

ISSUE 1 AUTUMN 2002

ADULT LEARNING AUSTRALIA



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OF LIFELONG LEARNING





▲ A celebration for community health and development: the Moon Lantern Festival is an annual multicultural celebration of the traditional Vietnamese and Chinese Harvest Festival. It is presented by the Arts and Culture Program of North Richmond Community Health Centre together with the Richmond Community Events Group

Adult Learning Australia Inc. (ALA) is the peak body for organisations and individuals involved with adult learning in Australia. ALA informs and fosters networks of adult educators; advises and lobbies government; promotes policy development; represents Australia on international education bodies; coordinates Adult Learners Week; and more.

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THESE ARE TIMES WHEN THE ROUTINE OF COMMENCING ANOTHER
EDUCATION YEAR SEEMS LESS IMPORTANT.

Learning our way out

The fractious atmosphere surrounding last year's election had barely eased before we were dramatically confronted by the disturbing realities of Australia's detention centres. And overlaying these local realities is the lingering aftermath of the September 11 atrocity and the promise by the American President of unilateral and potentially ongoing war.

In this context the business of organising an adult education program, a timetable, classes, tutors, advertisements, reports, audited statements and so on remains necessary. But how can we do more? How can we assist adults in our communities to question what is going on, to understand the emotional responses, to gather the information needed to come to informed judgements, to discuss with others in order to feel some confidence in taking control over the forces that shape their lives?

For isn't this claim of education for social change one of the enduring articles of faith of adult educators?

I recently read a book that claimed that adult education was at the crossroads. The authors, Matthias Finger and Jose Manuel Asun, believe that adult education has been tremendously successful in terms of practice – its methods have been widely embraced – at the same

time as it is disintegrating as an intellectual discipline. They point to adult education as being increasingly commodified, marketed, customised, modified for organisations, and sold worldwide. It embraces everything from grass-roots activism to top level management training, and because of this it has lost its way, it has lost its sense of purpose and the values that direct it.

Their challenge to adult educators is that we need to 'learn our way out' of this situation. It's an argument that won't be shared by everyone, but it is a challenge that can't be ignored. How can adult educators facilitate discussion and learning about the most pressing issues facing us all today with the purpose of shaping a fairer, more just society?

There are promising examples of small groups coming together to distribute information and discussion sheets about the refugees, immigration and the war. ALA's February website of the month highlighted one group's activity and another's booklet *The Truth Hurts* also features on the site. Can similar activities be organised between the computer and Thai cooking classes?

This immediate challenge for adult education coordinators is also relevant for other issues. For instance young (and older) people

continue to join environment groups to learn and act on global warming, deforestation and to consider ways of responding to the Rio and Kyoto agendas. Will they see the adult education centre as a site for this learning? Will adult education be seen as a place where the issues that people really want and need to know about will be discussed or will that occur elsewhere?

ALA wants to respond to these challenges. We will again this year convene a learning leadership program that will take up these issues and challenges. The aim will be to bring together current and aspiring leaders who believe that adult education and learning is vital in building community learning and action in order to develop a growing cohort of activist learning leaders. Details can be found on page 9.

This is my final editorial in my role as ALA Director. I would like to thank ALA members for their support over the past three years, for the warm welcome I received when visiting centres across the country, and for sharing your experience and expertise. I now return to the practice of teaching and learning. ■

Tony Brown

Dorothy Lucardie moves to Alice Springs in mid-February to take up the position of CEO at Central Australian Remote Health Development Services.

In a reshuffle at ANTA, **Lesley Johnson** will no longer have responsibility for ACE. **Margot Couldrey** will now fill that role.

More changes on the MCEETYA ACE Taskforce as **Marion Norton** has left her position as Queensland representative to start a new job in Research and Evaluation in Youth Justice in the Queensland Department of Families. **Sharon Mullins** is replacing Marion.

Bob Boughton has been appointed Senior Lecturer in Adult Education and Training in UNE's School of Professional Development and Leadership . ■

AS WORKPLACES CHANGE, SO DOES THE IT TRAINING PACKAGE

Change happens fast in IT workplaces, so the Information Technology Training Package ICA99 (IT Training Package) has been updated. The original IT Training Package was launched in 1999. Since then, there has been an enormously expansion in use of the internet, e-business applications and PCs, impacting on the shape and pace of IT skills formation.

Enhancements to the existing IT Training Package comprise four new qualifications, ten new competency standards and additional assessment guidance on simulation and resources within a large number of existing standards. The new qualifications include a new

Certificate I in Information Technology, an additional Certificate II (Applications) qualification and two new qualifications at the Certificate IV level. In developing and validating the enhancements to the training package, the Information Technology & Telecommunications Industry Training Advisory Body received input from industry, employers, training providers, community organisations and interested parties within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. ■

VICTORIAN PROVIDERS TO SHARE IN RECORD FUNDING

In 2002, the more than 500 adult and community education providers across Victoria will share in a record \$36 million funding pool, a \$2.4 million boost on last year. The Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment, Ms Lynne Kosky, said a key part of the funding boost would be the purchase of 414 leading-edge notebook computers to establish nine innovative mobile computer lending libraries across the state, costing \$1.5 million. In addition, neighbourhood houses and community centres would receive more than \$24.7 million to teach and develop courses. ■

RADIO 5UV REAPS EIGHT AWARDS IN 2001

ALA Award-winner Radio 5UV in Adelaide continues to attract the attention of award-givers. In 2001 it won eight national and state awards. Most recently, it was recognised for 'excellence in music broadcasting' (for its dynamic live broadcasts of the Womadelaide festival networked

to over 50 stations); and 'general excellence in broadcasting' (for its wide-ranging feature program strategy). It also won a high commendation in the category 'excellence in spoken word broadcasting', for coverage of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas. ■

BOOM IN UK MUSEUM VISITS

The introduction of free admission to national museums and galleries in the UK has been an enormous popular success, according to Tessa Jowell, the UK's Culture Secretary. In the first month of free admission, visitor numbers doubled on average compared with the same period in the previous year. Tessa Jowell said: "Clearly, charges were acting as a restraint to many people, particularly families. Free admission has democratised the nation's treasures, making them accessible to all." ■

ENHANCE TV

A new website showcasing film and television content for the education sector has been launched. With details of upcoming broadcasts relevant to teachers and students, study guides that can be downloaded and access to a wealth of other teaching material, www.enhancetv.com.au is an important – and free – new resource for educators. Developed by Screenrights, the non-profit copyright collecting society that licenses the use of television in educational institutions, enhanceTV is a direct response to calls from teachers for further resources to assist them in using audiovisual material. ■

NED DENNIS ANNOUNCES THE LATEST (2001) RECIPIENTS OF THE ALA AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN ADULT EDUCATION.

Recognising excellence in adult education

Adult Learning Australia's annual Awards are an important part of the adult education calendar. Awarded by the national peak organisation in the field of adult learning in Australia, the Awards recognise outstanding contributions to adult education and learning.

The Awards were first presented in 1990 to an individual or group for service to adult and community education. By 1997 the National Executive decided to create three award categories.

- ▶ Adult Educator of the Year is awarded to an individual for outstanding service and contribution to the development of adult education and learning. This Award is a tribute to outstanding work in research, teaching, training, administration, or some combination of these.
- ▶ Adult Education Provider of the Year recognises outstanding service and contribution to the development of adult education and learning.
- ▶ Adult Education Program of the Year is a tribute to outstanding work in program development, implementation, and evaluation.

EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Adult Educator of the Year for 2001 is **Sue Williamson**, who has made a significant contribution to adult learning through her support for the development of learning circles. Invited by Sydney Community College to run its first Learning Circle on Aboriginal Reconciliation, Sue has gone on to assist the College to develop a more comprehensive Learning Circle program.

