

## CONVENOR'S WELCOME



The North Terrace Precinct in Adelaide is an excellent place for the Academy to stage its 2010 symposium *Sharing Our Commonwealth: Cultural Institutions*. This is a landscape rich in institutions that have played (and continue to play) such a significant role in the cultural life of the nation. The broad theme of the Symposium was suggested by a meeting of Adelaide-based Fellows, represented by Ray Choate, Richard Maltby and Wilfred Prest. Subsequent discussions with John Byron, Christina Parolin and myself led to the development of the programme you have before you. Following the success of the 2009 symposium we have opted for panels with pre-circulated papers or abstracts which will allow panellists to speak to those papers, in dialogue with the viewpoints of other panellists.

The primary concern of the Organising Committee has been to create a programme that acknowledges the importance of location, and then takes this as a foundation for discussions that incorporate national and international frames of reference. Thus, in Session One our speakers will explore the rich links between the creative arts and the humanities through the context of the cultural festival (an event now so strongly identified with Adelaide). We were also concerned to interpret the idea of the cultural institution in usefully broad terms, recognising the multitude of frameworks within which we produce and consume culture. Thus, in Sessions Two and Five our speakers consider the impact of media convergence as broad as television and Twitter, and new digital technologies as a means of collecting and presenting cultural information. The Committee was also keen to stress the significance of cultural institutions for Indigenous people, especially in the identification and management of heritage both within and outside museums. Speakers in Sessions Three and Four consider these matters in the context of Australia and the immediate Asia-Pacific region. Last, but by no means least, the speakers in Session Six discuss the importance of scientific institutions and the humanities, an issue that will increase in importance in coming years. Fellows will notice that all Sessions are chaired by local colleagues and members of the Fellowship, underscoring our commitment to celebrating the significance of our location.

We are particularly pleased that Emeritus Professor Graeme Clarke will give the Academy Address this year on his research at Jebel Khalid, a major Hellenistic site on the Euphrates in northern Syria, which he has been digging since 1986. Professor Clarke will focus on the means by which archaeologists seek an understanding of the links between material culture and identity on major multi-period sites such as Jebel Khalid.

The task of convening this symposium has been made much easier through the great professionalism of the Academy Secretariat, particularly Gabriela Cabral, Christina Parolin and Christine Barnicoat. Our former Executive Director John Byron assisted in the early stages. The local members of the Committee Ray Choate, Wilfred Prest and Richard Maltby were invaluable. Many thanks to them all.

Tim Murray FAHA

## THANK YOU

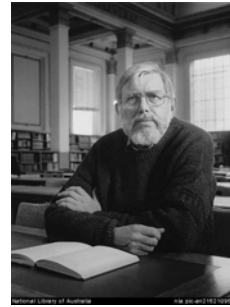
The Academy gratefully acknowledges the advice and assistance of the following Fellows with the planning of this event:



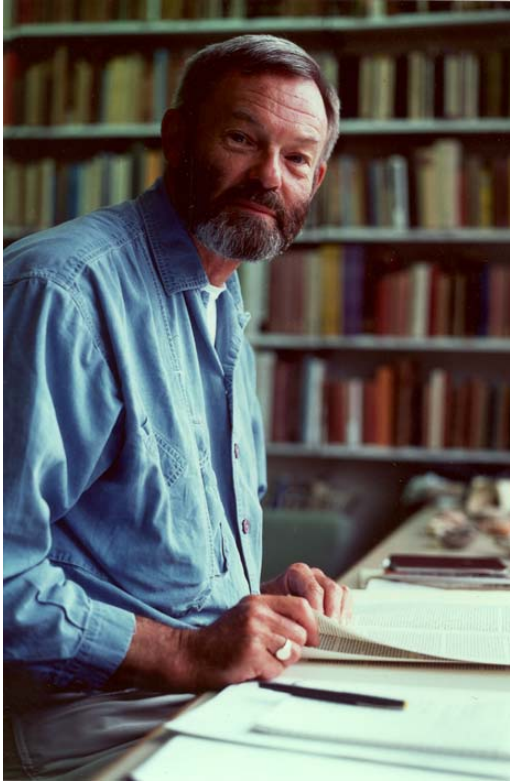
Ray Choate FAHA



Richard Maltby FAHA



Wilfred Prest FAHA



## ACADEMY ADDRESS **GRAEME CLARKE**

Graeme Clarke FAHA is currently an Adjunct Professor in the School of History at the Australian National University, having been previously Professor of Classical Studies at the University of Melbourne (1969-1981) and a Director in the Humanities Research Centre, ANU (1982-1999).

Graeme has been a Director of excavations at the Hellenistic site of Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates in North Syria since 1986.

He has served on the Council of the Academy of the Humanities for 19 years and has held the position of Honorary Secretary of since 2000.

### ***Can the Mute Stones Speak?***

Jebel Khalid in North Syria is potentially a multicultural colonial site occupied from c.300-70 BCE. How far can we discern the identities of its inhabitants over this period (ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social, religious) from its material remains? There will be examination of the built environment and public institutions on the site (defence system and town-planning, Acropolis Palace, Temple, Palaestra) as well as house layout and choice of decoration. Various categories of artifact (figurines, seals) will also be examined for the answers they might possibly give to these questions of identity.

# PROGRAMME

## THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER

- 10:00am            **Registrations (at Horace Lamb Lecture Theatre)**
- 11:00am            **Morning Tea**
- 11:30am            **Welcome**
- Uncle Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien  
                         David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research
- Prof Joseph Lo Bianco FAHA  
                         President, Australian Academy of the Humanities
- Prof Fred McDougall  
                         Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Vice-President (Academic), The University of Adelaide
- 11:45am            **Academy Address**
- Em Prof Graeme Clarke FAHA, Australian National University
- Chair: Prof Joseph Lo Bianco FAHA, University of Melbourne
- 12:45pm            **Lunch**
- 1:45pm            **Session One: *Creative Arts and the Humanities: The Festival Experience***
- Chair: Dr Robert Phiddian, Flinders University
- Panellists:
- Mr Douglas Gautier, Director, Adelaide Festival Centre
- Mr Anthony Steel AM, Former Artistic Director, Adelaide Festival
- Prof Em Jill Roe AO, FASSA, Macquarie University
- 3:00pm            **Afternoon Tea**
- 3:30pm            **Session Two: *Accessing Culture Through Traditional, New and Emerging Media***
- Chair: Prof Richard Maltby FAHA, Flinders University
- Panellists:
- Prof Kate Burridge FAHA, Monash University
- Dr Chris Scanlon, La Trobe University
- Prof Tom O'Regan FAHA, University of Queensland

**FRIDAY 19 NOVEMBER**

9:00am                   **Session Three: *Contested Heritages* (Pacific Gallery, SA Museum)**

Chair: Dr Philip Jones, South Australian Museum

Panellists:

Dr Nuno Oliveira, Adviser, Secretary of State for Culture, Timor-Leste

Dr Keir Reeves, Monash University

Dr Anita Smith, La Trobe University

10:20am                   **Morning Tea (at Armoury Lawns)**

11:00am                   **Session Four: *Indigenous Culture and Public Institutions***

Chair: Em Prof Vincent Megaw FAHA, Flinders University

Panellists:

Dr Philip Jones, Senior Curator, South Australian Museum

Dr Ron Radford, Director, National Gallery of Australia

Assoc Prof Claire Smith, Flinders University

Dr Margo Neale, National Museum of Australia

12:45pm                   **Lunch**

1:45pm                   **Session Five: *Scientific Institutions and the Humanities***

Chair: Dr Garrett Cullity FAHA, University of Adelaide

Panellists:

Dr Oliver Mayo FTSE, FAA, CSIRO Livestock Industries

Mr Alec Coles OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Western Australian Museum

2:40pm                   **Session Six: *Digitising Culture***

Chair: Ms Margaret Anderson, CEO, History Trust of South Australia

Panellists:

Prof Graeme Turner FAHA, University of Queensland

Prof Julie Holledge & Dr Jonathan Bollen, Flinders University

Prof Janet McCalman FAHA, University of Melbourne

4:00pm                   **Closing Remarks**

Prof Joseph Lo Bianco FAHA

## RELATED EVENTS FOR ACADEMY FELLOWS

### Friday 19 November

7pm for 7:30pm      *Fellows' Dinner*  
The Reading Room, Barr Smith Library, The University of Adelaide

### Saturday 20 November

8:30am                *Electoral Section Meetings*  
Engineering Building, The University of Adelaide

12:00pm              Lunch

1:00pm                *Academy Fellows' Annual General Meeting*  
Engineering Building, The University of Adelaide

4:00pm                Bus departs for airport. **Bookings essential.**

## **Session One**

***Creative Arts and the Humanities:***

***The Festival Experience***





# DOUGLAS GAUTIER

## *The OzAsia Festival – Work in Progress*

The OzAsia Festival concept really began when I was Director of the Hong Kong Arts Festival in 2005.

