The 40th Annual Symposium of the Australian Academy of the Humanities

The Humanities in Australia: Taking Stock

National Library of Australia, Canberra
19-20 November 2009

Panel Session 5.

How have we changed the way we communicate the results of research to our audiences?

Chair: **Kate Burridge**, Monash University

Respondent: **John Poynter**, University of Melbourne

Panellists: **Iain McCalman**, University of Sydney

Elspeth Probyn, University of South Australia

Howard Morphy, Australian National University

Frances Morphy, Australian National University

Lawrence Zion, La Trobe University

Iain McCalman
University of Sydney

Uncharted Waters? Reflections on new formats for picturing evolution.

Some years ago I delivered a paper at a previous Academy Symposium in which I outlined some of the sorrows of publishing my first trade book history, *The Seven Ordeals of Count Cagliostro* (or *The Last Alchemist* in the USA and Europe). I complained that my utopian hopes of reaching wider audiences had been shaken by the unanticipated exigencies of working with a mass press. First, my US editor never managed to understand that, because it was a history rather than a novel, the story couldn't be altered at whim; secondly, the marketing and public relations sections of the company over-ruled any sensible editorial suggestion for the book's title, cover, blurbs and sales outlets; thirdly, the book's reasonable success in Europe and Australia (fifteen editions in twelve languages) was seen as no compensation for its failure to become an airport seller in the United States.

Under the circumstances it might seem a triumph of hope over experience that I should decide this year to publish another such history, especially one that, in Australia, carries the grandiloquent title of *Darwin's Armada. How four voyagers to Australasia won the battle for evolution and changed the world*. Still, subtitle notwithstanding, this book has experienced a far happier passage from genesis to production than its predecessor, not least because it has been able to realise several interesting spin-offs into other non-print formats.

That this second foray into communicating my history through different formats has so far proved a more satisfying process than the first is due largely to a change of approach in how I've gone about trying to disseminate the book's contents. I must admit at once that this shift in direction had little to do with any improved understanding on my part of how to negotiate or communicate new research modes. Rather it arose from a combination of good luck and good advice from my agent. I'd long been toying with the idea of writing a book about how the experience of voyaging in the southern oceans influenced the scientific ideas and characters of Charles Darwin and his three most important disciples, Joseph Hooker, Thomas Huxley and Alfred Wallace. After my earlier travails my agent advised me, first, to concentrate on finding a simpatico new editor rather than on targeting a particular press; secondly, to aim to contract the book within the Australian market, before branching out looking for publishers in Britain, Europe and the United States – an exact reversal of my approach with the Cagliostro book.

Penguin Australia provided me with a brilliant editor, as well as a splendid publishing team, though I have to say that the choice was made difficult by the fact that Australia boasts some exceptionally talented publishers who work in both scholarly and trade-book formats. My good luck, which I initially saw as

exactly the opposite, proved to be the discovery that 2009 would be the occasion of a double Darwin commemoration – the bicentenary of his birth in 1809 and the sesquicentenary of the publication of the *Origin of Species* in 1859. Needless to say this revelation concentrated my mind painfully. Soon after beginning to write in late 2007 I found myself confronted with two almost equally unpalatable alternatives: to publish or not to publish. Because the year 2009 was certain to generate a world-wide flood of books, films, exhibitions and TV series about Darwin, I was caught between the likelihood of being eclipsed by rival productions or missing the boat by failing to produce my research at a significant moment of global interest in Darwin's ideas. Moreover, the brief amount of time remaining before the Darwin deluge also meant that there was no hope of translating my research into other non-print formats <u>after</u> the book was finished, as I had tried to do with *Cagliostro*. It would simply be too late. If I wanted my research to reach any non-print formats, these would have to be negotiated before or while I was writing the book.

I can see now that the apparent setback of the looming bicentenary deadline turned out to be fortunate because it forced me to explore the themes of *Darwin's Armada* with a number of potential producers at a time when my ideas were still sufficiently inchoate to be adaptable to the demands of diverse media forms. As a result the book's themes have this year found their way into several other communicative modes: two museum exhibitions, the Macleay Museum's *Accidental Encounters* and the National Maritime Museum's *Charles Darwin. Voyages and Ideas that Shook the World*; a scholarly catalogue, *In the Wake of the Beagle. Science in the Southern Oceans from the age of Darwin* (UNSW, 2009); a Screen Australia educational website, *Charles Darwin. The Australian Connection*; and a Screenworld and Ferns Productions television series, *Darwin's Brave New World*.

In this short paper I'll confine myself to discussing the TV series because it proved to be both the most challenging and satisfying of the non-print outlets. Whether *Darwin's Brave New World* actually succeeds as documentary history is another matter. The last of the three episodes will screen on the ABC at 7.30 pm on 22 November, soon after our symposium. Any interested Academy viewers will be able to judge for themselves.

