirements¹. It is anticipated that as the

trend towards offshore teaching programs grows, the ability to travel regularly and teach in such programs will become essential to academic work within many universities. This may have subsequent implications for academic staff who find it difficult to travel regularly (e.g. due to family commitments or health).

Technology and the virtual academic

The difficulties associated with delivering services over long distances include quality control and perishability. These can potentially be overcome via the use of information technology. A range of technologies are now available that enable education services to be captured and stored on electronic media for later use and reuse, or delivered electronically over long-distances.

In offshore delivery, use is being made of video conferencing as a means of delivering lectures long distance. It was not until the early 1990s that video conferences were first used by Australian universities. However, by 1993 some nineteen institutions had such facilities (Latchem, Mitchell and Atkinson, 1993). Video conference links have been used by Curtin University of Technology to link staff and students together in Perth and Singapore (King and Hedges, 1995). Deakin University is implementing desktop video conferencing to transmit digitised images, as well as graphics and statistics simultaneously to several students via ISDN.

Deakin University has pioneered distance education via information technology and had an estimated 20,000 students studying externally via various advanced media in 1995 (Ashenden and Milligan, 1995). This has involved delivering education services to external students both in Australia and overseas using electronic mail. Students can access the university's mainframe computer to communicate with each other and their tutors. They are also able to access course material 24 hours per day, seven days a week, and take tests which are marked by the computer (Hamer, 1993).

In conjunction with the growth of electronic mail is the use of the Internet as a medium of service delivery. Currently the Internet or World Wide Web is a somewhat loosely organised network of computers covering an estimated 150 countries and 30 million users. The Internet has become a useful marketing tool for many universities, who now view their web site or "home pages" as a necessary element in their promotion. Its use as a medium of service delivery for education is still somewhat rudimentary. Although students make extensive use of the Internet for gathering information, it has not been widely used for interactive teaching or instruction. However, the potential is there for the Internet to be used for "real time" keyboard-based discussions or tutorials using Internet Relay Chat. Although some limitations currently exist on the practical use of the Internet for delivery of higher education programs, these

gaps will soon be closed, raising the question of how best to make use of this new technology?

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) currently has many of its subjects on the Web. For example, the unit 6.004 Computation Structures has a home page that includes links to technical and administrative material, lecture notes, activities, lab instructions and test items. Another MIT course 4.605 Introduction to the History and Theory of Architecture has a home page that offers fully indexed graphics of architectural images².

New information technology opens an opportunity for delivery of education offshore both in real time and via packaged interactive multimedia (Hosie, 1993). It has been argued that quality control over the delivery of education services can be maintained via technologically-mediated learning (TML) (Hosie, 1993; Lundin, 1993). Interactive multimedia has been found to provide an effective medium for teaching mechanical and procedural skills (Fletcher, 1990). In cases it has reduced training time by 30 to 60 per cent, a substantial cost saving (De Bloois, 1982; Brandt, 1986).

Use of this technology within industry training is growing. A recent study of computer based training activity and multimedia among 519 United States organisations, in all industry sectors, found that an average of 10 per cent of all training effort was computer-based (Kemske, 1995). It seems only a matter of time before international education is increasingly delivered by TML.

As the communications and information technology advances, it seems probable that live academics can be replaced or supplemented with "virtual academics". The cost of overseas travel may make this attractive for universities with offshore teaching programs. A student's ability to access a "virtual academic" via the Internet or electronic mail and download interactive learning programs 24 hours a day offers universities an opportunity to expand service delivery anywhere telecommunications infrastructure permits.

Implications for academic work

The combined impact of offshore delivery of education and advanced information technology on academic work is likely to be both positive and negative. Important issues are the cost of production and the ability of staff to adapt to the new media.

Regardless of the availability and capabilities of the new media, a key problem will be the costs associated with producing high-quality interactive multimedia programs. These costs are likely to be high and involve substantial investment in both production staff and equipment (Smith and Delahaye, 1988). Unless adequate planning is undertaken the shelf life of courseware is unlikely to be long (Hosie, 1987). Further problems may arise from the lack of multimedia production expertise within many universities. Academics who are com-

petent in delivering traditional classroom lectures may need a new set of skills to communicate via television or computer screen (Hosie, Charman and Atkinson, 1991). Some have noted that while some science disciplines have embraced the new technology with enthusiasm, the humanities are prepared for change and risk being left behind (Illing 1996).