Having become interested in the Learning Circle concept, Sue offered her services to Learning Circles Australia (LCA). She then wrote three discussion modules for LCA, joined the Interim Board, helped prepare submissions, visited organisations on behalf of LCA to promote and develop programs, conducted introductions to Learning Circles and trained many facilitators.

Sue uses the methodology that she is teaching as a model to good practice. She endeavours to enable participants in workshops to discover what they already know, research and explore new ideas, and take action to use the learning in their lives or work. Many of the participants in the Aboriginal Reconciliation Learning

Circles have continued taking action or extending their learning following the course. From the facilitator training programs, participants have adapted the Learning Circles methodology to their own work, or used LCA programs.

By helping adults to take responsibility for their own learning, Sue demonstrates a clear commitment to community education. Her exceptional commitment to the development of Learning Circles makes Sue a deserving recipient of the ALA Educator of the Year Award for 2001.

PROVIDER OF THE YEAR

WEA of South Australia has been operating since 1917, providing quality programs and adapting with the times to develop efficient systems to deliver them.

In 1976, the WEA produced its first newspaper course guide, opening up participation in adult community education in Adelaide. In 1987, the WEA began to deliver course guides to all metropolitan houses, in a weekly over the fence, free newspaper. It thereby began the practice of providing over 400 000 households in the greater metropolitan area of Adelaide with access to course information, four times a year.

In 1984 the WEA of South Australia was a leader in instituting computerised systems. It developed a course data system for creating its course program and contracts, making tutor payments, and monitoring enrolment vacancies. In later years a student database was linked in to provide a fully computerised course, student and enrolment system. The WEA was also one of the first major providers

of ACE in Australia to enable online enrolments via its website.

The WEA has always taken a flexible approach to the delivery of courses and regularly responds to requests from employers and organisations for short courses for their staff. Often, courses take place in workplaces rather than the WEA Centre. For example, in 2001, ten courses were conducted with homeless youth in the suburbs of Adelaide for an organisation called Street Level West, from yoga and car maintenance to cooking and self-image.

Other ways in which the WEA excels as an adult education provider:

- ▶ WEA has good quality control. It carefully selects teachers, provides induction workshops for tutors, and monitors student evaluation forms
- ▶ Where students need it, WEA provides statements of attendance and Certificates of Merit,
- ▶ The WEA has assisted many learners to achieve adult re-entry to university.

The WEA of South Australia continues to be an innovative provider of lifelong learning and well deserves to be 2001 Provider of the Year.

PROGRAM OF THE YEAR

This year, ALA made two Outstanding Program awards. One of the award recipients this year is 'Filling the gaps', a collaborative project of the Koorda Learning Centre and the Koorda Telecentre. Koorda is a small rural town in the wheat-belt of Western Australia. The goal of 'Filling the gaps' was to increase

the potential for community management in the town by strengthening literacy and numeracy skills within the community. The Learning Centre and the Telecentre hatched their plan for this innovative program when they noticed it was difficult to find people for office bearer positions in local community organisations. As participants in 'Filling the gaps', community members could work with a mentor to identify their individual educational needs and develop a personalised program of learning.

A further outcome of the project has been the development and distribution of an ACE/VET Resource List, which identifies organisations that provide learning opportunities and/or resources for community members, both locally and via flexible delivery methods.

From a broader perspective, 'Filling the gaps' demonstrates that two organisations can work in partnership effectively. Out of this project, in collaboration with Learning Centre Link, a partnership process model has been developed. The Koorda project model has since been applied to and reviewed through two other rural pilot projects, and enhanced after consultation with key stakeholders in Western Australia. As a result, the partnership process model has been documented in the WA Department of Training publication *Partnerships – The Way to Go*.

The other Outstanding Program Award for 2001 goes to **U3A Online Resources**. U3A Online is a novel internet-based program that offers a variety of adult education courses and resources, all developed by older volunteers for older learners.

U3A Online operates in the same spirit as a conventional U3A. Volunteers develop and teach all the courses. As well, a team of volunteers, who oversee the many facets of the program, carries out all the management. The only paid person is the coordinator. This is the first program of its kind for isolated older people.

The program has two main target groups. The first target group is older people who are isolated by distance or circumstance (such as illness or being a caregiver) and, as a consequence, cannot take part in face-to-face adult education activities. One volunteer teaches her course from the UK, clearly demonstrating the potential of this program to harness the talents of older people regardless of their location.

The second target group comprises the 50 000 members of the 140 autonomous U3A groups in Australia and 43 groups in New Zealand. Until U3A Online, there was no systematic, inexpensive way for U3As in either country to communicate widely with other groups, or to learn about adult education matters of interest to older adults, nationally or internationally. As a free service to all U3A members, U3A Online provides a directory of addresses, information about conferences and courses, and links to U3As all around the world and other resources. U3A members may also take part in all the online courses for a nominal annual membership fee of \$12. ■

Ned Dennis is Acting Director of Adult Learning Australia.

A fuller version of this story is available from www.ala.asn.au.

ON 16 JANUARY, ALA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TONY BROWN, AND NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER, BARBARA PAMPHILON, MET WITH THE NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, DR BRENDAN NELSON. BARBARA REPORTS ON THEIR DISCUSSION.

New Minister to see ACE first-hand



Tony, Barbara and Brendan Nelson

During our 45-minute meeting, Dr Nelson showed a keen interest in the breadth and diversity of adult learning issues in Australia today. We were particularly impressed with the Minister's concern for 'disenfranchised learners' – those groups of adults who just don't see that formal education is for them.

Following a discussion on creative and innovative approaches to learning used in our sector, from programs in the pub to

'peer learning for the elderly', we agreed to facilitate some visits by the Minister to ACE programs later in the year. As we all know, seeing programs in action really brings our work to light. Another concrete outcome was a request for further input into the ways that computer training for Centrelink clients could be most effectively funded. The National Executive are compiling this response.

We all agreed that adult learning was a central plank for Australia's further development. We shared our visions for a Commonwealth unit that would make visible adult learning, lifelong learning and community education. Whilst we acknowledge that Dr Nelson has an incredibly challenging portfolio, we are hopeful that his understanding and interest in the need for learning opportunities for ALL Australians will continue to grow. ■

Barbara Pamphilon is Head of the School of Professional and Community Education at the University of Canberra.



Learn to make a difference

Adult Learning Australia seeks applicants for its 3rd annual program to develop a network of Community Learning Leaders. The program will be delivered by ALA in association with the UTS Centre for Popular Education and leaders in the field. This is a leadership program unlike any other.

THE COMMUNITY LEARNING LEADERSHIP PROGRAM:

- ▶ supports people in the business of facilitating change,
- ▶ builds awareness that learning is part of change efforts and that educators have expertise in change practices, and
- ▶ fosters networks for learning across different areas of community activity.

ARE YOU AN ACTIVE ADULT EDUCATOR?

- ▶ Committed to facilitating learning for social change?
- ▶ Aware of contemporary initiatives around lifelong learning?
- ▶ Responsive to emerging community learning needs?
- ▶ Developing learning networks in

“Thank you for the opportunity to learn and clarify my own direction in the adult learning world. I would rate the program as excellent.”

“I have enjoyed these three days enormously. I am exhilarated, inspired and exhausted.”

- the local community and nationally?
- ▶ Understand community adult learning as a national field of practice with international links and traditions?