At a lunch in Hong Kong with the Chairman of the National Australia Gallery, Rupert Myer, we talked about the Asian focus of the acquisitions policy of that organisation and how that approach made cultural and economic sense for a prime Australian cultural institution coming to grips with the challenges of our history and geography in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Apart from the Brisbane Triennial, a very prestigious visual event, which has celebrated Australian engagement with Asia over more than twenty years, there appeared to be no main Australian event or festival which showcased and explored such engagement in the performing and popular arts.

Having spent some 25 years of my life living and working in Asia and knowing that I would be taking charge of the Adelaide Festival Centre in a few months, it seemed a gap in the market and a possibility worth pursuing.

As many of you know Adelaide has a reputation as a Festival City – and deservedly so. It is the right size and has the tradition and determination to ‘punch above its weight’ in the Festival stakes. The city does not have the critical mass of Melbourne or Sydney, but its reputation and positioning equates well with Edinburgh, Montreal or Barcelona – not their nation’s biggest cities by any means – but clearly cultural hubs and very successful at mounting and promoting Festivals or ‘Marquee Events’ as they say in the business.

Important in all this festival making is the point of difference, each capital city in Australia now has an annual Festival with a great deal of similarity in programming and format. Occasionally an artistic director bursts out of the mould, but rarely. So in dealing with Asian engagement we felt we were on to very interesting and fertile cultural ground that no one else was dealing with seriously and which would likely be creative territory for the foreseeable future – with many possible changes in dynamics over coming years.

Given the changing cultural and ethnic demographics of our cities most commentators thought it was a valid ‘experiment’ when we made our announcement about the launch of our first OzAsia festival. Some questioned why we would do it in Adelaide, our reply was that Adelaide is an ideal Festival city and after all the founder of Adelaide, Colonel William Light was born in Penang (where his father was Governor) to a Chinese Malay mother. So it was indeed quite fitting.

More specifically our aim for this Festival was and is with system and some serendipity to explore the links between Australia and the diverse and rich cultures of our Asian neighbours, and showcase such an exploration in a compelling arts package on an annual basis – hopefully with some cumulative effect.

We noted that:

- Australia's current cultural, social and business links with Asia have become important and lively relationships that will determine many aspects of our nation's future.
- Many of our country's best artists now look for inspiration to the great cultural riches and opportunities in the Asian region rather than to the traditional hubs of Western culture.
- Generations of Asian Australians are now reaching out and examining their own combined or dual heritage and histories to find themselves and in doing so lead us all to more fully realise our own sense of, and confidence in, a multi-cultural Australia.
- That the various cultures of Asia are in line with growing economic and political influence, becoming more confident and are increasingly throwing off and out Western cultural yardsticks and perceived restrictions, to celebrate their rich traditional cultures in modern contexts.
- Many Asian artists considering collaboration with Western colleagues prefer the flexibility and openness of Australian artists.

As such, we decided that the OzAsia Festival would endeavour each year to:

- Present work by Australian artists that identify with an Asian heritage.
- Present collaborative work between Australian and Asian artists.
- Present a cross-section of the cultures of Asia, both traditional and contemporary, but with a preference for modern work.
- Cover a broad spectrum of work including theatre, dance, music, film, visual arts, literature, food and design culture and multimedia.
- Encourage key Australian performing arts groups and individual artists to consider work with Asian connections or perspectives.
- Be an inclusive Festival that offers accessible events and "ways in" to all audiences.
- Encourage various Asian communities and groups across Australia to participate in the Festival.
- To provide a forum for the exchange and airing of ideas about Asian engagement.
- Gradually, over a number of years, build a strong set of constituencies across the country and in Asia to support the momentum of the Festival and ensure its future.
- Foster an annual 'country' focus which would engage guest curators from Asia and seek support from foreign governments and cultural agencies.

- Explore the commissioning of new collaborative Asian/Australian work which following our festival might tour nationally and also receive performances as part of a reverse flow back to Asia.
- Seek collaboration from other sectors – such as education, business and tourism, culturally diverse communities, school and university students and the general public to participate in the Moon Lantern event and the OzAsia Festival. This will be achieved through diverse programming and offering free and low cost performances across the festival.
- To engage and partner with appropriate media to further and foster the reach of the Festival and its program content.

Now in its fourth year the Festival has followed through in most of these areas and has established itself as the nation's preeminent festival event for Asian cultural engagement. It regularly attracts approx. 30,000 attendees, close to half of these participate in our Moon Lantern parade in Elder Park which involves schools and community groups carrying and parading huge themed lanterns which they have mostly designed and built themselves. This parade is on the same night that most Asian communities are celebrating mid-autumn/lantern festival in the northern hemisphere – but which carries great significance for Asian communities and students even though they are now resident here in the southern hemisphere.

In our forums over the years we have canvassed such issues as education – specifically literacy in Asian languages, the role of the media, the projection of Australia “cultures” to Asia and many other important topics that are germane to successful cultural dialogue. We have had a range of keynote speakers and thinkers who have inspired us and help us see new perspectives. We have brought artists together from all over our region to make new work, including collaborative works between theatre groups from Arnhem Land and Makassar. We have won a number of national and international arts awards, one for an astonishing retrospective concert by Australian composers and their music directly influenced by Asia.

We have presented some of the finest Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese performing ensembles and artists. We have focused on contemporary Asia which has displayed elements of these cultures which has surprised many of our local audiences. Our OzAsia film program has been so successful that it is touring nationally next year under the OzAsia banner. We now consistently have foreign governments and cultural organisations coming to us to seek collaboration and participation with our Festival. And this is still the beginning.

OzAsia has so far delivered all this, plus it has fostered some of the most important by-products of cultural festivals of this nature – tolerance and enlightenment.

# ANTHONY STEEL

## *Creative Arts and the Humanities: The Festival Experience*

This paper uses the trend in programming recent Australian arts festivals – in particular that of Adelaide – as an example of the quandary that arises when arts organisations are so dependent on political support that they become in danger of capitulating to political demands – to balance budgets and appeal to a wide cross-section of society, for example.

Martha C. Nussbaum's latest book is quoted to demonstrate the dangers of today's emphasis on profit in all things, to the disadvantage of the humanities in general and the arts in particular.

Examples of earlier complaints about this trend are quoted, from Australia and the UK.

A brief history of the birth of each of the Australian capital city festivals – which were launched for various and often haphazard reasons – is followed by an examination of the plethora of 'arts activities' that flood Adelaide in autumn, a critical mass enthusiastically encouraged and financially supported by the state government, though whether to everyone's benefit is debatable and is indeed debated.

Questions are raised about the political motives for this largesse and about a possible loss of distinctive character in the Adelaide Festival compared with other multi-arts festivals elsewhere in Australia.

Is there a danger that the public can no longer see anything particularly special about the Adelaide Festival, particularly now as it prepares to go annual? Has the whole multi-arts festival format had its day? What can Adelaide do to retain – or regain – its previously unchallenged top spot?

# JILL ROE

## *Creative Arts and the Humanities: The Festival Experience*

Festivals date back a long way, maybe a millennium. The word itself comes from Old French and Middle English; and historians of early modern Europe have paid close attention to the practice. Festivals, they tell us, were by then a vital aspect of popular culture, celebrations of ‘the world turned upside down’.<sup>1</sup>

When the first literary festivals were held is unclear, possibly the early 20th century, but mostly it seems even later. In this country, we tend to think of literary festivals as dating from the first Writers’ Week here in Adelaide in 1960, though the 1930s would probably be more accurate. In April 1935 in Sydney the recently formed Fellowship of Australian Writers held an Authors’ Week and an Authors’ Ball, at which some authors turned up in fancy dress. Miles Franklin gave a paper on ‘Novels from the Bush’, and nationalist publisher P. R. Stephensen went to the Ball dressed as ‘Brent of Bin Bin’, Miles’s now best-known but then unacknowledged pseudonym.<sup>2</sup>

It may be that my experience of literary festivals, even in this country, is too slight, and mostly too recent, to fit the bill today. But there will be plenty of time to discuss the underlying issue of the place of the humanities in literary festivals when I’m done. So far as recent festivals are concerned, thanks to Miles Franklin I’ve attended several, including the Sydney Writers’ Festival, a rather worrisome affair, and the Brisbane Writers’ Festival, smaller and nicely located but pretty impersonal. (Without my publisher, I would have been at a loss when not presenting.) And then of course I was here at Writers’ Week earlier this year, and delighted to be, though I did have one shocking experience in the audience for a panel on the Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature, upon which I will dilate shortly as it has a direct bearing on the humanities at literary festivals. For now I’ll just say that if such an ill-prepared gaggle had turned up for a class, I would have had to send them home to read the text.<sup>3</sup>

More significant for our subject, however, is the recently established non-fiction festival at Maleny, inland from Noosa, at which I spoke a few months ago, as did writers like David Marr and Ian Lowe. Furthermore, I was here as a student for the first Adelaide Festivals, 1960 and 1962, which we with reason regarded as elitist affairs.

