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## Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology

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## Editorial: The birth of an association, plus a year in the life of CJLT

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As I write this editorial, two well-known Canadian associations, The Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE) and the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada (AMTEC), are in the final administrative stages of merging to form a new organization named the Canadian Network for Innovation in Education / Réseau Canadien pour l'innovation en Éducation. (CNIE-RCIE). After more than a year of discussions, consultation and committee work, involving dozens of members from both organizations, the birth of the new educational association was formally announced to the world at the annual AMTEC / CADE convention in May 2007.

A May 15th press release from Winnipeg quoted the presidents of both organizations, as well as the first president of the new association. Johanne Rioux, outgoing president of AMTEC, noted, "AMTEC's wide knowledge of educational technology and CADE's expertise in distance and open education are an excellent fit in today's world." Jamie Rossiter, outgoing president of CADE, added, "Education at all levels is changing rapidly. CNIE will play an important role in making educational opportunities available when and where they are needed". The initial President of CNIE-RCIE, Raymond Guy, Instructional Designer at College Boréal in Ontario [<http://borealedu.boreal.on.ca>] noted, "What I see as our greatest innovation as we move forward, is the bridging of the divide between on-campus and open and distance education cultures and practices".

Those in charge of the merger invited a small group of present and past editors and associate editors of the *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology* and the *Journal of Distance Education* to form a Journals Committee to discuss the present vision, scope and mandate of the two journals, as well as the nature of the ongoing relationship between the journals and the CNIE-RCIE. The committee, chaired by Rick Kenny and consisting of Mark Bullen, François Desjardins, Michele Jacobsen and François Pettigrew, has met regularly over the past year to discuss how the two journals are currently edited and published, to revisit the submission guidelines and terms of reference, to analyze the content of both journals, and to prepare some recommendations for the new association. What follows is a summary of the Journals Committee's ideas that were shared at the recent conference in Winnipeg.

In the short term, former AMTEC and CADE members will see few changes in how CJLT and JDE are published. The Journals Committee has recommended that the new association continue to publish both journals, and that each journal maintain separate editorial teams and editorial boards. While the disciplines of Distance Education and Educational Technology are closely related, the disciplines are also distinct and there is enduring value for both to continue to be served by a reputable Canadian peer reviewed journal that publishes research in both English and French. The two journal editors continue to receive a growing number of article submissions each year, including manuscripts in French, which means there is a need for more places to publish, not fewer. The Journals Committee believes that editorial control must continue to rest in the hands of the editorial team and editorial board of each journal. It is the Journals Committee's collective view that the journals depend on an "arms length" relationship with the association to preserve scholarly integrity and autonomy and to properly serve the academic community. These two recommendations have been well-received by the new association. The Journals Committee still has some work to do with regard to clarifying and communicating what makes each journal distinct for association members and journal readers.

Given the birth of a major new educational association, the time is ripe to consider the media and method of CNIE-RCIE's scholarly communication. Both the *Journal of Distance Education* and the *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology* are quasi-open access, which means that online readers must wait a few months while the paper version is first enjoyed by subscribers and members. While the Journals Committee has recommended that the new association publish both journals as solely open access, online journals, there will be no immediate change with regard to either journal's dual-mode publishing. For the time being, JDE and CJLT will continue to publish using a dual-medium approach; a paper-based version of the journal mailed to subscribers a few months before publishing the freely available and identical web-based version. In fact, members of the new organization will start to receive both journals in hard copy (print) as part of their membership in the near future. Both JDE and CJLT receive funding from SSHRC (i.e., Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) to offset the costs of publication, with the remaining costs being covered by subscribers and the two associations. Maintenance of the current financial modus operandi is facilitated, at least in part, by the "year of grace" and extended funding granted by open access friendly SSHRC.

Understandably, there are a few issues to consider when deciding whether to move JDE and CJLT to completely open source, online publishing, including scholarly reputation, citation rates, financial viability, international access, standards for metadata, archiving standards, and managing traditional expectations (i.e., hard copy journals). Each of these concerns will have to be openly discussed, considered and somehow addressed as the new association charts its future. In addition to clarifying each journal's distinct focus and vision, the Journals Committee plans to continue to discuss the promises and pitfalls of open access (OA) and to offer informed advice to the new association. Given the new association's receptiveness and support for the Journals Committee's recent recommendations, and CNIE-RCIE's early commitment to transparency, academic integrity and open communication, the future currently looks bright for scholarly publishing in distance education and educational technology in Canada.

