



Newsletter November 2008

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Editor's note

Dear colleagues

As usual at this stage of the year, we're left wondering where the whole year went!

For AALL, this has been an important year spent consolidating our activities. A significant achievement in 2008 has been AALL's contribution to a nation-wide project to review and develop good practice principles for English language competence in tertiary studies. The project was funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). AALL President Alex Barthel (ably supported by the whole AALL team helping him) was on the steering committee convened by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). Alex, along with several AALL state and territory reps, will be representing AALL at the AUQA workshop happening in Melbourne on 26 November to consider the recommendations of the various submissions to the project.

16 AALL members have been awarded Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) citations. Our hearty congratulations to them all. For details, please click into <http://forum.aall.org.au/viewtopic>. In addition, of course, AALL grants have been awarded too. For details, see <http://www.aall.org.au/grants/>.

In-house activities undertaken by the AALL executive have included the designing of a special AALL bookmark, available through AALL reps (so, ask your AALL rep if you think you can distribute these to appropriate places such as your library etc.).

One of the special pieces in this issue is the article by Bev Kokkinn celebrating the careers of three pioneering SA advisers - Kate Cadman, Margaret Cargill and Kerry O'Reagan - read and enjoy!

As usual, one of the nicest jobs in producing this newsletter is the chance to interview fellow members of AALL. Last issue it was the inspiring Linda Li from the University of Canberra. This time I managed to cast the net wider: Siri Barrett-Lennard from UWA and Peter

Hanley from JCU, gave generously of their time to share their career and life experiences with you.

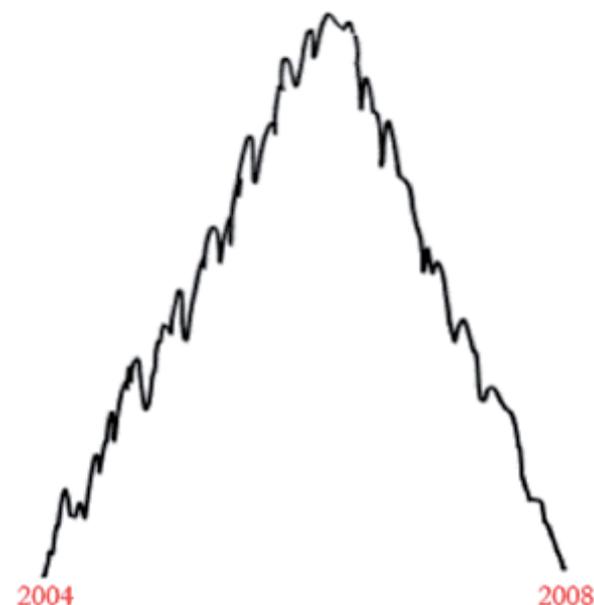
Time for a small confession. While I was putting all this material for the newsletter together, my computer 'crashed'. I think I have retrieved all relevant material, but if perchance something you have sent has been missed, please accept my profound apologies.

The inaugural May edition of the AALL newsletter was welcomed by many members, and it was very encouraging to receive feedback from individual members. Please keep the feedback coming! Email me at valli.rao@anu.edu.au.

Best wishes for the Christmas and New Year season.

Kind regards,

Valli



Santa to the rescue?



AGM 2008

- 2008 being an off-conference year, the Association's Annual General Meeting will this year be held online next week, 1-5 December.
- Reports by the President, Treasurer, state representatives and website manager will be published on the Association's website in the lead up to the AGM for members to consider. As well, the proposed budget for 2009 will be there.
- There will be an opportunity to ask questions and to make comments on various items such as the proposed budget, and then members will be asked to vote on whether to accept the proposed budget and so on.
- Keep track next week on <http://www.aall.org.au/agm>

AALL grant recipients for 2008

Projects which have been funded with membership funds this year are:

- RMIT: Database for ALL research
- University of Wollongong: Promoting on-going cross institutional AALL collegiality and professionalism
- University of Wollongong: Annotated bibliographies on key ALL topics
- Curtin University of Technology: English language diagnostic instruments at Australian universities

For more details, see: http://www.aall.org.au/sites/default/files/2008AALLgrants4Web_2.pdf

Journal news

David Rowland, the Co-Editor of JALL, reports:

The second issue of the Association's electronic journal, *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, is coming along nicely with a

guest editorial on surviving the review process, some book reviews, and two articles published so far. The articles have been on a very creative way of approaching a writing program for Communication Studies students by Josephine Ellis and Susan O'Rourke, and an analysis of the ways sources are cited in health science journals by Marie Clugston. A further one or two articles are hoped to be published by the end of the year.