I certainly attended some of the 2nd Writers’ Week, where I heard West Australian writer Tom Hungerford’s address on the parlous position of Australian writers, entitled ‘The infiltration of canned overseas culture and its calamitous effect on Australian writers’. Given that I had recently studied Australian literature with Geoffrey Dutton, I

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<sup>1</sup> festival’, *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Ashgate, Aldershot, England, new edition, 2002, Ch. 7

<sup>2</sup> ‘literary festivals’, Wikipedia listings, 16/9/2010; Ruth Starke, ‘A Festival of Writers. Adelaide Writers’ Week, 1960-2000’, unpublished PhD thesis, Flinders University, c.2000, p. 50; Jill Roe, *Stella Miles Franklin. A Life*, HarperCollins, Pymble, NSW, 2008, p. 352 and graphic.

<sup>3</sup> *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature*, gen. ed. Nicholas Jose, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2009, *The Literature of Australia*, Norton, New York, 2009.

was well attuned to Hungerford's message. Even so, there weren't many there, the lecture room seating was hard as usual, and he did seem a bit rough. Obviously we were a bit on the elitist side ourselves then.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, due to Dutton, and because the university was close to the public library which hosted events, we students did feel some ownership of the festival, more than most probably. We objected when Patrick White's play 'The Ham Funeral' was rejected, and we went when it was put on in the Union Theatre. We couldn't afford to attend much else—is this still an issue for students?—but we did sense that something significant was happening. Maybe we knew from our British history courses – of which there were plenty – about the Festival of Britain, staged in 1951 to mark the end of the 'Age of Austerity'.<sup>5</sup>

It's all bit of a blur by now, and literary festivals are now so big, and a bit blurry too. But I have had the benefit of perusing Ruth Starke's excellent thesis on the history of Adelaide Writers' Week (see note 2), and it confirms my sense that the humanities were once more central to the festival experience. Starke takes a thematic approach to show how Writers' Week and the Festival itself have stayed alive and adaptable over four decades, maintaining a balance between international and national writers, despite many administrative challenges and underlying issues of enduring significance, the two most notable ones for me being attached to the words 'literary' and 'excellence'.

Since the 1980s, a vital issue for literary festivals has been the role of the publishing industry and all that goes with it. I am not one to sneer at this, nor the money that has to be found to run something like Writers' Week. But people have a point if they think that consumption has become more important than creativity. Blanche D'Alpuget has recently expressed nostalgia for the old writers' festivals: 'They've become gentrified, groomed, and toned down... I miss poets shouting at each other and tongue-tied novelists staring panic-stricken at the audience'.<sup>6</sup>

Having done something like shouting at the previously mentioned panel on the Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature panel here last April, I can offer some reassurance. Moreover, it's not just the literary festival that has been smoothed out. So has Australia; so have authors. The things they were raging about in the 1960s are now in the past, though the cultural tensions between national and international priorities persist and doubtless always will.

And here the issue of 'excellence' highlighted in the Starke thesis rears its head. I don't recall which writers constituted the panel to discuss the Anthology and I wouldn't mention names if I did. However, Robert Dessaix did object that the very idea of an anthology was outdated; otherwise it was matter of mumbles. Now, as you may imagine, because I served as Director of the Macquarie PEN Anthology Centre at Macquarie University, though largely in a figure head/administrative capacity, I was appalled.

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<sup>4</sup> *Adelaide Advertiser*, 20/3/1962.

<sup>5</sup> Re 'The Ham Funeral', David Marr, *Patrick White. A Life*, Random House Australia, Milsons Point, NSW, 1991, has the details. For a still delectable essay on the Festival of Britain, see *Age of Austerity 1945-1951*, eds. Michael Sissons and Philip French, Penguin Books, 1964.

<sup>6</sup> Open Page, *Australian Book Review*, September 2010.

No doubt the panellists were too: the audience left in droves. How did those panellists get there? Was it a matter of pleasing the publishers who brought them along? Why weren't competent people appointed to the panel, people who knew some literary history or had some editing experience? Is there now an anti-intellectual bias to literary festivals? Have the festivals become too commercialised? Either or both would help to explain the vacuous response to the Anthology.

In early 2009 I was invited to be a guest of the Sydney Festival. It was good time to be there as my biography of Miles Franklin had only recently come out. However, when the programme arrived I found myself demoted to a panel on biography. No doubt there was problem fitting everyone in. At Maleny I found myself empanelled with military historians. How come? Could it be that publishers' PR machines encourage these decisions? Or is it arts administrators with qualifications only in arts administration? And what are panels for? I suggest this is a form of hedging your bets, and that the inevitable outcome is dumbing down. Unless genuine debate is the aim, as should have been the case with the Anthology panel, conversations, readings, and informed commentary would be more to the point.

I appreciate that humanities academics can be self-regarding and quite unrealistic about the needs of the marketplace. Intellectual fashions since the 1980s have made things harder too. Nonetheless there is one literary trend that we disregard at our peril. I refer to the blurring of the fiction-non-fiction divide. As a biographer I am well aware of this. I belong to that half of the reading public that likes footnotes; and I object to biography as fiction. Moreover, too much modern fiction it seems to me is simply parasitic on history. I recently came across a writer who specialises in literary non-fiction. I'm still not sure what that is, however the best non-fiction writers write very well though they are often not treated seriously as writers. The little Maleny festival devoted to non-fiction may be sign of things to come.

Once it was true in this country that it was the fiction writers who held up a mirror to society. These days it is as likely to be the sociologists or historians. The role now played by publishers and the market on the one hand, and the degree of comfort now afforded to some writers by grants and prizes on the other has taken some of the edge off literary festivals. Miles Franklin was a NSW person, anxious about what she called 'the government stroke'. Beware she would say to her fellow writers of 'the government stroke'. Another way of putting it is that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. Practitioners of the humanities are forcibly reminded of this from time to time, when the research culture with its persistent claims for innovation pushes out time-consuming scholarship. They're unlikely to 'turn the world upside down'. But they are the ones who can most readily assist with the exploration of the boundaries of both subject and writing that could challenge the now standard approaches of literary festivals.





## **Session Two**

### ***Accessing Culture Through Traditional, New and Emerging Media***



# CHRISTOPHER SCANLON

During his recent visit to Australia, the English actor, comedian, novelist, columnist, actor, broadcaster and noted tweeter, Stephen Fry, made an astute observation about the parallel between contemporary responses to Twitter and the status of how magazines were viewed during the 18th century. Speaking to Mark Colvin – another regular tweeter – on the ABC Radio National’s PM program, Fry noted that the emergence of the printing press and the declining costs of printing gave rise to new forms of publication: the magazine and the political pamphlet.

Fry noted, ‘it wasn’t the full invention of printing, anymore than Twitter is the full invention of the internet ... It’s a little development within it that seems so small. And there was the little development of the hand presses that led to magazines, journalism...’<sup>7</sup> Fry further noted that the titles of these publications bore a curious similarity to Twitter:

They were called things like The Rambler, The Idler, The Tattler, Spectator. It was all very trivial ... They weren’t called Earnest Debate. They weren’t called Serious Penetration of Issues or The Philosopher...

