Introduction

Welcome to the first web issue of the ReCALL Journal. At a time when many journals are starting to appear in on-line form, it seems appropriate that the ReCALL Journal should take this step. Is this not indeed the natural medium for a publication whose subject is so closely associated with it? However, it would be premature to announce the demise of the paper-based journal.

In the case of ReCALL, this is an experiment to see whether the medium has come of age, or rather the first phase of an experiment that is going to run over a long period. The format chosen for the on-line version is a close match of the paper version. The use of pdf enables the familiar look to be retained, but the feel is very different. While this version is going to be read on-line, it is significant that the format of submissions has remained largely the same as for the traditional paper-based medium. It will take us time to learn to write for this medium, to play to its strengths and avoid its pitfalls. The potential it offers for cross-referencing, for embedded multimedia and for involvement of the ‘reader’ in a dynamic and interactive role will take us a long time to realise. For extensive reading, the screen interface falls well short of the paper page. In other words, I am pleading for some patience with a new medium at an early stage in its development. My own feeling is that paper and online versions will co-exist, with each meeting different needs. The paper version is far from dead — vive the web version anyhow, and time will tell.*

The topics covered by the papers cover a broad range, with a telematic thread running through all of them. They are characterised by the innovative and fast-evolving nature of the medium that underpins the work they describe.

I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to act as Guest Editor on this issue. I must make clear the largely honorific nature of this title, as the bulk of the hard work has been carried out as ever by June Thompson. Many thanks are due to her, and also to the ReCALL referees and to my partners in the WELL consortium for their contribution to the refereeing process.

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*The next stage is likely to be that, from the year 2000, all articles in ReCALL will be published online as html files as soon as they have progressed through the refereeing and editing process. They will then be collected together and typeset in the normal way for printed publication. We hope that this approach will thus give our subscribers the best of both worlds.

June Thompson