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

The program will:

- ▶ bring together current and aspiring leaders focusing on major issues in community leadership and adult learning,
- ▶ provide an environment where leaders from a range of backgrounds can develop mutual respect, understanding and knowledge,
- ▶ enable participants to meet, learn from and work with leaders in different fields of practice,
- ▶ develop networks as a continuing resource of skills, expertise and influence, and
- ▶ challenge you to think and act differently.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The program will combine residential and flexible (including online) delivery. In May, selected applicants will receive pre-residential materials and advice. From 26–29 June, a residential will be held in Melbourne. During the

next five months, participants will meet online, as well as attending four one-day face-to-face workshops in Melbourne. A final gathering, devised and organised by participants, will be held in November to reflect on and evaluate projects.

THE COST IS MINIMAL

The cost of participating in the Community Learning Leaders program is \$350 – a small fee in comparison to other leadership programs. Successful participants will have their residential accommodation met, and some travel subsidy will be available.

WANT TO PARTICIPATE?

Nomination forms are available from the ALA National Office: phone 02 6251 7933 and we will send one out to you. Alternatively, see <http://www.ala.asn.au/pages/leadership.html>. All the details you need to provide in your application are listed, along with more information about the program. You can also download a PDF of the printed brochure.

Please encourage others in your organisation or networks to apply for this unique opportunity. ■

Deadline for applications is 28 March 2002.

LOCAL LEARNING EMPLOYMENT NETWORKS ARE CREATING A REVOLUTION IN THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TO LEARN, ACCORDING TO PAUL DI MASI.

Putting the lens on youth in the community

I'm not usually given to hyperbole or overstatement. But I don't think it's stretching the truth to say that LLENs represent one of the most significant changes in thinking about youth, learning and employment issues since the introduction of compulsory and universal schooling two centuries ago.

Indeed, the LLENs initiative can be traced in a direct line from

that initiative, in the sense that a movement that began by insisting that young people had the right to access to learning is now vesting community-based organisations with the responsibility to ensure that that learning is not only available but *successful*.

Think about it for a minute. LLENs are community-building and local coordination organisations, fully (if not

generously) funded to carry out their basic strategic role of drawing together all of the local players and putting young people at the centre of their deliberations.

Yes, that's right – young people. Not funding, not organisational structures, not modes of delivery, not staff, not... well, you get the picture. Young people. At the centre.

Revolutionary stuff.

Because of their structure, LLENs have the opportunity to report directly to an independent Commission (the Victorian Learning and Employment Commission), which reports directly to the Minister. Their structure also means that LLENs closely reflect the community they operate in. There is now a real and effective conduit for local communities of interest – teachers, youth workers, economic development officers, employers, kooris, parents from within all of these segments – to



Graduation of the SELLEN Youth Leadership Training Program, November 2001. This group has gone on to form the SELLEN Youth Advisory Panel.

bring their analysis and collective wisdom to bear in a collective way to nut out what works. For their young people. And with the authority to weed out, over time, what doesn't work.

LLENs embody powerful concepts – local, *collaborative*, *partnership*, *control*, *access*, and *community*.

Whilst LLENs are based on a British model of Learning and Skills Councils, their development and implementation here in Victoria are uniquely Australian. The original British model involved the Learning and Skills Council being central to all local learning and employment planning. Whilst this may well be the destination of LLENs, they are for now focused solely on young people engaged in (or disengaged from) post-compulsory education. Despite their currently limited focus, LLENs are potentially powerful local organisations.

If you doubt the potential breadth and influence of LLENs consider this.

LLENs are embodied in legislation. Their establishment has bipartisan support in parliament. LLEN Committees of Management are often made up of key influencers and decision-makers drawn from within local communities of interest.

LLENs are structured into all of the key performance agreements negotiated by various state government instrumentalities with the Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education (ETTE), the Office of School Education (OSE), the Councils of all TAFE's in Victoria, Victorian Industry Training Advisory Boards (VITABs) and Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Boards.

Typical of these inclusions in service agreements is the following, from the OSE Service Agreement with the Office of Portfolio Integration (and covering the distribution of funding of over \$27 million, including Managed Individual Pathways funding):

Schools are expected to consult with their LLEN on the local application of these funds. The LLENs are seen as

a key mechanism in the construction of a comprehensive set of arrangements at the local level to improve post-compulsory education and training outcomes.

So, having set the framework, what are we at the South East Local Learning and Employment Network actually *doing*?

Since moving to our permanent premises in June last year – aside from establishing a new local community-based organisation and developing a network that currently has 110 members, we have:

- ▶ commissioned a detailed local environmental scan and gap analysis to guide our deliberations,
- ▶ brought together all local agencies delivering Managed Individual Pathways or



A meeting of the south-east VET cluster at the SELLEN office.

similar programs (including private and catholic schools and ACE and TAFE) in a forum that shared best practice materials,

- ▶ conducted a Youth Leadership Training program for Year 10 students and invited the graduates of that program to form the SELLEN Youth Advisory Panel, which provides us with advice ‘from the ground’ on issues of concern to young people,
- ▶ established sub-committees and working parties to examine and recommend on areas as diverse as the experience of NESB and migrant youth and the structure of school-based work placement programs,
- ▶ begun to design a program for linking employers in specific industry sectors into schools and training providers to offer formal, structured and articulated school-based apprenticeship and trainee programs,
- ▶ planned a Job and Careers Information Forum to provide the usual information as well as workshops and activities targeting parents and employers,
- ▶ provided comprehensive advice to the Victorian Learning and Employment

Commission on a range of key local issues, and

- ▶ gathered information to allow us to provide structured and detailed advice to the Government – on crucial areas of alternative funding models, issues and barriers – via semi-structured interviews, focus groups and forums.

More importantly perhaps is the talking that goes on across tables, in (and after) forums and meetings with people from vastly different disciplines and occupations who share experiences and learnings and engage in that vital communal conversation that leads to shared visions, partnerships and fundamental change in the way we work with young people.

The Youth Advisory Panel meets regularly so that we can gain insight into the issues facing young people and hear their thoughts on solutions. Our meeting held in December addressed issues of:

- ▶ education and teaching methods: “It’s a problem that different schools offer different subjects”,
- ▶ public transport: “there is a lack of affordable public transport”,
- ▶ the need for consultation with a wider range of young people: “We need to be able to get suggestions from other

young people in our area, but how?”,

- ▶ lack of transitional assistance between school and employment: “There is little or no help finding jobs or assistance with career choices”, and
- ▶ drug and alcohol education: “Teachers teach abstinence, but we want to know why”.

A key project under discussion is developing a brochure for teachers on how young people would *like* to be treated.

Panel members are working on several projects with the intention of picking up at least two more for this year. Commitment is high amongst these young people and they show an enthusiasm for identifying issues and possible solutions. We are hoping to extend our base of consultation by utilising these panel members in consultation with student representative councils across the region.

LLENs represent a significant and ground-breaking opportunity for local communities to seize the agenda for local provision of education, employment and training services and re-structure it to benefit their young people.

It is a hackneyed expression, but nevertheless true: it takes a village to raise a child. ■

Paul Di Masi is CEO of the South East Local Learning and Employment Network.

WHAT WOULD A REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY LOOK LIKE? TONY BROWN SUMMARISES THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE 46TH SESSION OF THE UNESCO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION, HELD IN GENEVA IN SEPTEMBER.

The development of Australian education

Does the report refer to the million adults participating in adult and community education? Does it provide an inspiring vision for Australian lifelong learning? Does it acknowledge that education takes place outside universities, schools and VET? What do other countries say about their education systems?

Australia's report is in two parts. The first provides an overview of the Australian education system at the end of the 20th century, while the second outlines educational content and learning strategies for the 21st century.