And by such strange and curious byways, huge upheavals in the way people relate, the way people respond to each other and to political ideas and the way they push those ideas forward can be promulgated and it isn’t anything you could ever predict. It isn’t anything you can actually control.<sup>8</sup>

Fry’s remarks were a response to the view of Twitter as little more than *scuttlebutt* and fluff. This view of Twitter is perhaps best summed up by *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd’s memorable quote that ‘Twitter seems like telegrams without the news’.<sup>9</sup>

Fry’s remarks are quoted here, not to suggest that Twitter has usurped the place occupied by magazines in our culture. And nor am I suggesting that it will, in time, enjoy a similar place in our culture as that taken by magazines and political pamphlets. A form of publishing that only permits 140 characters per message is going to carve out its own niche within the culture, rather than replace others.

Twitter, rather, is having its own effects on publishing, writing and journalism that are different, and potentially no less significant than those of other publications magazines, newspapers, pamphlets and books. Summarising the different ways that Twitter is being used by journalists, Hermida categorises short message publishing services such as

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<sup>7</sup> (2010) ‘Stephen Fry: In defence of the modern digital world’, PM, ABC Radio National, 26 July. <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2010/s2964649.htm> Accessed 21 September 2010.

<sup>8</sup> (2010) ‘Stephen Fry: In defence of the modern digital world’, PM, ABC Radio National, 26 July <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2010/s2964649.htm> Accessed 21 September 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Dowd, Maureen, (2009) ‘To Tweet or Not to Tweet’, *New York Times*, 21 April, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/22/opinion/22dowd.html> Accessed 5 October, 2010.

Twitter as 'awareness systems', providing journalists with more complex ways of understanding and reporting on the subtleties of public communication'.<sup>10</sup> It is, he suggests, a new form of 'para-journalism' that he refers to as 'ambient journalism': not quite journalism, but a kind of enabler of journalism proper.

There are a number of different ways to illustrate Twitter's role in ambient journalism, but perhaps one of the more interesting examples is how journalists themselves have used the service as another avenue to publish and source information. Journalists such as Fairfax radio journalist and recent Young Walkley winner Latika Bourke and others, often conduct 'live tweets' from the press conferences, delivering real-time coverage of major news stories, such as the recent ALP leadership challenge.

Sharing news and information isn't confined to journalists. According to Evan Williams, one of the founders of Twitter, around 25 per cent of the 90 million tweets sent each day contain links to other information.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, Twitter is being used to connect up digital content in new ways.

Twitter is also being used as a service to drive stories and source comment. For example, during the election campaign, when Julia Gillard's wardrobe seemed to be a serious issue of debate, *upstart* – which is La Trobe's journalism publication launched by my colleague Dr Lawrie Zion and I in June 2009 – used Twitter to turn the tables and query male MPs about their own wardrobe choices. We received 5 responses from Federal MPs and wrote about them.<sup>12</sup> In this instance, Twitter was used as a light-hearted way to make a more serious point about the media's perceptions of male and female politicians.

Another was the idea to combine Twitter with Google Maps in what is commonly known as a 'mash up' in a project that we called '#ozelection: a nation tweeting to itself'. The project invited users to insert the hashtag '#ozelection' along with the postcode of their present location into their election-related tweets so they would appear on a Google map.

For those unfamiliar with Twitter and its associated terminology, a Twitter hashtag is word or a phrase – without any spaces – that is preceded by the hash symbol '#'. When this is included in a tweet, the hashtag displays as an active link which, if clicked, generates an aggregated feed of all the other tweets that use this same hashtag.

Shows such as the ABC's discussion panel show, *Q&A*, for example, make a point of telling their viewers to use the hashtag #qanda when commenting on the discussion and the show's panellists. In the case of the *Q&A* hashtag, clicking the link generates a live feed of what other viewers/tweeters are saying about the show as it goes to air.

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<sup>10</sup> Hermida, Alfred, (2010), 'Twittering the News: The emergence of ambient journalism', *Journalism Practice*, Vol. 4, No 3, 298.

<sup>11</sup> Crabb, Annabel, (2010) 'The end of journalism as we know it (and other good news)', *The Drum*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, October 27. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/10/27/3050027.htm?site=thedrum> Accessed: 28 October 2010.

<sup>12</sup> (2010) 'What are our male pollies wearing?', *upstart*, 30 July. <http://www.upstart.net.au/2010/07/30/what-are-our-male-pollies-wearing/> Accessed: 28 October 2010.

Importantly, the aggregated comments can be refreshed at regular intervals, so that you can have a kind of running discussion or back channel of viewer conversation about the show as it is going to air. Viewers can also interact with one another, by prefacing another Twitter users' name with the 'at' ('@') symbol and including it in their tweet. This creates a more lively experience of watching television, since viewers can comment on the show as it goes to air – and then comment on one another's tweets.

With the #ozelection project, users weren't simply confined to text messages, but could also send photos from the campaign trail to the map, so as to build up a photographic record of the campaign.

The inspiration for the 'a nation tweeting to itself' project came from two similar examples where Twitter and Google Maps had been used to facilitate national conversations. Firstly, Ben Marsh, a web developer living in Leicestershire in the UK created a Google Maps/Twitter mash-up called 'uksnow' that used the hashtag #uksnow and postcodes to aggregate coverage of the snowfalls in the UK in 2009.<sup>13</sup>

Marsh's site was launched before Christmas 2009 and attracted approximately 160,000 hits and recorded 60,000 reports. The site was also co-hosted by *The Guardian's* website [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk).<sup>14</sup> Drawing on people from the UK, the site created a user-driven composite picture of the snow falls over the UK in 2009–2010. Users could post images of the snow in the area. No doubt part of *The Guardian's* interest in the map was that it enabled them to draw on the energy of their readers to offer national coverage of the snowfalls that went beyond what they could have supplied if they had relied on their own resources.

If coverage of a whiteout seems a little gimmicky, then another example might serve to show the potential of this technology. Rather than cover a whiteout, another Twitter/Google Map mash up was used to cover a media blackout. Iran Protest Tweets, which was created by Indian-born software developer Virender Ajmani, who now resides in the US, made it possible to track protest tweets about the contested Iranian election in 2009 in the Middle East, Europe, and the east and west of the United States.<sup>15</sup>

The '#ozelection: a nation tweeting to itself project' was directly inspired by both Marsh and Ajmani's mash ups. It was a means by which to track tweets around the 2010 federal election. There were some challenges with the project.

The first was that we had to get tweeters to add a specific hashtag to their tweets and insert their postcode, which required an education campaign prior to the election. We launched in May 2010, but there was a slow take-up.

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<sup>13</sup> Marsh, Ben, (2010) '#uksnow Map 2.0', January. <http://uksnow.benmarsh.co.uk/> Accessed: 26 September 2010.

<sup>14</sup> (2010) 'UK snow map — tweet your pictures', [guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), 5 January. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/interactive/2010/jan/05/weather-snow-pictures> Accessed: 26 September, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Ajmani, Virender, (2010) 'Iran Protest Tweets', <http://www.mibazaar.com/irantweets.html> Accessed: 26 September, 2010.

A second challenge was what hashtag to use. The hashtags that are used for specific events are collectively generated by the Twitter user-community. Anyone can create their own hashtag, but it will only become useful if lots of people start using them. We proposed #ozelection, but it turned that most people used #aus2010 or #ausvotes. These had to be added during the campaign.

The third challenge was getting people to use their postcode. This was necessary for the tweet to be plotted on the Google Map. While Twitter has a feature called geo-tagging – which automatically works out where your computer is based on your internet connection – users have to choose to switch it on. And many don't either for privacy reasons (they have no wish for others to know where they're tweeting from), or because they have no idea that the feature exists or what it does.

To some extent, these issues were solved by other news organisations coming on board to promote the project. The #ozelection project featured on *ABC Radio National's Future Tense* program, in *The Australian* and was co-hosted by Crikey. With their significant subscriber base, Crikey were able to promote the project, which increased the numbers of people tweeting.

As an experiment in ambient journalism, the #ozelection project was a partial success. All up, the site captured over 30,000 tweets using one of the hashtags - although only a fraction of these inserted a postcode – which means that many of the tweets were simply related to the election and not explicitly designed to appear on the site. Nevertheless, all of the election-related tweets – the text and the Twitter username – have been captured in database and provide a unique snapshot of tweets related to the election. The next part is to go through this mass of data to look at what this found. Perhaps the real utility of this data is in offering some baseline data to compare how social media – and people's sentiments – change from one election to the next.

More generally, the experiment has a number of lessons about the use of online services such as Twitter in research. The key one is that there are ways of capturing these parts of our culture in the digital age, but they need to be quick and lightweight. Whether a map mash-up is the best way to do this is open to question. The requirement to add a postcode to a tweet – thereby eating up valuable characters – may have been too high a hurdle for a quick and disposable messaging system like Twitter.

