Editorial

Glyn Thomas

It is my pleasure to share some recent, positive developments for the Australian Journal of Outdoor Education. A journal banding research project, completed at the University of Newcastle, Australia sought to rank education related journals (See <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/Banding/mehtod.html>). AJOE was ranked 97 out of 913 journals according to *overall esteem* and 103 out of 913 for *quality*. Whilst these results need to be interpreted cautiously, because there were some potential problems with the research methodology, it is still a positive result for AJOE. This is a credit to the authors, reviewers and editors with AJOE in the past and present.

Another positive development is the formalisation of an advisory board for the journal. Over the last three years, I have relied heavily on Peter Martin and Andy Brookes for wisdom and support on issues concerning the editorial process. I have now formalised this advisory board by recruiting the assistance of Robyn Zink, Mike Brown, and James Neill. These five experienced scholars will provide support and direction for the journal through to the end of 2008. I believe this is an important step in the process of further enhancing the quality and professionalism of the journal. The panel of reviewers, identified on the inside cover, will also continue to play an important role in the publication of quality papers relevant to the field of outdoor education. The membership of this panel has also grown to assist with the number of submissions the journal is receiving.

The six refereed papers in this issue address a broad range of important issues for outdoor education both in Australia and internationally and I trust you will find them engaging and stimulating. Four of the papers (Zink, Kane & Tucker, Gough, and Brookes) are reworked versions of papers presented at the 15th National Outdoor Education conference in Ballarat, Australia in September, 2007. However, to be included in this issue they have all been through the standard AJOE reviewing process.

The first paper in this issue by Robyn Zink follows up a theme that arose with the Outdoor and Environmental Studies unit in Victoria, Australia, regarding tensions between environment, race and ethnicity. Zink urges us to avoid simplistic characterisations which may prevent us from exploring the rich debate concerning peoples' interactions with the environment.

As the author of the second paper I would like to thank Andrew Brookes for his assistance with the editorial process. It can be tricky trying to publish a paper in the journal for which you are the editor, and to demonstrate extra rigour in the review process three reviewers were used rather than two. The paper explores some of the strengths and weaknesses of two different approaches to teaching motor skills in outdoor education and outdoor recreation settings. In summary, direct instructional approaches and discovery learning approaches can both work well provided they are used intentionally and in accordance with the principles of skill acquisition theory.

Next, Annette Gough raises some issues for the Outdoor and Environmental Studies unit in the Victorian Certificate of Education (upper high school) as it prepares for another formal accreditation review in 2008. Annette suggests that the education for sustainable development agenda and the issue of climate change provide some potential opportunities for curriculum development. One of the other issues raised is the place of 'trips' in the new study, which leads nicely to the paper by Maurice Kane and Hazel Tucker. This latter paper draws on some research conducted in New Zealand exploring the potential educational benefits of adventure experiences. The authors explored the perspectives of 12 renowned New Zealand adventurers regarding the context, traits, skills and values associated with adventure experiences.

Beth McLeod and Sandy Allen-Craig present the findings of a research project which explored the effect of an outdoor and experiential education program on the life effectiveness skills of the student participants. In the final paper of this issue Andrew Brookes continues his review of fatalities in outdoor education by specifically reporting on deaths caused by falling trees or branches. Suggestions on how outdoor educators can prevent such incidents are presented and a recent coroner's report reinforced the importance of such research and discussion in outdoor education.

Enjoy your reading in this issue.

Glyn Thomas
Editor