The report details major educational reforms in recent years such as the national goals and outcomes for schools, introduction of the new apprenticeship system in VET and moves to deregulate university course fees. A second section details major achievements under the headings of access, equity, quality and participation. Tables and graphs comparing trends and statistics over the past 20 years illustrate these sections. As such the report provides valuable information. We see for instance that the



proportion of indigenous students in higher education increased by 42 per cent from 1991–95 while the increase from 1996–99 was only 18 per cent. (p.19).

However, readers wanting to find out more about adult and community education or the rapid growth in workplace learning, or to gain an appreciation of the practice and extent of informal learning will be disappointed because there is no mention here. This large area of Australian educational activity is simply omitted.

The second part of the report sets out to discuss educational content and learning strategies for the 21st century. Here the

report lacks vision. Reflecting the existing policy preference for a narrow understanding of institutional learning and a narrow focus on skills within our educational institutions, the report fails to provide any inspiration for what the Australian education system could become. Instead it is dominated by an instrumental approach couched in general

Democracy can never be finally achieved, it must be continually nurtured and won over and over by each successive generation.

commitments to strengthening democracy and 'preparing for careers in a challenging and competitive future'. (p.33)

The UNESCO website does include messages from Ministers from participating countries and here we get a glimpse of the thinking that is informing their educational planning.

Ingegerd Wärnersson, Sweden's Minister for Schools and Adult Education wrote that "Learning to live together is a very important dimension of social citizenship and a part of democracy. Democracy can never be finally achieved, it must be continually nurtured and won over and over by each successive generation. We are reminded almost daily of violations against our democratic values in the form of crimes with xenophobic, racist, homophobic or Nazi motives. To my mind the education system is vital to the creation of good, democratic and responsible citizens..."

Trond Giske, Norway's Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs declared that his government will "be in the

forefront in the global struggle for equal rights to education. This is a struggle for the empowerment of the individual, and for the sustainable, democratic development of all nations."

These views are not confined to the wealthy Scandinavian countries. Thailand's Thaksin Shinawatra said his country was preparing for the new challenges of globalisation and advanced technologies. "Our people must be empowered to find appropriate ways to keep up with them. A wide-ranging reform in education is the only effective way to equip our citizens with skills to cope with future trends." He went on to state that education reform in Thailand is:

based on the concept Education for All and All for Education. Its underlying principle is lifelong learning and self-development for all learners. [...] All types of education, namely formal, non-formal, and informal, will place emphasis on knowledge, morality, learning process, and integration of self-knowledge into the relationship between oneself and society, from the family, the community, to the nation, and the world community.

Australia's national report provides important information but lacks the inspiration that can broaden our perspective on the potential of learning for the individual and society.

More details about the Conference can be found at the UNESCO site via www.ibe.unesco.org. ■

Tony Brown, former Director of Adult Learning Australia, lectures in the Faculty of Education at UTS.

A RECENT EVENT AT THE ALA WEBSITE ILLUMINATES AS MUCH ABOUT THE WEB-BASED FORUM AS A MEDIUM FOR DISCUSSION AS IT DOES ABOUT CELEBRATIONS AND THE PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. CATH STYLES REPORTS.

Celebrations for development and change

Throughout November of 2001, 116 people attended the forum 'Celebrations for development and change' in ALA's Community Cultural Development (CCD) Interest Group. Part of a series of online and face-to-face forums on CCD (organised by the Centre for Popular Education, UTS), 'Celebrations' had a committed moderator in Julieanne Hilbers, so it was a lively, engaging discussion. And because the discussion remains visible on the ALA website, it is possible to reread it to consider how well the technology works to facilitate a smooth, well-rounded conversation. It turns out that although the conversation was of ample interest, and people shared powerful experiences and good ideas, there were plenty of loose threads left at the end of the month-long discussion.

One of the first points that forum participants made is that occasions for celebrations are many and varied: from getting L-plates, through first sex, birthdays, leaving home, graduations, voting rights, first job, equinoxes, solstices, full moons, eclipses, Easter and Christmas, to divorce and so on. Having established the breadth of the forum's relevance, Julieanne invited people to describe particular celebrations. And as the detail came out, we began to get a sense of the purpose of both celebrations and of CCD. We 'heard', for instance, that:

- ▶ a series of cultural activities around the Maralinga nuclear test site were organised to coincide with the Federal Government's decommissioning program "by which the Maralinga Tjarutja must decide whether or not to take back their land",
- ▶ annual celebrations in a middle-class neighbourhood in Massachusetts enable

members of that community to get to know one another,

- ▶ an open day to celebrate the centenary of White Gum Valley primary school in Fremantle raised historical consciousness among the locals,
- ▶ the annual Moon Lantern Festival at the North Richmond High Rise Estate, which draws on a traditional Chinese and Vietnamese celebration, has revived the art and practice of lantern-making by local children and their families, but has adapted and diversified so that now people who see the procession might "think it was [the lesbian and gay] Mardi Gras", and
- ▶ at a 'Reclaim the Night' march, when a woman spoke publicly for the first time about her brutal rape, she reached a crucial turning point in her healing process.

Celebrations, in other words, can foster healing, decision-making and communion for both individuals and communities.

Some topics inspired multiple strands, forming a patchwork of ideas on the subject. An example is a topic introduced by 'Roxanne Adams' concerning rites of passage into adulthood. She laments that there is no longer any clear moment or process of passage from childhood to adulthood, leaving young people in a state of limbo for years, no longer kids but not quite adults. In reply, 'steve' reflects that with the decline in 'blue-collar' industries young men are losing the opportunity for a positive initiation into work cultures. The final respondent on this topic – 'john tracey' – argues that it is not that we have no clear initiations into adulthood so much as that modern Australian (Western) culture does not appreciate the state of adulthood and encourages people to remain in an egocentric, infantile state.



Julieanne Hilbers,
moderator of the
'Celebrations' discussion.



The North Richmond Moon Lantern Festival.

The conversation was far from uncritical or glib, and it is unrealistic to expect that such a forum would come up with a comprehensive agenda for future research or practice. I'm not sure if what I'm about to say reflects on the discussion or the technology, but I think it is worth noting that participants tended to concentrate on the benefits of community cultural development. For example, in the topic on the health outcomes of celebrations, respondents agreed that celebrations can enhance people's social, emotional and spiritual health. The discussion certainly raised several critical questions, including:

- ▶ how can facilitators demonstrate to funding bodies the benefits of CCD for the communities involved?,
- ▶ how do facilitators deal with racial, ethnic, religious and other differences within communities so that no one feels excluded?,
- ▶ how can traditional celebrations be revived and adapted for modern contexts?, and perhaps most crucially,
- ▶ does CCD practice inevitably clash with the bureaucratic capitalist economy in which it must work?.

Some of these questions were addressed, but some were not articulated explicitly enough to demand attention.

There are advantages and disadvantages to virtual conversations. I like being able to skim

email notifications that someone has 'spoken', and return to the website to respond at my leisure. Taking one's time often leads to a more considered response than the quick-fire responses necessitated in a face-to-face (f2f) forum. An attentive moderator can also massage what could be a rabble of conflicting voices into a sustained, multi-layered conversation. It is possible to revisit each topic, invite further exploration of issues that arise, solicit responses to unanswered questions, and edit for accuracy and clarity. In addition, assuming you are not intimidated by the technology, it is much less daunting to address a large crowd of people via the mediation of a computer, so in this sense web-based discussion might encourage a greater and more diverse participation.

But although web-based conversations may be more inclusive, and considered, than f2f ones, it ain't necessarily so. The technology is far from universally accessible, and even with access to a fast, powerful computer, people can be intimidated or frustrated by the machine, the internet software, an unfamiliar website, and/or the unique linguistic conventions that have developed online: 'f2f' is but one example of new jargon common in online discussion.