Higher education within Australia has tended to follow the British "tutorial model" with students presenting their ideas and having in-depth face to face discussions. Whatever the effectiveness of this method, it is labour-intensive and has been placed under severe strain in some faculties. As class sizes grow, the trend is towards more highly packaged presentations that can be delivered to mass audiences and repeated on demand. The new information technologies offer this option and have received support from governments seeking to expand access without increasing expenditure. The Open Learning programs currently screened in Australia are an example. Australia's Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) has initiated a five year plan to enhance its delivery of Professional and Graduate Education programs (Creer, 1996).

Referring to the influence of different forms of electronic media on similar communications, Marshall McLuhan (1964) identified that "the medium is the message". In the political arena, the effectiveness of a future national leader is now measured more on television image than on their policies. The "30 second sound bite" has become a dominant feature of political campaigns. Proliferation of the new media may reduce the depth of analysis and discussion.

The growth in use of multimedia within universities is likely to accelerate in the next ten to twenty years. Melbourne University has recently moved to place multimedia in the centre of academic decision making and has allocated funds "to redesign its curriculums in the context of multimedia applications" (Illing, 1996).

Multimedia technologies have a range of benefits for instruction. Muller and Leonetti (1992:17) have summarised these advantages as: timeliness; flexible training periods; effectiveness; multiple applications; and validated and documented effectiveness.

Earlier research into the use of multimedia for instruction has shown substantial cost savings (Brandt 1986; De Bloois 1982), and substantial reduction in training time (Gerber and Pribble, 1989). Other research has indicated that multimedia is more effective in delivering some training than more conventional means, particularly when instructional outcomes are well-defined (Fletcher, 1990). Much of the literature assumes that learning may be enhanced using multimedia, but the incidence of its use is often not widely reported or evaluated. While multimedia may be crucial for industrial training it also

has many broader educational applications (Hosie, 1993; Illing, 1996).

These benefits must nevertheless be tempered with consideration of the limitations of the technology. At present, such technologies are more a support media that do not fully replace the "live academic". Students involved with multimedia generally find it appealing, but many dislike working in isolation and favour small group learning (Vada, 1989). There are also limits on the delivery of full-motion video images via the Internet. Over time these technical limitations are likely to disappear; already the Digital Video Disc (DVD) technology available for computer games and training is highly advanced and enables full-motion, feature film length video, with multiple soundtracks in several languages.

Currently the publication of scholarly research is a key criteria for measuring academic performance. If widespread use is made of new information technology as a core teaching medium, academic staff may in time be assessed on such things as their ability to communicate via television or multimedia, or their "screen presence".

Conclusions

This paper has raised two distinct but related issues. The first is the apparent spread of offshore teaching programs by Australian universities seeking to gain a competitive advantage in international markets. The second is the emergence of new information technologies that enable the packaging and delivery of interactive educational services on demand over long distances. Employment must become more flexible if it is to accommodate these changes (Mueller and Cordery, 1989).

The expansion of offshore teaching programs is likely to impose an increasing burden on universities. The cost (both in time and money) of staff travelling to distant locations must eventually take its toll. The new information technologies offer a partial solution to long distance delivery. However, the cost of developing high-quality interactive multimedia may need to be carefully weighed against the cost of live teaching staff. Information technology is not a complete panacea. High quality multimedia is likely to be expensive (Meredyth and Thomas, 1996).

For academic staff, these two developments offer both an opportunity and a challenge. Those faculties which embrace the challenge of offshore teaching can enhance their overall international student intake and reap the financial benefits. Further, if they also develop the new technology successfully they will be likely to attract more students and retain funds for the future development of interactive multimedia programs. The possession of an attractive Web Site on the Internet is already becoming a necessity for recruitment.

