Editorial: Who's learning? Whose technology?

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The annual conferences of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ascilite) bring together delegates with research interests in the broad area of educational technologies, computer-supported learning and tertiary education. This year's conference theme is: *Who's learning? Whose technology?* Conference presenters were encouraged to address one or both these topics by considering some of the questions outlined below, as well as by offering their own interpretations of key issues.

Who's learning?

How well do we know our students? How can we ensure we meet learners' real needs and not what we imagine they might need? What do they actually do with all this 'neat stuff'?

Learning by individuals, groups and teams. Design for individualised learning is different from design for learning teams and learning communities. Flexibility for the individual and collaboration can be competing goals. How could we reconcile them? Are there good ways of assessing the work of virtual teams and individuals?

The needs of the iPod/iLife generation – and an aging and diversifying student population. We are hearing more about the characteristics, habits and demands of the iPod generation – and we need to respond to their expectations – but the student population is older and more diverse than it was 10 years ago. How can podcasting, social technologies, design for diversity and/or other technological, design and pedagogical innovations meet different learning demands?

What are teachers learning? Organisations? The higher education sector? We are not just interested in what students learn. What are teachers learning about new ways of teaching? What are their conceptions of learning with technology? How are they coping with the intensification of academic work? What can we say about organisational learning or learning across the whole of higher education, especially with respect to smarter use of educational technologies?

Who's learning from research? Good research is all very well, but who is learning from it and how? How do we know? How do we improve the impact of our research and demonstrate that it has effects?

Whose technology?

How can we plan the articulation of personal and organisational technologies? Fifteen years ago the challenge for tertiary education institutions was to provide enough computer labs. Now it is equipping smart learning spaces and providing wireless access. As personal technologies become more mobile, ubiquitous and powerful, where will the boundary be between what the institution provides and the learner brings? How are higher education institutions addressing this challenge? What strategies might they adopt? What do reports from foresight or horizon scanning exercises tell us about the future? Do we have successful examples that illustrate the possibilities of integrating mobile personal technologies with smart learning spaces?

User and activity-centred technology design. Research and development help us to move towards a user-centred and/or activity-centred educational technology. How far have we advanced in this research area? What successful examples illustrate our current achievements?

E-learning, e-teaching or e-management? Some of what goes under the name of e-learning is really e-management or e-administration. Some of it is e-teaching. How much is really about learning? Do we

have good research and development examples that celebrate the best of e-learning? What can we learn from critiques of current practice?

Technology in whose image? Technology design 'constructs the user'. What kind of users do we imagine, value and serve? How do we know? What can we do to surface our assumptions about learners and learning?

These contemporary challenges and issues are addressed in the research papers presented at the annual ascilite conference.

Review process

The conference program chairs established two committees: an international scientific committee and a local program committee.

The international scientific committee (board of reviewers) was composed of 103 people with expertise in the area of computer-supported learning and tertiary education. The members came from 11 different countries, with personnel drawn from 25 Australian universities and 17 universities from other countries. The members of the international scientific committee provided academic advice and helped to review and select the best research papers for presentation at the conference. The local program committee, composed of researchers from several Australian universities, helped with program planning, editorial and other program-related matters.

We received 180 papers (108 – full and 72 – concise) and 14 posters from 17 countries. All full and concise papers were peer reviewed in a double-blind review process by the international review team. Each paper was reviewed by at least three reviewers selected from the international board of reviewers. To achieve consistency, reviewers were provided with a *Reviewer's Guide* and detailed assessment criteria. Reviewers' comments were then considered by the program chairs. The papers with positive recommendations from at least two reviewers were further reviewed by the program chairs and, if necessary, after additional consultation with the members of the international scientific committee, the best contributions were selected for presentation at the meeting. The overall acceptance rate for refereed papers was just above 65%: 81% in full and 54% in concise paper categories. The only criterion that was used for selection of papers was that of quality and scientific merit.

The international review team provided detailed, formative feedback for the authors. This enabled many good papers to be further elaborated and improved. A subset of the local program committee worked with the authors of accepted papers helping them to address reviewers' comments, check that review recommendations had been dealt with appropriately and generally improve the quality of their papers. Only those papers that successfully passed all stages of the review and academic editing process are published in these proceedings.

To achieve balance between quality and immediacy, some proposers of full and concise papers that reported innovative research in early stages of development, work in progress or initial outcomes of ongoing research were offered a chance to present their results at the ascilite 2006 poster sessions.

The main results of the paper review process are summarised in the table below.

Category	Refereed	Submitted	Full papers Accepted	Full papers Presented	Concise papers Accepted	Concise papers Presented	Posters Accepted	Posters Presented	Rejected
Full papers	Yes	108	71	67	17	15	13	4	7
Concise papers	Yes	72	–	–	39	38	23	12	10
Posters	No	14	–	–	–	–	14	14	0
Total		194	71	**67**	56	**53**	50	**30**	17

The final scientific conference program consists of 120 refereed scholarly papers: 67 papers are full (10–12 pages) and 53 papers are concise (4–6 pages). These research papers are published in the Conference

Proceedings and will be presented for the first time during the meeting, 4th–6th December 2006, in 34 paper sessions and two symposia (30 minutes for each full paper; 20 minutes for each concise).

Additionally, two keynote, three special and two poster sessions (comprising of 30 poster presentations) will be held during the conference. Prior to the main conference program (on 3rd December, 2006), all conference delegates will have a chance to attend one or more of 11 workshops that were selected from 14 proposals. Summaries of these non-refereed contributions are published in the appendix to the Conference Proceedings.

We are pleased to note that the standard of research presented at the ascilite 2006 conference is very high. Participation from international researchers from the region and from other countries is also especially strong this year. We are confident that ascilite 2006 will be an important landmark in the field, providing a useful overview of the state of the art, and of emerging research themes and issues.

This would not have been possible without the assistance of a large team of people, many of whom are named in these proceedings, though others have also been working behind the scenes. We want to take this opportunity to thank many friends and colleagues who have assisted in the process, including the ascilite executive (led by President, Cathy Gunn), the sponsors and exhibitors, local organising committee, program committee, international scientific committee, conference helper team, keynote speakers, workshop organisers, convenors of symposia and special sessions, presenters and delegates. Our special thanks go to Mandy Newton, who has been the mainstay of the conference organising team, and of CoCo in its first three years.

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