

Editorial: The Once and Future Device

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Some things change ...

It's hard to believe JAET started 3 years ago. In that time, we have undergone many changes, both in personnel and in format. This issue kicks off a new release schedule along with several other changes.

The most significant change has been the loss of our publisher. When Professor Chris Calvin and I started the journal, we envisioned a dual format: print and online. The print version would be sold to institutions and individuals while the online version would appear after a delay on the web. Needless to say, with the loss of our publisher we had to rethink some things. For now, we are maintaining the online version, and have suspended print production until such time as we secure another publisher willing to take on our journal.

Additional changes that have occurred have been some personnel transitions, at the Texas Center for Educational Technology, UNT, and elsewhere. One significant loss was our valued copy editor, Louise Keeton.

Our outstanding editorial board remains committed to the cause of JAET, and we continue to look forward to your paper submissions. Peer review by scholars in the field will continue, as in the past.

... Some things remain the same

In this space in 2004, I addressed the issue of portable devices for classroom use. PDAs and other devices supplement computers, but don't replace them. Laptops remain expensive, and are vulnerable to damage. I called for a device powerful enough to run common software, connect to the Internet, and priced under \$800. My specs hold, except for the price. Massachusetts Institute of Technology's \$100 laptop idea has lowered the overall expectations for a usable education machine's price point. Meanwhile, barebones laptops can be found (alas, often after rebates) in the sub-\$500 range.

My new specs call for a flash-based portable machine with a small keyboard. Different ideas have floated about that touch close to my original vision. Most recently, the Microsoft Origami Project has gained headlines. It is similar to a Sony PSP gaming device, but bigger at perhaps the size of a paperback book. It is essentially a small version of a tablet PC. Unfortunately, it appears Microsoft does not feel a keyboard is an integral element to the device.

What we really need is a tiny laptop (but not too tiny) with the traditional clamshell design and keyboard. I would even be willing to pony up my original \$800 if it's powerful enough to do most of the things I'm used to doing; otherwise, if it runs flash and something like Windows CE or Palm OS, I'll want to see a much lower price point.

The issue at hand

In the meantime, please enjoy the first issue of JAET for 2006. Dianne Chambers from University of Melbourne offers an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of electronic professional development. Krista Poscente from University of Calgary, along with Liam Rourke and Terry Anderson from the Canadian Institute for Distance Education Research at Athabasca University offer a study of perceptions of educators using a high speed network in Canada. Finally, Les Lunce from University of North Texas offers an examination of the use of computer simulations in classroom settings.