In the context of a discussion about open access, educational technologists need to ask, does our current system of academic publishing and scholarly communication meet the needs of educational technology researchers? Advocates of 'open access' argue that research results must be made available such that all scientists can see them and use them, for free, via the Web (Swan, 2007, p. 197). While our discipline has moved beyond the command-line, Gopher and Lynx forms of access that were revolutionary when I was a graduate student, towards making more of its research available on the Web, there is still a need for more progress. CJLT is one of a small number of

educational technology journals freely available, full-text, online (albeit with a one issue delay). However, there are other major journals in our discipline that are only available by subscription and/or in print form. When a researcher publishes their findings, they share this new knowledge with the expectation that other researchers will critique, build and extend upon the work in order to move the discipline forward. If we want educational technology research to continue to make a measurable impact on our discipline, researchers need access to each other's new findings, preferably as quickly and as easily as possible.

A standard metric for measuring the impact, or worth, of a publication is the citation. A memorable study by Lawrence (2001) demonstrates that computer science articles freely available online are more highly cited. Lawrence (2001) argues that for greater impact and faster scientific progress, authors and publishers should aim to make research easy to access. Swan (2007) argues that highly cited articles (and journals) have measurable impact, and that the greater visibility provided by open access invites researchers to read and use what they might otherwise not have seen, in other words, we cite what we see. Further, she argues that open access can "advance science in another way, by accelerating the speed at which science moves" (Swan, 2007, p. 197) as well as supporting interdisciplinary science. Her argument that open access actually speeds science forward and connects disparate areas of science rests in part on evidence gathered on open-access archives such as arXiv at Cornell University which contains author deposited articles on all areas of physics, giving other physicists and scientists across disciplines immediate access to results (Swan, 2007).

In some ways, Canada has taken a lead with open access scientific publishing. For example, the National Research Council press currently provides free online access to 16 scientific journals, links to 16 affiliated journals, conference proceedings and monographs [please see [http://pubs.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/rp2\\_home\\_e.html](http://pubs.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/rp2_home_e.html) or [http://pubs.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/rp2\\_home\\_f.html](http://pubs.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/rp2_home_f.html)]. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council adopted open access in principle in 2004, and is in the process of redesigning support for research journals by expanding eligibility to include open access journals. SSHRC's goal, as summarized on their website, is to ensure "that the Council's journal support programs effectively meet the needs of a wide variety of journal types" [<http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/>]. The Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences publicly supported the principle of open access in a comprehensive position paper that was prepared by a working group in March 2006 [Year in Review, 2006 - <http://www.fedcan.ca/english/publications/reports/>]. So, the good news is that Canada appears to be on the right track with regard to making research open access across disciplines.

Canadian researchers Hajjem, Harnad and Gingras (2005) substantiate Lawrence's (2001) claim by documenting higher citation percentages for open access (OA) articles versus non-open access (NOA) articles across 10 disciplines (i.e., biology, business, economics, education, health, law, management, political science, psychology, and sociology). Journal articles that are openly available on the internet are cited more heavily than those that remain behind subscription barriers. The finding that open access publishing is associated with a citation impact that is between 25% and 250% higher than non-open access publishing (Hajjem, Harnad and Gingras, 2005) offers a compelling argument for journals to go online and share research for free. Not surprisingly, both of these papers are freely available on the web. A next step for an interested researcher in our discipline is to examine the citation impact of OA versus NOA articles in educational technology journals. Are the Lawrence (2001) and Hajjem, Harnad and Gingras (2005) findings replicated for OA educational technology articles? If there is a citation advantage for OA in educational technology, what might or should this mean for scholarly publishing in our discipline? <>

#### An Overview of Current Journal Activity

The present editorial team has overseen the publication of *CJLT* since 2005. During the past 2+ years, seven new issues have been added to the collective knowledge base, including the Winter 2007 issue. In this period, the francophone presence has grown from about one French article published per year to an average of one article per issue. Increased francophone presence is also reflected in the increased number of manuscript submissions. We are encouraged by the steady upward trend and hope to see this number continue to increase.

The CJLT is unique in the international field of educational technology in that manuscripts are accepted and published in either in English or in French. The Editorial Team and Editorial Board are very fortunate to include members who are fluent in either or both of Canada's official languages. I extend a sincere thank-you to Associate Editors, Dr. Bruce Clark and Dr. François Desjardins, and Review Editor, Dr. Jennifer Lock, for their exceptional work as part of the journal's editorial team. A doctoral student joined the editorial team this year. Krista Poscente serves as managing editor, and has been instrumental in setting up the online peer review system. I am grateful for the ongoing contribution of two team members who help to prepare CJLT for publication: Maureen Washington, our copyeditor and layout designer, and Stephanie Dion, our English to French translator.

