

The *Journal of Distance Learning* made its first appearance in 1995. It was launched at the annual DEANZ Conference, which was held in Auckland, and was the result of a great deal of discussion and planning. The membership of the Association felt that the time was right to develop a Journal as a sign of the increasing professionalism of the distance education community in New Zealand, and that a vehicle was needed in which to publish articles and other material about distance and open learning. I am pleased to say that the Journal is still alive and well and it is one of a small number of refereed journals in the world that focus on distance and open learning.

This issue contains a range of articles. In the first one, Bill Grote looks at quality assurance in tertiary education in Australia, the UK, the USA and New Zealand and presents an institutional perspective by examining some of the quality assurance processes in place at The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. He asks whether it is time to develop an international quality assurance system for tertiary education.

Two articles follow which report on research carried out on distance learning programmes in New Zealand. Cynthia White reports on some research that examined how adult distance learning students of Spanish accessed and evaluated different textual forms in their course. Then Rachel McCahon reports on research that she conducted with library studies students about the forms of support that they found helpful with their studies. She argues that one of the challenges for large scale distance and open learning providers is to find support strategies that maximise students' chances for course completion.

Next, in a report from Otago University, Andrew Higgins describes some of the flexible learning strategies that were integrated into five of the University's courses, and student reactions to these strategies. Finally, there are two book reviews to tempt you into a library or bookstore.

This is the last issue of the Journal that I will edit. Claire McLachlan-Smith is taking over the role of editor and she will bring a fresh perspective and new energy to the task. I wish her well and encourage all readers of the Journal to consider writing material for possible publication. The Journal is one of the ways that we keep our association healthy and vital.

I would like to thank the DEANZ Executive for their support and encouragement during my time as Chair of the Editorial Board and editor. I would also like to thank all of those people who submitted articles or who acted as referees. The peer review process can be very time-consuming and sometimes quite challenging. Thank you for rising to that challenge and helping to keep our Journal going.

Andrea McIlroy
Editor