For prospective authors thinking about where they might publish their next article, you might like to consider JALL for the following benefits:

- Fully refereed.
- Potentially quick publication times.
 - As a fully electronic journal, there are no page limits, so articles accepted for publication are published as soon as they have navigated their way through the review and editorial processes, meaning that lengthy publication delays resulting from having to wait until the next available issue are avoided.
- Open access - readership not limited to subscribers.
- High readership by Academic Language and Learning staff (downloads for the 2007 conference articles are in the multiples of hundreds).
- Electronic template to take the pain out of getting the formatting of your submission right (see <http://www.aall.org.au/journal>).
- Electronic submission saves on paper, and speeds up submission and review process.

Visit JALL at

<http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall>

State activities & initiatives

The State (and territory, of course) reps sent in their reports of activities as they had done for the first issue of the newsletter. Because this time the reports are also on the AALL AGM website (<http://www.aall.org.au/agm/>), I felt there's no need to repeat details here but

rather direct readers to the AALL website for the state activities. So, do go and check out all the goodies!



New learning materials

LearnHigher - www.learnhigher.ac.uk

Bhama Daly has a tip: LearnHigher CETL website has some useful learning resources. The writing resources section has good ideas on embedding writing into the curriculum through shorter writing assessments that develop students' writing skills.

Summer Institute in Applied Linguistics

Meg Rosse recommends: the Summer Institute in Applied Linguistics is held at Penn State in the USA June 22nd to July 17th, 2009. You can attend for 2 weeks or 4 weeks, I did 5 of the courses across 4 weeks in 2005. If you can make the time and find the money, I highly recommend it: <http://outreach.psu.edu/programs/applied-linguistics>. The home page has just been updated with information about scholarships.

AALL professional development resources

For new learning materials, always check the AALL forum under 'Professional Development Resources' at <http://forum.aall.org.au>.

Conferences & meetings

AALL (VIC) seminar day

The Australian Catholic University is hosting the AALL (VIC) seminar day on Thursday 27th

November 2008 at the ACU's (St Patrick's) Melbourne campus. For more information, please contact sophie.gimel@acu.edu.au.

ACT/NSW ALL forum

The UNSW Learning Centre is hosting the Christmas meeting of the ACT/NSW ALL Forum on 5th December. For more details, please contact s.starfield@unsw.edu.au.

VU conference report

Fiona Henderson from Victoria University reports on the 3rd annual conference organised by Victoria University's School of Learning Support Services in collaboration with VU's tertiary institution partners in China.

The conference successfully brought together 25 VU staff and 40 partner staff in Beijing. This year's conference, entitled 'Enriching Partnerships: Promoting and Celebrating Student Success', focused on teaching and learning issues, addressed partner requests to discuss research opportunities and explored VU Teaching and Learning directions from a Chinese perspective. The Vice Chancellor and VU Senior Managers, in Beijing for Graduations and the Alumni event, had a significant involvement this year. A major outcome has been the announcement of Teaching and Learning funding for collaborative (VU and Chinese partner institution) research projects, focused on the scholarship of teaching and learning. All eight projects, funded for between \$6000 and \$10,000 each, actively involve and in some cases are led by partner staff. The projects are:

- Developing a common evaluation framework for joint VU/Offshore English language programs
- A comparative study of on & off shore student engagement with online English language learning
- Identifying & Supporting at Risk VU offshore Diploma Students
- Transnational collaborative review of teaching
- Graduate Skills in VU's Beijing Bachelor of Business Graduates
- Investigation into industry preparedness

in China for accepting VU's Learning in the Workplace and Community

- A toolkit for internationalising the curriculum at VU
- An autonomous learner centred, computer-based model for assisting English language teaching

Social networking website for ACT

by Margaret Carmody

Academic Skills Adviser
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I have set up a social networking site, Academic Skills Canberra for the Academic Skills Advisers from all the Universities and TAFE here in Canberra: <http://academicsskillscanberra.ning.com>. You can view the site but not contribute to it unless you join.

