

Editorial: Incoming greeting

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Introduction

In January 2021, the South African Institute of Computer Scientists and Information Technologists (SAICSIT) sent a message to its members that they were seeking to appoint an editor-in-chief for the *South African Computer Journal*. I applied and was appointed in July 2021 as editor-in-chief elect, giving me time to learn the ropes from Philip Machanick, who served as editor-in-chief for ten years. Under his leadership, *SACJ* grew from a small struggling journal to a robust successful operation with a growing number of submissions. At the time of writing, *SACJ* had received 111 submissions in 2022 so far, with a growing number of submissions from outside South Africa.

With this issue, I officially start my five-year term as the fourth editor since *SACJ* was formed, after Prof Derrick Kourie (1990–2008), Prof Lucas Venter (2008–2011) and Prof Philip Machanick (2012–2022). I appreciate the importance of *SACJ* to the SAICSIT community and I am committed to taking care of the whole system, from the section editors, reviewers and authors, to the production pipeline, accreditation/indices, and the overall quality of the publication itself. Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or advice – I appreciate hearing from *SACJ* readers any time.

In this issue

This issue mostly consists of papers for the special issue on *Digital education and online learning to achieve inclusivity and instructional equity* with guest editors Reuben Dlamini and Reikai Zenda. Due to the significant number of submissions, the special issue has been split into two parts with the second part planned for inclusion in an issue in 2023. The [guest editorial](#) discusses the papers included in this issue.

We also have a research paper by [Ritesh Ajoodha](#) titled “Identifying academically vulnerable learners in first-year science programmes at a South African higher-education institution”. This paper coincidentally fits rather well with the special issue’s focus on education. The author shows that the APS (admission point score) is insufficient as a predictor of learner vulnerability and argues for a more complex model for predicting student attrition to inform early intervention strategies.

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The issue ends with a Viewpoint by [Petrus Potgieter](#), *Touchy information and irregular esteem – on the problem of tortured phrases and possibly fake science*, that highlights an alarming trend being observed in academic writing. We are seeing more and more evidence of researchers relying on automated writing / paraphrasing / translation tools. An example is the QuillBot paraphrasing tool – “trusted by students worldwide” (<https://www.quillbot.com>).

Although these tools can be very effective at improving one’s own writing, they can also be used to modify the published writing of others and even generate fake research. Papers produced using this practice are being published in journals, either due to a lack of peer review, or (possibly worse still) due to low quality peer review processes. I have come across these *tortured phrases* as a reviewer, with the most recent being just last week in a paper proposing an “outfit solution” to a cyber security problem using “outfit classifiers”. It took me a while to get this one . . . the word “outfit” is a synonym for “ensemble” when used to refer to a set of clothes that work well together.

On a less serious note and in the theme of generative AI, [Figure 1](#) presents the set of images generated by DALL·E 2 (<https://openai.com/dall-e-2/>) in response to the input phrase “editor-in-chief of computer journal”. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the fourth artificial image was of a woman in a slightly less isolated environment than the other three. I will use this image of a happy, relaxed and engaged woman as inspiration for my role going forward.

Future

There are positive changes in store for *SACJ* in 2023. We have joined Khulisa Journals (<https://journals.assaf.org.za/>) and will be moving the journal to be hosted on their platform with a new URL (www.sacj.org.za). We are very grateful to UCT’s Computer Science Department for hosting *SACJ* for so many years, but are looking forward to the benefits of being part of the publishing community of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf).



Figure 1: Images generated by DALL·E 2 from the input description “editor-in-chief of computer journal”