And perhaps in a media saturated country like Australia, unlike somewhere like Iran, where there are any alternative and open forums for discussion and debate, Twitter isn't as important as a way to spread ideas.

Twitter certainly isn't about to take over the cultural real estate currently occupied by magazines or newspapers. And, who knows, it may well be a passing fad – early 21st century equivalent of the pet rock, its users having long departed for the next online novelty. Even if that is the case, Twitter will be a footnote in our forms of cultural expression. That changes – however fleetingly – the nature of our cultural commonwealth. And that, alone, makes it worthy of study.

# TOM O'REGAN

## *Cinema, the Academy and Digitalisation: Some Observations*

Much of this symposium is concerned with both:

- how the changing circumstances of our cultural institutions suggest the need for new kinds of academic engagement; and
- how academic approaches might themselves need to adjust not only to accommodate what is happening in cultural institutions but within our scholarship.

Both our cultural institutions and our apprehension of them are being repositioned through what has been variously called the transition to digital, the advent of social media, and the power of computing and telecommunications not only for the creation and transmission of culture but also for its visualisation and analysis. In this session I am concerned with three areas:

- The changing academic relation to cinema as a cultural institution. This is a story of the academy's continuing, diversifying and increasingly multi-disciplinary engagements with the cinema in its various historical and contemporary dimensions. The cinema has always had multiple academic attentions as befits a cultural form so evidently a matter of aesthetics; of cultural consumption inside and outside the home; of policy and regulation; and of industry and management. So this diverse attention is not new – its contemporary configuration(s) are.
- The consequences of digitalisation for cinema as a traditional media, and for new and emerging media; and
- The consequences of digitalisation for our scholarship of the cinema. This is about how our instruments and techniques for understanding, analysing and apprehending the cinema are being recalibrated.

I initially hesitated centering digitalisation because the transition to digital is a component of larger media transformations. Let's turn to the first of my concerns.

### **Academia and the cinema as a cultural institution.**

A lot of academics drawn from an increasing array of disciplines now write about the cinema. They draw attention to its different aspects. There is cinema for the usual suspects: in contemporary screen and media studies; art theory and criticism; in literary and drama/performance studies; in philosophy where there has been much interesting work done particularly in relation to the nature of the cinematic image and its relation to place and a philosophy of art (*Carroll 2008*); in cultural history where what was once called the history of popular culture has morphed into multi-faceted histories of cultural expression (*Sassoon 2006*); in sociology and anthropology as part of the ongoing concern with the sociology of culture and anthropology of art. But alongside these there is the cinema for business and management, economic and cultural geographers, urban and regional planners, economists and policy analysts.

These last disciplinary engagements have to do with a growing sense of the importance of the cultural economy to cities and governments alike. The media industries more generally have become part of the ensemble of, variously, urban entertainment, creative industries, and knowledge-based industries. As perceptions of the importance of culture to place making and city branding has grown, so too have ideas of 'creative city' policies and strategies and of securing for a city the 'creative class'. As Ben Goldsmith and I (2005) found the building of film studios – production infrastructure for high budget film and television – became associated with urban renewal, inter-city competition, national strategies for developing national champions for world city status among other things.

Three of the 'compass works' for me of these contemporary attentions are: Donald Sassoon's (2006) remarkable cultural history *Culture of the Europeans* with its commanding view of nearly 180 years of cultural production across diverse cultural forms, Noel Carroll's (2008) philosophy primer *The Philosophy of the Motion Picture*, and Allen J Scott's study of the geography and industry of Hollywood in *On Hollywood: The Place, the Industry* (2005).

### **Digitalisation of cinema**

These academic attentions have been encouraged by our next story, the digital transformation of the cinema. In the first instance this is a story of the relation between cinema and new and emerging media. When we (Ben Goldsmith, Sue Ward and I) began our research on globally dispersed film and television production we were acutely aware we were in the midst of an extraordinary transition to digital in nearly every domain of film and TV production, distribution and exhibition, and consumption.

This transition had given rise to the usual utopian imagining of small scale film and TV production bypassing the Hollywood majors and traditional distribution altogether to directly address and build audiences (Kenner 1999). The big sound stages were in Kenner's celebrated *Wired* article dinosaurs. But what we found was not the demise of the studio but its increasing centrality. Larger and more complex sound stages were being built all over the world. And, as it turned out, these sound stages were very much tied up with the transition to digital.

The story of these new sound stages was not one to be explained in terms of traditional media versus new media. It was, instead, a story of new media in old media, old media transforming new media, old media becoming new media. Digitalisation in film and TV production is a root and branch reconstruction. It was affecting everything from ticketing to postproduction to the scheduling of production tasks. And in this mix physical production spaces were more, not less, important to higher budgeted internationally oriented film and television production.

The 'can do' netizen posting his or her productions on You Tube and the growing computer games industry seems to be the flip side of these developments. This is a story of innovation at every level of the production, distribution, exhibition and consumption cycle and so emphasises revolutionary change and new structural models and modes of expression. But alongside this is the incremental transformation of 'old media' as new



media are incorporated into old media production processes, formats and platforms. We clearly need to attend to both stories.

### **Digitalisation's consequences for our scholarship of this medium**

The third part of our story is the consequences of digitalisation for scholarship. *The Film Studio* (2005) was my first book project based on research in a digital form. This was not just material on the internet. It was also the raft of newspaper articles drawn from Factiva, the journal articles delivered to my desktop, and the electronic prepublication version of Scott's *On Hollywood*. What I noticed was that we were using materials from journals that I would previously have never thought about consulting.

The tools that Screen Studies researchers are increasingly using are also digital. Like many others in the humanities and social sciences I have been drawn to geographical information systems and the visualisation through mapping they provide to afford new ways of understanding data. It was only when we put Sydney film production and postproduction companies on maps with roads that we came to see the significance of arterial roads to company location. This helped us conceptualise Sydney's film and television industry as a cluster organised not so much on a grid of streets as in London or in a dedicated site as in Hilversum in Holland but in terms of suburbs rendered functionally proximate by car.

The large scale digitisation and research infrastructure projects undertaken in the humanities such as AustLit and AusStage have driven the uptake of new analytical techniques. While these research infrastructures have been developed for literature and drama not screen studies, they provide traces of film and television production activity which we are using to create the ScreenLit community within AustLit. Although in its early stages it provides a reasonably robust if incomplete map of Australian feature film and TV drama production in a relational database form. We are using it to sketch trajectories of scriptwriting over the 20th century and to answer such questions as: how many TV dramas have been able to be sustained at any one time on Australian TV? And what is the average shelf-life of Australian TV series? This is certainly modest in comparison to what is being achieved in the study of Australian literature and drama. But there is an area in which Screen Studies has made more progress. This is the study of consumption and the organisation of viewing. I am referring here to the work of Richard Maltby, Mike Walsh, Deb Verhoeven, Kate Bowles et al which focuses on film consumption and its spatial organisation over a large slice of time.

### **Conclusion**

The cinema and its study are being reworked. Are we seeing a future in which our disciplinary fields are becoming more blurred and our invisible colleges more open-ended?

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## **Session Three**

### ***Contested Heritages***



# NUNO VASCO OLIVEIRA

## ***Across the Tangible and Intangible of Nation-Building: Contested Heritages in the New-Born State of Timor-Leste***

To call it '*the world's youngest nation*' is equivalent to say that it is within the state's womb that the nation is created and consolidated, when in fact the state, to which the people come before, should not be – otherwise it could be oppressive – more than the political crystallization of an existing nationality.

Luís F. Thomaz, *O País dos Belos*

Fact: more than 40,000 years of human history is suggested by archaeological records, with many other 'stories' provided by oral tradition that connect man to the island, myths to places, and the present to the time of the ancestors.

Fact: the most extensive group of rock art paintings in Island Southeast Asia exists in caves and rockshelters whose history of occupation during thousands of years could have ended during the recent liberation struggle, except that many such sites are still being revisited on a regular basis by people as they are sacred within communities.

Fact: a rich and diverse culture in cosmologies, myths, languages and dialects, architectonic expressions, music and dances exists, notwithstanding the fact that the island was removed from any major civilisation that reached other parts of the archipelago before the arrival of the first European, and despite the wave of violence that killed by the thousands during a quarter of a century, displacing people and habits, destroying physical evidence, and nearly erasing the memory that allows culture to reinvent itself.