I originally pitched the idea of a Darwin series focused on the southern hemisphere to the then head of Film Australia (now Screen Australia) almost accidentally late in 2007, at a time when I'd not yet finished writing the opening chapter of my book. She was intrigued enough to ask me for a short outline, which was then used as the basis for attracting overseas partners to fund a production consortium. Partners were found in Australia, Canada and Germany, and the series was contracted in principle. Even at this point, however, I experienced a tricky moment when it appeared that detailed script work might commence without acknowledging my intellectual property – another salutary moment of naiveté on my part. I was shocked to discover that humanists – indeed university scholars of all kinds – lay themselves open to exploitation if they reveal their ideas to commercial companies without first ensuring some form of legal protection. Fortunately, my agent brought a stringent sense to bear

and I was able to negotiate sale of the rights and a substantial role in the shaping of the series.

The latter process became intellectually exciting as soon as the consortium outsourced the production of the series to Becker Films (now Screenworld) in Sydney, under the charge of a brilliant producer, Mike Bluett. His broad idea was to divide the narrative into three, hour-long, segments: the first would concentrate on Darwin's *Beagle* voyage; the second would follow the Australasian voyages of Hooker, Huxley and Wallace; and the last would cover the collaboration of these three naturalists with Darwin in a fierce British campaign to publish and fight for the *Origin of Species*. Interviews with expert commentators would be interspersed with sequences of docudrama that enacted key scenes of the story. The third episode would also employ a battery of scholars to evaluate Darwin's intellectual legacy for science and society today.

From the outset the producer showed himself willing both to immerse himself in independent reading and to respect the constraints and possibilities of my research. One of those constraints was, of course, time. I was simultaneously struggling to write a book of some 120,000 words in under nine months. We developed an arrangement whereby I would deliver up each chapter in rough draft and we then immediately met to try to adapt it to the medium of TV drama. I have never before tried to shape research as part of a multifaceted team, and I was surprised at how exhilarating I found the process to be. Sometimes I met independently with the scriptwriter, film researcher or director, but more often the producer and I thrashed out ideas, episodes, events and characters at a regular series of free-and-easies held in an Erskineville wine bar. These sessions – with tape-recorders, pens, drafts and glasses scattered on the bar table – were loud, lively and consensual.

It would be difficult to list the precise ways that this collaboration influenced my overall perceptions of the story of Darwin and his three disciples, but I know that the debt was considerable. Most obviously, it opened up my awareness of the actual problematics involved in working within a visual medium – both then and now. I came to see, for example, that Darwin experienced serious difficulties when he tried to translate his evolutionary ideas into visual form using the conventions of scientific illustration prevalent in his day.

For a start all established scientific illustrators assumed that species were static, eternal and divinely created. Furthermore, social conservatives like the great bird illustrator, John Gould, disliked the way Darwin's ideas challenged ruling Victorian social norms. Gould was particularly unsettled by Darwin's secondary evolutionary mechanism of sexual selection. The idea that male birds had evolved new physical adornments, accomplishments and behaviours in an effort to woo potential female partners was especially abhorrent to him. He took care to ensure that a large proportion of his bird illustrations featured bucolic domestic scenes, with father bird working as breadwinner and mother bird nurturing a happy brood of chicks in her nest. Gould also avoided showing any hint in his illustrations of the brutal struggles for survival between and among bird species that Darwin was claiming.

Darwin responded to these obstacles by improvising some idiosyncratic techniques of his own for demonstrating processes of morphological change from ancestral species over time and for suggesting analogies between animal and human structures and behaviours. He did this initially by devising a series of thought diagrams, such as his branching tree of life – the only illustration contained in the first edition of his *Origin of Species*. Later he borrowed his friend Huxley's idea of using an almost cartoon-like sequence of drawings that showed stages of anatomical evolution from the first stooped shuffle of ancestral hominoid to the upright strut of a contemporary Victorian. Darwin was also quick to see and adapt the potentialities of photography. When illustrating his *Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals* (1872), for example, he eschewed using examples drawn from the elite photographic portraiture of his day in favour of commissioning photographs of low-life melodrama actors, whom he directed to simulate extreme and stylised emotional expressions.

In retrospect, we can see, however, that what Darwin really needed in order to make the case for evolution visually was a form of technology that had not yet been invented. Moving pictures and modern digital CGI effects, with their capacity to portray minute calibrations of change taking place over time, are the logical illustrative agent for depicting evolutionary theory. We can only imagine how eagerly Darwin would have exploited these dynamic attributes had they been available to him.

For me, then, one of the chief satisfactions of making *Darwin's Brave New World* was the thought that we were using a visual medium that had evolved to the point where it was perfectly adapted for picturing evolution.

Elspeth Probyn
University of South Australia

Only connect?

Taking this panel by its title, I want to think through my own experiences of communicating to audiences over the last couple of decades. I do this for two reasons: because of where I have taught and what I research. This has been an underlying question that may have been more highlighted for me than for those in more traditional disciplines and/or more central academic-geographically based centres.