The Academic Skills and Learning Development Group, is all the Academic Skills Advisers in Canberra. We meet monthly for a paper and discussion, and once a year, we visit each other's campuses. They came here to the Canberra Campus of ACU National in August.

This website is an example of Academic Skills Community Engagement, in addition to part of professional networking.

"I think this is such a positive initiative ... it is a way in which community capacity can be built and enhanced. It provides a way in which people can engage and learn from one another and to indeed progress community engagement activities across ACU" (Associate Professor Peter Howard, Institute for Advancing Community Engagement, ACU National, August 2008).

The Academic Skills Canberra site is Community Engagement, but not in the sense of engagement with the poor and neglected.

- It is building the Canberra community of Academic Skills Advisers, it is promoting engagement by all of them, including ones who can't attend every meeting;

- It is providing a place to lodge documents and resources that are not already on the net but could be very useful.

In a Quality sense, that is the Australian Universities Quality Audit, the Academic Skills and Learning Development Group's discussions can be seen as a benchmarking process.

In a transformative sense, the social networking site can be considered Community Engagement because:

- It potentially affects the practice and knowledge of the Advisers who participate;
- It creates a sense of community in what can be a rather lonely and stressful job;
- It is inclusive of all the tertiary institutions and the TAFE and some private providers;
- It may influence the institutions and the way they provide skills assistance and;
- It may enhance the learning experience of students;
- It may affect the lives of the students.

I am hoping that more Advisers will join the site and that they will find it a useful way of sending and receiving information. I am hoping that it will be especially useful for anyone new to Academic Skills Advising here in the Nation's Capital: that it will give them a snapshot of the Group and its activities and the resources we have shared with each other. I am also hoping that the site can be strategically linked to other sites that Advisers may find useful.

South Australians move on to new things...

by Bev Kokkinn

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UNISA (Magill Campus)

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Over the last year, three South Australians have decided to 'move on' from ALL to other things. Kate Cadman, Margaret Cargill and Kerry O'Regan have all played significant roles in academic language and learning in the SA (and elsewhere). In total, they have contributed around

50 years to ALL and they are already missed in the SA community of ALL. We know that many AALL members would also like to know what they are doing.

Kate started in the role in Victoria in the Faculty of Law at Monash before coming across to the Language and Learning Unit at Flinders U and then Adelaide U where she was the coordinator of the IBP for more than 10 years. Her contribution to the local ALL community has been enormous as can be seen in her publications, her work with the IBP team, and, well, just being Kate! In terms of 'moving on' she has, in fact, 'resigned' from her position with the Graduate Centre after several years of bureaucratic frustration and is very clear about the fact that her R-word is not 'retirement'! Her big interest at the moment is in pedagogy, the 'how' beyond the 'what' of we do, and this year she's taken her 'pedagogy of connection' as an invited keynote to the UNESCO conference in Malaysia and to the ACTA international conference in Alice Springs. And she's still managing to carry on her ALL work (albeit without salary!) from her new adjunct role in the University of Adelaide's Department of Gender, Work & Social Inquiry.

Margaret has also led the field in ALL with her work in the IBP with science students, and more recently in her work with Chinese scientists - mostly in the Chinese Academy of Sciences and its universities - on a genre-based approach to developing publication skills in English, taught collaboratively with scientists active as authors, referees, and journal editors. Although still at the IBP until March next year, she is already working as a consultant in SA and interstate, hopefully with more trips to China and beyond in the offing as well ('r' word = resignation and re-invention). Margaret and her longstanding scientist colleague Patrick O'Connor have a book in press with Wiley-Blackwell, due out in early April next year: 'Writing scientific research articles: Strategy and steps'. Margaret began her ALL work on the back of a 4-year stint in a Tongan agricultural college in the 1980s and developed the prototype IBP with Ursula McGowan as a response to that experience - an early implementation of embedding ALL in disciplinary HDR contexts. She served as co-editor and

executive editor of the ACTA Journal TESOL in Context on two occasions (with Kate Cadman in the other role each time), and maintains a strong interest in this and other journals in the field.

