

## Editorial

### Seeking the Benefits of Broadband

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**Abstract:** This editorial comes in three parts: some observations on national preparedness to capture the benefits of widespread broadband availability; some updates on the editorial team that produces the *Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy*; and a brief introduction to the papers in this issue.

**Keywords:** Broadband, Editorial

#### Prepared for Broadband?

Over the last decade in Australia and elsewhere, there has been much discussion about ‘league tables’ for ‘broadband’ – based on availability, subscriptions, speed tests, and so on. Australia has ‘improved’ or ‘declined’ in various measures over the years and, importantly for some, not always fared so well as New Zealand. Debate continues over the usefulness or meaning of these comparisons.

Now that the availability of broadband access is improving in Australia through the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN), discussion inevitably turns to the question of capturing the economic and social benefits of broadband. Conservative estimates suggest that capturing the principal economic benefits of the NBN could make a 3% step change in Australia’s Gross Domestic Product ([Suessspeck, 2017](#)). It turns out that there are league tables that may help to assess Australia’s relative preparedness to capture these benefits.

The Institute for Management Development (IMD), a Swiss business school, provides some relevant rankings for 63 countries. The IMD World Competitiveness ranking 2020 (based on ‘hard data’ from 2019 and survey results from early 2020) shows Australia ranked at 18th, below Canada at 8th but above the UK at 19th and New Zealand at 22nd ([IMD, 2020](#)). General competitiveness will be significant in determining how quickly the economy will adapt to greater availability of broadband access.

The IMD World *Digital* Competitiveness ranking 2019 (the latest available), which focusses on preparedness for ‘the adoption and use of digitalization’ (IMD, 2019, p. 1) has Australia at 14th, with Canada at 11th, the UK at 15th and New Zealand at 18th. The US leads the rankings, with Singapore at 2nd (IMD, 2019).

The ranking for digital competitiveness is made up of factors in three categories: Knowledge, Technology and Future Readiness. Under Knowledge, Australia ranks highly in ‘Net flow of international students’ but poorly in ‘Digital/Technological skills’, ‘Employee training’ and ‘Graduates in Sciences’. Under Technology, Australia scores well for ‘Country credit rating’ and ‘Enforcing contracts’, but poorly for ‘Communications technology’. Under Future Readiness, Australia ranks highly for ‘Tablet possession’ (a sign of ‘adaptive attitudes’) and ‘E-Government’, but poorly in ‘Agility of companies’ (IMD, 2019, p. 47). Australians may recognize their country in some of these descriptions.

While one can (and we undoubtedly will) debate the merits of such rankings, they do provide some pointers of where a country may improve its responsiveness to change as the digital economy rolls ever outward. In Australia’s case, a lack of skills and training may be creating a ‘digital divide’ between those who have a good awareness of digital services and how to use them and those who do not. This is not just an issue for Australia: in this *Journal* number, we publish some survey results from the Czech Republic (Bokšová *et al.*, 2021) that describe differences in attitudes towards Government digital services based on familiarity and usage.

## The Editorial Team

As foreshadowed in the last issue, Associate Professor Mark Gregory has stepped down from the editorship and I have had the honour to be appointed Managing Editor by the TelSoc Board. Mark Gregory established a strong operational system for the *Journal* and expanded its interests and reach. He also achieved a Q2 rating for the *Journal* from SCImago (based on Scopus data). It is on this solid foundation that we can continue to build influence and readership.

I would like particularly to acknowledge the contributions of two Section Editors who joined the *Journal* a few years ago: Dr Michael de Percy from the University of Canberra for the Telecommunications section; and Associate Professor Payam Hanafizadeh from Allameh Tabataba’i University, Iran, for the Digital Economy section. They have worked diligently behind the scenes to ensure that submissions are well reviewed, that authors are kept informed, and that papers are appropriately revised before publication. It is through their efforts that the quality of the *Journal* is maintained and enhanced. I am pleased to report that they will be continuing in their roles.

We have also moved to formalize some other section arrangements. Dr Jim Holmes has become Section Editor for Book Reviews; and Professor Peter Gerrand has taken on the Sections for Biography and History of Telecommunications. They, like all members of the editorial team, are volunteers, giving their time freely to bring you a new issue each quarter.

There will be further changes to the editorial team, especially to the Board of Editors, over the next few months that I will report on in a future issue.

## In This Issue

We publish in this issue two papers reporting surveys of attitudes to and usage of digital services: Jiřina Bokřova and colleagues on *E-Government Services and the Digital Divide: A Quantitative Analysis of the Digital Divide between the General Public and Internet Users* (p. 27); and David Kennedy on *Australian Video Viewing Survey: Household Consumption across Formats* (p. 73).

We also explore the design and acceptance of digital services through a paper by Javier A. Sanchez-Torres and colleagues on *Adoption of Tourist Mobile Applications: Motivating Factors for their Use, an Exploratory Study in Spanish Millennials* (p. 1).

In our regular features, we bring you a book review by Jim Holmes on *Subprime Attention Crisis: Advertising and the Time Bomb at the Heart of the Internet* (p. 19); and Simon Moorhead introduces two historical reprints in *Seas No Longer Divide* (p. 50), detailing the long saga on improving the telecommunications connections between the Australian mainland and Tasmania.

As always, we encourage you to consider submitting articles to the *Journal* and we welcome comments and suggestions on which topics or special issues would be of interest.

## References

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