

Editorial

Richard Smith



there's who thinks what from
 students by Bruce Dawe and
 teachers by William Ross and more
 teachers by Keith Skamp with
 suggestions about who should do
 what even looking at the
 quality of students'
 environmental experiences what
 a wicked idea and there's
 inclusivity for the experiences
 of women and girls by Hilary
 Whitehouse and Sandra Taylor—maybe
 someone will write one for
 men and boys who too
 don't want to be environmental dags
 or SNAGS
 there's much about interpretation big
 thanks for sub-editorial support to
 Elizabeth Beckmann and Pat Devlin and
 Stephen Wearing we meet
 some Van Matre style successes in
 Kosciusko thanks to Pat
 Darlington and Rosemary Black some
 andragogical projections which Kevin
 Markwell surmises is a best
 way forwards for interpreters some
 significant immersions with Christine
 O'Brien it seems there's
 many ways to skin a cat and
 hey maybe there's many cats
 speaking of projections read futures you'll
 find David Hicks crystal ball gazing funny
 how themes recur because Roger
 Smith no relation
 reckons its rather vital in planning
 to care for the Earth and so
 amongst other things does
 Annette Gough who adds
 some notes from an ecofeminist
 perspective and just

to balance things out past
 wise John Sibly enthuses over important nay
 wondrous tales
 from Gondwanaland impossible how
 could anyone
 eat their future
 there's more
 about how the past became
 the present for Peter Newman whose hope points
 forwards to the futures
 and there's more about
 the futures as Lisa Walker learns
 about ways to make an
 impact with water workers Laurie
 Cosgrove and Ian Thomas tell us
 it might not be happening
 it being environmental
 education Bill Scott looks
 at how the same it can
 best be got by
 teachers novice Kathleen Gray
 and Michael Nott make
 real comments
 about stimulating simulations
 all in all there's lots to chew
 upon there's
 heaps of thank yous somewhere
 under cover please read them all
 there's a post script
 at the end silly it
 talks about 1997
 already sharpen up your quills
 and if not anyway
 send a pigeon comment carrying so
 we know what you
 liked and
 didn't
 OK?
 there's more
 because

There's more because there needs to be.

The part-editorial just presented is intended to serve at least two purposes.

First, it is intended to bring to your attention some of the highlights of this issue of *AJEE*, and the authors who contributed them. Its second purpose is discussed in a postscript to this issue.

In keeping with the thematic section of this issue the first part of the editorial requires some interpreting.

The extensive data gathering, analysing and interpreting inherent in the work presented by Bruce Clarke, William Ross and Keith Skamp result in a series of propositions about aspects of the state of environmental education in parts of Australia and suggestions about ways of contributing to its increased effectiveness. Many readers will find the studies and conclusions reported, and their quantitative bases, to have considerable force. Not all, however, will be completely satisfied with the methods used or the conclusions made. Some may find the conclusions to be unsurprising; others will find informative patterns in the conclusions of the three independent studies. And so, to borrow a term from *AJEE's* previous editor, the field of environmental education is and continues to be a contested one. But, somehow, we need to document and discuss the pluralistic state of environmental education so that we are satisfied that our documentation is appropriate and so that our documentation carries sufficient weight to influence those who make decisions about educational practice and about the extent to which and the ways in which environmental education will be an influential part of that educational practice. What will be clear and convincing ways of documenting the cases we make for environmental education so that it receives the kinds of support which William and Keith suggest as necessary? Bruce's study suggests that some year 11 students are not all that well informed about environmental issues. Is this generalisable? Does it matter? How will we know? What will be our response?

Elizabeth Beckmann, Pat Devlin and Stephen Wearing have been thanked; thanks again! The introduction to the set of articles provided by environmental educators with strong interest in interpretive approaches describes more fully the content and intent of the material provided. Perhaps the cats deserve a mention here. It is evident from the three papers from interpreters that theirs is also a contested field, that there are at least as many ways to achieve the goals of interpretation as there are the goals of environmental education. Strategies for successful educational experiences for our clients are logically going to be enormously varied, given the multiplicity of kinds of intentions educators may have and the kaleidoscopic variety of backgrounds our students, visitors, clients and participants bring to the experiences we engineer. Claims and counter-claims about the effectiveness of the diverse array of strategies which environmental educators and

interpreters use are therefore not surprising. How will we determine ways in which environmental educators and interpreters can develop increasingly effective strategies so that within and between the two fields they complement each other's work?

In some of the articles in this issue residues of retreating ways of thinking are present, residues which contribute to another current contest. From other authors terms such as "Man over Nature" and "middlemen" have been borrowed. They have been rendered in this issue as "[Humans] over Nature" and "middlemen (sic)". These are admittedly clumsy ways of reminding ourselves that the issues raised by Hilary Whitehouse and Sandra Taylor are continuing—and contested—ones. The question of how environmental educators might provide accurate and proper portrayal of all the humans we are and with whom we work regardless, in Hilary and Sandra's words, of "class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, [or] ableness", is one which needs continuing attempts at resolution. An account of the ecology of kangaroos would be considered incomplete if it did not make explicit the ways in which the contributions of males and females were not only similar but also uniquely different; accounts of the ecology of environmental education are not as well balanced in the view of Hilary and Sandra who call for proper attention to females. Steve Biddulph in *Manhood* (published by Finch, 1994, Sydney) calls for attention to males, to males who might be rather than to the masculinity debased by its equation still in much of western society with power and supremacy. Further papers about practical approaches to developing fully inclusive environmental education curricula would be welcome indeed.

