

## Editorial

The 'CAL' in the name of this publication, of course, stands for Computer Aided Learning, although nowadays we are inclined to broaden its meaning to embrace all forms of Information Technology used in the teaching process. Whatever we call it, it has been with us for something like 20 years now (although the World Wide Web has been here for about half that time).

We all know that teaching innovations come and go, and educational technologies seem to have a built-in shelf life of something like 20 years. Television teaching, for example, was the great white hope of the early 70s, but by the late 80s it had essentially disappeared, at least in its original form. It is perhaps a good time therefore, to pause and reflect on how Computer Aided Learning has fared.

We hear all around that e-learning has made some inroads to mainstream teaching, but it certainly has not become as ubiquitous in universities as we once feared/hoped. We haven't all lost our jobs (yet). And all those promises that Information Technology would change what we teach as well as how we teach haven't really come to pass. In many respects Information Technology has simply withdrawn to the background, as just another resource which some teachers use and others don't.

But innovation in the area has not stopped. And that is a very comforting observation. Those attempting to push the envelope in teaching today are not the same people who were doing it ten years ago. Today there is a new crop of teachers anxious to do their bit. They continue to produce interesting new teaching resources which continue to broaden the range of materials and methodologies that mainstream university teachers can bring into their teaching. More and more we are hearing the new name on the block—**blended learning**.

This issue of *CAL-laborate* illustrates what we mean. In it you can read about (among much else):

- the use of virtual field trips in problem oriented learning, and interactive teaching and learning platforms, both from Sweden;
- the development of virtual learning environments in chemistry and the earth sciences, from Britain; and
- an online tutorial/assessment scheme and the use of online student diaries, from Australia.

Perhaps, as innovations like these continue to be developed and added to the blend, CAL may yet live up to its initial promise.

**Ian Johnston**