ALA's facility for web-based discussion is a work-in-progress. I welcome your feedback on the technology, and especially your suggestions for improving it. The UTS Centre for Popular Education has a good approach. Now that they have hosted an online discussion, their next step is to hold the f2f version. At this event, participants will be able to follow up on some of the questions that emerge in the virtual forum. The f2f goes from 9–5pm on 22 March, at Building 5, Blackfriars Campus, UTS. Enquiries to cpe@uts.edu.au. ■

Cath Styles is ALA's Print & Web Services Manager.

The full 'Celebrations' discussion begins with Julieanne Hilbers' introduction at <http://www.ala.asn.au/interests/phorum/read.html?forumid=88707&id=688>.

FOR MANY YEARS, ALA HAS ADVOCATED FOR A SET OF INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING. HERE IAN MARTIN CALLS FOR THE VOCATIONAL BASIS OF ADULT EDUCATION TO BE RECLAIMED FROM THE 'MORASS' OF LIFELONG LEARNING. WE HOPE TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION, AND WELCOME YOUR RESPONSES.

Re-discovering the vocation of adult education

My own journey through education has taken me from school teaching to traditional university extra-mural work, from continuing education to professional development, and from community education to lifelong learning – and always, inexorably, back to adult education. Why is this? What explains the stubborn circularity of this trajectory?

My experience suggests that for some of us, although we make the road by walking, the compass bearings of the route we choose to take are already there. And that while some things change – not least the words we use to describe them – other things, in a fundamental and incontrovertible way, do not. There are many different kinds of adult education, but this argument proceeds from one distinctive historical tradition and ideological position: adult education is a dissenting vocation – one that is overtly political and partisan. It takes the side of particular social interests and political actors and thus, inevitably, stands against certain others.

Adult educators oppose the ubiquitous ideological and economic forces – now seen in the global market – that seek to dominate, oppress and exploit ordinary people by turning them into the

producers of other people's power, profit and privilege. These forces, I would contend, are hegemonic within the current construction of lifelong learning as a universalised learning to labour, or



Photo: Cheryl Brown, 1999

learning for earning. There are other more palatable and progressive versions of lifelong learning, but if these claim to stand for human flourishing and social justice, they may be in danger of fiddling while Rome burns. Within the dominant discourse of lifelong learning, the adult educator is seen as a neutral facilitator of individual learning, rather than as an agent of social change. What is going on here? What can we do to rescue adult education as a vocation of choice, as distinct from the job we have to do?

The apparently inexorable logic of the current politics of publication and research is to draw us away from the messy business of social and political engagement towards the more fertile and

fashionable pastures of technical and intellectual disengagement. In number-crunching surveys of ‘participation’ and ‘access’, the question surely is in what, to what, and on whose terms? For whom – and in whose interests – are the increasingly bland and sanitised packages of continuing education and professional

“Adult education is a dissenting vocation – one that is overtly political and partisan.”

development? Earnest assertions of the importance of social capital in building the learning society do not deal with what destroys the norms and networks of trust in communities.

What I find troubling is the separation of the process of learning from the intentions of teaching. The social purpose tradition has always stood for purposeful educational intervention in the interests of social and political change: change towards more justice, equality and democracy. We need it in these muddled, late-modern times as much as we ever did. Briefly, social purpose adult education can be characterised as embodying the following principles:

- ▶ adult students/learners are treated as citizens and social actors,
- ▶ curriculum reflects shared social and political interests,
- ▶ knowledge is actively and purposefully constructed to advance these collective interests,
- ▶ pedagogy is based on dialogue rather than transmission,
- ▶ adult education exists in symbiotic relationship to social movements,

- ▶ critical understanding leads to social action and political engagement, and
- ▶ education is always a key resource in the broader struggle for democracy.

Variants of this tradition exist in almost all countries and cultures. In the era of globalisation, the New World Order, and the TINA (There is no alternative) mindset, we sever our roots at our peril. We must not abandon the unashamedly political discourse of social purpose adult education for the curiously depoliticised discourse of lifelong learning.

The dominant discourse of lifelong learning can be summarised in terms of the three ps – professionalisation, pedagogy and policy – all of which reflect and reproduce a pervasive technical rationality and ideology of individualism. It is at best indifferent – and at worst hostile – to the notion of adult education as a dissenting and visionary vocation.

This, of course, started long before the current version of lifelong learning came into vogue. Michael Collins (1991) shows how the values of professionalism have been lost to the baser currency of professionalisation and the notion of vocation jettisoned in favour of the toolkit of technique. In this sense, the seeds of the lifelong yawning version were sown quite a long time ago in adult education’s search for professional respectability. This seized upon a spurious positivism to spawn what Malcolm Knowles, perhaps the arch villain of the piece, so successfully peddled in the academic and corporate market place as the modern practice of adult education.

Knowles’ ‘routinisation’ in mainstream adult education, thinking of the notion of



the universal and unproblematic self-directed learner, encouraged a technicism which was based on what Collins rightly identifies as an ‘excessive individualism and psychologism’. The removal of educational practice from questions of value and purpose was, of course, very convenient for dominant commercial and institutional interests. The focus on the self-directed individual (inevitably, perhaps, an unreconstructed white, Anglo Saxon, Protestant male) meant that the adult educator’s role was reduced to merely the facilitation of learning, ie technical support. The purposes of learning no longer mattered – at any rate, they could be left to the sovereign individual or, alternatively, those who knew better (leading to the anomaly of what Collins nicely terms ‘directed “self-directed learning”’). Issues of curriculum and epistemology did not even arise. It was all delightfully simple!

Ironically, however, as the search for the recognition and respectability of academic and professional status mainstreams adult learning, so it marginalises the vocation of adult education as a distinctive field of practice and cuts it off from its historical and cultural roots (eg, see Barr 1999).

The technicist legacy remains alive and

well today. In recent years, it has begun to thrive with particular vigour in the university itself – in its turbo-charged, value for money, quality-assured manifestation. But, of course, it is not called adult education; it is called teaching and learning. In the lifelong learning university, the technical skills of the facilitator of learning in managing student learning as efficiently, effectively and economically as possible are in the ascendancy (leaving staff more time for that much more important and lucrative activity, research). Concerns of the critical practitioner with questions of value and purpose, content and context, dialogue and curriculum are simply beyond the pale. In this sense, the hegemony of lifelong learning in the modern academy has turned the historic mission of progressive adult education into little more than an irrelevant anachronism.

All this has come about within the wider policy context of the instrumental and economic imperatives of national competitiveness in the global market. This pedagogy of labour (Field 1991), or learning for earning, is what Frank Coffield (1999) sees at the heart of the now dominant discourse of lifelong learning and the learning society. When Prime Minister Tony Blair famously declared that “education is the best economic policy we have”, he meant precisely that. Lifelong learning is an instrumental process, not a vocational, let alone ontological, purpose. It is about learning for a living, rather than learning for living.

Lifelong learning is also, crucially, a project of diversionary remoralisation, systematically constructed to turn public

“The hegemony of lifelong learning in the modern academy has turned the historic mission of progressive adult education into little more than an irrelevant anachronism.”

issues back into personal troubles by individualising, privatising and pathologising the responsibility for employability and flexibility. In other words, lifelong learning is about people's capacity to get a job, any job, as distinct from their right to have a decent one, in what are lean and mean times for so many unemployed, casual and lowpaid workers. In this sense, lifelong learning is about social control, managing the consequences of macro-economic policy.