The need to be absent from Australia for lengthy periods will place added pressure on staff. If frequent

trips are to be a core part of an academic's work, contractual recognition of these absences will be needed. The new information technology is also likely to lead to both a reduction in staff and change in the way academic work is performed.

The pace of change in both areas is rapid. There are few established paradigms that can be used to guide the development of academic work practices involving TML. While numerous opportunities for the enhancement of academic quality of work life are likely to emerge, attention must also be paid to the less desirable aspects.

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Notes

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Why Open Learning?

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Abstract

In the present climate of social and political accountability, education is facing an ever increasing demand for value for money. Value, in the quality of the education being offered and in the ease of access to this education. Employers are demanding graduates with generic and transferable skills, who have the ability to go on learning after graduation. New types of learners, with wide differences in background, learning styles, fields of interest and study habits, are enrolling in tertiary institutions. These modern students, a large proportion of whom are mature age, have a greater need for flexibility in the provision of their education. Academics, and the institutions that employ them, have to be prepared to meet these challenges. Open learning could provide the answer, it is both a process focusing on access to educational opportunities, and a philosophy of education which makes learning more student centred. However, adopting such a philosophy, requires commitment, motivation and flexibility at all levels of the university. This paper discusses the characteristics and benefits of open learning, the hazards and potential abuses that will be faced when institutions adopt its more open and flexible practices.

Introduction

Universities are facing increasing pressures to become self sufficient and cost effective. Students are being expected to pay for their tertiary education, and hence they demand more from their learning experience. Increasingly, accountability is the catch cry. Such demands may well see not only the adoption, but also the abuse of open learning by institutes of higher education. This paper is a discussion of open learning, its characteristics, the advantages it offers and the potential for its abuse.

Open Learning - a philosophy of education

The term 'open learning' means all things to all men, so any preface to a discussion of the potential value of open learning in a tertiary institution must start with a clarification of what is meant by the term. In Australia, and overseas, the term open learning is often confused, and used synonymously, with the term 'distance education'. This may, in part, be due to the fact that in Australia, there is a long and established tradition of distance learning (also known as correspondence education, external

study or off-campus study), though the philosophy of open learning is a much less familiar concept. It may also be due to the high profile of the British Open University and other distance teaching institutions that have adopted some open practices and/or use names containing the adjective 'open' (Holmberg, 1989). In this article we prefer to use the definition used by Paine (1989, xi), which is to look at:

...open learning as both a process which focuses on access to educational opportunities and a philosophy which makes learning more client and student centred. It is learning which allows the learner to choose how to learn, when to learn, where to learn and what to learn as far as possible within the resource constraints of any education and training provision.

This means that not only is access to education made more equitable, allowing anyone the opportunity to start on the path to a qualification via higher education, but also that the learning experience itself is more flexible. Flexibility can be provided in -

- the course/subject entry and exit times,
- the mode of learning,
- the mode of attendance,
- the resources made available for learning,
- the pace of learning,
- the interaction between learners,
- the support provided for learners, and
- the methods of assessment.

Consequently, the term 'flexible learning' is often used in place of 'open learning' (Lewis, 1993) and the educational aim of 'student-centred' learning is also included under the umbrella term of 'open learning', as subscribers to this philosophy aim to help individuals take responsibility for their own learning. Their aim is for the student to become an expert learner - strategic, self-regulated and reflective (Ertmer and Newby, 1996).

Higher education - pressures for change

Higher education, in Australia, as in many other parts of the world, is facing a period of great change. The impetus for change is coming from a variety of sources: from economic rationalists in government, looking for

