

## **A new era for the Australasian Journal of Construction Economics and Building**

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The *Australasian Journal of Construction Economics and Building (AJCEB)* is now into its tenth year of publication and this tenth year sees a complete restructuring of the way the journal is produced and shared. While it may be unknown to many AIQS members, the AIQS in partnership, initially, with the Australian Institute of Building (AIB) and more recently with a number of other professional bodies, has been responsible for producing the *AJCEB* since its inception in 2000.

Prior to the establishment of the *AJCEB* the AIQS and the AIB had attempted to produce individual refereed academic journals, separate from their member journals (*The Building Economist* and *Construct*). Neither journal attracted much attention and while a number of issues of each were produced, in 2000 the two institutes decided to join forces and co-produce a single journal. The first issue appeared in 2001 and since then two issues have been published each year with the costs of printing and postage being met equally by the two bodies and the rest of the work (calling for papers, organising reviews, editing and formatting) being done by the universities on a rotation basis. The University of Western Sydney produced the first two issues in 2001 and subsequently the production moved through another seven Australian universities.

During that period the number of sponsors increased with two New Zealand institutes, the NZIQS and NZIOB, both contributing and with the Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers also making a small annual contribution. Most recently (in 2010) the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors has joined the list of sponsors. With the addition of the international institutes the word *Australian* in the name changed to *Australasian*.

The production of the journal is overseen by a management committee comprising representatives from each of the sponsoring bodies; the CEOs of five of the various sponsoring bodies are the core of the committee supported by several academics and industry people. The journal is also supported by an international panel (the Editorial Board) of eminent construction academics.

### **What is a refereed journal and why do we need one?**

Refereed journals are a primary mechanism for the dissemination and archiving of research work across a wide range of disciplines. Researchers document the research work that they do in research papers and before these are published in journals they are reviewed by a number of people who can be considered to be experts or least to be well-informed in the area of research relevant to each paper. The number of reviewers varies but it is seldom, if ever, less than two. The reviewers or referees make recommendations to journal editors about the suitability of the papers for publication and recommend revisions and amendments where necessary. Once a paper has been accepted for publication, perhaps following a period of review and revision, it is published and is then available for all interested people, including other researchers in

the field, to refer to. In this way our knowledge base is steadily expanded with future work building on earlier work.

Publication in such journals is of great importance to academics as in most cases it is required that academics, in addition to carrying out their teaching and administrative duties, are active in research. The measure of research activity is typically based on an individual's publication record, and refereed journal papers are one of the most significant components of such records. Performance measures and promotion opportunities are directly influenced by measurable research output. Journals are ranked according to their reputation in a given field and authors naturally target higher ranked journals. Papers or articles published in professional journals such as *The Building Economist* generally do not count for much in an academic's record as the articles are not subject to peer review.

Before the two Institutes launched their own journals in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were few, if any, locally produced refereed journals relevant to construction and so authors routinely targeted journals produced elsewhere, mostly in the UK and USA. Having a strong local journal is desirable as it reduces our dependence on the overseas journals and helps to remove the perception that Australia is some sort of backwater. In fact Australian construction researchers feature strongly in the consolidated indices of journals such as the UK-based journal *Construction Management and Economics*, which is one of the most respected journals in the construction area, but why should Australian authors find it necessary to depend on overseas academics and publishers to have their work recorded?

The *AJCEB* has so far published more than 100 papers, the bulk of them written by researchers from our region. It has achieved a B ranking in the first ranking exercise carried out under the new Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) framework and the aim of the management committee and the editor is to improve that ranking by at least one step in the next ERA round which will take place in a few years' time.

### **The new structure**

In 2010 the way in which the journal is produced and published has changed significantly. Volume 10, Issue 1/2 has recently appeared and it is the first issue to appear only as an electronic online publication. From this issue onwards there will be no hardcopy print version of the journal and with that comes a new era of free and open access to the journal. In addition this first issue is the first produced by our new permanent editor, Dr Göran Runeson; the existing system of rotating the editorial function around the universities was deemed unsustainable as the number of papers being submitted to the journal made the voluntary work required of editors too onerous and Dr Runeson will remain as editor-in-chief for the foreseeable future. He has a long and distinguished record as an academic with many papers and several books to his name. His enthusiasm and experience will ensure that the quality of the journal is enhanced and maintained at a level that will give it the best chance of improving its ranking in the ERA list. Sponsors' contributions which have previously barely covered the costs of printing and postage, will now be used to pay for professional formatting of papers as well as covering a small annual stipend for the editor.

Institute members will naturally have free access to all papers published in the journal and so will anyone else who cares to make use of it. It is expected that this will greatly increase the frequency of *AJCEB* papers being cited in the research papers of others, and increased citations means increased status for the journal and a much wider audience for the work of the authors who publish their work in it. This is clearly a win-win for all concerned. The journal can be accessed via links on the homepages of the various sponsoring institutes or directly at:

<http://utsescholarship.lib.uts.edu.au/epress/journals/index.php/AJCEB/index>

Institute members are asked to register as “Readers” – this is free but it is important as each registered reader will subsequently receive an e-mail whenever new papers are published and the larger the number of registered readers the better the journal looks. Over the next few months it is expected that all papers previously published in the first nine volumes (2001-2009) will be archived in electronic form on the website and thus will be freely available.

The journal is a very real symbol of fruitful co-operation between the professional bodies and academia. For a very modest outlay the institutes are not only actively supporting the academics by providing a local journal with international standing that gives them a place to publish their work but also making the work freely available to their members and to the worldwide academic community. This can only be a good thing and members are asked to support it by visiting the website, registering and then engaging with the journal by commenting on the papers. Soon to be added is a section called “Viewpoint” in which prominent construction people from both industry and academia will give their views on a variety of, perhaps controversial, topics of interest. Readers will be able to respond directly to these pieces and hopefully some lively online debate will follow. The editor and the management committee look forward to the support of the Institutes and their members in the years ahead.