In a very real way, it is the reworking of an old trick – one that is all too familiar to the critical adult education practitioner. When the amelioration of social and economic ills and inequities threatens the interests of those who profit from the system that generates them, education is always there to carry the can. This was never put better than by the celebrated British sociologist A. H. Halsey. Reviewing the UK government's Educational Priority Areas (EPA) projects of three decades ago, he warned that we should avoid “treating education as the waste paper basket of social policy – a repository for dealing with social problems where solutions are uncertain, or where there is a disinclination to wrestle with them seriously” (Halsey 1972). *Plus ça change!*

I recently asked a group of postgraduate students for their views about teaching and the role of the teacher based on their

own educational experience. One of them, an overseas student from a relatively poor developing country, replied in exasperation: “I did not invest £7200 for a mere qualification. Maybe it is a bit too much to expect, but I was hoping for some sort of impartation of vision... Do the lecturers in this university really want to make a difference? Do all the lecturers in this university really want us to make a difference?”

In the era of lifelong learning, it seems to me essential that those of us who care about social purpose recover our sense of vocation, and reconstruct a notion of vision and a sense of yearning in our work. There are lots of important and urgent reasons for doing this. Most of these are about radical adult education's historic engagement (as both agent and resource) in the continuing struggle to extend democracy, promote inclusive citizenship, and pursue social justice. But my frustrated student also reminds us of another kind of reason. Part of the pleasure and challenge of the vocation of adult education is the opportunity for teachers to learn from their students. That is a privilege for the adult educator that the mere facilitator of learning can never fully share. ■

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A fuller version of his paper, including references, is available from www.ala.asn.au. Your comments are welcome in the Lifelong Learning Interest Group.

CATH STYLES EXPLAINS.

Your privacy, our pledge

On 21 December 2001, the Privacy Act 1988 – which regulates the collection and use of personal information – came into effect. The Act requires organisations subject to its provisions – and ALA is one – to comply with the National Privacy Principles (NPP) when handling personal information. You might not think that Adult Learning Australia (ALA) has any personal information about you, but in fact any information that can identify you is ‘personal’, so most of our membership data is personal information.

Most of the Privacy Principles relate to the use and disclosure of personal information. Of course, ALA doesn’t sell or pass on your information to anyone. There is one exception to this rule: we do provide our membership data to the State and Territory Branches on, but only for the purposes of contacting you with relevant State-based information. We do not give the information to anyone else.

Other aspects of the Principles are also worth noting. For example, we are required to take reasonable steps to ensure the personal information we collect, use or disclose is accurate, complete and up-to-date (NPP 3); and, if they request it, to give our members access to the personal information we hold about them (NPP 6). ALA satisfies both of these requirements via our internet-based membership administration system. In fact, we exceed the requirements of NPPs 3 and 6, in that our members have the ability to correct and update their

information, and thereby ensure its accuracy.

To access your personal information, log in in at www.ala.asn.au/members. You will be prompted for your User Name (which is your family name) and your password (which is your membership number). If you don’t know your membership number/password, you can type in your email address and it will be sent to you automatically. And if this fails – and you don’t receive your password in a few minutes – it means that ALA doesn’t know or recognise your email address and you will need to contact us directly. Once logged in, you will see a link to your membership information.

Of course, having an online membership administration system via which data is transmitted raises another privacy issue – that of the security of your information. ALA uses the Thawte Secure Socket Layer system for encrypting your personal information (including credit card numbers) at the point of transmission, which ensures that it cannot be viewed if intercepted. See www.thawte.com for more information.

Your personal information is also protected in its offline forms. Outside business hours, the national office is locked and the security alarm is set. All our computers are password-restricted. In addition, our membership officers never pass on membership data, and any paper containing your credit card information is either shredded or (where it is necessary for us to retain it) secured.

The Privacy Commission website is at www.privacy.gov.au. Some of the most pertinent Principles are as follows.

- ▶ Only collect personal information that is necessary for your functions or activities.
- ▶ Use fair and lawful ways to collect personal information.
- ▶ Take reasonable steps to ensure the personal information you collect, use or disclose is accurate, complete and up-to-date.
- ▶ Take reasonable steps to protect the personal information you hold from misuse and loss and from unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.
- ▶ Take reasonable steps to destroy or permanently de-identify personal information if you no longer need it for any purpose for which you may use or disclose the information.
- ▶ Have a short document that sets out clearly expressed policies on the way you manage personal information and make it available to anyone who asks for it.
- ▶ If an individual asks, take reasonable steps to let them know, generally, what sort of personal information you hold, what purposes you hold it for and how you collect, use and disclose that information.
- ▶ If an individual asks, you must give access to the personal information you hold about them. ■

Cath Styles is ALA’s Print & Web Services Manager.

AT THIS TIME OF GLOBAL UNREST AND DISLOCATION, ALA IS JOINING WITH OTHER ADULT EDUCATION ORGANISATIONS TO EXPLORE WAYS OF IMPROVING THE CAPACITY OF ADULT EDUCATORS EVERYWHERE TO LOBBY AND WORK FOR A MORE JUST WORLD. JOHN CROSS REPORTS.

Projects in Indonesia and Europe



Adult Learning Australia is currently involved with two separate international projects. One is a series of training workshops in Kalimantan, Indonesia, for building capacity among community adult learning organisations; the other is a European Union-funded project aimed at strengthening the voice and outcomes of Adult Learners Week in terms of its potential as a tool for advocacy.

KALIMANTAN WORKSHOPS

Early in 2001, training workshops were held in Kalimantan (West and South), Indonesia, to strengthen the professional capacities of adult learning organisations

at the provincial and district level. Specifically, the workshops provided key representatives of adult learning organisations and other NGOs in the province with training in skills and materials that can facilitate gender and grassroots advocacy work. These skills are especially important in light of changing circumstances in Indonesia.

The second stage of the project, to be undertaken during 2002, involves follow-up workshops that offer further training for the original participants. Grassroots leaders and educators will have a valuable opportunity to reflect upon their experience since the first workshops, and to review and further develop the training materials they have been using in their work. A focus of the second round will also be gender: opportunities for women representatives of adult learning organisations to participate, and gender awareness training.

This follow-up program will comprise a five-day workshop at the provincial level and two three-day workshops at the local level. Qualified resource people and workshop facilitators from Australia and Indonesia will conduct the sessions. Presented by Pusat Pengembangan

Sumberdaya Wanita (PPSW) – the Centre For Women's Resources Development, Jakarta – and funded by AusAID, the project will be coordinated by Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), with the support of Adult Learning Australia. This project is an effort by Adult Learning Australia to strengthen the capacities of counterpart adult learning organisations in the province of Indonesia. It will build upon – and strengthen – professional linkages that already exist between adult learning organisations in the two countries.

INCREASING DEMAND FOR LEARNING – AN INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY GUIDE

This project explores the experiences and opportunities for advocacy that stem from Adult Learners Weeks, Days and Festivals around the world. The intention is to develop advocacy tools that will enable maximum impact to be gained from such events at local, national and international level and also to examine what other advocacy approaches may be used to stimulate demand from governments and funding agencies.

The cornerstone of the project will be a workshop held in Budapest in late March. The Budapest meeting will be a rare opportunity for Adult Learners Week coordinators to come together and share experiences of adult learning festivals and the part they can play in advocacy. Additional advocacy strategies for raising demand for learning in both local contexts on national levels in each of the participating countries will also be examined. From the Budapest meeting an advocacy guide will be developed.