an ever increasing cost effective delivery of educational products, and value for the public dollars; from industry and other employers; seeking graduates who are adaptable and autonomous workers with generic, transferable skills; and from recent advances in technology and academic research on teaching. Unfortunately, very often, the things tertiary institutions do are hard to measure or quantify. Research, often considered the *raison d'être* of tertiary institutions, is fast becoming a luxury as the dollar becomes harder to chase. Students are also critical of the quality of the undergraduate teaching and hence, the education they receive (McInnes, 1993). Society's perception of the social value of tertiary institutions is also changing. As education in Australia moves more to a 'user pays' philosophy, with a rise in fee paying courses and an increase in HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme), the demand for value for money becomes more urgent. Value, not only in the quality of the education being offered, but also in the ease of access to this education. Institutes of higher education are also facing the challenges of large numbers of learners, each with differing educational, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and hence, foundations upon which the learning experience can be based (Candy et al., 1994). Institutions must provide access for new types of learners with wide differences in learning styles, fields of interest and study habits. The modern student, a large proportion of whom are of mature age, have a greater need for flexibility in the provision of their education, and recognition of their prior learning (Baldwin, 1991, Candy et al., 1994). Those in all levels of power, within tertiary institutions, need to formulate response strategies requiring the redirection of existing resources to ensure that the current challenges are met. According to Lewis (1993), changes that would allow a more flexible response to present challenges, include:-

- the establishment of modularisation, focusing on exactly what will be taught, effectively increasing student choice,
- flexible timetabling, which accommodates a range of course structures, such as recurrent education, cooperative education, sandwich courses, part-time study, credit accumulation, individual study and experiential learning,
- credit accumulation/transfer schemes, which allow for recognition, accreditation and validation of students' prior learning,
- increased access to the learning resources,
- further development of the information technology base, with cooperation between institutions, enabling them to become highly organised, efficient and cost-effective, whilst throwing open access to students,

- provision of a network of flexible student support systems which should include counselling services, bridging, catch-up, remedial and study skills courses and,
- the development of the learning resources and experiences which cater for differing learning styles and are of the required scale.

Such provisions, should, in the long run, meet the requirements of cost-effectiveness, whilst dealing with the increased volume and type of learners. At the same time, they serve to enhance the quality of the individuals' learning experience, which will be of increasing importance as accountability becomes more entrenched. University administrators have an important role in establishing an academic environment in which good teaching is recognised, valued, fostered and rewarded. Excellence in teaching should be credited with equal importance and prestige to that of research and publication (Seldin, 1990). The role of the academic needs to be redefined in the light of changes that occur in an open learning environment, with appointment and promotion policies adjusted accordingly. These objectives should be stated, but also committed to action (Green, 1990).

It cannot be stressed too greatly, the importance of leadership in bringing about actual change in the status of teaching as a worthwhile pursuit in institutions of higher education. (Narveson, 1992, as cited in Ramsden et al., 1995).

One major problem for university administrators is to achieve a balance between the demands of quality and accountability, coming from within and beyond the institution, and providing for the needs of academic staff and the university (Lonsdale, 1993). These measures will require extra staff in most institutions plus some time, effort and motivation for the development of open attitudes amongst teaching staff (Johnson, 1990). If open learning is to become established, there needs to be an extensive program of staff development and re-education, without such direct support and active leadership, from the top levels of administration, momentum for the establishment of open learning, will be halted.

Teaching - rewards for excellence?

In the 19th Century, Newman stated that a university was:

...a place of teaching universal knowledge...[its object is] the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than its advancement. If its objects were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a university should have students" (Newman, 1959; as cited in Ramsden et al., 1995).

During this century, however, resources have been steadily channelled away from the teaching role of academics into research. Traditionally, the promotion

route does little to recognise an academic's contribution to excellence in teaching, rather research is seen to be the factor that influences promotion decisions (Over, 1993; Seldin, 1990). Perhaps this is because research is more easily quantifiable, and seems to be less susceptible to subjective assessment. Why then, should academics devote so much of their time and energy to the development and enhancement of their teaching skills when, both here and around the world, the pressure is to perform research? Recently, there have been strong moves, both in North America and the United Kingdom, to develop initiatives that would enhance the profile of teaching in institutions of higher education (Laurillard, 1993), Australian institutions are not far behind in the push (AVCC, 1993; CQAHE, 1995). In order to raise both the status and value of teaching, it is first necessary to have some kind of understanding of what constitutes good practice. The CAUT commissioned report (Ramsden et al., 1995), 'Recognising and rewarding good teaching', lists seven qualities that researchers generally agree are essential to good teaching. Good teachers...