Being able to imagine is probably a key capability for educators to encourage learners to develop; an active and empathetic imagination would help towards dismantling inequities of many kinds which exist within most sectors of most human societies, including within environmental education. Such an imagination is used by and developed in the kinds of futures envisioning activities which David Hicks reports. And planning for future societies which are just societies is one of the aspects of making futures which Roger Smith discusses in his review. 'Just' and 'sustainable' also appear in Annette Gough's consideration of Carolyn Merchant's work. John Sibly reminds us that a lack of wise contemplation of the future can lead humans into what might be seen by later generations as a gluttony which included consuming their—our?—own future. Hopefully the skilled and sensitive actions of Society and Environment teachers in Australia and their counterparts overseas will help us plan for futures which will happen; Annette Gough also provides some notes towards the use of Rob Gilbert's book which has as one of its intentions the improved teaching and learning of social sciences.

Getting to a just and sustainable future may well be something of a difficult task. One thing is clear, however. If the objective set is about attaining futures which are

substantially less ecologically and socially divided—or more equitable—than the Earth's present ones then we shall need as much optimism as we can muster about the possibilities of such futures and our places in realising and enjoying them. Peter Newman has provided some reflections about hope and despair in his own work as an environmental educator. His remarks are found in a new section to the journal called 'Stories from practice' in which experienced environmental educators will be invited to reminisce and perhaps to be provocative. 'Storying' is an approach to communicating ideas which has traditional origins. Telling stories is usually referenced by procedures different from those used in academic circles; at least the Harvard system is not as overbearingly in the minds of the storytellers as it is in the minds of authors. Our stories from practice may not be fully referenced, but they might stimulate some free discussion about ideas.

The circle turns again as Lisa Walker tells us what she has learnt about improving the environmental education explicitly available in a large organisation, in this case one whose 'mission statement', while not centred on education, certainly includes more of an orientation towards education than it had. We might look forwards to reports of qualitative considerations of people's experiences in Sydney Water and similar organisations, and in schools as Bruce Clarke suggests. Such reports might reveal much about implicit educational forces including the language used in organisations. Laurie Cosgrove and Ian Thomas add to earlier information about the kinds of environmental education which tertiary institutions claim are available to their students. There is apparently much to be accomplished, for example in the generation of agreed language about what 'environmental education' might and does mean in tertiary circles; they would be wonderfully fascinating places to conduct further research about the extent to which 'what you hear is what you get', about the intersection of explicit and implicit environmental educational forces. That is just the kind of information we shall need if there is to be reliability in the practice of Bill Scott's carefully developed theory for assisting novice teachers towards a full realisation of their possibilities as educators participating with their students in the processes of environmental education, in being environmentally educating practitioners. Echoes of Kevin Markwell's andragogical approaches are discernible behind Bill's search for an environmental grail for teacher education, a grail which once apprehended might inform the remainder of the tertiary arena from which Laurie and Ian have sent in their report.

Finally, in all our endeavours, how shall we best benefit our clients in our use of the burgeoning bestiary of virtualisms? There's a strangely reminiscent scent apparent; the wondrous worlds of bestiaries, of fantastical electronic experiences and of future eaters all begin to run together. Kathleen Gray and Michael Nott provide us with a thought provoking and timely discussion of some of the possibilities and pitfalls of envisioning alternative actions

and futures through electronic 'might-be's. I confess to wondering whether the designers of these manipulably unreal possible worlds are up to allowing human imaginations the free running of unleashed animals which futures imagining and effecting requires, and whether the medium (read rampant consumerism/inbuilt obsolescence/hard-and-software-upgrading which characterises computerville) will become the message a la McLuhan. Will fixing simulated worlds supplant environmental action? And I wonder how much free RAM is needed to promote a clear understanding of the powers of darkness, the denizens of 'Development-at-all-costs' bestiaries, who continue to believe that level playing fields operate anywhere in unvirtual worlds, and that free enterprise can be relied on to avoid future-eating.

Some suggestions are made about future directions for *AJEE* in the postscript to this issue. To make it relatively straightforward for readers to comment on *AJEE*, to respond to our suggestions and to make additional ones, a questionnaire has been included as an insert. It would be daunting, if delightfully so, were all the recipients of *AJEE* to respond to even a small part of that questionnaire! If you read this but can't find the questionnaire please just send us your ideas, especially if you can manage a return date of within the next year or so. Ideally, so that your ideas can contribute to the editorial board's monitoring and developing the journal in the best interests of members and other environmental educators, your views should reach us by the end of March 1997.

It's time to take the plunge! We shall speak more at the end of this issue.