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## Editorial 27(4)

### AJET review process outcomes: 2010 data

The last report on AJET's review process, published in AJET Editorial 26(5) [1], included data for 2010 until 18 July 2010. Table 1 below includes data for 2011 until 31 July, with a saddening similarity to the 18 Jul 2010 data [1]. This is the number in the pending column, which at 85 is the same for both years, reflecting a continuing increase in the pressures upon AJET's review process.

Table 1: Article review outcomes AJET 2003-2011

Year of receipt	No. rec'd	No. rejected editorially (b)	No. reject ext review (b)	No. withdrawn (c)	No. pending	No. accept(d)	No. published (d)	% accepted (e)
2003	61	34	14	0	0	13	24	21.3%
2004	97	51	13	2	0	31	21	32.0%
2005	91	47	9	5	0	30	30	33.0%
2006	100	59	9	3	0	29	29	29.0%
2007	119	67	14	4	0	34	30	28.6%
2008	127	71	20	1	0	35	42	27.6%
2009	186	95	27	2	0	62	45	33.3%
2010	236	126	25	6	0	78	54	33.5%
2011(a)	179	78	1	0	85	15	9	-

- Data for 2011 in columns 2-8 is at 31 July 2011. The recent increases in 'No. rec'd' (a 26% increase from 2009 to 2010, and prospectively a 21% increase from 2010 to 2011) were the main causes for the current backlog ('No. pending') in the review process.
- Some of the rejected articles may appear again as receivals later in the same year or in a subsequent year. The reasons for counting these instances as rejections are to enable a clearer cut off for each year's outcomes, and to align data collection with the editorial advice, used in a significant proportion of cases, 'Reject. Invite resubmission of a revised or expanded work for a new review process'.
- Withdrawn means withdrawn at the request of the authors.
- The number of articles accepted from a particular year's receivals does not correspond to the number published in each year, owing to time taken for review and revisions, and fluctuations in the speed of these processes.
- % accepted is calculated from column 2 (No. rec'd) and column 7 (No. accepted).

Table 1 shows one of the two main causes for continually increasing pressures upon AJET's review process. This is the number of articles received, a 26% increase from 2009 to 2010, and prospectively a 21% increase from 2010 to 2011. However, the other main cause is not shown in Table 1. This the static picture with AJET's editorial staff resources, unchanged since ASET and ASCILITE assumed responsibility for AJET in 1997. One honorary Editor and one honorary Production Editor! This was quite adequate in earlier years, but the recent sharp increases in the number of articles received per year have created a blowout in workloads. Now we need an estimated 0.6 FTE just to keep up with the flow of articles (column 2), editorial review advice



Hobart, 4-7 December 2011. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/hobart11/>



Association for Learning Technology: ALT-C 2011  
*Thriving in a colder and more challenging climate*

University of Leeds, UK, 6-8 September 2011  
<http://www.alt.ac.uk/altc2011/>

(column 3), the flow of external reviews (columns 4 and 7), providing the external review advice and other advice to authors (columns 4 and 7), and copy editing for accepted articles (column 8). The estimate of 0.6 FTE is just for "keeping up", with little spare for more developmental work on other matters, such as the need for an alerts facility, induction of associate editors, website upgrades, research into publishing and editorial matters, research into quality control, etc.

During the years spanned by Table 1, quite significant economies with editorial staff time have been effected by the retirement of the printed version at the end of 2007 [3], and by the use of an "editorial reject process" (i.e. review advice is composed by AJET Editorial staff, usually within about 10 days of receipt, though some involve longer periods). Another step we took was the withdrawal of the Production Editor from *ascilite* Conference Proceedings duties after 2009.