- (i) are themselves, good learners - resulting in teaching that is dynamic, reflective and constantly evolving, often as a result of advances in their own research,
- (ii) display enthusiasm for their subject and research activities, and the desire to share it with their students,
- (iii) recognise the importance of context and adapt their teaching accordingly,
- (iv) encourage deep learning approaches and are concerned with developing their students' critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills and problem approach behaviours,
- (v) demonstrate an ability to transform and extend knowledge rather than merely transmitting it - "pedagogical content knowledge" (Shulman, 1987),
- (vi) set clear goals, use valid/appropriate assessment methods and provide high quality feedback to their students, and
- (vii) show respect for and interest in their students; encourage their independence and sustain high expectations of them.

These seven qualities also underpin the philosophy of open learning. If all academics aspired to such heights, a learning experience tailored to each student's needs would be inevitable and moreover would provide satisfaction to the teacher. The flexibility that is demanded of higher education by the modern student develops as the institution's philosophy becomes more learner centred. Such learner centred initiatives are taking place at the

level of the individual academic, but these innovations will not survive if the individual moves on, and the innovation has not become institutionalised (Lublin and Prosser, 1994). However, tertiary institutions are changing. In the near future, as well as the intrinsic rewards gained from working in a stimulating atmosphere, from contact with students and the sense that they are contributing to their overall growth and development (Ramsden et al., 1995), there should soon be extrinsic rewards, in the form of academic promotion, for pursuing academic excellence in teaching.

Generic and transferable skills - the new role of the teacher

In the present climate of social and political accountability, there is a focus on the quality of graduates and their progression rates through institutes of higher education. Degree courses, whose assessment strategies require students to learn by rote and reiterate the course material, which do not require the student to interact with the material, construct a personal meaning about it or even to understand the discipline, are resulting in poor learning outcomes (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Fraser, 1996; Watkins, 1983). This traditional approach does not take into account modern theories of education, the individual needs of the learner nor his/her prior learning experience. In many disciplines, the body of knowledge related to it, is growing at an exponential rate. No longer is it possible, or even desirable, that an individual have a complete knowledge base, rather it is preferable that he/she have an understanding of the concepts and principles of the discipline, have the ability to apply this understanding to novel situations and the wherewithal to seek out the information that is needed. Our society continues to increase in complexity, graduates will need to be equipped to cope with rapid change in technology and to enter careers that may not yet be envisaged, with a change in professions being commonplace.

To produce graduates equipped for the workplace, it is essential that educators teach in ways that encourage the learner to engage in deep or meaningful learning which, may be built upon in the later years of their course, and also be transferred to the workplace, as demanded by employers. '...employers in business and industry want their graduates to come equipped with a range of transferable, generic skills. These include the ability to go on learning, to adapt to new circumstances and, in the case of employment, to acquire industry-specific or even firm-specific knowledge and skill' (Candy et al., 1994, p65). Boyer (1990) stresses the importance of enhancement of students' capacity to continue learning after their formal education is finished. 'Change is needed in the methods of teaching and learning to accommodate adult learners and to provide the long-range needs of the learning society' (Cross, 1987, p99).

However, academics in higher education are not necessarily appointed as a result of a strong background in teaching despite the expectation that they will fulfil such a role with excellence. University teaching has remained relatively unexamined, there being no pre-service or in-service requirement of new academic staff to study or be formally qualified in teaching (Lublin and Prosser, 1994). It is apparent that many academics teach as they were taught themselves, very often with a traditional didactic approach (Fraser, 1996). Such an approach does not take into account the differing learning styles of different types of students, effective teaching must do so. The new role of the teacher is to be '...increasingly less the carrier of information, but more and more the tutor who stimulates and promotes a communication process between himself and the student and between the student and the learning materials.' University teachers should '...not be the ones who transmit other people's knowledge to others, but the ones who engage with the students in a critical assessment of knowledge bases to establish their truthfulness and applicability' (Van Enckevort and Leibbrandt, 1988, p54). The focus will be on the students' learning, not on the instructors' teaching. The "syllabus" is likely to move from being a set of lecture notes to a set of learning materials made up of print, cassettes, disks and computer programs. Class contact hours would cease to be the major determinant of an academic workload. The teacher is then released from being the sole source of information transmission and can become more a learning manager, able to pay more attention to the creative development and delivery of education (Johnson, 1990).