There is then geographic location – I started my full-time academic career in a French language sociology department in Montreal at a time when the discipline was in a bit of an identity crisis. Sociologists at the Université de Montréal had been instrumental in furthering what was called 'le visage français de Montréal', which is to say they had contributed ideas for policy to the nationalist government during what many regard as the heyday of Québecois politics. The Parti Québecois was one of the most intellectual and progressive political parties ever seen in North America and sociologists at the leading Francophone university were welcomed into the halls of political power. However, after the end of René Lévesque's reign as premier in 1985, much of the heady intellectual passion of the time dwindled. By the late 1980s when I was hired, many of my colleagues seemed to have lost their drive or at least their favoured position in political machinations. This was hard enough for many of them but it was about this time that the language of scholarly publishing slowly began to change to English. What is known in French academic circles as the pasteurisation of intellectual writing (so named because the Institut Louis Pasteur moved to English-language publication) was a blow to many of my colleagues. In addition the move to internationalisation meant that many Québecois academics had to find a way of interesting the outside world in the specific problems of French-Canadian society.

This was for me an early experience in matters that are now widespread. How can local, engaged research in small, marginal places and cultures be communicated in ways that will attract the interest of 'international' audiences? For international we know we can read American or perhaps British at a pinch. This was not an easy task – it was hard enough trying to interest our English-speaking Canadian colleagues in the intricacies of cultural life in say Chicoutimi, in the north of the province, let alone anyone 'international'. It is not so different in Australia – I wonder how far research about the oyster farming communities in the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia would travel?

For many, myself included, the option was to turn to 'theory', that nebulous and putatively placeless beast. While the access to 'theory' was hardly equal opportunity, at least in Montreal we had the advantage of linguistic proximity to France, which helped given that 'theory' then was French theory. We could travel

the world on theory and even correctly pronounce the theorists' names – not always a good thing if you happened to be at an American university where they were all talking about someone called 'Dee-lose'.

Of course many of the publications in theory/on theory were quite incomprehensible to a wider audience. But as long as you stayed within a tight band of fellow theory-types you didn't get lonely. One of the reasons I moved to Australia was that I was getting a bit tired of the mainly North American conference circuit. I was also drawn here because of the acute intellectual rigour of colleagues who have been central to the Academy. That the communication and cultural studies sector was created in the Academy, at the time that it was, is a testimony to the Academy and to those Fellows across many sectors who set the course.

To return to place, geography, language, and how internationalisation is understood continue to have an impact on where we can connect with audiences. This has only been compounded by the timidity of publishers, further scared by the economic downturn into only accepting quite mainstream research from the centre.

The other particularity of my experience of trying to communicate to audiences is what I research, which ranges from sexuality, bodies, gender to media, and consumption, now combined with the production side of food consumption. Not unsurprisingly, journalists expect those of us in the areas of cultural studies and especially what might be called everyday culture to speak to a wide audience. But it is often a two-way street as colleagues and I attempt to inflect and deflect some of the assumptions that journalists bring to many issues, which is to say what comes to count as public debate. When I had a stint writing columns for the *Australian* this lead to some rather fraught confrontations with the media. It also allowed some precious moments of interacting with lecturers across Australia – now that I live in a town with a truly banal newspaper, I see why so many of my readers came from outside of Melbourne and Sydney – as well as 'the public', or at least that strange section that read the Higher Education Supplement.

Connecting with public audiences on matters of everyday practice – be it eating, gender, TV, or sex – poses some interesting challenges. If everyone does it in his or her everyday lives, how does academic research distinguish itself? Well, it's not by saying it is 'complicated', but it may be about showing how issues of everyday concern are complex. And while it is not about promoting an ideological line, it is about trying to show how things we take for granted have particular historical and cultural frameworks, which encourage certain understandings at the expense of others.

The last couple of decades have seen some shifts in how we communicate our research in cultural studies. Pressures from different institutional sources have had an impact on what and how we research. For instance, the ARC in the Howard years seemed to promote a more problem-based type of research and also tended to encourage more team-based research. Neither of these tendencies is bad per se. I tend to think that public funding should shed new understandings

of social issues, and often a more collaborative approach can bear fruit – and was at the basis of one important strand of cultural studies.

While I could mention the various technological changes affecting – for good and bad – how we communicate our research, I am much more worried about the effects that ERA is already having in terms of metrics that are re-centring research into disciplinary silos. This will be tough on younger scholars, who have been schooled in the sometimes-eclectic disciplinary-crossing mix that some cultural studies research has accomplished (for good, bad and sometimes indifferent). I am especially worried journal rankings will have a chilling factor on new avenues of research.

