The Use and Users of ICT 
in Australian Higher Education

Janet Price-Glick, Janet.PriceGlick@utas.edu.au
Ph.D. Student, University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania

Andrew Fluck, Andrew.Fluck@utas.edu.au
Ph.D. Primary Supervisor, University of Tasmania, Launceston, Tasmania

Abstract
This research poses two questions: Is there an information and communications technology (ICT) skill discrepancy between Australian universities and their overseas student cohort; and, if so, should measures be taken to offset this disparity. It is prima facie that Australia's aggressive integration of computers into education, over many years, has made ICT ubiquitous; that ICT have specific, definable skills that are required if one is to use them effectively; and, that Australian higher education (AHE) personnel are the primary determinants of daily ICT use. To determine what ICT are required, an online pilot survey was conducted of 453 University of Tasmania and University of Wollongong instructors, librarians and student support personnel in July, 2012. Forty-nine surveys were completed.

In order to compare the AHE skills with Chinese student skills, a model of the ICT used in Chinese primary to secondary (P-12) education is required. An historic overview of the systematic decimation of Chinese education systems between 1948 and 1980 is presented. This time period is contrasted with ICT innovation and integration in western education. It posits that it would be difficult for China to achieve the current level of ICT integration in western education. Recent literature indicates that whilst China is progressing in developing teachers, teachers training, infrastructure, connectivity and curriculum; current levels of ICT integration fall far short of the Chinese government’s stated goals and seriously lag behind its western counterparts. It can be reasonably expected that the current Chinese students entering AHE do not have ICT skills required for a rigorous university program.

If research shows that a segment of the AHE overseas student cohort lacks basic communication skills then it is our mandate as educators to identify and remediate this situation. Pilot survey data will be enhanced by a full survey of 12 additional Australian universities to be completed in May, 2013.

Keywords
Australia, Chinese students, Chinese education, Higher Education, ICT skills
Biography

Janet Price-Glick began teaching ICT in 2000. She is certified in ICT and ESL. Her 2005 M.Sc. is in Design & Digital Technology from the University of Edinburgh. Since 2006, she has lived in Suzhou, China, teaching ICT and advising both international school and native Chinese students on western university placement. From 1985-2000, she worked in desktop publishing and has a B.Sc. in Journalism.

Copyright
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/