It would be very difficult to serve as editor of a peer-reviewed journal without the ongoing support and scholarly contribution of an active editorial board. The present CJLT Editorial Board includes over 60 national and international scholars. I extend my sincere thank-you to several long-time editorial board members, who have decided to move on to other challenges, for past service to CJLT. I also welcome and sincerely thank several new members who have agreed to become active members of the current CJLT Editorial Board and to work with me to publish high quality and interesting research in educational technology and learning. A rough calculation reflects the considerable workload carried by our Editorial Board and community of peer reviewers. Of the 85 papers submitted in 2006, at least 56 papers each received 2 – 3 peer reviews, which means that between 112 and 168 peer reviews were completed in the review process last year. Suffice it to say that the editorial team is grateful for the Herculean effort and sweat equity invested by CJLT reviewers.

#### Volume 32 – Calendar Year 2006

The following section presents highlights from the 32nd Volume and 2006 publication year of the *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*. In brief, three issues of the journal were published in 2006: two open issues and one special issue. A total of 3 editorials and 21 scholarly articles were published and shared with the international academic community. The journal received 85 new manuscript submissions in 2006 which is a 27% increase over 2005. An acceptance rate of 37% shows a slight increase over 2005 (34%), as does the higher rejection rate (34% versus 28%). In the past year, the editorial team was able to maintain a regular publication and distribution schedule for the first two issues of the journal and published three solid issues<sup>1</sup>. The contributing authors in the three issues of Volume 32 hail from Australia, Canada, France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. So, while we are a Canadian journal, we provide a valuable publication venue for educational technology researchers around the world.

#### Winter 2006, Volume 32.1

The first issue, Volume 32.1 (Winter 2006), is an open issue and contains an editorial by Michele Jacobsen and eight articles, including one in French, about various approaches to educational technology research and teaching (five research papers, one case study, one evaluation report and one instructional development report). Authors use experimental, qualitative, case study and descriptive approaches to investigate key questions in our field. The

Winter 2006 issue contains the article nominated for the **2007 CJLT Editor's Award**, by Jennifer Sclater, Fiore Sicolu, Philip Abrami and Anne Wade, entitled "*Ubiquitous technology integration in Canadian public schools: Year one study*". Authors in this issue hail from a variety of academic and public institutions in Canada, France, the United Kingdom and the United States.

#### Spring 2006, Volume 32.2

Volume 32.2 (Spring 2006) is another open issue and consists of an editorial by Michele Jacobsen and seven articles (four research papers [one in French] and three position papers) that summarize various approaches to educational technology research and teaching. Authors use mixed methods, qualitative and descriptive approaches to research key questions in our field. Authors have used logical argumentation and literature review to frame and explore key issues and problems of interest in educational technology. Authors in this issue hail from academic and public institutions in Australia, Canada, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

#### Fall 2006, Volume 32.3

The final issue of the year was a special issue on e-Learning in Canada, edited by Michele Jacobsen, which consisted of 6 articles. In addition to an editorial, this theme issue contains an extensive and timely report on e-Learning, four commentaries on the report by leading educational technology researchers, and a rejoinder by the e-Learning report authors. The e-Learning review presents findings from an up-to-date, comprehensive examination of e-learning with a special emphasis on Canadian research. The review provides a foundation for a debate that includes commentary from four top Canadian researchers. The final rejoinder provides the review authors with an opportunity to respond to the reviewers. There are several reasons why a special issue on e-learning in Canada was published. The primary reason is the need for systematic reviews of primary research in our field. Given the complexity of questions that tend to characterize the often diverse approaches to research on e-Learning, there is a pressing need for systematic reviews of the primary research that has been conducted. A second reason the idea of a special issue was so intriguing was the opportunity to build and extend on the CCL review with invited commentary from other leading Canadian researchers. An opportunity to explore a different approach to writing, reviewing and publishing research is the third reason CJLT published a special issue on e-Learning.

The 2006 calendar year saw the fourth full year of the publication of the journal as a dual media publication. The open access CJLT / RCAT website ([www.cjlt.ca](http://www.cjlt.ca)) was launched in February, 2003. The full-text, online version continues to be hosted at Athabasca University under the auspices of the International Consortium for the Advancement of Academic Publishing (ICAAP). The titles, authors and abstracts of each current print issue are provided at the time the issue is mailed out to AMTEC members and subscribers.