Kerry, the only one of the three who claims to use the other 'r' word - retirement - has indeed retired. Kerry started as a Study Skills Tutor in 1989, a part-time casual position in what was to become the University of South Australia. Except for a brief stint at Charles Sturt in Bathurst, she worked at UniSA until lured away to the U of Adelaide in 2003. It was in those latter years at Adelaide that she was a member of the national committee of LAS who worked to develop a constitution for the new Association for Academic Language and learning. Despite her 'retirement', she is still hard at work as a Research Fellow in the Centre for Learning and Professional Development at the University of Adelaide. There her major focus is coordinating a program in which volunteers from the community are matched with international students. She is also doing some casual work at UniSA and editing the odd PhD thesis. During her professional life she authored numerous journal articles and conference papers and was part of the UniSA team who won a national teaching award for their online workshops. There's space in her life now though for other things, other writing. In June-July this year she walked the Camino, the 750 kilometre pilgrimage across the north of Spain, and her reflections on that are to be published by Ginninderra Press early in the new year.

All of us in AALL in South Australia - and nationally - wish them everything of the best in the future!



Kerry O'Regan, Margaret Cargill and Kate Cadman

Member interview: Siri Barrett-Lennard, UWA



Siri Barrett-Lennard is an English Language and Study Skills Adviser at the University of Western Australia.

Where did your name come from?

My first name is Norwegian (not me, just the name) and my family name is typically West Australian. My father's ancestors were poor aristocracy who came out from England in the 1800s to try their luck. One branch of Barrett-Lennards went into wheat and sheep farming; the other went into cultivating grapes and brewing grog. My family's the wheat variety (sorry).

So, your father's Australian.; but you don't sound very Australian?

My father (he of the wheat and sheep stock) was much more interested in people than he was in livestock. My mother is West Australian too, but her skills as a pharmacist were transportable and she was eager to see the world. And so it was that my parents set off for Chicago with my eldest brother long before I was born.

Dad did psych studies there under Carl Rogers; Mum ran reading circles and added another brother to the family collection. With two little boys and a PhD, they then went to Alabama. This was where my twin sister (not identical) and I were born.

While my mother was on 24 hour nappy and feeding duty, my father escaped to the univer-

sity where he conducted surreptitious student excursions. He used these to show his students from the white university where he worked that their coloured brethren at the black university were really no different at all and that they could mix and learn from one another.

What seems so obvious now didn't seem so obvious back then. These were still the heady days of the late 50s/early 60s, shot gun murders and lynchings were a part of the not-so-distant past, and intermarriage was still illegal in Alabama and, in fact, in every other state except Hawaii - and you see what happened there!

At the grand age of one, I returned with my family to Australia, but by the time I was five, we were back in the States for a short stop, then off to Canada, where my youngest sister was born and where we stayed for the next 17 years. So that explains the accent.

Canada was a great place to grow up. The area we lived in Ontario was very multicultural, very accepting. There isn't the same lovely wicked sense of humour as there is in Australia, but the people there were very very nice, so it suited us well. But the pull of the home country can be strong, and my parents returned to Perth in 1983.

Did you come back here then?

Not right away. In fact, I stayed on in Canada for another ten years. During this time I fell in love, finished uni, got married, moved around a bit, started teaching and had two kids. Ten years later, we (my husband and I, my son and daughter) came out to Sydney to be closer to my family. I didn't realise just how far away Sydney and Perth are!

Eventually, my husband managed to get a transfer out to Perth, and we've been ever since. I've done a lot of things, but for the last four years I've been at UWA, which is a fantastic place to work.

And my family - we're still a bit scattered. Some of us are still Canada; the rest of us are over here or hereabouts. It'd be great if we could all be together, but I guess then I wouldn't have as many excuses for travelling, which is something

I really enjoy.

Why do you think 'Academic skills advising' is an important area to work in?

