

## Editorial: Back to the Future

---

**John P. Keeves**

IEJ Chief Editor

School of Education, Flinders University

**Katherine L. Dix**

Managing Director Shannon Research Press

School of Education, Flinders University

*This editorial presents a retrospective statement on the International Education Journal and its relationship with the Flinders University Institute of International Education and Shannon Research Press. By doing so, a strategic model of research and publication practice within an academic community is presented that seeks to find sustainability in an increasingly challenging climate.*

### THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION JOURNAL

The preparation and production of the *International Education Journal (IEJ)* is part of the Publications Program of the Flinders University Institute of International Education (FUIIE). Two years after the Institute was established, Dr Raeburn Reynolds had the vision to propose the setting up of a journal to help focus the work of the course that he was building in the School of Education at Flinders University that would lead to the award of the degree of Doctor of Education. He envisaged that the journal would be oriented towards international education and it was clear from the outset that the journal would be prepared and produced by FUIIE as part of its program of activities. Moreover, he arranged for the journal to be published by a privately owned publishing house – Shannon Research Press (SRP). The costs of preparation and production were initially carried by Dr Reynolds and were gradually shared as the journal expanded with the Flinders University Institute of International Education that was also publishing a newsletter, occasional papers, and subsequently a series of Research Monographs. When Dr Reynolds retired from the University in early 2002, office bearers of FUIIE continued with the work of preparation and production and SRP was sold. More recently the School of Education has made payments to SRP to assist with the work of publication. Furthermore, as the journal has expanded, the reviewing of articles has been undertaken voluntarily by members of the Editorial Advisory Board, Members of FUIIE both inside and outside Flinders University and has involved a heavy commitment by staff and senior post-graduate students of the Schools of Education at Flinders University and the University of Adelaide. The work of reviewing of articles has during the past two years become a heavy burden, and the contributions of all who have undertaken this work is acknowledged with gratitude, particularly the members of the Editorial Board.

### The Aims of the *IEJ*

The aims of the International Education Journal are to publish articles that possess one or more of the following characteristics or qualities:

- a) the presentation of substantive findings that are of importance for policy and practice beyond the country in which the research was conducted;
- b) the integration of education with academic disciplines such as anthropology, demography, economics, history, law, linguistics, philosophy, political science, psychology and

- sociology, or examines educational issues from the perspective of the disciplines, or investigates issues at the interface between education and one or more of these disciplines;
- c) the examination of educational issues from a cross-cultural or indigenous people's perspective;
  - d) the evaluation of educational policy or programs or the use of information technology of cross-national interest and significance;
  - e) the employment of advanced research methods and measurement procedures that are clearly explained;
  - f) the presentation of empirically or analytically based investigations of theory, models or conceptual frameworks in the field of education; and
  - g) the synthesis of research findings from comparative and cross-national studies in education.

While these aims are both broadly based and oriented towards future developments in education from a cross-national and comparative educational perspective, together with a strong international and global orientation, they do not exclude issues that arise in a particular country, provided the issues raised are not limited to the country of origin of the submitted article. This focus of the journal occasionally leads to the rejection of articles that have originated in Australia or North America, which would be more appropriately published within the country of origin for an audience within that country to read. However, the location of Australia, and in particular, Flinders University within the Asia-Pacific Region leads to an emphasis on work within that region. In addition, a concern for work in education and for research into educational issues in developing countries, particularly, but not exclusively, in the Asia-Pacific Region has led to the establishment of a firmly held policy not to charge for the publication of articles, or for the submission of articles, or for access to the journal on-line, and not to market hard-copy annual or issue based copies of the journal, even to libraries. The primary purpose of the journal is to provide for the dissemination and discussion of research-based ideas and findings about education from an international and global perspective as widely as possible and at minimal cost.