This seems to be particularly hard at the younger universities, which are faced with a conflicting set of tensions. For instance, the University of South Australia is well regarded for its industry and community ties. It has a vibrant scheme of research clustering, which actively seeks out new partners with which to talk about combined approaches to social problems. In the short time I have been there I have been involved with talking to various groups about the effects of mining of the Upper Spencer Gulf, the establishment of aquaculture in isolated regional schools in the Eyre, the implications of increased urban sprawl and housing in the wine-producing regions such as the McLaren Vale, how to better educate police and other agencies to deal with and prevent rural youth suicides, how to feed South Australia, the challenges of export, and the exigencies of better understanding Islamic communities and Muslim-non Muslim relations in Australia. I meet with wine growers, teachers and principals, the Defence Security Technology Organisation, the New Zealand and Australian food standards board, retired fishermen, the Premier's council on climate change, and advocates of sustainable housing for the disenfranchised. These are audiences and co-interlocutors who seem to want to engage with academics. But as it stands I have little idea of how these conversations will play out in the designated ERA journals.

Sometimes under the pressures of distance and discipline it seems hard to maintain that desire to connect. Contrary to E.M. Forster's message that we might *'Live in fragments no longer'* it seems that we will need to fight for fragmentation rather than centralisation if we are to continue to communicate widely and diversely with our very different audiences.

Howard Morphy
Australian National University

Frances Morphy
Australian National University

New cases, new technologies: applying anthropological research in changing times

Introduction: anthropology applied

As anthropologists working in Australia much of our life has been involved with applied research. Anthropology is essentially a discipline for creating cross-cultural understandings. Anthropologists undertake research to record and systematise social and cultural data so that what they observe can be communicated cross-culturally, so that people's actions can be understood in the context of their lives as a whole.

Anthropologists often find themselves the odd person out at a dinner party arguing why polygamy is not inherently wrong, or why what some people think of as superstition is someone else's religion. The history of anthropology has been in part the movement from the collection of data in the form of lists of traits, which could be used to categorise people into types or order them in temporal sequences, to understanding people in the context of their interrelationships with one other. Applied anthropology is generally a form of cultural translation: it involves equally the accurate recording and systematic analysis of data.

We would argue for a broad definition of applied research in the humanities and social sciences. People underestimate the role of the academy in cultural production in creating things that are interesting, insightful, and informative and/or give pleasure to others. One of us spends much of his time persuading others of the beauty and cultural significance of Aboriginal art and bringing Aboriginal art into Australian art history.[1] These conclusions come out of thirty years of research and absorption in western art discourse and a realisation that there is a broad family resemblance between expressive aesthetic productions cross-culturally – something long recognised by Indigenous Australians. One of us has spent the past decade as an anthropological demographer questioning some aspects of the census as it applies to Indigenous Australians and developing frameworks that can provide a more accurate and informative picture of Aboriginal family and household structures and regional organisation.[2] The former may seem esoteric but the Aboriginal art industry has been one of the success stories of the Indigenous economy and a major generator of employment. And of course a nuanced demography that takes account of Indigenous categories, relationships to place and patterns of mobility helps to elucidate the factors underpinning the success of the

Aboriginal art industry. We have had the advantage of being members of an interdisciplinary team for a considerable time!

Applied research is always open to examination that tests its effectiveness. We would argue that in the broader framework of cultural production, the contribution of the humanities and creative arts is too often taken for granted. However, in another domain, that of expert testimony in court, the results of research are literally open to cross-examination.

Research under cross-examination

We have been involved in legal cases in the area of land rights and native title since early days. As anthropologists we prepared the claim book for one of the earliest land claims at Roper Bar in southern Arnhem Land and acted in the same role in the Blue Mud Bay case which reached a favourable conclusion in the High Court in August last year. The latter case confirmed Aboriginal ownership of the intertidal zone along eighty percent of the coastline of the Northern Territory in addition to recognising more limited native title over the coastal waters and the waters of the Bay. The main differences as far as we were concerned between the Roper Bar Land claim and the Blue Mud Bay case were in the legal framework we operated under and the research methods we employed. The former case under the *Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* was non-adversarial, although we still remember feeling under fire at times. The Blue Mud Bay case was held under the jurisdiction of the Federal Court and subject to similar rules of evidence to other contested cases. Methodologically the first case was in effect pre-digital. Information was recorded by pen on paper, places were located using air photographs and compass-bearings, maps were drawn by hand and genealogies were compiled laboriously and drawn out on vast sheets of paper Sellotaped together. Photographs were printed by hand and stuck in place. By the time of Blue Mud Bay, methods had been transformed. The mapping of the sea and land involved the use of GPS recordings and the data were transferred into a MapInfo database to produce the final maps of the distribution of place names and clan estate boundaries and plot the journeys of Ancestral beings across the landscape.[3] The genealogical data were recorded in a program we were able to adapt to fit the complexities of the Yolngu kinship structures and produce up to date genealogies for the court hearings. We continued to use our trusty notebooks but also depended on our portable computers. We also had to make use of some slightly older technology in producing radiocarbon dates as part of the process of establishing long-term continuity of occupation.

