



## **History**

This section provides an account of ascilite's beginnings and basis for the foundation of the organisation. This account is a 'collective memory'. If you are able to add or clarify aspects of it please send your contribution to [info@ascilite.org.au](mailto:info@ascilite.org.au).

### **Pre-Beginnings**

In 1983 and 1984 two highly successful Conferences known as CALITE '83 and CALITE '84 were held at the University of Queensland. These were the idea of Marshall Harris, a lecturer in the Department of Computer Science, and they attracted international attention. Colleagues Dr Rosalie Russell, Dr Andrew Lian of the Languages Department, and Dr Brian Carss from Education contributed greatly. At CALITE '84 the challenge was made for other Universities to "pick up the ball and run with it".

### **A Society is Formed**

Dr John Bowden, then at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) at Melbourne University, took up the challenge, and together with Sharman Lichtenstein of RMIT, plus many other helpers, staged a most successful conference CALITE'85 in Melbourne with over 450 people attending. A theme of "Student Control of Learning" was provided as a focus for the conference, and Dr Diana Laurillard of Open University UK demonstrated and discussed the theme using videodisc and multimedia examples. The other keynote speaker was the father of Artificial Intelligence, Professor Marvin Minsky from MIT.

At that conference, it was decided to form a group to be known as the Australian Society of Computers In Learning In Tertiary Education (ascilite). During the next two years, a Constitution was drawn up and debated, the Society was formally registered, and so ascilite was born. At the 1993 Conference, Geoff Isaacs presented a paper addressing the question How have ascilite's conferences, as reflected in their proceedings, changed since 1983?

### **Around Australia**

Over the next few years, conferences were held at Tertiary Institutions in various cities around Australia. Adelaide in 1986, Sydney in 1987, Canberra 1988 and Gold Coast

(Bond University) in 1989. During this time, the Society was sorting out some of its priorities and concerns. There were amendments made to the Constitution; there were links made with Industry and Business; a regular newsletter was begun; and a number of other initiatives were tried with varying success. The possibility of affiliated State or Local Chapters was discussed, and a Local Activities subsidy scheme was established. Links were established across the Tasman with New Zealand, and the idea of a NZ conference was considered.

### **International Links**

In 1990, the ascilite conference was subsumed into the World Congress of Computers in Education (WCCE 90), Sydney, where ascilite hosted a strand called CBT 90. This was an important stage for ascilite as it was establishing links with other groups with similar interests around the world. These links have continued and strengthened with international attendance and papers at conferences and the constitutional amendments of 1997 to change 'Australian' in ascilite to 'Australasian'.

After a break of 18 months with no conference from 1990 to ascilite 91 in Launceston, Tasmania, there was increasing interest from academics interested in or concerned about the use of computers in teaching and learning. Conferences followed in Sydney in 1992, Lismore (UNE, soon to become SCU) in 1993, Brisbane (QUT) at APITITE 1994, Melbourne (UoM) in 1995, Adelaide (UniSA) in 1996 with Perth hosting 1997 at Curtin. In 1997 there were 300 members with 70 campus reps (including seven from overseas!) giving a supporting role to the Executive in membership drives, local activities and visiting fellow co-ordination.

The 1998 Conference was held at the University of Wollongong, with the theme Flexibility The Next Wave?

The 1999 Conference was held in Brisbane, hosted by Queensland University of Technology with support from the University of Queensland. The theme of the Conference was 'Diversity - the response to diverse Markets and Environments, Technologies, Disciplines, Student bodies and Administrative structures'.

In November 1999 membership had reached 419, with members in 11 countries. Ascilite 2000 (Learning to Choose - Choosing to Learn) was held in Coffs Harbour, hosted by Southern Cross University, and provided another great time for ascilite members.

### **The Journal**

From the Society's beginning, ascilite members often discussed the concept of a refereed Journal, and a printed magazine was posted to members for many years, followed later by an emailed ascilite Update. In November 1997 the first issue of the re-established AJET journal was published by ascilite and ASET, under a joint editorial board comprised of nominated members from ascilite and ASET. (Editor in Chief, Ron Oliver, and Production Editor, Roger Atkinson).