### **Research and Publishing Program**

From the initial links of the journal to the training of research workers through the degree of Doctor of Education course, a particular emphasis is given to assisting postgraduate students and early career researchers to publish the findings of their initial research studies. One consequence of this emphasis on training in research is the publication of the proceedings each year of reviewed papers initially presented at the annual Educational Research Conferences conducted by FUIIE in cooperation with the Schools of Education at Flinders University, University of Adelaide, University of South Australia, and the South Australian Institute of Educational Research. The publication of the papers given at other research conferences has also been undertaken with a similar purpose of introducing post-graduate students and early career researchers to the scholarly demands of publication. Furthermore, the proceedings of a research training workshop that addresses issues arising in the secondary analysis of readily available international data sets has also been published recently, with the view of raising certain issues that are confronting those post-graduate students and research workers who are engaged in the secondary analysis of data. In addition, certain controversial questions are raised in a recently published special issue of the *IEJ* that are concerned with a failure to maintain an international perspective at a time efforts are being made both within Australia and within OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries to raise the quality of higher education. These questions have important consequences for the final years of secondary schooling.

It should be noted that subventions have been received from the School of Education at Flinders University to assist with the publication of recent issues of the *IEJ* that contain papers presented at the Education Research Conference and the Research Training Workshop conducted by FUIIE. The *IEJ* has clearly developed into a highly important component of the work at the Flinders University Institute of International Education that strengthens the cross-national and international orientation of the activities it engages in within Flinders University and beyond.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF FUIIE AS AN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WITHIN A UNIVERSITY**

It is now ten years since FUIIE was initially informally and subsequently more formally founded in 1998 as an Institute within Flinders University. An institute within a university is faced with the challenge to contribute to the life and work of that university as well as to the attainment of the particular goals and purposes it seeks to address in ways that focus on teaching and research towards the betterment of the wider world in which it operates. The paths to be followed are those that scholars and leaders from the great universities around the world signpost and mark well.

The first challenge is to form a concentration of the best scholars it can attract to work within the institute in whatever capacity is most appropriate as students, staff and persons of adjunct or affiliated status. Of particular importance are the students, whether they are honours students, masters degree students, or doctoral students, and whether they come from within Australia, Europe, Asia or Africa. Of great importance is the richness and variety of their interests and concerns as scholars and research workers. They not only benefit from individual mentoring by more senior staff, but also by their informal interaction with each other. Consequently, arrangements must be made to promote and support such interaction, by providing working and living space, less formal work-in-progress seminars, or more formal conference presentations in which they can talk and debate ideas among themselves and among others who wish to enter into informed debate and discussion. However, informal discussion is not enough, it must lead to the scholarly writing of papers for presentation, articles for publication, and the sustained argument of a thesis for examination. Ideas and thought processes are clarified by both speaking and writing. All the tasks involved in writing for publication demand that ideas and relationships are clearly and logically argued in ways that others can read, examine and challenge. Students, for whom the language in which writing occurs is not their native language, invariably face considerable problems in learning to write clearly and logically in a language that for them is a foreign language. However, while English is a complex language to use, it has such a richness of lexis and structure that great clarity of meaning can be readily achieved if care is taken in the writing and editing of text.

Underlying the development of ideas and relationships, of models, propositions and hypotheses, as well as theoretical frameworks and perspectives in the fields of Education, is the need for training beyond that obtained in a bachelors degree course. While some of such training can be accomplished by reading widely and well, the range of material now readily accessible is so great that some introduction to such material through lectures and seminars is today essential. Furthermore, the procedures now available for both logical and statistical analysis of not only information, but also the count data and measurements made on identified variables are so extensive and so readily accessible with the advent of laptop computers, that courses that focus on the learning of such procedures are essential, particularly in honours, masters and doctoral degree courses. However, course work programs are not enough. An institute within a university must also provide such training for its members who are not only students but also research workers who need to keep abreast of such developments. Moreover, for the learning of new skills of analysis, sustained effort is required.