The complexity of the research and the open-ended nature of an adversarial judicial system requires those preparing a case to have all bases covered. We needed to work with an interdisciplinary team, which comprised an archaeologist, Annie Clarke, hence the radiocarbon dates, a linguistic anthropologist, Frances Morphy, and an anthropologist, Howard Morphy. In addition there were two doctoral students. One was Marcus Barber with a background in marine biology, training to be an environmental anthropologist, and the other an archaeologist, Pat Faulkner.

The team was joined at times by another anthropologist, Nicolas Peterson, and the research was funded in part by an ARC linkage grant.

Compiling the evidence

In a short paper it is possible only to exemplify briefly the nature of the data required to satisfy the criteria of traditional ownership or native title in a court case. The actual evidence that is critical to determine the outcome is not the testimony of the expert witnesses, the team of researchers, but the evidence given by the claimants in court under conditions of cross-examination. However, as we will see shortly, the expert testimony is essential if the case is going to be heard in a reasonable period of time. The court case in essence involves a dialogue between the data and analysis provided by the expert witnesses in the form of reports, genealogies and maps of country, and the interrogation of Aboriginal witnesses in court.

Howard Morphy distinguished between three kinds of expert evidence and opinion: facts, systematic compilations of facts that are likely to be, at least in part, the product of analysis, and anthropological models or syntheses, what Justice Sundberg referred to as a construct (Neowarra v State of Western Australia (397)).[4] These different kinds of evidence are likely to be subject to different rules of evidence and different kinds of cross-examination. Anthropological models are essential to interpret the 'facts' and to demonstrate that there is a principled system of law in operation. At the same time anthropological interpretations themselves are not evidence. The evidence is that given by the claimants in court and subject to cross-examination. The anthropologist's propositions are tested under cross-examination on the minutiae of the data.

To simplify greatly, the centre of the case, as far as proving ownership or the existence of native title is concerned, involves establishing continuity in the relationship between people and place over time under a system of law that allocates rights to particular people on the basis of customary practice. In the case of ownership those rights essentially are the right to exclude others from access to land and the use of resources unless they have permission. In order to demonstrate the pattern of ownership, it is necessary to map the relationship between groups and country (land and sea). In the Blue Mud Bay case we were originally concerned with an area of land and sea the size of Tasmania. Fortunately that was reduced considerably in scale before the court hearings. Nonetheless we had to produce detailed maps and a gazetteer of place names covering some thirteen clans each of which had an average of five estates in land and sea. The court required that the estate areas were mapped in detail, their boundaries marked and their ownership determined. Proving ownership required that we produced genealogies for each of those clans that not only listed the living members of the clan but also extended back to the time of sovereignty to demonstrate continuity of connection to an estate over time. The genealogies we recorded indeed extended back into the late eighteenth century. The enormity of the task should now be apparent. It took the members of the team many months over a period of five years to produce the

detailed map of the region. To elicit the same information in the context of court hearings would have required several months of testimony. The solution the court deployed was to test the expert testimony on the basis of evidence from claimants under cross-examination. The map was pinned up in the front of the court and all counsel had his or her own copies. Since place names and the ownership of place can be related to all aspects of the Indigenous testimony there are countless occasions when the map we produced was tested on the basis of evidence. If the map had been substantially inaccurate, if places brought up in evidence could not be found or turned out to be owned by a different group, then the credibility of the data provided by the experts would have quickly come under question. Fortunately, the map stood the test of the court environment and counsel and the judge, the late Justice Selway, became familiar with the Indigenous geography as the hearings proceeded. Indeed Selway himself appeared to delight in his own ability to know ahead of others the location of the evidence and the correct pronunciation of the place names. The court can also test the accuracy of the data through selective site visits. Site visits did take place and the maps were used but the proceedings had by then established the credibility of the data and cross-examination over estates and their boundaries were very limited.

Similar considerations apply to genealogical material. The proving of genealogies in the context of a court hearing, though sometimes undertaken, is a very difficult and time consuming task. The Blue Mud Bay case required the compilation of ten clan genealogies. The clans are patrilineal – individuals belong to the clan of their father and the clan is the group with exclusive native title rights to particular estate areas. In addition to producing the patrilineal clan genealogies we had to create a database that encompassed connections to individuals and groups along the matriline. The system of rights encompasses individuals and groups linked matrilineally to the 'owning clan' and hence to understand the operation of the Yolngu system of law those relationships need to be included. The total number of people in the genealogical database numbered several thousand. The patrilineal genealogies were provided in printed form as small booklets and key matrilineal relatives were listed. However we also had available the full database with its infinite possible channels of interconnection should that information be required by the court.