Lifelong learners - learning how to learn

Educators must be aware of the skills they wish graduating students to master. Each skill may be discipline specific, but generic skills such as autonomous learning are of vital importance and applicable in a wide variety of likely workplaces that graduates may enter. Graduates may no longer be able to work in their area of expertise, they are now required to be life-long learners, ready to face the rapidly changing society of the next century. A recent NBEET commissioned report, recommends that 'lifelong learning skills should form part of the core of any and every undergraduate degree, and that its emphasis should be spelled out in course aims and objectives' (Candy et al., 1994, p66). Most students do not develop lifelong learning strategies unless they receive training in how to do so. Metacognitive skills can be learned in the same way that other skills are learned, through extensive practice, followed by feedback (Derry and Murphy, 1986). 'Expertise in learning, as in any other domain, can only be expected to develop from many years of actually performing the necessary metacognitive

and regulatory skills in the context of meaningful learning activities' (Ertmer and Newby, 1996, p21).

There are many ways that an educator can plan his/her teaching, with a learner-centred perspective that encourages deep learning. Biggs (1989) lists four key elements of the learning experience that do so:

- (i) motivational context; whereby the students experience a 'need to know',
- (ii) learner activity; in which the students are actively learning, thereby making more connections between past learning and new concepts,
- (iii) interaction with others; by using group strategies, such as peer tutoring, autonomous student groups and tutorials, we provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning and manipulate ideas with others (Gibbs, 1992) and reflect upon their learning, and
- (iv) a well structured and integrated knowledge base.

Some activities which provide such meaningful learning opportunities, are listed in Table 1 (next page). There is no one teaching and learning scheme that suits all students, but by providing an array of learning experiences, we are more likely to accommodate most learning styles.

Assessment - the hidden curriculum

Student centred learning activities that foster deep learning require innovative assessment strategies. 'There is little point in having a programme of study which is intended to promote a deep approach to student learning if the assessment of that programme encourages a surface approach' (Davies, 1994, p114). Traditional assessment and reporting aims to produce a single mark or symbol which intends to indicate at least three things:- the extent to which the learned material was mastered or understood; the level at which certain skills were performed; and the degree to which certain attitudes were displayed (Potterton, 1994). Many such assessment methods assess different outcomes to those desired by student-centred education. It is common for conventional assessment to test, for example, 'the ability to recall information or to tackle familiar forms of academic problems' (Gibbs, 1995, p 2). A deep learning approach would test 'the ability to identify and tackle new and unfamiliar 'real world' problems'. Examination systems that result in students cramming and rote learning are followed by rapid forgetting (Entwistle and Entwistle, 1991). If students are rewarded, via summative assessment, for surface learning approaches, such as reproducing the content of a lecture, then many will focus on such learning techniques and no others. A major assessment goal should be to increase the size and complexity of assignments and minimise what can be achieved by

Table 1: Some alternative learning techniques and procedures that encourage deep learning.