The developments that are occurring in the social and behavioural sciences as well as the physical and biological sciences are related to the rapid expansion of knowledge, the advancement of technology, and the impact of global communication. The barriers between disciplines are breaking down and the growing points in learning and research are occurring at the interfaces between disciplines, so that a multi-disciplinary approach is essential. No institute within a university can hope to be successful if it adopts too narrow a focus. Learning about these developments can not occur in large and impersonal classrooms. Only by improving out-of-classroom connections between students and staff, improving writing skills to achieve greater clarity of thought, as well as curriculum reform to keep abreast of new ideas and the new findings and perspectives of research, can both students and staff continue to work and study in the scholarly world of the future. This is particularly true for the fields of Education.

A strong focus on internationalisation is essential for an institute of international education. Attendance at international conferences is useful but costly when compared with maintaining contact with colleagues working in similar fields, even at the post-graduate student level through the internet. Great gains are to be made through global engagement. Working in teams not only at the local level, but also at the cross-institutional and cross-national levels, provides effective ways of keeping abreast of developments and sharing knowledge. However, for each individual there is the need to write, to clarify ideas, to read and to publish. An institute that promotes and supports such interaction is central to the work of a university. Its success is not only to be judged by the size of the research grants that it attracts, but also by the research scholars that it trains and who graduate at a high level, by the publications that it issues, by the seminars that it conducts, and the conferences at which papers are read and debated.

Financial support is necessary to maintain computer equipment, printing equipment to support publication, to provide access to libraries around the world through the internet and the flexibility of access to small sums of money to purchase materials and services quickly when needed. However, working space is essential for staff and students to work together in close proximity, to share ideas and experience and to engage in informal discussion and debate, and to hold more formal meetings, lectures and seminars.

### **The Goals and Purposes of FUIIE**

It was with these ideas in mind that the Flinders University Institute of International Education was set up to pursue the following goals and purposes.

**Goals:** The Institute and its members aim to contribute constructively to debate and research towards the resolution of the substantial issues and challenges facing both initial and recurrent education worldwide.

**Purposes:** The Institute and its members seek to:

- a) invigorate and reform debate on the role of education in world peace and justice, the protection of the world's natural and cultural heritage, and the promotion internationally of human development with a full appreciation of the differences between cultures;
- b) use creatively technology for the advancement of learning across cultures;
- c) create a self-sustaining and innovative Institute that contributes to research, scholarship and community service for the advancement of learning throughout life.

The Institute seeks to achieve these goals and purposes in three key ways.

1. A strong research and training program is sustained.
2. Collegiality and good fellowship within the Institute are fostered.
3. An active publications and dissemination program is maintained.

The Institute has relied very heavily on voluntary help to support much of its program of activity during 2006. Its life and work have been greatly enriched by its capacity to attract the best students from the PhD, Ed.D, M.Ed and B.Ed (Hons) programs to share in its activities, and to enable them to interact with staff and colleagues who give their time and energies voluntarily to research and training activities. At the same time through an Outreach program, it has drawn attention to the issues and problems created by terrorism and by ignoring the international aspects of education.

The challenges faced by an institute of education within a university have thus been met by working with scholars of high quality among students, staff and adjunct persons, by conducting seminars and conferences, by maintaining a strong publications program, by providing opportunities for informal debate and discussion, by focusing efforts on research training programs, but supporting the enhancement of the quality of written work, and by maintaining a strong international orientation in all possible activities.

*John P. Keeves*

## SHANNON RESEARCH PRESS

### **Publish or Perish**

Publishing is potentially a high profit and high margin business when only the marketability and bottom line of a product are considered. As a result, less marketable products that only attract a select readership, are generally turned down by the larger publishing houses on the basis of the so-called 'bottom line', even though the work often is of high quality. Books resulting from research, such as PhD theses, fall into this category and typically get declined for publication. Editors of the larger publishing houses know that this work, despite its scholarship, has limited appeal. The question is raised, is it any less worthy of publication because it is not as profitable?

In addition, the challenge of getting research published in the form of journal articles is also becoming increasingly difficult and costly. Many journals not only require an exorbitant subscription fee to access articles but also charge authors a review fee, regardless of whether the article is published or not. This challenge is further compounded by the growing competition between authors to have their work published in a finite resource, in which there are only a small number of appropriate reputable journals with only a limited number of spaces.

