

Brisbane 2010 Strategic Technology Summit

Create an action plan to advance a better understanding of the place for ICTs in Australian higher education and society at large; and a clearer sense of the urgency with which national, state-level, and sector-focused initiatives should be moving forward.

This was the goal of the thirty-five influential leaders from across the nation, all very involved in the debates around broadband and other strategic technology choices facing Australia who met in Brisbane on September 26-27, 2010, at the Strategic Technology Summit sponsored by the Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (CEIT), the University of Queensland, the State Library of Queensland, and the New Media Consortium (NMC), an international agency.

The occasion for the discussions was the imminent publication of the NMC's 2010 Australia-New Zealand Edition of the *Horizon Report* – the third in the annual series. The report documents clear and practical directions for the uptake of emerging technology in Australia and New Zealand specifically, and like all of the NMC's series of sector and regionally based reports, it is distributed free of charge under a Creative Commons license. The various editions focus on tertiary education, primary and secondary education, and museums for the world as a whole; and tertiary education in Australia-New Zealand and Latin America. The reports enjoy a global readership of more than 500,000 educational leaders, faculty, teachers, and policy makers, and are used in more than 70 countries. (For more information, see <http://horizon.nmc.org>.)

For each of the last three years, the NMC's Australia-New Zealand Horizon Report has identified six emerging technologies that will be important to tertiary education within Australia and New Zealand over the next five years, the national and international trends driving their implementations and adoptions, and the challenges inherent in those efforts. This year, the report targets *e-books* and *mobile devices* as technologies ripe for educational adoption in the coming 12 months; *open content* and *augmented reality* as new approaches coming into broad use over the next two to three years; and *gesture-based computing* and *visual data analysis* as technologies that are already on campuses in some contexts, but expected to become widely applied over a four to five year time span.

With access to the full research set from the current round of analyses for Australia, the participants in the Strategic Technology Summit looked to what will be needed to ensure tertiary education is ready to take advantage of the kinds of technologies identified in the report. Over the course of the summit, they considered the impact of global and local trends, key challenges, and critical stakeholders in the conversations that will need to take place if Australia is to retain its share of leadership in the application of emerging technologies to the educational process.

A Call to Action

Summit attendees considered a wide range of organizations — policy groups, academic and discipline groups, unions and labour organizations, and government — that influence Australia's ability to innovate in the educational arena at a global level. In addition, the group looked to identify exemplar projects within Australia that could be used to showcase the tremendous potential of the developments identified in the Horizon Project work.

The ultimate task for summit participants was to develop action recommendations in three areas: national policy; innovation catalysts; and outreach. Avenues were sought for ongoing discussions around emerging technologies, and especially ways to increase understanding among both educators and the public around the applications of new technologies for learning, research, and creative inquiry. Twenty-two potential actions were framed. These were discussed and ultimately ranked by the group to distil the six highlighted in the following paragraphs of this communiqué.

National Policy

- ***We need to revise the copyright laws for the 21st Century.*** Legislation is needed to bring current laws and procedures for copyright and digital rights management into line with the world of modern media, and to recognize all of the interests of authors and creators, including ways to allow sharing and remixing of content.
- ***Fast, easy, ubiquitous, and inexpensive Internet access is vital.*** Current practices are rife with disincentives and have reached the point where an increasing number of options are simply not available to Australians because the infrastructure cannot support them. This baseline capability is not only vital for education, but to ensure the competitive position of the nation in global commerce as well.

Innovation Catalysts

- ***Australia should actively be incubating ideas related to the technologies identified each year in the Horizon Report.*** Nation-wide funds for innovation targeted to the various educational sectors would be an inexpensive but highly visible way to ensure that work is going on with key emerging technologies. Groups like the Australian Learning and Teaching Council or the Australian Flexible Learning Framework would be ideal organizations to take the lead on something like this, but the door should be also broadly open to others.
- ***Foresight Projects should be commissioned within all the educational sectors to highlight how the role of the academic is shifting.*** The key outcome of this effort would be to outline a vision for the ideal set of skills for Australian academics in 2020. This includes identifying critical “e” and ICT skills as they relate to teaching and research, but also model job descriptions that can be used to recruit and attract talented people to the profession. This effort should include everyone with a stake in maintaining world-class faculties, including academic teaching and research leaders clearly, but also professional staff and representatives of the various unions and human-resource areas.

Outreach

- ***We need to “walk the walk” among educational technologists and find ways to use technology to better understand it – especially for ongoing dialog and reflection.*** More use of ICT approaches across the board is needed to ensure that broad numbers of academics and teachers are engaged in conversations that help them to see how technology is permeating everyday life. Proposed projects like “The CORE” series of discussions in Queensland should be modelled in every state, and shared broadly via streaming, social networks, and other strategies.
- ***We should engage the public and non-technical audiences in regular, ongoing conversations about educational technology.*** This must be done in ways that help people to understand how technologies are shaping every aspect of our lives. While some may lament the pace of technological innovation, it is part of our reality, and ignoring it is not an option. We need to involve non-technical stakeholders in the educational systems in ways that will help drive informed decisions about emerging technologies and how they might be applied.

As noted at the outset, twenty-two timely, achievable action steps were identified in the process of identifying these listed here. Many were deemed to be so actionable that they found immediate sponsorship with the group. Among them were two that the NMC has already committed to, including devising a means to showcase promising or successful Australian efforts in the application of emerging technology via the Horizon Project Navigator platform, and finding ways to facilitate ongoing conversations like the one that took place in Brisbane.

One point was clear throughout the summit: the task of keeping education relevant in a rapidly changing world is complex, and the road to change long. Institutions move incrementally, by degree. Nonetheless, academic culture must not only embrace the diverse richness of collective knowledge and wisdom, but also work to both conserve and expand it. We must recognize the utility and value of new ideas, of new tools, and of the new roles being made possible via the network and social media.

Most of all, we must encourage thoughtful discussion, support for demonstrations of emerging technologies in educational practice, and the cultivation of imaginative exploration across the breadth of higher education in Australia and all of its diverse communities.