Technique/ Procedure	Advantages	References
Concept mapping, Vee diagrams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ metacognitive development ♣ constructed knowledge; information assimilation ♣ recognition of prior learning ♣ concept integration into existing cognitive structure ♣ autonomous learning 	Fraser, 1996; Lehman et al., 1985; Novak, 1990, 1991; Novak and Gowin, 1984;
Inquiry and problem based learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ metacognitive development - lifelong learning skills ♣ small group collaboration; interactive learning, problem resolution ♣ cognitive dissonance, generic reasoning process development ♣ knowledge and process assimilation 	Boud and Feletti, 1991; Creedy et al., 1992; Feletti, 1993; Norman and Schmidt, 1992;
Group/Team work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ transferable skills - cooperative behaviour, interpersonal skills, risk taking ♣ cognitive dissonance ♣ problem solving, active learning 	Heller and Hollabaugh, 1992; Heller et al., 1992; Renshaw, 1992;
Collaborative learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ group work skills ♣ data/information sharing ♣ problem based inquiry 	Johnson et al., 1991; Kadel and Keehner, 1994; Kaye, 1991; Klemm, 1994; Van den Brande, 1993;
Computer aided learning and multimedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ autonomous learning - exploratory, experimental ♣ simulation scenarios - active and reactive exploration and learning ♣ learner modelling - monitoring/tutoring/remedial facilities ♣ self-paced, non-threatening, uniquely tailored learning environment 	Cosgrove, 1994; Fjelstadt, 1991; Kozma, 1991; Marchionini, 1990; Navassardian et al., 1995; Van den Brande, 1993;
Diaries, logs and reflective journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ assimilation/development of concepts, make connections ♣ critical thinking; communication skills ♣ self-confidence, self-acceptance, self-awareness ♣ personal meanings - learning experience 	Ballantyne and Packer, 1995; Day, 1994; Hettich, 1990;
Self, peer and group assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♣ critical, appraisal skills development ♣ trust, collegiality development, "partners in learning", faculty expectations understood ♣ increased technical ability, rapid feedback 	Boud, 1986; Scott and Watson, 1994;

memorising or reproducing content (Exley and Gibbs, 1994). It must be remembered that learning may well be improved by adopting student centred approaches but 'this may not become apparent in results from conventional assessment methods' (Gibbs, 1995, p2). The assessment strategy to be used must be given as much attention as is given to the learning experience being established. Wherever possible, students should be involved in the assessment process, as this helps them to develop the ability to make judgments, in particular about themselves and their work (Brown et. al., 1994). The ability to judge one's own performance is an extremely important skill, and one that is all but ignored in most degree courses. Strategies such as allowing students to see marked examples of good and bad work, the use of peer-assessment and self-assessment comment sheets are all useful in enabling students to practise such skills.

Student opinion of open learning strategies

A final, but vital, variable that needs to be considered when trying to establish an open learning environment is student opinion of flexible teaching and learning. Few higher education institutions have developed open and formal recognition of student opinion of teacher innova-

tions (Clark, 1994). There are few opportunities during the development of a new course for open discussion between students and staff. The student community is, by its very nature, transitory and hence often less powerful than academic staff. However, the role of students in open learning is as active participants, whose opinions and recommendations are listened to and given credence. Students have the right to choose and in so doing they must have the right to express opinions about the choices given them. As Clark (1994) says, a close developmental relationship needs to be established between staff and students in which there is honest discussion of teaching delivery and strategies for learning. Any course development must not only meet the objectives of how students learn but also take into account the students' motivations, priorities and preferences. Staff must be willing to take the risk of leaving the learning in the hands of the learner, and become a partner and helpmate in such an enterprise.

As the student body is both diverse and dynamic, it would be expected that student responses to flexible learning initiatives would also be diverse. However, common complaints and suggestions from the student body can be identified (Clark, 1994; Moss, 1991). When presented with new ways of teaching, students often

need to develop new and unfamiliar learning techniques. Not only should this skills shortage be acknowledged, but they must be given the opportunities to develop these skills (Moss, 1991, p37). Traditionally, students are taught note-taking and information gathering skills, now it is necessary to include such study skills as group work and presentation. It must be remembered that, although we seek to develop the students' ability to be independent learners, the tutor does not become obsolete, rather he/she must be the supportive and motivating influence in the development of the students' autonomy. The learner requires immediate and continual feedback about his/her progress which results, not only in a sense of achievement but also provides a validation of the learning strategy adopted by the student (Clark, 1994). At the beginning of their career in university, students may lack the discipline to benefit from the freedom to study when and where they choose (Moss, 1991). Thus, the tutor needs to be aware of the individual learning needs of each student and be prepared to help with the students management of their learning. Indeed, the individual learner may be more intimately affected by the person or persons directly facilitating his/her learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a lecturer who is interested in embracing the philosophy of open learning has to be highly motivated. It requires considerable commitment of both time and energy. If the individual is stimulated to adopt practices of student centred education and innovative approaches to student learning, it is essential that the institution offers its financial, physical and moral support for this undertaking. Policies need to be either amended or put into place which incorporate the concept of good teaching, innovations need to be institutionalised (Lublin and Prosser, 1994) and the old issue of Intellectual Property revisited.

