

Secretary General's Report 2001

The work of the Secretary General is mainly concerned with the task of developing the organization and effectiveness of EERA. The main areas of work are to do with the EERA Office, communications, policies and networks in addition to supporting the Council and the work of the President.

Every year the role of the S-G seems to be submerged in practical difficulties with a consequent elimination of strategic thinking. The post is increasingly impossible to manage in addition to a full time post.

Office Contract

The EERA secretary left her post in early 2001. The new post of EERA manager was advertised in February 2001 - it is envisaged that the Manager will play a key role in managing the administration of the EERA, liaising with its Council and Network Convenors, working with the EERA Secretary General and President, organising its Conferences and overseeing its communications. Eilean Mackie was appointed and took up the post in early June 2001.

The consequence of the changes this year meant that for a great part of the year [the part in which the submissions to ECER are managed] the Office was managed by temporary staff who worked as well as possible without direction to process submissions etc To complicate matters, the database software used to order this process was seriously inadequate, something which has still not been rectified because of the massive scale of the work involved. Even the Programme Guide had to be produced by hand. Improvements in the quality of the computing facilities in the Office have been completed but a major upgrading and design of Office software support must take place in autumn 2001 at the latest.

Next year will be different but the problems of the Office revealed another issue. While the Strathclyde University service level contract [support based on 10% of personnel cost] maybe efficient from EERA's point of view, the Office is disconnected from Council support and particularly direct support from the S-G. It is not clear how to resolve this.

Communications

In the last year, there were four significant elements in EERA communications - the Website, the European Education Researcher, EducationLine and the Yearbook: each of these was encouraged to report directly to the Executive Council and have their own place on its agenda. The Secretary General is the main line of communication between these services and the Council.

This year, I have spent a lot of time on each area of EERA communications again.

I would say that the website has suffered because of time spent on the other aspects.

It will need revamping for 2002 to make EERA procedures clearer for its members.

EducationLine continues to provide a good service for EERA members, with its electronic guide to the ECER programme, abstracts of the papers and access to ECER papers online. Because of the disruption in production this year, the ECER Guide still went on the EducationLine site but it was also produced as a paper copy, reversing last year's decision.

Council decided not to continue with the European Educational Researcher this year when the post of Editor came up for review, after being successfully managed by Martin Mulder over the last three years. The Council felt that the EER was not distributed widely enough, cost too much to produce and needed a rethink as to its purpose in EERA. After a series of negotiations, EERA has contracted with Triangle Press to produce a new online journal, the European Education Research Journal, four times a year. This will be a peer reviewed journal with a section on research intelligence and news from around Europe. This journal will be free to members. (More information about this Journal is available from Triangle and online at [www. Triangle.co.uk/eeerj](http://www.Triangle.co.uk/eeerj)). It will start in 2002 and it is expected to become the main European research journal in education and many thousands of subscribers within a few years.

The EERA yearbook is in second year of production and will be given out to all participants in the Conference this year. While it is recognized to be a success, it has limited circulation and significant cost to EERA. In line with the new policy of the EERJ, the Council used the opportunity of a major rethink and modernization of its publications to use the idea of the Yearbook, with the agreement of its editors, to produce a special issue of the EERJ each year based upon ECER conference papers.

The Networks have stabilized in number this year with few changes in convenor personnel. I would like to apologize for the problems with reviewing and acceptance which we had this year and I have written to a number of people who could not attend because of problems of our making. Their letters have been raised in the Council agenda.

Review

This year is my final year as Secretary General although there may be sometime before I can officially leave this post. I was the first person to fill this position and I am unsure whether I should be the last as well.

In a paper written in 1999 at the start of my work, I suggested that it was vital to clarify the purpose of EERA within a changing Europe. I proposed that this purpose should be the concept of the new 'educational research space' in Europe, that was in process of being created in a number of ways : through interpersonal contacts and professional networks, through European policy documents and programmes, through the work of new European associations, the exchange of students and academics and through discussion about the nature and limits of a European identity in educational research. I suggested that, if EERA was working to support and embody the European educational research 'space', then EERA needed to [amongst other things]

- strengthen the organization of EERA - networks, links with national associations and Brussels through Convenors and Executive Council members
- support and strengthen its academic policy [purpose, refereeing etc]
- develop the communication policies of EERA
- organize events within ECER itself to make sure that European policy on research and the development of the European 'space'

Because of the practical problems which have occurred over the last three years [such as financial survival, conference problems, growth of networks and communications], I have not been able to help this direction enough. Given the size of the task and the problems of managing it in full time work, I think that a new effort to focus upon the main tasks of the Council and the S-G, redistribute them among Council members [in expert roles or groups] may overcome the gap between purpose and execution.

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