#### Hunching the Numbers

In the past three years, the level of *author interest* in the Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology as a place to submit their research *has steadily increased* while our acceptance rate has remained stable at approximately 34 to 37%.

Journal activity has been tracked in order to generate the numbers used to calculate the approximate acceptance / rejection rate for 2006. A total of 85 manuscripts were submitted in 2006 (which includes 64 English, 6 French and 15 special issue papers), a 27% increase from the 67 submissions in 2005. The increased number of submissions has been a yearly trend (see Table 1). CJLT published 21 articles in 2006 for an approximate **acceptance rate of 37%**, which is slightly higher than the acceptance rate in 2005 (34%).

Table 1. *CJLT Submission and Acceptance Rates, 2002 – 2005*

Volume and Publication Year	# Articles Submitted	% Increase over Prior year	# Published *	% Acceptance Rate**
V. 32 - 2006	85	27	21	37
V. 31 - 2005	67	16	19	34 (10 still in review)
V. 30 - 2004	58	26	17	34 (7 in review)
V. 29 - 2003	46	64	16	34.8
V. 28 - 2002	28	No data	16	46.4

\* Reflects articles only; excludes book reviews and research reports

\*\* Acceptance rates reflect the proportion of submitted articles already through the review process

An honest attempt has been made to report accurate submission, publication and rejection rates for 2006. However, it must be acknowledged that some of the articles published in Volume 32 were actually submitted in 2005 (which makes complete sense when you reflect upon it). Any manuscript submitted after the Fall issue is set can only appear, if accepted, in a subsequent year's issue (and would thus be reflected in that year's acceptance rate).

Of the 85 manuscripts submitted in 2006, **29 were rejected** for a **34% rejection rate** (an increase over the 2005 rejection rate of 28%). Of the 85 English manuscripts submitted to CJLT last year, 29 (34%) were rejected after editorial review. In a few cases, the decision to reject a manuscript as unsuitable for CJLT is based on topic and interest. In most cases, the decision to reject a manuscript prior to peer review is based on a lack of clarity or logic in argumentation, vagueness about the manuscript category, or lack of adherence to our length and style guidelines (i.e., too short, too long, sloppy referencing, poor grammar and structure, unsubstantiated claims). A concerted effort is made to explain the main reasons for rejection in each letter to authors. At the end of 2006, approximately 35 articles (41%) remained in a category labeled, "ongoing consideration". Included in this category are articles that will be published in an upcoming issue, or those that were sent back to authors with suggestions for revisions and an invitation to resubmit.

The Spring 2007 issue contains seven diverse articles (one in French) and two book reviews by American, Canadian and Mexican researchers. In the first paper, Kopp and Crichton present a qualitative case study that supports and extends the learning object literature, and brings forward context-specific examples of issues around repository

design, autonomy and self-containment, technical support and granularity. The second paper, by Apedoe, reports the findings of a qualitative research study that investigated opportunities and obstacles inherent in a digital library for supporting teaching and learning in an inquiry-based undergraduate geology course. The third article is Leclerc's case study which highlights the profiles of teachers in a francophone elementary school in Ontario using three models: the representations of the teachers' ICT competencies, the categories of adopters based on personality traits, and the evolution of preoccupations and use of innovation. The fourth article, by Salinas-Amescua, is a qualitative study of adult learners' technology access, adoption and learning experiences in sixteen community technology centers in Mexico. The fifth paper, by Kulig, Krupa and Nowatzki, is a case study of the development, delivery, and evaluation of a successful and unique graduate course in community development offered to students across Canada via the internet. Towers' paper explores the potential offered by video material to foster the belief that teaching is a learning activity by (i) refocusing attention on the learner rather than the teacher in the analysis of classroom practices, (ii) raising awareness of the importance of reflective practice, and (iii) providing a prompt for the imaginative rehearsal of action. The final paper in this issue is Zhou, Varnhagen, Sears, Kasprzak and Shervey's mixed methods study that evaluates an online professional development course for inservice teachers in the area of information and communication technology (ICT) and concurrently explores the factors that influence online professional development. Two book reviews by Sharon Friesen and Krista Poscente round out the second issue of CJLT in 2007.

The editor is eager to receive feedback or reactions to any of the issues or ideas raised in this editorial, and to respond to questions about manuscripts for future issues.

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<sup>1</sup> A special issue of CJLT on **Knowledge Building**, edited by William J. Egnatoff, Queen's University, and Marlene Scardamalia, OISE / University of Toronto, will be published in Fall 2007.

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