The genealogies had been compiled as a result of thirty years research in the region. Again, rather than eliciting the genealogies in court, which would have been an impossible task, the data was continually referred to in the giving of other evidence and the cross-examination of witness statements. In the Blue Mud Bay case the proceedings were also facilitated by the holding of a 'hot tub'[5] of experts prior to commencement of the hearing of evidence. This procedure brought together the expert anthropologist for the applicants and the experts for the respondents with the objective of coming to an agreed position where possible over the expert testimony provided in the anthropologist's report. The applicants' anthropologist then had the opportunity to clarify any issues that were raised. Although the conclusions reached as a result of the hot tub were not regarded as evidence, there is no question that they provided guidance for the court that eased the burden of

cross-examination of the applicant's anthropologist, and facilitated the acceptance of the genealogies as proven.

Testing the models

Maps and genealogies fit into the category of evidence we label systematic compilations of fact. They require anthropological knowledge and linguistic skills to produce but they are essentially factual in nature in that they could be reproduced in court through witness testimony. At the edges most description merges into areas of contestation, the precise boundaries of the estates may be arguable and there may be issues over the concept of a patrilineal clan. However in the case of such compilations the primary concern of the anthropologist is to represent as accurately as possible the picture that will emerge from the evidence presented by witnesses in court. In this context expert witnesses have to exercise restraint through avoiding getting deflected by issues that are not of primary relevance to the matter under consideration. At the same time they need to be aware of anthropological debates that can be made relevant by expertly informed counsel for the respondents. Evidence could be given that problematises the principle of patrilineal descent and hence undermines the whole underlying framework of clan estates. The compilations of data then would become meaningless because they were shown to be based on false presuppositions.

However many areas of a native title case do indeed require anthropological models. Anthropological models are a state of abstraction further removed from the data than compilations. They involve such matters as the nature of regional systems of social organisation, the system of kinship and marriage, and more specifically principles of succession to land or procedures for dispute resolution. These models are going to be subject to testing in court but they are unlikely to be derived easily from the applicant's evidence unless analysed on the basis of anthropological knowledge. It is not an easy task to understand the principles of the kinship system of the Yolngu people of Blue Mud Bay. In anthropology, its intractability was recognised by the label 'the Murngin problem' that generated half a century of theoretical debate and cast fear into the minds of generations of students at examination time. However, a model of the Yolngu kinship system is of central relevance to the regional system of governance and to land ownership. In particular it is central to the issue of succession, which has become crucial to the discourse of establishing continuity of relationships to land.

Given the nature of small group demographics, some groups are likely to expand greatly over time while others become extinct. In the Blue Mud Bay case indeed there were estate areas that belonged to extinct clans and in other cases evidence for the expansion of clans and the taking over of the territory of one clan by another. Not only might this prove problematic for those estates where the owning group had become extinct but it could also be used to argue that the continuity over time was an illusion. It could be proposed that in reality clans were always dying out hence it was unlikely that any groups had long term continuity of relationship with land over time. Arguments very similar to this were put in the original Gove land

Rights case and needed to be addressed in cases under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* which was understood to give priority to continuities in spiritual relationships to land. The way this has been addressed is to demonstrate that Aboriginal society has principled ways of dealing with issues of succession on a regional basis under their system of law. Those principles of succession allow for continuity of spiritual relationship with land and indeed are often based on theories of spiritual continuity and the practices that ensure it. Because relationships with land are descent-based, an understanding of Yolngu processes of successions requires knowledge of the kinship system and of the ways in which it articulates with group organisation. The model can then be tested in cross-examination in the court in order to determining if actual cases of succession involve the set of principles that derive from the anthropologist's analysis presented as expert testimony.

The same anthropological models of a regional system of social organisation in operation can be used in other contexts: for example to demonstrate the way in which exclusive ownership of estate areas is compatible with the efficient utilisation of land on a regional basis. The nature of the regional system of social organisation ensures that rights and permissions are distributed across the region in such a way that passage across country from place to place or to forage across estate boundaries is permissible because such a right is granted a priori to a relative of a particular category and can be taken for granted until it is withdrawn. Since the region as a whole is an intermarrying connubium operating under the same system of law, exclusive rights can be seen to be perfectly compatible with the rational use of resources. Testing the propositions put forward by the anthropologist against the evidence led to apparently esoteric lines of questions about who owns a fish as it swims across the boundary of one clan's estate and enters another. If someone were hunting a fish in his own clan territory, would he have to stop hunting the fish when it crossed into the country of neighbouring clan? If in fact he could without asking permission, then might that be taken as proof that Yolngu clans did not have exclusive native title. Such lines of questioning often appear intrusive but are the means by which an adversarial legal framework tests models against evidence and helps the court to understand and give recognition to a system of law that is in many respects very different from their own.[6]

Conclusion

The distinction between pure and applied research is perhaps one that might itself usefully undergo cross-examination under rigorous rules of evidence. Our experience of applying research belies any absolute distinction between pure research and applied research – both require the same high level of disciplinary expertise and the research findings can contribute to the discipline as a whole and be applied in quite different contexts. Clearly the same level of expertise is not required for every research project or application of disciplinary knowledge. Clearly temporal and financial constraints can affect the quality of research in the applied arena. The ethical considerations in applied research are different in some cases to those of 'pure' research. However, pragmatic factors affect all forms of research and

we should be cautious about making assumptions about the quality of research without examining it in detail.