At uni, students are exposed to so many new people, new ideas, new ways of thinking, new ways of knowing, new ways of being with others, new ways of expressing themselves. This can result in great discovery, learning, excitement and joy. But it can also be a shock to the system. The rules of the game - or whatever rules there are - may not seem that clear. How do people manage their time effectively with so much going on? What modes of thinking, writing and presenting ideas are expected and rewarded? The territory can be quite unfamiliar. Students can easily get lost.

I think academic skills advising is incredibly important in ensuring that students don't get lost. That students are clear about the rules of the game. That they know what modes of thinking, writing and presenting ideas are expected. That they are able to perform at the very highest levels they can, without losing balance or perspective. That their university experience, challenging as it might be, also affirms and helps students to become whatever and whoever they want to be.

What did you want to be when you were young, and what is it about your current life that reflects this initial desire?

I've always been fascinated by the diversity of human experience. When I was younger, I was really into creative arts. I loved reading stories of people's lives - real and fiction - writing stories and poems, watching films and writing and acting in plays. I suppose what I liked most about these things is that they opened up other worlds to me - allowed me to step into other people's shoes for a while and see the world from other people's perspectives.

When I started teaching English language to groups of students from all over the world, I found an even better place than on the stage or in books to find out about life's many and varied experiences. Helping others learn to communicate their thoughts and ideas in English gave me a legitimate excuse to ask them lots of questions about their lives, about what they've seen,

about what they know, about what they think. I feel really lucky that I've been able to indulge my curiosity about others and make living at the same time!

What are some memorable life experiences?

My most memorable experiences - apart from the usual experiences of love, loss and new life - are of travelling. When you travel, you are an outsider, and being an outsider helps you know who and what you are.

I first experienced being an outsider when my family, who had been living in Canada for a number of years, travelled to Australia when I was in my teens. Even though my parents are Australian, I was an 'ethnic' kid at school. I didn't think like other kids did, I didn't talk the way they did, I didn't behave the way they did, I didn't dress the way they did. I was interested in different things.

As an outsider, I was particularly sensitive to the way my Aussie classmates treated others. Although I was simply excluded from much of what was going on, there were others who were persecuted. I remember a Chinese geography teacher who was driven to tears by kids' taunts about his accent. He left and never came back.

This experience really upset me. I vowed then to try to be as inclusive and respectful in my behaviour towards others as I could. I didn't know who I was until I saw what I didn't want to be.

Have you had other experiences like that?

Yes, I felt even more of an outsider when after uni studies I moved with my husband to Québec. In Québec, I was a 'tête carrée' (a square head), but even more importantly, I was an Anglophone. Communicating in English was something I was good at, and being good at communicating was something I took for granted. But communicating wasn't possible any more. It had never occurred to me before that being only an Anglophone could be extremely limiting.

Living in a French environment, I was suddenly limited by my language and by the words I lacked. I discovered what it was like to live in a world surrounded by my own silence, and

I didn't like it! I knew then that being able to communicate to those around me was important to my sense of identity. So I studied French.

I had some great French teachers. For the first time, I experienced learning a language in a very communicative manner. I didn't have many words, and I was very embarrassed about making mistakes, but my teachers made me talk. They made me talk and make mistakes and learn from my mistakes.

Observing my teachers and marvelling at the way they helped me learn inspired me. I found myself taking notes when they taught - notes not just of the French I was learning, but also of teaching methods and activities that I found most effective. This was my first step to becoming an English language adviser. Now I too help others to better communicate their ideas. It makes me very happy to do this.

What things keep you motivated?

Well, apart from my students and the intrinsic joy of teaching I've already mentioned, and apart from my family and friends, the main things that keep me motivated are my colleagues and others in my work environment. I'm lucky to be working with some really fantastic people in the Learning, Language and Research Skills team at UWA, and Student Services is a very collegial, open and creative work environment.

We're a very diverse team: our experiences and backgrounds are all quite different, as are our personality types and learning and teaching styles. But I suppose we're all similar in that we're all quite team-oriented. Our diversity means that we each bring something quite unique to the team, and our team focus keeps us from breaking apart and all heading off in different directions.