Administrators must be wary of abusing both the philosophy of open learning and the trust of their staff. In these times, where economic pressures are being brought to bear on higher education institutions, it is easy for administrators to do so. It is possible to state that their aim is to increase access to learning resources, thereby meeting the learners' needs, when in fact, the focus is on cheaper delivery whilst competing for students. If such a path is followed, the institution will become second rate whilst sacrificing staff in the process. Even now, academics are overloaded with teaching responsibilities, giving them little time to become scholars in research or teaching (Boyer, 1990). Teaching and research are central aspects of academic culture, and they can be mutually beneficial, the former being enhanced by the acquisition of new knowledge. However, it is possible that by bowing too completely to economic pressures, we will

produce two classes of academics: those doing research and those committed to teaching excellence. This will inevitably result in divisions and factions among staff. Such a divided campus would not be beneficial to the students and will sound the death knell to open learning.

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Letters

We're in this mess together

I wish to comment on Tom Bramble's article in *AUR*, volume 39, no. 2.

First, I would echo Gavin Moodie's sentiments in the same edition concerning the use of the offensive "non-academic" tag to describe general staff. I would hope that Tom, as a progressive member of the non-general staff, would accept that defining people by what they are not, is totally unacceptable. I hope the *AUR* Board will adopt an appropriate editorial policy on this sensitive issue.

In the substance of his article, Tom claims there are 30 HEW 10 staff at the University of Queensland and that they are all on salary packages of between \$100,000 and \$150,000. To anyone who knows the slightest thing about HEW 10 staff matters, this seemed implausible at best and even if true of UQ, unique to that institution. However, DEETYA data reveal it is not even true of UQ.

At HEW 10, there is only a base rate with "award" status, and at most places that is currently in the region of \$55,000 to \$60,000, my imprecision being a reflection of EB uncertainties. Beyond that level, universities have developed their own scales and systems, some being fairly transparent and some more secretive. In the stellar regions identified by Tom (Registrar, Chief Librarian etc), it is more common for these to be individually negotiated contracts, ratified by the vice-chancellor, or in more democratic institutions, by the governing body.

There may well be 30 such staff at UQ, although DEETYA statistics do not provide this level of salary precision. What they do make clear is the presence of around 45 EFT general staff in the sub-stellar HEW 10 ranks, probably around the senior lecturer/reader/associate professor level in salary terms.¹ If these staff constitute some financial elite, they have a lot of friends in the academic ranks.

It is neither accurate nor helpful to lump all HEW 10 general staff together as some sort of six-figure salary elite who constitute a monolithic threat to everything good in universities. The senior general staff working party (which I convene), established by NTEU Council, is operating on the more plausible assumption that such staff, numbers of whom are good union members, constitute a more diverse group, sharing many concerns with other staff, while having some unique ones of their own.

In passing, I might comment on Tom's reference to the office of Registrar at UQ. Elsewhere in the country, this generalist administrative position is heading for extinction as the very senior general staff ranks are taken over

by specialists, usually of the resource management variety.² It is not uncommon now for Registrars' resignations/retirements to be followed by the abolition of the position. For middle level general staff, this means the disappearance of yet another career position to which to aspire, compounding the shrinking of opportunities caused by mergers and down-sizing. This observation is not meant to engender sympathy, but to suggest that for the vast bulk of us, at nearly all levels, we're in this mess together.

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References

1. DEETYA, 1996 Higher Education Staff Collection, p1
2. See Clare White, "The Role and Function of the Registrar in Australian Higher Education Institutions", *Journal of Tertiary Education Administration*, vol 13, no 2, October 1991, pp 165-187.

Editorial response:

The Editorial Board of *Australian Universities' Review* accepts Paul Rodan's and Gavin Moodie's points regarding the use of the term 'non-academic' to describe general staff. Contributors to *AUR* are advised that "general staff" is the preferred term.

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