Applying research can create new areas of knowledge both within disciplines and in interdisciplinary contexts. Applied anthropology on land claims and native title cases has transformed knowledge of, among other things, comparative Aboriginal systems of social organisation. It has influenced global discourse on property rights, produced an extraordinary resource in mapping the relationship of people to land and naming the geography of remote Australia, directed attention towards resource exploitation of the intertidal zone and Indigenous bio-geographical knowledge, and has developed a literature on processes of succession to land which had virtually been un-researched previously. The nature of the native title legislation has encouraged interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research – bringing archaeology, history and anthropology closer together. In applying our disciplines we are likely to make discoveries outside the immediate aims of the project. Working in an interdisciplinary team on the Blue Mud Bay native title claim enabled one of us to discover evidence about the distribution of place names over time that fed into her 'pure passion' for historical linguistics in the Australian context. If only she had time to pursue it further. Which leads us to a final note of qualification.

The very challenging of the boundaries between pure and applied research should be the strongest justification for the continuation of independently funded research. Clearly applied research depends on more general disciplinary knowledge and expertise gained outside the particular context of its application. It is absolutely essential that research be carried out for its own sake and for the contribution it makes to knowledge and innovation. The funding opportunities for applied research are serendipitous and can over-determine the nature of the research that takes place. Fifty years ago research into Indigenous systems of land tenure would not have been widely considered as potentially applied research. Unless research is carried out for its own intrinsic contribution to knowledge, that knowledge will not exist in the future when it needs to be applied. There is clearly a dialogical relationship between research and its application but the two are relatively autonomous. The humanities and the social sciences often suffer relative to the sciences because the same faith that pure research is ultimately applicable is not granted to them. We would argue that precisely that same faith should be applied to knowledge production more generally, in particular in a digital age when disciplinary boundaries are continually being crossed.

Notes

[1] Howard Morphy, *Becoming Art: The Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008).
[2] Frances Morphy, (ed.), 'Agency, Contingency and Census Process: Observations of the 2006 Indigenous Enumeration Strategy in Remote Aboriginal Australia', *CAEPR Research Monograph*, 28, (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2007).
[3] For a perspective on Yolngu relationships to land and sea that resulted from our research into the Blue Mud Bay native title claims, see Howard Morphy and Frances Morphy, 'Tasting the waters:

discriminating identities in the waters of Blue Mud Bay', *Journal of Material Culture*, 11 (1-2) (2006), 67–85.

[4] Howard Morphy, 'The Practice of an Expert: Anthropology in Native Title', *Anthropological Forum*, 16, No. 2 (2006), 135-51.

[5] More formally known as a compulsory conference of experts. For a relevant discussion see C. Edwards, L. Anderson and S. McKeering, 'Anthropologists, Lawyers and Native Title Cases in Australia', *Anthropological Forum*, 16, No. 2 (2006), 153-171.

[6] This issue is the subject of Frances Morphy's chapter, 'Enacting sovereignty in a colonized space: the Yolngu of Blue Mud Bay meet the native title process', in *The Rights and Wrongs of Land Restitution: 'Restoring What Was Ours'*, ed. by Derick Fay and Deborah James (Abingdon and New York: Routledge-Cavendish, 2008), pp. 99-122.

Lawrence Zion
La Trobe University

Building Audiences into Research

I'd like to explore this topic by taking a step back behind the question of communicating the results of research to explore how we might be able to build audiences into the actual research process. Doing this has become a kind of a habit of mine, and to be honest, I don't think I really know how to work any other way now.

For me the idea of harnessing the public to develop research has happened in three specific cases, each ten years apart. And I think it might be happening again now.

Each project has had very different relationships to the academy, but in all three cases I was doing similar things – exploring a research question by involving the public, and thereby building projects that could make a more meaningful connection with audiences, while securing a space to workshop my ideas through the kind of feedback loop we don't always get inside academic institutions.

My PhD – Pop Music in Australia in the 1960s
I wrote my PhD in the 1980s when history was being liberated by the cassette deck. Suddenly, talking to people was part of what constituted research, at least in forward thinking history schools, where the very notion of research as a dusty, hermetic and secretive pursuit was being challenged by ethnography and oral history. As much of my research was taking the form of recorded conversations, I began to sense that some kind of public engagement might help me identify not just who I should be talking to, but what I should be talking to them about. For much of the duration of my research, I was a regular on ABC regional radio where I became a commentator on popular music, and this programme – hosted by Derek Guille – also provided me with access to talkback – which helped contextualise many of the issues and themes I was exploring through more traditional print sources.