Driving this publishing frenzy in the academic community, certainly in Australia, but similarly in other parts of the world, is the bottom line. In Australia, university departments are increasingly dependent upon the publication output of their staff to maintain government funding support. The more a university publishes, the greater the allocation of government research funding that it receives. So the old adage 'publish or perish', which used to be a phrase referring to the future career of an academic, now refers to the future of a whole department, faculty, or even university.

### **The Conundrum**

Clearly, in an increasingly financially hostile environment, where every research dollar counts, there is enormous pressure from above for researchers to have their work published. Yet the researcher is also faced with resistance from below in trying to get their work published. Often they receive knock-back after knock-back, either from publishing houses that reject the work on poor marketability, or from journals, because there just are not enough spaces and the standards are raised so high that unless you have 'Professor' in front of your name, you don't stand a chance. From this conundrum, a gap in the market place and a clear need to fill it, is apparent. The model upon which Shannon Research Press (SRP) is based and from which the production of

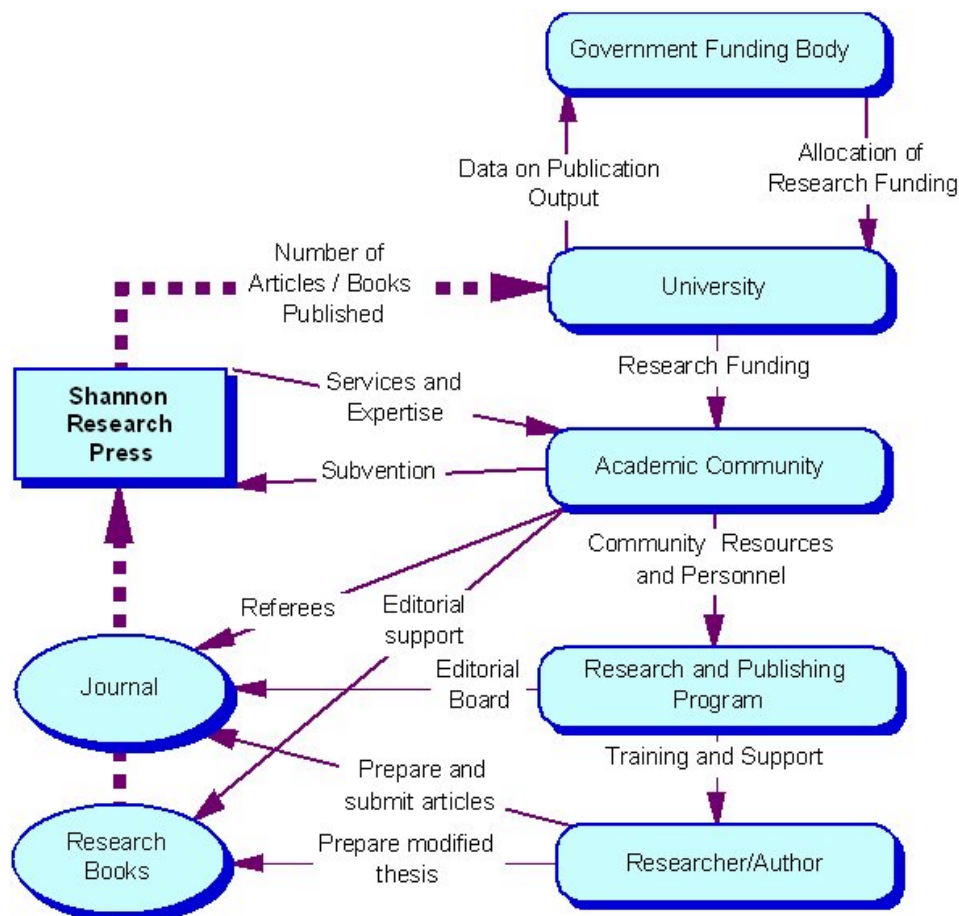
works such as the *International Education Journal (IEJ)* and the *FUIIE Research Monographs* have evolved, is the result.