Fact: a colonial past that beyond moral judgment left marks that are unique both in a regional and world context, with architectural forms that may in the future be classified as UNESCO World Heritage Sites (see, for example, Macao and Malacca), and used for cultural tourism purposes, making Timor-Leste one of the few countries in the world and in Asia that relates to the Portuguese language and culture diaspora.

In Timor-Leste, one of the world's earliest *states*, history of human occupation goes back ca. 42,000 years. At a local level, the work carried out by a team of international archaeologists was most welcome as it confirmed traditional perceptions of a time before the arrival of first Europeans, supported by oral history and customary practice.

However, the data provided by archaeology, history and anthropology has had so far little relevance in the ways current politicians and elite members convey a sense of identity at a national level, both within the country and abroad. The point raised here is that of the role cultural institutions and practitioners dealing with the past may play in supporting state-building, through the range of historical and anthropological information by which the nation – formed by all tangible and intangible preexistences – has long existed.

Ignacio Taibo II said in his book on 'Che' Guevara (*Ernesto Guevara, also known as El Che* 1996) that 'one cannot tell history from the consequences to the origins, it falsifies the perspective.' The same could be said about nation-building processes. Timorese elites – like any other elite around the world – recreated a sense of identity that is both a social and a political construct. If it does not shield itself in deep historical grounds, it runs the risk of not being accepted by common cultural practitioners, i.e. most of the population in rural areas, living from subsistence farming and with very close ties to customary practice and tradition.

Besides the archaeological evidence of early human occupation, the eastern part of the island comprising Timor-Leste includes some 16 different languages and many more dialects, with evidence of both Austronesian and Papuan language groups. Before the arrival of the first Europeans, Papuan communities first and Austronesian speaking populations later made contact with the island and brought with them not just languages but also plant and animal species, as well as different knowledge systems that can be seen in material culture items such as earth ovens, pottery, stone and metal tools.

During the last two to three thousand years, a prolific tradition of painting art in caves and rockshelters also developed, and one of the easternmost regions in the country today (Tutuala) bares some of the most impressive rock art existing in the whole of Island Southeast Asia.

According to written Chinese sources, merchants from areas in China must have made contact and started trading with Timorese populations as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Many Chinese-Timorese families who remained in the island after the 16<sup>th</sup> century and up to this date, probably descend from those early migration groups. It is also known that regional trade and alliances were established between neighbouring islands in Island Southeast Asia, including Timor. Evidence of such trade was reported by the first Portuguese that landed in Timor, and at least evidence of one ancient alliance is known through the archaeological record, linking Makassar people from the island of Sulawesi to the northern shores of East Timor, close to the capital, Dili.

Portuguese presence began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, mainly through Dominican monks and the search for the island's most prized goods: sandalwood, honey and beeswax. For centuries, the Portuguese presence was mainly felt in coastal areas, where fortresses were built to control trade, as well as through some catholic missions established in more inland areas. The original capital, Oecusse (today an enclave located in the western part of the island), was moved to Dili in 1769, after pressure and war raged by Dutch troops and their local allies, the *Topasses* or 'black Portuguese' (half-caste from both Portuguese and local Timorese lineage).

It was not until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Portuguese presence begun to be felt through the whole of the eastern half of the island, and not just along the coast. This period, marked by several military campaigns, an administrative reform and the extension of coffee plantations through forced labour, marks the true beginning of the Portuguese colonial era. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new agricultural and social reforms, as well as a harsher taxation system lead to major local uprisings and the concomitant response by the few Portuguese troops in the territory.

In February 1942, and following the uninvited arrival of both Australian and Dutch troops a few months earlier, Japan breaks Portuguese neutrality in World War Two and invades Timor. The Japanese occupation lasted until September 1945 and resulted in between 40,000 to 60,000 deaths – some 10-15% of the Timorese population at the time.

The period that followed World War Two was one of major infrastructure reconstruction, and most buildings of Portuguese origins still subsisting in Timor-Leste today date from this period. Amongst these are a number of administration buildings, churches and schools, a reflection of the country's own colonial imperial vision that despite international pressure saw Portugal as a nation that stretched from mainland Europe to the half-island in the Indonesian archipelago. It is thus not by accident that language, religion and public buildings remain as some of the most distinctive features evoking Portuguese heritage in modern Timor-Leste today.

The point I wish to discuss in this paper – for which the short historical account given above serves as a discussion trigger – is what represents matters of cultural and historical relevance when talking about East Timorese national identity. Even though one should not discard the recent influences and changes that resulted from the recent Indonesian occupation – which was not just militarily brutal but also very efficient from a language and cultural perspective – and the global mobilisation against occupation that led to liberation, Timorese elites should probably be looking at the history of their island with much greater pride and a sense of how useful it can be asserting what constitutes Timor-Leste's identity.

At a moment in time when new cultural institutions such as the future National Library and National Museum of Timor-Leste are being planned and developed, it is critical that decisions be made regarding the possible ways in which the country's identity is shaped. It is argued here that national identity can only be built when a country owns its own past, and that cultural institutions should be based on the recognition that history and heritage matter and are key to develop a culture of dialogue and peace.

# KEIR REEVES

## *Are History and Heritage a Good Fit?*

O Lorde ... blesse thyne heritage. *Book of Common Prayer, Te Deum* (1549).

When Graeme Davison meditated on the use and abuse of Australian history, he chided 'that we play fast and loose in our reckonings with the past, giving our forefathers credit when it suits us but ruling off their debts if the liability seems large'. A decade on since Davison's work was first published I want to reflect here on the very important relationship between heritage and history, with particular reference to Australia and the Asia-Pacific. This methodological intersection is one that frames much of the current discussion between intangible heritage and heritage values associated with built environment throughout the region. In a sense it mirrors similar discussions about the relationship between archaeology and history in historical archaeology. The question that I will ask in this paper is a short one with a long answer: are history and heritage a good fit?

Many of the changes to academic, professional and amateur historical practice over the past few decades have been profound: labour history, women's history, social history, oral history and cultural history have each generated significant new ways of thinking about the past. Yet the general aim of historical writing, whatever its sub-disciplinary focus, is to explain, recount and re-imagine people, places and things that have their origins in the past. History's strength lies partly in its ability to straddle the humanities and the social sciences: to put the particular in the context of the general in a way that is engaging, creative and imaginative. Its other strength is in the disciplinary practice of leaving a trail of sources so that anyone (sometimes with a bit of training) might easily discover the document, book or person cited. The comparative value of a piece of historical writing is marked by how well sources are arranged, how skilfully they are interpreted and how well the argument for which they are employed is advanced.

Where the changes to history over the last forty years have been profound, the changes to heritage have been even greater. Heritage was once a word used to describe the concept of a people chosen by God. The Christadelphian church's network of prep to 12 schools in Australia – each called Heritage College – certainly uses the term in a biblical sense. Since the 1970s, however, using the word in this manner has become rare. Heritage as an inherited temporal estate has held its meaning with far more longevity. The more significant shift in its usage has been in the way that it now describes what all of us – rather than members of a particular family or group – have inherited. As Davison observed, heritage is 'a concept grounded in the first person plural'.

Any familial link that we might share with people from the past matters little in this regard. Founded in 2005, *Australian Heritage* magazine 'celebrates the birthright of all Australians – the stories, the people and the places that we, as Australians, have inherited and pass on to future generations'. Place has become far more important in identifying 'our' heritage.



History fits well within heritage where it can demonstrate a connection to place. One report on the heritage of Victoria's central goldfields argues that it is 'better to start with the historical research and then compare this with the features on the ground in order to define cultural landscapes, rather than define units and then identify historic themes within the units'. What gets omitted when place is used to identify history can often seem stark: Vanuatu's first UNESCO World Heritage listed site was Chief Roi Mata's Domain, not the sites from which ni-Vanuatu were black-birded to the Queensland canefields. More recently in Tasmania, the inclusion of the Port Arthur prison among the list of Australian World Heritage convict sites became part of the debate over the location of a freeway in Richmond, north of Hobart, which opponents claimed would be built over a 40,000 year old midden.

The tensions about what to include or indeed what to privilege in terms of significance is not unique to the Australian and the Pacific region. In Luang Prabang, situated in north-eastern Laos PDR, post-colonial tensions are apparent in the nature of how the world heritage inscribed city is interpreted for its heritage values. Laos government officials are loathe to feature the royal heritage of the city as it conflicts with the Communist government's recent history of postcolonial liberation. Likewise the overwhelmingly French *La Maison du Patrimoine* in Luang Prabang emphasises the importance of the unique hybrid French-Laos architecture seemingly at the expense of intangible cultural life and custom of the Laos who live in Luang Prabang. Indeed the disconnect between people (history) and place (built heritage) in Luang Prabang along with tourism-led development pressures on the city are central to its future as a designated World Heritage city.