Whilst these measures have helped considerably, they were not sufficient. The number of articles in the "Pending column" remains large, and turnaround times for externally reviewed articles are mostly in the 4-5 month range, substantially above our desired benchmark of three months maximum between receipt and outcomes advice to authors. Of course we have sought ways to engage more persons in the conduct of AJET. We are very well served by a large and diverse Review Panel [4], and even in these trying times, the acceptances of our "AJET: Invitation to review an article" invitations remain at a very pleasing high level. However, in relation to the need for Associate Editors to be review process facilitators, advisers to authors and copy editors, progress has stalled (one reason is the all consuming problem of the "Pending" column). The last serious plan for Associate Editors was one advanced as a contribution towards the planning for *ascilite Sydney 2010* [5]. Among other matters, this plan sought to highlight the scope for integrating "Program Committee" work for Conferences with AJET's need for a major expansion of its volunteer staffing. It concluded with the paragraph:

#### **AJET's Associate Editor needs**

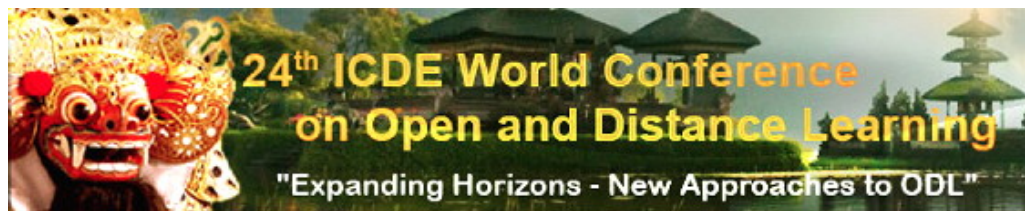
Although this is a tentative plan, there is a very attractive possibility for using the "Program Committee" proposal, as outlined above, as a developing, testing and inducting pathway for associate editors to support AJET's growth. The culmination could be a special workshop (Catherine has volunteered) conducted at *ascilite 2010*, as a debriefing and team bonding exercise, from which we could expect the prime candidates to emerge, well-prepared to take up a good share of the rather heavy load at present carried by Roger Atkinson. [5]



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<http://www.catl.uwa.edu.au/5apcei>



Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia, 2-5 October 2011. <http://www.ut.ac.id/icde2011/>

The proposal did not acquire any momentum - if our recollection is correct, we did not receive an acknowledgment. This may have been due to a potentially alarming sentence under the heading "Budget implications" and referring to incentives to attract volunteers, namely "Waiver or discounting of Conference registration fees for 25-30 persons, plus some allowance for travel expenses, may reduce Conference income by \$30-35,000" [5]. Nevertheless, the effort to increase AJET's Editorial staffing, and to establish a positive interaction between AJET and the editorial processes for the annual ascilite Conference needs to be restarted.

On a brighter note, Table 1 shows good progress in a number of the most significant performance benchmarks for AJET. An increase in the number of articles received per year and the maintenance of a "mid-range" acceptance rate has led to an increasing number of articles published per year. These are positives, although regular publication of such comprehensive data is not a practice followed by the journals generally regarded as AJET's peers (see Editorial 27(2), Figure 1 [6], for a list of AJET's "most influential" or "best known" peers). Whilst no doubt these peer journals compile data similar to Table 1's data, usually it is made available only to the publisher, editorial staff and possibly also the journal's Editorial Board. One potential disadvantage in AJET's regular publication of data as in Table 1 is that AJET's Management Committee, AJET's Editorial Board and ascilite Executive do not have any privileged position, that is access to data that is not made available to AJET's authors, reviewers and readers generally. Some may find that disconcerting.

Another performance benchmark important to projecting AJET as a genuinely "Australasian" journal is maintained in files with cryptic names like "ajet-acc-rate-internat10.xls" (for interpretations of "Australasian", see the 2004 announcement of name change for AJET [7]). Again, it presents data that is not normally made available to all and sundry. Nevertheless, we present an update in the next section.

