

It gives me great pleasure and pride to be writing an introduction for the first issue of the *Journal of Distance Learning*. The pleasure is personal. It comes from seeing a project with which I have been involved for several years coming to fruition. The pride derives from being involved in an organisation, the Distance Education Association of New Zealand (DEANZ), which continues to grow and develop and is prepared to support initiatives which involve some degree of risk.

From its inception in 1984, DEANZ, in accordance with its constitutional aims and objectives, has used a publication as a vehicle to disseminate information about distance education. The DEANZ Newsletter, Bulletin and Flier have served this purpose well in the past.

The need for a professional journal of international calibre was identified by the DEANZ Executive in 1991. Widespread discussion and consultation then took place and a remit proposing that the Bulletin be developed into a professional journal was finally ratified by the DEANZ membership at the 1993 Annual General Meeting. The *Journal of Distance Learning* has been in development since then.

That DEANZ is able to publish a professional journal speaks volumes for the association. Our energy, vigour and enthusiasm is apparent in many ways. For example, the increasingly high quality of the papers being presented at our annual conferences was one of the indicators that we would be able to sustain a journal. In addition, our members continue to be invited to present papers at international conferences, write for various publications and consult in developing countries.

A Journal also requires a dedicated, hard working and tenacious editor. This person must not only have good networks within the education community, but also be capable of

extracting copy from often very busy and sometimes reluctant authors. DEANZ is fortunate in having such a person in Dr Terry Hearn, Head of the Distance Teaching Unit at the University of Otago. He is supported by an Editorial Board which is representative of DEANZ various constituencies.

As I said at the beginning, the journal is something of a risky business. While the association is providing initial finance, it must become self-supporting. It will only become viable if you, our members, submit quality articles for publication that assure us of an interested and committed readership.

The journal provides us with a wonderful forum for debate, a source of knowledge, inspiration and stimulation, a clearing house for information about distance education and open learning and an entree into the world of our colleagues. It will help to keep us energised and linked with the open and distance learning communities both nationally and internationally. If you have done some interesting research, developed an innovative teaching approach or want to explore some theoretical construct, write about it and submit an article to the *Journal of Distance Learning* for possible publication. Encourage your colleagues to write as well. Someone needs to write up the history of DEANZ. Now there's an idea!

I hope that the journal has a long and eventful life in which it explores important issues, informs our practise and serves the changing needs of our various constituencies.

Andrea McIlroy
President, DEANZ

In *Open Praxis* (1, 1994, 6-9), Keith Harry noted that there is only a handful of refereed journals in distance education, among them the *American*

Journal of Distance Education (Australia), the *Indian Journal of Open Learning*, the *Journal of Distance Learning* (Canada), and *Open Learning* (United Kingdom). The *Journal of Distance Learning*, published by the Distance Education Association of New Zealand, thus joins a small group of journals devoted to exploring both the theory and practice of distance education and distance learning, and marks an important new stage in the development of the distance education community and profession in New Zealand.

The establishment of the *Journal of Distance Learning* also springs from a conviction that distance learning in New Zealand has developed and continues to develop in distinctive and interesting ways, and what we

should share that experience with the wider international distance education community. Several of the articles in this first issue describe ways in which approaches to distance learning in New Zealand are being shaped by this country's cultural traditions and aspirations and by its geography.

The distance education community in New Zealand is small, but diverse: we should celebrate that diversity and try to ensure the *Journal of Distance Learning* reflects that diversity, encourages communication, and fosters a sense of shared professional identity and purpose.

Terry Hearn
Editor, *Journal of Distance Learning*
