
Editorial

James Neill

As the incoming editor, I want to acknowledge the vision and efforts of the previous editor, Dr. Tonia Gray who has brought the journal a long way over the last few years. I have always admired the vitality, professionalism, and warmth that Tonia brought to the journal. It is in this vein that I hope to continue. Tonia will continue on the reviewers' panel. We have also been fortunate to have the editorial assistance of Dr. Jackie Kiewa in producing the current issue – thanks Jackie.

In the Viewpoint, Tony Pammer engages the debate about how much environmental content we should have in outdoor education programs. Tony asks whether the environmental focus in our programs is really based on the expressed desires of our clients or whether it is based on the interests of outdoor educators?

In this rest of the issue there are six refereed articles, a non-refereed article, and a book review. In the refereed section, Kathy Mann provides a timely look at national progress over the last few years in developing outdoor education as a "profession" in Australia. Kathy's article builds on Peter Martin's proposed "signs of a profession". An important first sign was the creation of a "motive of service", a statement which evolved from the National Outdoor Education Conference in 2001. Kathy extends the discussion about the proposed "motive of service" in a non-refereed article which contains comments from delegates at the 2001 conference. In the refereed article Kathy then explains the vocational training system in Australia and how it serves to promote the outdoor education profession in Australia.

Dr. Sarah Leberman and Dr. Andrew Martin's article reports on research examining the notion that pushing participants out of their comfort zone is conducive to personal growth. Sarah and

Andrew conducted two qualitative studies, the results of which challenge the idea that learning is best pursued through challenge. The authors recommend that outdoor educators consider activities that may seem less challenging, such as social, creative, and dramatic, activities, but which may be just as effective, if not more effective, in facilitating the development of participants. Sarah and Andrew also argue that comfort zones are very individual, and that a more individualized approach should be taken in providing challenging activities.

In the first of a series of articles, Andrew Brookes introduces the notion of fatality analysis and how it can contribute to preventing future fatalities. Andrew has conducted an in-depth search and cataloguing of outdoor education fatalities in Australia between 1960 and 2002. Andrew cautions against the potential errors and biases that are liable to creep into fatality analysis, but also offers several insights derived from his reading and analysis of the incidents. Fatalities, it seems, might be understood as surprising events, which nevertheless seem to be almost always preventable. For example, since accidental fatalities seem to cluster around themes of speed (automobile accidents or falling) and water (drowning), then closer analysis of these incidents could help to identify ways to reduce their incidence. It is also notable that instructors and supervisors of activities seem to be at higher risk of dying than participants. In the next two papers in the series, Andrew will examine the specific classes of fatalities in more detail, and in the final paper, Andrew will offer some more systematic viewpoints on the underlying trends and issues.

Karen Pearce's and Mike Boyes' article applies the notion of "stages of readiness" (or "transtheoretical model") to an adventure therapy youth at risk programs. Drawn from the health sciences, "stages of readiness"

refers to an ordinal series of stages in a change process. If one can determine an individual level of readiness, then particular types of therapeutic processes and activities can be provided. Karen and Mike describe how four youth at risk programs in New Zealand identify and select youth for their programs. The "stages of readiness" paradigm provides an insightful framework within which to situate discussion of how outdoor education and adventure therapy programs can be used to help people "change".

John Quay's article presents a research study on the effects of an outdoor education program on the caring felt amongst high school students. The positive findings suggest promising potential for outdoor education to have social impacts, not only for caring, but also other social values, such as conflict management, sense of community, and peace.

Glyn Thomas reports on an investigation into work-related stress amongst outdoor educators. Glyn finds that there is a high level of work-related stress for outdoor educators and that work conditions could be improved considerably. The article also provides several examples of ways in which organisations are currently improving work conditions for outdoor educators in Australia.

Finally, Steve Bowles provides a book review of Colin Mortlock's third book, *Beyond Adventure*. Steve's review goes much deeper than a regular review because he traces the development in Mortlock's thinking about outdoor education over three decades. Steve fears that Mortlock has retreated from emphasizing the social relevance of outdoor education into a quieter corner, more focused on the individual. In reviewing the book in this way, Steve sounds a warning call to us all.