



Our vision is that action learning, action research & related processes and approaches, are widely used and publicly shared by individuals and groups creating local and global change for the achievement of a more equitable, just, joyful, productive, peaceful and sustainable society.

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Issue 4, December 2010



From the President

All the Best in these Festive Times.

Mid-December and so much to do before the fireworks for the New Year! I am sure someone took a couple of months out of my diary.

The year has been an eventful one for ALARA with another successful World Congress, and further growth in the organisation (with more to come). This last year has also seen continuing unrest and turmoil in the Middle East, with associated increasing inconvenience in travel, changes in governments in several countries, with more changes likely to come following the belt-tightening post-GFC, and some extremes in weather (the big freeze across Europe and the big wet in Eastern Australia and other places). One wonders how much reflection and learning took place after these events, and particularly learning that led to changes in policies and actions. The challenge in the year ahead for ALARA is to increase that count.

That year ahead looks very exciting. As indicated elsewhere in this Newsletter, the Management Committee has agreed to a proposal to hold the next Australian National Conference in Brisbane - more information on that Conference will appear soon. We should also have finalised an agreement for the next World Congress (in 2013) and we will have more information on that by February. The Management Committee has commenced

discussions on what it needs to do to enhance the ALARA website, and we plan to discuss a new three-year Strategic Plan at our January meeting. That meeting will be a face-to-face meeting as most of the Committee members' stars are aligned (or most of us will be in the one city early in January!).

I hope you have a wonderful, joyous, and restful time over the Festive Season. May all of your, and your family and friends', wishes be fulfilled. I hope to hear from you in 2011 when you participate in events, activities, discussions and general networking through ALARA.

Cheers

Colin Bradley

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Invitation

2011 ALARA Australian National Conference, Brisbane Australia

26-27 September 2011

Please place in your 2011 diaries.

Keep an eye out for further news.

Location:

www.riverglenn.com.au

Any enquiries or to offer ideas please contact Pamela Kruse

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Or 0402 195090



Journal Questions

As you may know, the ALARA journals for 2011 are themed.

The April edition will be about "Future Praxis", and the October edition, about "Decolonising Praxis".

We are honoured and delighted that Dr Bronwyn Fredericks and Dr Karen Adams, who co-Chaired the Decolonising Stream at the World Congress, are co-Editing the October edition.

We are receiving inquiries and submissions already – the deadline for Future Praxis is January 21st, and for Decolonising Practices, February 18th.

Both these editions have required us to rethink the editorial review process that has served us well for the last three years under Margaret O'Connell's very developmental leadership.

It is not that the editorial review wheel is broken, just that we seem to be sailing a ship for the present time!

This need to re-think our approaches was unexpected, and, as we are a participatory organization, I am very keen to include members in thinking about the changes that we are seeing possible, and contributing to decision-making to get them in place.

Working with our reviewers:

For the October issue, as we are working with guest editors for the first time, we are shifting the way we work with our editorial review panel.

Our guest editors will decide a reviewer (rather than the Managing Editors making this decision) either from our existing panel or from their own academic networks. In some instances Bronwyn and Karen will team up two reviewers for a writer, one from the ALARA panel and one from their networks.

Review criteria:

We have also adapted the review criteria for this edition, to include criteria related to the theme. All this information is in the Call we sent out last month.

Review process:

Similarly, for the April edition, we have had a suggestion that the process of review more

effectively works with the themed journal: future praxis (of editorial review).

The suggestion is that we have transparent review – where the reviewer is named, and a discourse takes place between the writer and the reviewer, some of which will be published with the paper.

Standards:

This way of reviewing has raised questions about Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA ratings). I am learning from our editorial panel members, that the Australian Research Council has standards against which journals are rated. With our current way of working we are a B rated journal, but if we go to transparent review we would "slip" to a C rating.

Our identity, our roots:

Some of our members may have concerns about this, while others care not a fig about slippage and conventions. Indeed – as one person said to me recently – why are we worried about being a B rated journal – there are plenty out there for people to find. Let's do something truly different.

Another member reminded us of the origins of ALARAJ (printed here with permission):

"A key rationale originally was (a) to help practitioners publish in the first place and (b) to overcome the academic bottlenecks we are discussing... I note with frank gladness how you have kept the celebration aspect of poems and even drawings etc to broaden the journals locus of authenticity beyond text ...In concept, to my mind, the journal was intended for a pracademic, not academic, audience in part in recognition of the failure of conventional academic avenues for publishing and in particular sharing praxis from the field ie Field Reports or Work in Progress Reports."

Material or de-materialise?

Not only are we at a place where our review process, criteria and sense of purpose are opening for reconsideration; we are also looking at shifting the modality of our journal to an electronic one.

Margaret has been quietly researching the possibilities for some years – finding a data

base that would be a good fit and the members of the Committee are researching the implications for our web page and copyright, etc.

Our rating could affect our access to a data base.

If we go virtual we have a great deal more flexibility with our journal format and purpose; we can have some sections that are developmental and others that are more conventional, for example.

We could facilitate conversations from papers to their authors and members on the website, as Ross Colliver, our Web Coordinator, suggests.

This is in keeping with how we currently work, but the separation of "linking" shifts the sense of interplay and balance between the conventional, the radical, the developmental and the maverick in the journal. More separation, freedom, connection, action...

Our people:

All this affects our generous and patient reviewers, our writers, our readers and the way the journal strengthens our field of practices world-wide.

Participation – what we do best!

Thus, I warmly encourage you, if you have a view, a story, or anything else to contribute to our thinking, to get in touch with me by email, while we set up a discussion thread to support the changes we are making.

Some of my questions:

Here are some trigger questions ... but please create your own too:

- To what extent do you want our journal to be recognized by ERA standards, and to what extent do you want us to be independent of such conventions?
- When you think about the future of our field, what kind of writing, reading, learning do you want to be doing?
- How do you feel about a virtual journal?
- How do you feel about our writers being read world-wide? Our writers coming from a world-wide pool?

- What do you think about having flexible criteria, processes etc rather than fixed ones?
- What do you think about transparent reviews?

We welcome your thoughts....

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