

John Costa's 35 Years of Contributions to this Telecommunications Journal

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Former Editor-in-Chief of this Journal

Abstract: John Costa has retired from this Journal's Board of Editors, after 35 years of active contribution. From 1990 to 1992, he was Executive Editor (and Editor-in-Chief), producing eight issues of the *Telecommunication Journal of Australia* (TJA), the name of this Journal up until 2013. Just as significant were the many subsequent issues of the Journal for which he was Guest Editor, from 1994 onwards. TJA evolved first into the *Australian Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy* (AJTDE: 2013–2018) and subsequently the more deliberately international *Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy* (JTDE: 2019–). As an ongoing and popular member of the Editorial Advisory Board, John was noted for his skill in commissioning new papers from distinguished overseas authors, as well as the impetus he gave the Journal in its coverage of new forms of satellite and terrestrial radio communications.

Keywords: Australian telecommunications, Telecommunication Journal of Australia, Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy.

Pre-Journal Career

After graduating as a communications engineer from RMIT in the 1960s, John worked on a



Figure 1. John Costa

variety of radio-based voice and video transmission systems, as well as video broadcasting, in the PMG Department and its successor, Telecom Australia. By 1983, he was promoted to Manager of Engineer Development across the whole national organisation, to boost the skill sets that the large engineering workforce would need in introducing a burgeoning set of new technologies, particularly as the organization geared

itself up during the 1980s to handle industry competition.

In this role he used his TV production skills to produce a series of 24 live broadcast two-hour National Video Seminars, delivered over Telecom Australia's national broadband transmission networks to conference rooms in all capital cities. He chaired all these national seminars. The topics ranged from the impact of broadband and mobile communications to the "People-less Paper-less Wireless Office of the future" (1989).

The Many Journal Years

During this period, he also made time to assist TJA's Editor-in-Chief, Fred Cox, with production of the Journal. John ensured that several of the presentations prepared for the National Video Seminars were transformed into TJA articles, to reach a wider audience and be available in reference libraries for future use. When Fred retired in 1989, John took over Fred's dual roles as Editor-in-Chief and Executive Editor. This was the tail-end of a long era, starting in 1935, when the production of the Journal had the full support of the PMG and then Telecom senior management, as an essential in-house technology transfer and educational mechanism.



Figure 2. The cover of TJA, 42(3), 1992, 'Benchmarking', designed by Kerry Stokes.

Although John was impressed with TJA's content, he was not impressed with its visual presentation, which regularly included, for example, black & white cover photographs of technical equipment in racks. He paid a Telecom draftsman, Kerry Stokes,ⁱ a talented artist, to design colourful graphics covers instead, and sometimes cartoons as well, to add visual impact. This may have shocked some of the Journal's older readers but was welcomed by many others. John produced eight excellent, highly topical issues of the TJA from Volume 40, No.2 (1990) to Volume 43, Number 3 (1992), inclusive (Table 1).

While persuading Dick Danckert to take over the combined Editorial role in year 1993, John remained on the Editorial Board in order to provide valued advice. He then stayed on the Editorial Board during the long reigns of three other Editors-in-Chief: Professor Peter Gerrand (1994 to 2015); Dr Mark Gregory (2015 to 2020); and Dr Leith Campbell (2021 to 2024). Blair Feenaghty was Executive Editor of the Journal from 1994 to 2015. During this period, the journal changed its name twice, from the *Telecommunication Journal of Australia* to the *Australian Journal of*

Telecommunications and the Digital Economy in 2013, and subsequently to the current *Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy* in 2019.

Table 1. Issues of TJA produced by John Costa as Executive Editor

Issue, Year	Title	
40(2), 1990	Broadband ISDN	Foreword by Dr Ray Freeman
40(3), 1990	Intelligent Buildings	Foreword by Martin Cheeseman
41(1), 1991	Australia as a Player in the Global Telecommunication Industry	
41(2), 1991	Trends in Integrated Management of Services and Networks	Guest co-editors: Dr John Ellershaw, Allan Beale Foreword by Peter Gerrand
41(3), 1991	Telecommunications for Education	Foreword by the Hon. John Dawkins, Minister for Education Guest Editor: Dr F. Geoffrey Jones
42(1), 1992	Intelligent Networking	
42(2), 1992	Access	Foreword by Bill Dair
42(3), 1992	Benchmarking	
TJA special supplement, 1992	Consolidated Index TJA Vols 31–40 (1981–1990)	

Table 2. Issues of TJA produced by John Costa as Guest Editor or Special Theme Editor

Issue, Year	Title
44(3), 1994	Post '97 Communications – the Australian Way
48(3), 1998	New Uses of Radio Spectrum for the next Millennium, Part 1
48(4), 1998	New Uses of Radio Spectrum for the next Millennium, Part 2
54(4), 2004	The New Silk Road for ICT Trade
56(1), 2006	Direct Digital Broadcasting. Markets, technology and regulation on the move

Amongst the value John provided as a Board member to his successors as Editor-in-Chief was his conscientious and detailed reviews of current issues, as input into the Editorial Advisory Board (EAB) discussions. He volunteered to put together several Special Issues of the Journal (Table 2). He showed considerable chutzpah in writing to invite leading overseas eminences, such as Vint Cerf, to contribute valuable articles to the Journal, with successful outcomes. And, to pick out another example, without his active membership of the EAB, the number of contributions the Journal published on new satellite communications technologies and services would have been miniscule.

John's contributions as author or co-author of individual papers are listed in the References.

Concluding Remarks

Apart from his major contributions as an Executive or Guest Editor of the Journal, as listed above, John Costa has contributed a significant number of individual papers to the Journal as author or co-author since the 1980s. His contributions to discussions within the Editorial

Advisory Board, especially in canvassing topics and authors for future issues, have been remarkably productive, and the more effective for being always conveyed in a warm and collegiate manner.

In the early 2000s, John was made a Life Member of the Telecommunications Society of Australia in acknowledgement for his services to the Society. The reader will note that he did not rest on his laurels.

The Editorial Board is most grateful to John for his outstanding contributions over more than 35 years.

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Endnote

ⁱ No relation to the West Australian media tycoon of the same name.