### Modus Operandi

SRP operates as a non-profit business dedicated to providing the best in affordable, small volume, quality publishing, with a mission to promoting a wide variety of research issues at minimal or no cost to either the reader or the author. Although this mission would seem to run contrary to most business practices, the success of SRP over the last five years suggests that this mode of operation is both viable and sustainable, and possibly even essential to the longer-term success of an academic community.

At the core of SRP's success is its relationship with its academic community. This is probably its greatest strength and the main feature that sets it apart from other publishing houses, where the relationship is usually between author and publisher. In essence, SRP works independently but alongside an academic community, such as FUIIE, to provide an organisational framework that supports and promotes the publication of research. Underpinning this approach and addressing the needs of researchers, is that it is the academic community and not the market place nor the bottom line that determines what gets published.

In order to understand the interconnectedness between all entities concerned, Figure 1 provides a summarising diagram of the *modus operandi*. It should be noted that non-specific terms, such as 'academic community' and 'journal' are adopted here because such a model of practice is potentially reproducible in any university school or department to form a cooperative relationship with a publishing house such as SRP.



**Figure 1. Model under which SRP operates alongside an academic community**

So what does this cooperative relationship entail? Within the university system in Australia, researchers belong to a research program, developed by an academic community such as a school or department, which belongs to a faculty that receives and distributes government funding. In order to stimulate scholarly work, an academic community, designs a research and publishing program that results in the need for a journal, such as the *IEJ*. Through the program, researchers receive training, support, and resources to prepare articles suitable for any appropriate journal. In conjunction with SRP an editorial board is formed by a body, such as FUIIE. The duties of the board become an integrated part of the normal workload and functioning of the community supporting the journal. Blind review of papers submitted by colleagues or external authors are undertaken by members of the editorial board and the community involved, as well as other local and international experts in the field. In order to keep costs to a minimum, while reaching a maximum audience, the journal is published electronically on the internet, with at least 12 hardbound copies made available to libraries for indexing and archival purposes.

Similarly, a research and publishing program may also seek to publish PhD theses (see Figure 1). Again, in conjunction with SRP and supported by senior academics or their supervisors, who are members of the supporting community, authors are encouraged to re-write their theses in order to make them more accessible to a broader audience. Authors also undertake the substantial task of re-formatting and copy-editing of their work prior to a final evaluation from SRP.

So what aspects of this model of practice sets SRP apart? The combination of features that appear to be unique to SRP in comparison to other publishing houses include the following policies and practices.

- SRP is a commercial organisation that puts the quality of scholarship ahead of marketability.
- Journals are open-access, peer-reviewed, and full text, underpinned by a sufficiently broad range of interests to embrace, in the first instance, the scholarly work of the local community, but also to target a clearly defined research niche in the global community. The *IEJ* is a good example of this.
- SRP produces and markets books, like the *FUIIE Research Monographs*, through direct marketing online. The direct marketing of SRP books is implemented through its web site. The production of hardcopy books is supported by FUIIE and marketed through established academic distribution channels. These books are sold at twice their production cost in order to break-even on those copies that are sent as a requirement to national and state libraries for archival purposes, and to other libraries for the purposes of indexing.
- Journals and books published by SRP satisfy DEST (Australian Department of Education, Science and Training) refereeing requirements for HERDC (Higher Education Research Data Collection). Currently, articles and books published by authors from Australian Universities are counted towards the allocation of research funding.
- Overheads are kept to a minimum by SRP substantially operating out of the supporting academic community. Any fee incurred by the community to SRP is for expertise and services, not shop-fronts and overheads. In addition, by allowing authors greater involvement in all stages of the publishing process, costs are further minimised.
- The flexibility of these arrangements and the availability of high-speed online communication means that similar models are viable in any field of academic research and open to the majority of schools and departments in Australian universities.