As place has become ever more central to the means by which the past is located in the present, re-discovering non-physical aspects of the past (such as speech, ideas, emotions, culture and attitudes) has taken on the language of heritage. 'Intangible heritage' and 'associative cultural landscapes', for example, sit somewhere between metaphor and the actual description of the past. There is certainly something seductive about the idea of history as intangible heritage. Assessing past practices against a list of certain local, state, national or universal values at least offers historians some opportunities to participate more fully in an area dominated by architects and associated professions.

The idea of heritage as an inheritance favours the material environment. History and heritage will simply have to make a good fit when establishing what is important and valuable about the built environment. Taking the past on its own terms, however, proves to create a more difficult relationship for history and heritage. Place is nowhere as central to history as it is to heritage.

Identifying the fault lines that lie between these two approaches to the past need not mean that they are unable to work together, but it does provide some warning about how and when they are likely to fit, and when they are not. It might be necessary to read the geology of cultural landscape to discern some of the fault lines that lie between history and heritage.

Because of the emphasis on the built environment, heritage as an emerging stand-alone discipline has greater representations among architects, planners, building

conservators, public servants and archaeologists than amongst historians, sociologists and cultural geographers. Accordingly in Australia there are disagreements about what constitutes cultural landscapes or indeed what the relationship is between intangible heritage and history in determining public memory in the present day.

The point here is to emphasise the need for a greater interdisciplinary dialogue between heritage and history throughout Australia and also abroad (an over familiar tocsin to be sure, but nonetheless a timely one). It is only through integrating these approaches in a more rigorous and meaningful manner through their original epistemological origins that this can be achieved. Twin approaches that enable practitioners and researchers to link the historical past with the physical heritage of the present day.

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Thanks to Damien Williams, Colin Long, Rebecca Sanders and Andrew May.

# ANITA SMITH

## *Contested Heritages in the Pacific Islands*

In most parts of the globe community values, consultation and engagement are recognised as core elements in heritage management, at least in policy if not practice. In the Pacific, 'community' takes on a powerful central position in the implementation and success or otherwise of programs for heritage protection and conservation. The vast majority of citizens of the Pacific Island nations are customary land owners with their rights to land – access, use and development – enshrined in the Constitutions of many island states.<sup>1</sup> Rather than heritage contestation being located in the assessment of values and significance as is often the case in Western countries, in the Pacific Island nations where heritage conservation programs are funded primarily through international donor programs conflict commonly arises as a consequence of the tension between traditional or customary tenure and practices and the regulatory systems or programs for heritage protection promoted by international agencies and non-government organisations. The overwhelming majority of these programs are focused on environmental or 'natural' heritage but at the local level these programs must be mediated through customary or cultural practices.

Largely as a product of the institutions of past colonial regimes, along with the need to engage with international heritage programs, a distinction between 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage exists in national government agencies and legislation and regional organisations. This is a framework that is largely irrelevant for local communities in the region. This was clearly articulated to the international community at the UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting in Christchurch Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2007. In a landmark appeal to the Committee, representatives of 11 Pacific Island nations argued that the outstanding heritage of their region offers a unique contribution to the World Heritage List. This contribution is characterised by the close continuing genealogical connections between peoples between islands and across vast oceans; an enormous wealth of cultural diversity and

traditional heritage management practices that reinforce the inseparable relationship between communities, cultures and environment that underpins sustainable development ... [P]rotection of our heritage must be based on respect for and understanding and maintenance of the traditional cultural practices, Indigenous knowledge and systems of land and sea tenure in the Pacific.<sup>2</sup>

If one was to evaluate the institutions, legislation and programs for the protection of cultural heritage in the Pacific Island nations as a measure of the strength, extent or

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper I am referring primarily to the independent Pacific Island states and to their Indigenous populations while recognising that the situation is somewhat different to that presented here for non-Indigenous and displaced communities in the region and Indigenous communities in the colonial territories and states who do not have the same legal rights and privileges as those of Indigenous citizens in the independent nations.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2007 Presentation of the World Heritage Programme for the Pacific WHC-07/31.COM/11C

importance of cultural heritage in the region a fairly grim picture emerges. With a few notable exceptions such as the Vanuatu Kajoral Senta, the museums and cultural centres of the independent Pacific Island states are at best struggling and some have effectively ceased to function. Government agencies overseeing cultural heritage are greatly under-resourced and often subsumed within other ministries or departments such as education or sport. The nature and extent of legislation for the protection of cultural heritage is limited and much is outdated; where it exists, compliance and enforcement are undermined by the very low priority given the protection of cultural heritage by governments of the region.

At a regional level the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) is charged with looking after regional issues around culture with their Human Development Program. The culture section provides excellent guidance to the region on cultural heritage policy including the Model Law for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture,<sup>3</sup> a framework developed by the SPC for use by governments in the region that are considering development of national legislation for the protection of Indigenous knowledge. The culture section is however is very under-resourced and programs are reliant on obtaining donor funding. In contrast, the equivalent regional body for environmental or 'natural' heritage is the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), a far larger and better resourced organisation charged with protecting and managing the environment and natural resources and coordinating national and regional approaches responding to environmental issues such as climate change. This emphasis on the protection of natural heritage in the Pacific reflects the global discourse of environmental protection, namely that local threats to the environment are threats to the global community, evident in the support – human, technical and financial – that Pacific Island nations receive from intergovernmental donor organisations such as the Global Environment Facility for implementation of International conventions and agreements spearheaded by the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) to which 14 Pacific Island states are signatories and for local, national and regional programs in association with non-government environmental organisations including the World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International and International Union for the Conservation of Nature<sup>4</sup> all of which have regional offices in the Pacific.

There are no international non-government organisations for cultural heritage with offices in the region. Within the region the Pacific Islands Museums Association and the more recently established ICOMOS Pasifika play a important role in maintaining a regional network for Pacific Islanders involved in cultural heritage conservation and an avenue for engagement with international cultural heritage organisations but their resources for capacity building or specific projects are extremely limited and ad hoc.

In marked contrast to the lack of institutional support for cultural heritage in the region, at the local level culture remains strong in language, place, performance and in structuring the ways in which people organise themselves in the landscape and use

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<sup>3</sup> Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2002 Regional Framework for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture Noumea: SPC

<sup>4</sup> Global Environment Facility <<http://www.thegef.org/gef/whatisgef>>; World Wildlife Fund Pacific <<http://www.wwfpacific.org.fj/>>; Conservation Internationale Melanesia <<http://www.cimelanesia.org.pg/>>; IUCN Oceania <<http://cms.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/oceania/>>

resources. Cultural heritage is arguably better recognised, more respected and in many ways far better protected in the Pacific Islands than in many other parts of the globe and in particular in other developing nations. This is largely because despite the previous century of international development philosophy arguing that the economic and social advancement of the Pacific nations would be possible only by dissolving of systems of traditional land tenure, over 80% of land and sea in the independent Pacific Island states is still held in customary ownership.<sup>5</sup> This has ensured the continuation of significant aspects of traditional food production and resource use, governance systems, and other cultural practices.

These traditional practices are, however, under pressure from increasing populations and development, migration, unsustainable resource use especially in forestry, mining and fisheries, rising sea levels and the desire of local communities to have access to opportunities of the global community and cash economy. There is a recognised need for a more coordinated and systematic approach to protection and management of Pacific Island heritage, including effective legislation, and for this to be embedded in programs for sustainable livelihoods at local, provincial, national and regional scales. Achieving this will only be possible with financial and technical support from international agencies, tying local objectives to outside objectives and processes in the implementation of heritage programs.