Discussions on air also helped me 'roadtest' my findings. Even after I'd done my main interviews, it was reassuring to find that when I'd talk about the relationship, for instance, between pop music in the wake of the Beatles, and Australia's large contingent of recent British arrivals, that those who joined in the conversation were affirming what I was saying.

The real communication of results was a more prolonged process. I couldn't find any publisher interest in the PhD, even after a couple of singles off the never-to-be-

released album were released in the form of peer reviewed articles in the Cambridge journal *Popular Music*.

It wasn't until ten years after I finished the thesis, however, that the research findings found a vehicle, this time embedded in the ABC TV series *Long way to the Top* and *Love is in the Air*. Now there was a chance to reconstitute the grunt work of the PhD into episodes of a documentary series, where I worked as a writer, interviewer, and researcher. Lesson learned: maybe the holy grail of publishing books based on a PhD isn't the only strategy academics should consider.

Triple J's Hottest 100

The listener poll that has been in play in one form or another for the last couple of decades on Triple J actually began with what for me was two pure research questions (with a great deal more focus than my PhD).

What sort of music does the Triple J audience like? And what happens when you ask people to nominate their FAVOURITE music (which is what pop's about) instead of what they think is the GREATEST (as the music press always seemed to do)?

The background: I was a trainee there, and was curious about why the station wasn't more successful with its then Sydney-only audience. Here the concept of how to communicate the results of the research was straightforward enough – just play the songs as a countdown, interspersed with interviews. But engaging the audience by developing promos and programmes that encouraged them to focus on their favourite songs was a key to the success of the concept. For me the lesson learnt was that the more the audience was engaged in a process, the more they enriched the overall outcome.

The Sounds of Aus

This documentary about the Australian accent, which first screened on ABC1 in November 2007, evolved out of an attempt to answer these questions:

- What is the Australian accent?
- Where does it come from?
- What does it say about us?
- Is it under threat?

With prime time TV the designated platform for the communication of research results, we knew we wanted the programme to address both the latest research about the accent as well as common perceptions about the accent. To do this, I embarked on a series of talkback sessions around the country which were set up to field questions and discussions about the accent. Almost without exception callers included a group who feared the onset of Americanisation, and a more strident group insisting on various forms of regional variation. Here was a case of the research pointing one way (not much regional variation, especially compared to other English-speaking countries) but popular opinion convinced of something

quite different. The resolution of this was to use our New Zealand presenter John Clarke to link the research to the 'myths'. Without the benefit of a public airing, there's every chance I'd have minimalised the 'regional variation' story, and delivered a dryer and duller story.

What was gained by this process of 'test driving' the key themes for the documentary was a greater sense of confidence in being able to engage the eventual audience with the material. A related benefit was that because the project already had a profile (especially within ABC local radio) while it was being made, when the publicity campaign for the broadcast began, we were able to line up more than thirty interviews, more than half of which were with ABC stations, several of which were already familiar with our aims and objectives.

I believe that without the ongoing engagement of audiences throughout the life of the project we would never have been able to secure the audience that watched on the night, which was around 1.3 million in the five main cities (enough for us to win our timeslot over Bionic Woman in Melbourne and Sydney). The structure of the programme was also deliberately shaped to integrate vox pop opinion, expertise, and celebrity.

A couple of observations about the 'communication of research results'. When John Clarke did his round of interviews, he said he was struck by how much those interviewing him wanted to tell what they thought – similarly, the coverage included more than just promotional interviews – several outlets, most notably *The Australian*, wrote longer essays or pieces that 'bounced' off the doco to develop their own explorations of why the issue of the accent was important.

The communication of research results process – notice how I've so far avoided using the term 'knowledge transfer', included a very productive relationship with schools and education media. The first time I showed any of the doco publicly was to a Victorian Association of English Teachers conference, and months after the documentary screened, busloads of high school students came to a special screening and talk at RMIT. Meanwhile, it was inspiring to see how professionally the project was transformed into a study guide through the Enhance TV site. The process, which is run by ATOM, was – at the time I made my doco – a standard part of the full funding package – that is, the FFC would allocate a small budget to produce a study guide for each of the doco it funded. One outcome of all of this is that the doco is now part of at least one year twelve subject (English Language in Victoria) and is being considered as a set text elsewhere.

Upstart

To finish, I just want to touch on how in my current role as journalism coordinator at La Trobe, we're trying to encourage students, and not just *our* students, to embrace the process of learning to talk about their work through a section of our publishing site upstart (www.upstart.net.au) called The Incubator (http://www.upstart.net.au/category/the-incubator/) which is designed as a forum

for practice and research-based projects both within and outside of the academy. We're not expecting that everyone will want to talk about their research while it's a work in progress, but in one case so far, this section has been invaluable for one of our PhD students who wanted to find journalists for his thesis on journalism and freedom of information. The premise here is the same as ever – by learning to speak in public about what we're doing, it's possible not only to achieve broader profile for your work, but also to become better at deciding what it is you want to discover.