## The Benefits

There is a well-known adage that ‘you have to spend money to make money’. Although much of the effort that goes into running a journal or producing research monographs is absorbed into the normal day-to-day functions of a school or department, in the form of voluntary community service, there are still some costs that require funds. The costs of outsourced services, expertise, and hard-copy production of journals and books are born by the supporting academic community. However, if FUIIE’s success is any indication, these costs are minor in comparison to the government research funding that is generated by the increased output of publications by university staff and post-graduate students due to the new focus on publishing activities within the academic community.

Of greater benefit, however, are the intrinsic gains to research, scholarship, and community that are non-financial in nature. The value that a journal brings to the academic community worldwide as a vehicle to publish leading edge research, free of charge and to a global audience, goes without saying. However, the value to be gained closer to home, within the immediate academic community, may not be as apparent. What follows is by no means an exhaustive list of benefits but serves to highlight the unique and important contribution a journal brings to a school or department.

- development of a research community;
- provides opportunities and experiences for early career researchers;
- increased publication output;
- opportunity to gain referee experience;
- raises awareness of latest research and issues;
- prestige and status in the research community;
- supports staff and students to publish without the delays of other mainstream journals;
- opportunity to learn new skills by getting involved in the publishing process;
- government funding (DEST points) gained resulting in increased research funding;
- opportunity to gain editorial experience; and
- strengthens relationships with other institutions (publication of special themed issues).

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

In order to understand the effectiveness of a strategic alliance between SRP and an academic community, a summary of FUIIE’s publishing milestones over the last eight years of operation serves as a case in point. The milestones examine the achievements of the *IEJ* and the *FUIIE Research Monographs and Series*, and go to form an indication of a measure of success.

### The *IEJ*

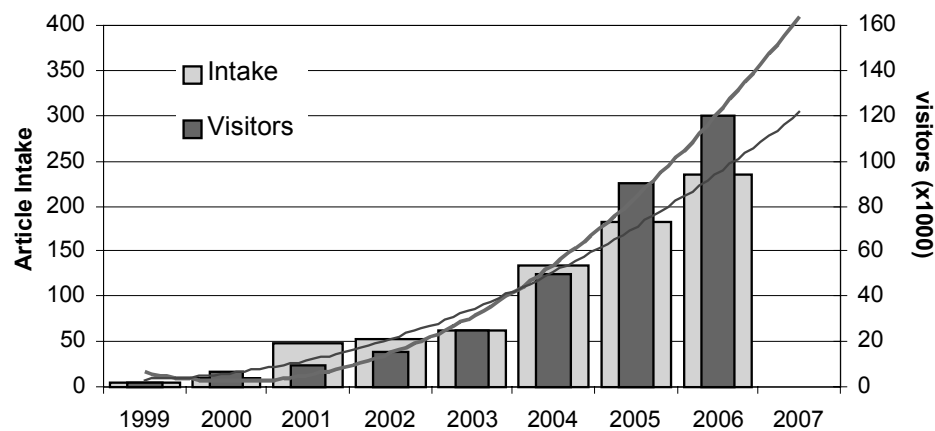
The success of a journal can be measured on many fronts and in the commercial world it is usually the profit margin. Being an online free-access, non-profit, university sponsored journal, the *IEJ* turns to other measures of success. These indicators include the level of *IEJ*’s web presence, the number of visitors, frequency of article intake, and the number of articles published.

Whether it is a shop front, the phone book or on the web, location has always been an important ingredient in success. When it comes to searching the web using Google.com, the most popular search engine available, *IEJ* has prominence. Type in ‘*IEJ*’ and the journal lands at the top of the list of about 130,000 sites, or use the words ‘international education journal’ in any order and out of over 12 million (yes, million) results, the journal still comes first.