Produced jointly by all the partners in the project, the guide will be a tool for use by adult educators everywhere to assist them in developing advocacy tools that will enable maximum impact to be gained from learning festivals events at local, national and international levels. The guide will

consider a variety of geographical and societal contexts as well as suggest other advocacy approaches that may be used in addition to learning festivals to stimulate demand for learning and support from government and funding agencies.

The project partners represent a range of organisations with a variety of experiences and priorities. They include National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) UK; Adult Learning Australia; Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education; European Association for the Education of Adults; Hungarian Folk High School Society; Institute for International Co-operation of the German Adult Education Organisation; Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE); UNESCO Institute for Education; International Council for Adult Education; and the Latin American Popular Education Network among Women (Uruguay).

Although the project is funded by the European Union, it is significant that a couple of the partner organisations come from outside Europe. The invitation extended to Adult Learning Australia, in particular, reflects the high regard in which Australia's Adult Learners Week – coordinated nationally by Adult Learning Australia – is held in Europe. Adult Learning Australia's participation in the workshop will also allow it to strengthen its own coordination of Adult Learners Week by discussing with other learning festival coordinators common challenges, ideas and innovations.

The International Advocacy Guide will be published in English, French, German and Spanish and will be disseminated among partner organisations in time for launching during International Adult Learners Week in September 2002. The guide will also be included in much larger publication on advocacy to be prepared by UNESCO and the International Council for Adult Education at a later date. ■

John Cross is National Coordinator of Adult Learners Week.

CATH STYLES SHOWCASES THE ADULT LEARNING AUSTRALIA WEBSITE, EXPLAINS WHAT HAS CHANGED RECENTLY, AND PREVIEWS ITS IMMINENT NEW DESIGN.

A website worth visiting

The online world is often a frustrating place but, given some decent technology at the user's end, and some thoughtful programming at the producer's, I believe its benefits far outweigh its frustrations. Of particular benefit is the web's capacity to provide space for (virtual) communities of (real) people to flourish. It is with this thought in mind that, during the past year, I have overseen a major overhaul of the ALA Interest Groups system, with the aim of simplifying its use and adding new features for building community among users. Other aspects of the site have also changed, or will soon, so I'm taking this opportunity to update less 'wired' readers, who may not have noticed.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AMONG YOUR GROUP

Previously, each Interest Group had three facilities: for news, discussion and links. But we found that the 'news' section was potentially circumventing the more interesting 'discussion' function, and that it was full of information that had long lost its relevance. So we deleted it. You can still attach a file – for example a press release – to your discussion post. But you are obliged, under the new system, to introduce it, and encouraged to comment on it. In this way the information itself will still date, but it will be better contextualised for future readers.

We have also established a closer connection between the two sections of the Groups (discussion and links). Previously you had to leave

the discussion to post a link. You still can post a link directly into the archive, but you now have the option of posting a link at the same time as you 'speak' in the discussion. Again, we encourage people to comment on the value of the links they are uploading.

Navigating and searching the Groups is easier now, too. A pull-down menu enables you to toggle from your current Interest Group to any other, and we have updated the wording of the navigation buttons. For example in the discussion forums we changed the terminology of 'Collapse threads' (code-writer's jargon!) to the more intuitive 'Show only topics'. And from every page of each Group, you can type in a key word or phrase and search through both the conversation and the links archive, of either the Group you are in or of all ALA Groups.

At www.ala.asn.au/interests, there is space for 29 virtual communities: groups of people with a special interest in topics ranging from ACE to youth. Most groups number over 60 members, and some are 120-strong – and that's not counting drop-ins. But how many of us visit our virtual communities on a regular basis, to share information, ideas, stories and opinions? Apart from 'more time', what would incline you to become an active group member?

A new feature of the Interest Groups system is author profiles. As a user of the Groups you can set up a profile for yourself – some text and a picture – which will appear as a link whenever you post a message in the discussion. Profiles enable Group members to introduce themselves to one another. We have connected this profiling facility to the process for subscribing to Groups (which is what you can do to receive an email notification whenever someone posts to the discussion of your chosen Group/s). Together, subscribing and creating a profile constitute your 'Registration', so that's the button to use if you want to add or cancel subscriptions, or create or edit your profile.

This article does not take you through the system step-by-step. For that purpose, we have an Interest Groups help file, with an easy-print version. You will find 'Help' on every page of each Group.

EVERY GROUP NEEDS A GOOD HOST

What is the difference between a stagnant web community and a thriving one? In my experience, the key to lively online communities is an attentive and welcoming host. Not surprisingly, the two most active Groups on the ALA website lately are those with designated moderators. John Cross and Cath Styles moderate the Learning in Museums Network (Limn) on an ongoing basis; and the UTS Centre for Popular Education organises and hosts occasional month-long forums on special topics in the Community



*A highlight from this photo will be used initially in the new design of the ALA website.
Photo courtesy of CAE, Melbourne.*

Cultural Development Group (see the story on 'Celebrations' on page 15 for a glimpse of the latest discussion).

If one of the other 27 Groups is of particular interest to you, you should consider adopting a Group by becoming its moderator. As Group moderator you would be the host-cum-housekeeper. How much effort this involves is up to you. Your role would be to welcome newcomers; respond to queries; keep the conversation flowing, edit and delete links as appropriate, and so on. An administration section for

external moderators, and a page of guidelines for moderators, will be ready on the site soon. And of course, National Office staff will remain available for support.

NEW STRUCTURE, NEW FEATURES, NEW LOOK

As the ALA website grows, it is crucial that a system be in place for ensuring that users can continue to locate the information they require. Rather than cutting items from the front page and pasting them onto a page of 'older news' or an 'archive', wherever possible or relevant we now add them to a relevant Interest

Group. Over time, the Groups will become a de facto classification system for all the information on the website. Each Group will have an introductory page, as some of them already do. See, for example, the lifelong learning page at www.ala.asn.au/lll and the Limn page at www.ala.asn.au/limn.

Our old site search engine – ht dig – seemed to produce results that were next to useless, so I have removed it. Instead I have inserted two new site search engines, both of which seem to work very well. One of these will be used as a quick search tool on the next incarnation of the home page.

A new page at www.ala.asn.au/pages/hints.html tells you, first, how you can start your day with ALA (that is, set up your browser so that ALA is your home page). The page also introduces nifty tools for getting the best out of the web.

I am in the process of redesigning the ALA website. In the coming months the site will look completely different, with a new design and revamped navigation buttons. Rather than being one long list of news, the front page will be reorganised into three columns for 'Features' (Adult Learners Week, Learning Circles Australia, The DiAL, Annual Conference, Website of the Month and Commentary of the Week); 'Interest Groups'; and 'News'. Visually, the new site will be more interesting. The photo accompanying this story will be used initially, and will be replaced, perhaps seasonally, with a different one. If you have a photo you would like to see used in the header of the ALA site, send it to us. Remember: we welcome members' input. ■

Cath Styles is ALA's Print & Web Services Manager. Email her at c.styles@ala.asn.au to respond to anything raised in this article.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The WA Branch enters 2002 with a number of exciting and challenging projects on the go.

We continue to work with the Health Department to develop the Falls Prevention for Older Persons Learning Circle. Like most such projects it's taking a little longer than anticipated but, with the content all but decided, we will soon be able to move on to the piloting of the package and then getting it out to a wider audience.

The Branch is busy contributing to the organisation of the first WA state ACE conference – 'ACE's Place in the Community' – which is planned for 14–15 June 2002. An enthusiastic and hard-working committee, convened by the Western Australian Department of Training, is currently putting shape to this exciting event. As well as the ALA and Department of Training representatives, the committee also includes representatives from Seniors Education, University Extension, the TAFE sector and Learning Centres. We will keep you posted as the program develops.