### **AJET's acceptance rate: A regional analysis updated**

Figure 1 provides an update for the data presented in Editorial 25(3), 2008 [8], for the purpose of benchmarking AJET's progress towards being an international journal with an Australasian emphasis. The number of submissions for the two periods selected (left hand axis) shows notable rates of growth for all three of the Asian regions in our tabulation (as the number of submissions for the two year period 2009-10 is greater than or nearly equal to the number for the six year period 2003-08). However, acceptance rates (right hand axis) are volatile, for example increased for East Asia (reflecting strong inputs from Taiwan and Hong Kong) but decreased or little changed for other regions of Asia. Of course, for regions with small numbers of submissions,

extreme variability can occur, as illustrated by the "Other America" group which leapt to 100% acceptance for two papers in 2009-11. Also, the sequence for the horizontal axis, taken from the 2003-08 percent acceptance data arranged from highest to lowest (orange triangles line) may seem to be quite different from a 2009-10 sequence (blue squares line), but high variability for regions represented by small numbers of submissions has to be remembered.

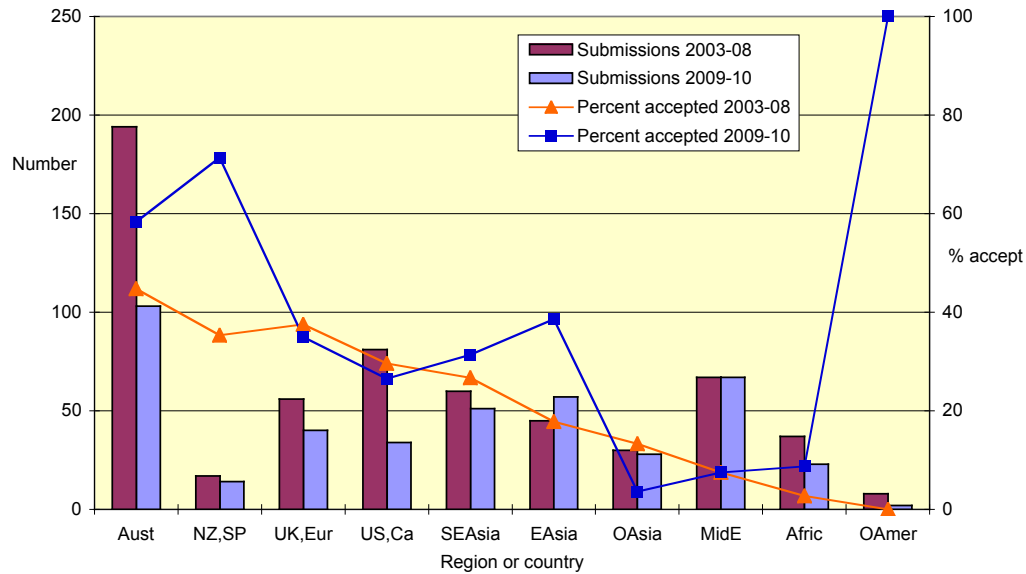


Figure 1: Total submissions and acceptance rates, years 2003-08 and 2009-10, by region or country

Notes: Aust is Australia only; NZ Sth Pacific includes Papua New Guinea; SE Asia includes Thailand, Philippines; East Asia includes Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea; Other Asia includes India, Bangladesh, Pakistan; Middle East includes Turkey, North Cyprus, Israel, Egypt; Africa includes Mauritius; UK and Europe includes Eastern Europe, Russia, Cyprus, Georgia; Other America includes Mexico, Caribbean countries, Central and South America. Missing data for 2010: Country of origin data not available for 3 submissions, i.e. only 233 of the 236 submissions could be counted.

Figure 1 suggests mixed progress towards a broader Australasian adoption of AJET as a highly ranked choice for submissions of articles. Nevertheless, we feel encouraged to persist with determination. Apart from the goal of growing AJET and keeping up with our major peers [6], the "Australasian orienting" work makes contributions, albeit very, very modestly small, towards wider community goals such as projecting ascilite into the broader Australasian region, supporting the roles of English language and open access publication of scholarly research, and encouraging the professional development of authors, especially in the developing countries of our region of the world.

Roger Atkinson and Catherine McLoughlin  
AJET Production Editor and AJET Editor

## Endnotes

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<http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet25/editorial25-3.html>



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