More importantly, through the promotional efforts of SRP, *IEJ* is prominent in notable indexing services and directories of open-access journals that make refereed work freely available on a

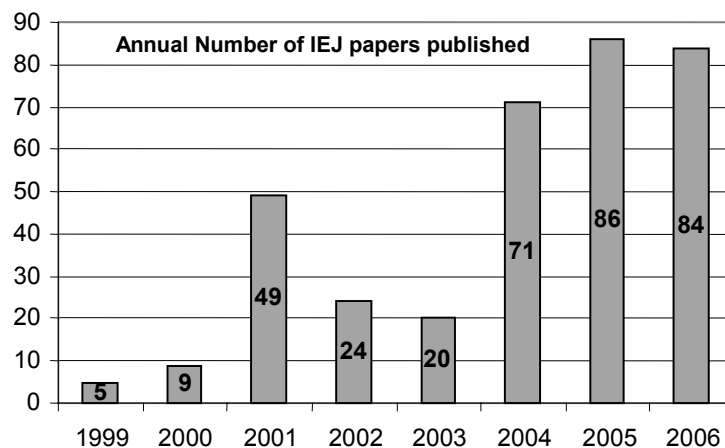
global scale. These include, the *Australian Education Index* (AEI), Australian Public Intellectual Network (API), National Library of Australia (Australian Journals On Line, AJOL), Australian Council of Education Research (ACER), *VOCED* (produced by NCVER for UNESCO), Yahoo Education Directory, New Zealand's LeadSpace, ELDIS, American Educational Research Association (AERA-SIG), *NewJourn*, and the *Directory of Open Access Journals* (DOAJ), in addition to numerous university libraries and government institutions. *IEJ* has even been reviewed in *TOJDE* the *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education* and receives many submissions from Turkish authors.

This level of exposure obviously takes time and the growth is reflected in two ways: first, by the number of visitors to *IEJ* each year, and second, by the annual intake of articles submitted. Figure 2 presents the two measures of growth. The logic of presenting these measures together follows that as the number of visitors increases each year, the number of articles submitted also increases. In 2006, *IEJ* received its 100,000 visitor and processed its 600th article. Figure 2 also presents trend lines, which suggest that in 2007 the intake of articles may top 300 submissions and the website will have been viewed by well over 150,000 people.



**Figure 2. Number of visitors to *IEJ* each year and the annual intake of articles submitted**

Another indication of success, and presented in Figure 3, is the growth in the number of papers *IEJ* publishes each year. Although the editors have had to put a cap on the number of published papers, due to the sheer workload involved, 2006 is one of the busiest years yet, with the publication of over 80 papers from around the world in seven issues. The increasing public profile of the *IEJ* has led to the increased intake of articles resulting in an average acceptance rate of 35 per cent during 2006. However, if special editions of *IEJ* are excluded, then the actual acceptance rate of articles published in the four regular journal issues is closer to 20 per cent.



**Figure 3. Number of *IEJ* papers published each year**

### **FUIIE Research Monographs and Series**

The *FUIIE Research Monographs*, resulting from reworked PhD theses, is another mainstay in FUIIE's publishing success. To date, 16 monographs have been published and another 11 books are in final production stage. Sales have been so strong that many of the books have been sold-out and reprints are in demand with back-orders to fill.

In even greater demand is the first of the books in the *FUIIE Research Training Series*. These small, highly practical booklets are proving to be very popular, selling into the hundreds.

### **LOOKING BACK AND TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

The intention of this editorial is to present a model of practice that appears to be unique in the global research community. The success and effectiveness of a close-knit academic community, such as FUIIE, in partnership with an entity like SRP has shown to be, over the last eight years, a potent combination. The service and intrinsic value that such an undertaking provides not only to the immediate academic community and university, but also to the broader research community, are numerous. On these measures, this model of practice is a resounding success.

However, although the motivations to undertake a research and publishing program on this scale are not born out of financial interests, for sustainability, it must at least break even. And on this measure too, with modest financial outlay yielding research funding many times in return, the venture has also been a resounding success. The revenue generated is then fed back into the system from the university to provide funds and resources for further research and scholarship, ensuring a viable and productive academic community. All it requires is foresight and willing participation.

*Katherine L. Dix*