Themes for the conference are developing around:

- ▶ learning communities, sustainability of lifelong learning, community development and partnerships,
- ▶ perceptions of the value of ACE, benefits of ACE – social capital, economic impact and marketing,
- ▶ increasing diversity in ACE – ACE is for everyone with nobody left out, and
- ▶ delivery strategies – what works and how to do it.

We're planning for a maximum of 140 participants (that's all the venue can hold) and are seeking to cover a wide range of interests including delivery, organisation and social policy.

The call for workshop presenters will be going out in the very near future – so give some thought to how you can showcase your work to others in the adult learning sector in WA. We want practical sessions as well as inspiring new ideas.

ALA is also working alongside the Department of Training with a broad spectrum of providers and disability services to improve access to ACE. With some funds from the Western Australian Department of Training we will be encouraging activities and projects across the State. A major push in these projects will be to establish partnerships and to share experiences of successful models. ■

Neil Carver-Smith

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

At the recent AGM of the South Australian Branch of ALA, elections were held for the vacant Presidency, and Ann Lawless was elected. Members elected to the State Executive for 2002 were: Rita Bennink, Roger Heath, Denis Binnion, Sue Ross, Mary Jo Bellew, Lorelie Ball, David Muscio and Judy Fawcett. The new executive will appoint a Treasurer and Secretary at its first meeting in 2002. June Milan, who has been a valued member of the executive for many years, was warmly thanked for her contribution to the state executive over that time. Likewise, Rita Bennink was warmly thanked for her excellent facilitative leadership of the state executive over the past four years.

The new executive looks forward to a year of supporting South Australian members and advocating for adult learning in our state. ■

Ann Lawless

QUEENSLAND

Queensland Branch has been having an eventful time. ALA's National Executive has been involved for some time in examining its governance structures. An outcome of these deliberations has been a separation of the state-based peak body and the national issues and functions that the incorporated Queensland Branch was involved with. Of recent years much of the branch's activity was focused on state issues. The incorporated Queensland Branch applied for a change of name to Lifelong Learning Council Queensland. This approach has made it possible to reconvene an Adult Learning Australia Queensland Branch.

During this time the Branch was funded by Queensland's Department of Employment and Training for a major Adult Learners Week project. This took the form of a celebration and an examination of the development of adult and community education in Queensland since the 1960s. The project involved an audiographic seminar held simultaneously in ten locations throughout Queensland, followed by an online discussion session during Adult Learners Week and the publication of Making Connections: Past & Present: Developments in Adult and Community Education in Queensland since the 1960s. This report is available for free by phoning Terry Clark 07 3225 8898 or emailing t.clark@LNQ.net.au. ■

Helen Schwencke

TASMANIA

The Tasmanian Branch will hold its Annual General Meeting on Friday 8 March, at Service Tasmanian (Upstairs meeting room), main road, Campbell Town, from 1pm. This

CALENDAR

4 March 2002

'Return on investment in training'

This NCVET Research Forum will be held in Sydney and will involve case studies and workshop activities.

Contact: Kim Rickards,
e forums@ncver.edu.au,
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/news/conf/roi.htm>

4-5 March 2002

Working at the Sharp End

James Smith, Director of the School for Social Entrepreneurs in London, will be a key guest, leading a stream of new thinking in learning/teaching/training people in communities to do social entrepreneurship. Reduced fees are available for small community groups.

Contact: Vern Hughes,
e vern@sen.org.au,
<http://www.sen.org.au/news/events/2002conference.html>

20-22 March 2002

Making a World of Difference – AVETRA Conference

The Australian VET Research Association (AVETRA) will be holding their annual conference: 'Making a world of difference? Innovation, internationalisation, new technologies and VET' at the Caulfield Race Course, Heath Function Centre.

Contact: Fran Ferrier,
f 03 9905 9184,
e fran.ferrier@education.monash.edu.au,
<http://www.avetra.org.au/2002%20conference.htm>

24-27 March 2002

2nd World Congress of Colleges & Polytechnics

A four-day event embodying a two-day ANTA 'provider oriented' forum, at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre. Registrants will have the option to attend one or all four days, depending on the Congress parcel they choose. Keynote speakers, presentations, workshops and network sessions will explore the contexts of globalisation, technology and youth as a customer of vocational education and training within the following themes:

Contact: World Congress Secretariat,
p 03 9417 0888, f 03 9417 0899,
e wf@meetingplanners.com.au,
<http://www.wfworldcongress.com>

3-5 April 2002

Australian Association of Career Counsellors National Conference

To be held at Hotel Sofitel, Melbourne. The theme of the 11th National

Conference is: 'Beyond Boundaries: Challenging Issues in Career Development' and it will encourage participants to explore and move the boundaries of our professional horizons and orthodoxies.

Contact: Conference Secretariat,
Australian Association of Career Counsellors,
p 08 8341 1492 f 08 8341 1635
e aaccnational@ozemail.com.au,
<http://www.aacc.org.au>

8-10 April 2002

4th Australian Narrative Therapy & Community Work Conference

To be held at the National Convention Centre in Canberra, the conference will comprise skills-based workshops, seminars, keynote addresses, evening talks and informal discussions. Key speakers include: Jill Freedman, Gene Coombs, Michael White, Johnella Bird, David Epston, Jenny Freeman, Alice Morgan, Maggie Carey & Shona Russell. Pre- and post-conference events will be facilitated by experienced therapists and teachers holding 1-5-day workshops.

Contact: Canberra Narrative 2002,
p 02 6247 1752,
e canberranarrative2002@yahoo.com.au,
<http://www.canberra.edu.au/CanberraNarrative2002>

17-19 May 2002

Chart Our Future

ACEA Conference: A National Conference for ALL Educators of Adults To be held at Lincoln Green Motor Hotel and Conference Venue, 159 Lincoln Road, Henderson, Waitakere City, this

conference will celebrate recognition for our sector.

Contact: Alan White,
e alan.white@selwyn.school.nz

16-19 June 2002

2nd International Lifelong Learning Conference

Themed "Building learning communities through education", the conference will be held at Rydges Capricorn International Resort on the Capricorn Coast, Yeppoon, Queensland.

Contact: Conference Secretary,
p 07 4930 9749 f 07 4930 6436,
e lifelong-learning-conference@cqu.edu.au
<http://www.library.cqu.edu.au/conference>

16-20 July 2002

The Learning Conference

The Ninth International Literacy and Education Research Network Conference on Learning.

To be held in Beijing, China, The Learning Conference takes as its overall theme 'New Learning' – the kinds of skills and knowledge, indeed the kinds of persons, required for the world of the near future. Critical issues include education for local and global cultural diversity, the impact of new technologies, changing forms of literacy, and the role of education in social and personal transformation. The conference will comprise everything from plenary presentations by world-renowned educators to informal 'conversation' sessions with the keynote speakers.

Contact: Kathryn Otte,
<http://www.LearningConference.com>

NET*Working 2002
See it. Do it. Share it.

See it. Do it. Share it. Online 19-30 August
An elearning experience

It's on again. NET*Working 2002 – an online activity-driven event – will show you the latest in elearning. **See it** online, learn how to **do it** from vocational education and training professionals, and **share it** with your colleagues.

Register your interest now as a participant, workshop facilitator, or key note speaker. Key note speakers and workshop facilitators expressions of interest close 31 March.

Single earlybird:	\$99	Group earlybird (6-10 people):	\$500
Single:	\$121	Group (6-10 people):	\$600

Earlybird registrations close 20 May. For more information contact (02) 9886 7214, net.working@det.nsw.edu.au or visit flexiblelearning.net.au/nw2002.

NET*Working 2002 is proudly supported by ANTA.