I find it really motivating to work in a team where the members all draw a lot of energy from one another, and where the whole is much more than the sum of its parts. Teams like this don't happen by accident, however. Not all of the teams I've worked in have been like this. I think building and maintaining good teams takes a lot of work, and commitment from all team members. You can't force someone to be team-

focused who isn't.

You mentioned the work environment as being important. How is this?

Teams that have momentum from the positive synergies of team members only flourish in certain environments. Our Student Services Director encourages us to 'hire the person' and 'build the skills', rather than try to do the reverse. I think this is important.

Also important is trust and support from the top. Our team makes a lot of our own decisions. We are given a level of freedom and autonomy that encourages creativity and innovation. But people above us also pay attention and support us when things go pear-shaped, and particularly if we encounter problems within the team. So motivation for me at work has to do with the teaching I love, the people I'm with in the team, and the people at the top who create and sustain culture in which I work.

Member interview: Peter Hanley, JCU



Learning Advisers and "The Learning Circles" -
(L to R) Kylie Bartlett, Peter Hanley, Soheil Ahmed, Kellie Johns

Peter Hanley has been a full-time learning adviser at James Cook University since 1995. Before that, along with working part-time as a learning adviser, he also ran a restaurant, along with his wife Ladda. They have a daughter Lana who has just completed a Master's degree in International Development.

Why do you think 'Academic skills advising' is an important area to work in?

Two very important aspects of my work as a

Learning Adviser are student empowerment and building community. Through our work with individual students and our courses and workshops we give students that little bit extra that enables them to be successful in their studies.

Vince Tinto and others have highlighted the importance of "learning communities" in the university experience and at JCU we are involved in building community on a number of levels.

The mentor program that the Learning Advisers

organise has proved very effective in helping new students to make the transition to university study. There are also a number of learning communities based in our learning Centre.

At JCU we are part of Teaching and Learning Development (TLD) and the teaching and learning programs that TLD offer help academic staff to build community across discipline boundaries. We collaborate with academic staff from a range of disciplines and work together to improve the academic skills of their students.

What things keep you motivated?

The students ... I get great satisfaction in helping students to realise their potential. I also enjoy the power of networking - helping people to connect with others. I have made many friends among staff and students in my 18 years at JCU and the university community is a very important part of my life.

What are some memorable life experiences?

Four years living and working in Malaysia then Thailand. This has had a profound influence on how I see the world. In the 30 years since I have been active in a number of organisations working for peace and justice and human rights.

Kayaking through the Whitsunday Islands - one of the most beautiful places on earth. I remember one morning paddling on a glassy ocean and the only sounds we could hear came from the sea turtles as they came to the surface to take breath.

The formation of the JCU kazoo band with our motto "The noble art of losing face may one day save the human race". In 1997 we performed the JCU Kazoo Tattoo - 80 staff and students dressed in tartan and precision marching to "Scotland the Brave" - played on kazoo of course.

Three years on the national board of Amnesty International: That was a fantastic experience of working with wonderful people around Australia united by our common commitment to human rights.

What's your favourite book?

My all-time favourite would have to be *Lord*

of the Rings but the book that I am currently telling everyone to read is *The Tall Man* by Chloe Hooper.

Hooper's book is sub-titled *Death and Life on Palm Island* and offers the reader a profound insight into a place that is only 50 km across the water from Townsville and yet in many ways is in another world.

What has been the highlight for you in 2008?

Definitely "The Learning Circles" - an amazing community art installation on the wall of our Learning Centre which is on the ground floor of the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library at JCU. The wall is 20m long and 4m high and the main feature is a number of circular windows set in the bare concrete wall.

As part of the First Year experience Project at JCU we were seeking a community art project that could involve all the commencing students in 2008.

Learning Adviser Kylie Bartlett and I were sitting with Art Education lecturer Linda Ashton in the Learning Centre beside the wall when the idea was born. With the assistance of our mentors, new students would be encouraged to make clay mandalas that would then be incorporated into "The Learning Circles".

Twelve months and more than 2000 mandalas later, the installation is complete. It has completely transformed our learning space and continues to amaze all those who see it by its scale and complexity. We are looking forward to the opening on 1 December by JCU Vice Chancellor Sandra Harding.