In response to the vitality of customary land tenure in the Pacific, and the strengthening of regional cultural programs, international programs now increasingly recognise and accommodate Pacific Island perspectives on heritage and conservation and work within local customary protocols. This is clearly evident in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Pacific. The Pacific Islands are the least represented geo-cultural region on the World Heritage List. To address this, over the past decade the World Heritage Centre has actively sought to increase membership of the Convention in the region and the number of Pacific Island properties on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Convention (1972) is the only international convention that specifically recognises cultural and natural heritage and properties may be nominated to the List for their cultural and/or natural values. Regardless of which, in the Pacific Islands customary land tenure means that management of World Heritage sites must be mediated through traditional systems of governance and cultural practices. In 1998 the inscription of East Rennell Island in the Solomon Islands on the World Heritage List for its natural values was a landmark, being the first World Heritage property from a Pacific Island nation. Inscription took place in the absence of a formal management plan although at the time it was assumed the natural values of the island, its biodiversity, would be protected through customary practices. However the absence of an agreed understanding of how customary practices intersect with scientific models for the assessment, protection and management of biodiversity has created ongoing and as yet unresolved tension between the Rennellese customary owners; the Solomon Islands Government, who under the Convention are responsible for protection of the site; and the World Heritage Committee. A local initiative now underway to map the cultural values of the Rennellese is seen as the much needed bridge between customary owners,

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) 2008 *Making Land Work*, Volume 1 Reconciling Land and Development in the Pacific Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra, June 2008.

their traditional management and the requirements of the government under the Convention.

Customary systems of decision-making and management may assist communities to negotiate outside pressures. However any romanticised notions of traditional ecological practices held by outsiders need to be tempered with concern for livelihoods and the realisation that conservation, as it is understood by non-locals, might not accord with local expectations. A challenge, particularly for conservationists, is examining how traditional management structures do the equivalent work of a Western conservation programme. Community approaches to conservation may seem inconsistent or incompatible when viewed through the lens of an international conservation regime. Assessment is coloured by preconceived expectations of best-practice in management. This includes requirements for governance, such as committees, reports and plans, which stand as representative of proper management. These may not be superfluous to a coherent customary management system, but a site being well managed under customary tenure may not have the need for such heritage management structures and tools.

Communities and governments in the region are keen to engage with international conservation programs not only because they are interested in protecting their heritage and resources but also as they provide a source of income, training and avenue for communication with the global community. The challenge is for processes of heritage protection and national legislation to govern and enforce this protection to be based in and evolve from traditional systems of governance and cultural practices rather than imposed from outside. Given this, a more appropriate foundation to protection through national legislation with its genesis in the region may be that of the SPC's innovative Model Law, discussed above, rather than models of environmental legislation adapted from countries outside the region. The Model Law is has been designed to strengthen the continuing traditional land tenure in the region, in accordance with the rights of customary owners but is currently under-utilised by governments in the region, possibly because it is seen as relevant only to cultural heritage. Although the emphasis of the Model Law is on intangible and movable heritage this includes traditional knowledge of the environment and resources, and expressions of culture may include places.

Since the inscription of East Rennell on the world Heritage List much progress has been made in detailing traditional governance and management systems evident in more recently inscribed World Heritage sites including Chief Roi Mata's Domain in Vanuatu and Kuk Early Agricultural Site in PNG. Their management plans based on customary decision making and resource use protect both the cultural and 'natural' values of the place through processes that recognises the centrality of land tenure and the indivisibility of people, culture and environment. Notwithstanding this, the reconciling customary management and the requirement under the World Heritage Convention for national governments to report on the state of conservation of their World Heritage properties within a framework acceptable to the international community pose future challenges.

## **Session Four**

### ***Indigenous Culture and Public Institutions***





# PHILIP JONES

## *Indigenous Culture and Public Institutions*

This topic is broad enough to allow many approaches, but as an historian interested in the trajectories and origins of collections I will take this opportunity to explore some of the shifts and landmarks in the relationships between public institutions and indigenous culture in this city, from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century until the present. Much of that story has unfolded within a few yards of where we sit today, along what we fondly call the 'cultural boulevard', North Terrace. It centres upon the tri-partite institution which became known as the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery from the 1880s until 1940. Of these institutions it was the South Australian Museum which became the key forum for the issues raised by today's topic, and in a short paper like this, it might serve best as a surrogate for discussion.

In 2012 it will be 150 years since the South Australian Institute Museum opened its doors to the public on the first floor of the Institute Building, above the Library, on the corner of Kintore Avenue. By 1862 the Aboriginal presence in Adelaide had become restricted to isolated camps on the city's fringes. As a corporate group the Adelaide Plains people were no longer visible. Not surprisingly, the principal ethnographic exhibits in the new museum were not Aboriginal at all, but Fijian – exotic and savage weapons. It took at least twenty years for Aboriginal collections to achieve the sort of prominence we take for granted today.

This shift in attitude occurred in two stages. The first impetus for change came about through the influence of International Exhibitions, particularly the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876 and the Paris Exhibition of 1878. In each case the South Australian government was asked by colonial authorities to contribute 'articles of native industry' and weapons, together with representative photographs of Aboriginal people. For the first time, the Museum's focus shifted to Aboriginal culture. None of the objects consigned to these two Exhibitions were ever returned to Adelaide – a great pity, as the Paris consignment probably included some of the only Adelaide Plains objects possessed by the Museum. But by now Waterhouse had made contact with several collectors, including the Palmerston (Darwin) based policeman-ethnographer and photographer Paul Foelsche, who continued to supply the Museum with natural history, photographs and ethnographic material. Closer to Adelaide, Waterhouse made a connection with the Point McLeay missionary, George Taplin, whose ethnographic enquiries among the Ngarrindjeri people of the Lower Lakes, Murray and Coorong resulted in a permanent written record of this culture, as well as a series of woven baskets, and carved wooden weapons retained in the collections today.

The second shift occurred during the late 1880s and early 1890s, with the important influence of two men, the Museum's Assistant Director Amandus Zietz, and its new Director, Edward Stirling. Both had a keen interest in ethnography. Stirling's interest had been fuelled by his transcontinental expedition in the company of South Australia's governor, the Earl of Kintore, during 1891. In Darwin Stirling met Paul Foelsche, and a succession of pastoralist-collectors and station operators along the Overland Telegraph Line, including the most famous of them all, the South Australian Francis Gillen. Three

years later, during the Horn Scientific Expedition to Central Australia, it was Stirling who introduced Gillen to Baldwin Spencer of the National Museum of Victoria, resulting in Australia's most influential anthropological partnership. Spencer and Gillen's *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, published in 1899, was the first text to articulate the vital connection between Aboriginal site, totemic identity, and ceremonial practice (including artistic expression) and it can therefore be seen as the founding text for much of our contemporary understanding of Aboriginal art itself.

Stirling used his Centralian contacts wisely. Within a year of his return from the 1891 expedition he had circularised a number of inland police, telegraph officers, other officials and pastoralists themselves, with a call to contribute objects to the Museum's collections. The wording of his letter reveals two framing paradigms which influenced the formation and deployment of indigenous collections for the following decades, until overtaken by another, unforeseen transition. Stirling's first paragraph read:

In view of the rapid disappearance of the Aborigines of Australia, it is much desired to obtain, for the South Australian Museum, as complete a collection as possible of all articles made and used by them. The Museum already possesses a fair number of things from some localities, but others are entirely unrepresented, and it is these gaps in the collection, representing the ethnology of the country, which we particularly wish to fill up. [<sup>AA309 Acc.161</sup>, South Australian Museum Archives]

The first paradigm involves Stirling's assumption of a 'vanishing race'. That prevailing assumption underpinned 'salvage' collection methodologies in museums and cultural institutions holding indigenous collections for many decades, and it particularly facilitated the acquisition of human remains. Ironically, while the notion of a vanishing race seems to assume the flux and effect of historical forces, it actually served also to place Aboriginal culture within an ahistorical 'ethnographic present', the domain of the 'other'. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnographic museum labels assumed artefacts to be either pristine, traditional and timeless, or contaminated by European contact.

A complex middle ground remained unexplored by museums or galleries until Aboriginal people themselves achieved historical agency. That resulted partly through the rupture of the second paradigm underlying Stirling's letter: his assumption that ethnographic objects could be arranged on a grid of types and forms, just as in natural history itself.

Curatorial practice would address the gaps and gradually 'complete the collection'. This natural history model effectively excluded the notion of a dynamic, innovative or adaptive element in Aboriginal material (or social) culture. The South Australian Museum collection contains at least one spectacular example of objects which Stirling sought to accommodate on his grid of traditional and authentic types, but which simply did not fit. These are the *toas* of Killalpaninna, objects which Stirling described as message-posts, but which seem to resemble instead an early efflorescence of the phenomenon we recognise more clearly in the Western Desert acrylic art movement, where traditional knowledge of country and mythology has been rendered into a form most appealing to the European market. As historical artefacts of carrying all the evidence of a particular frontier's zone of encounter, the *toas* fit that model.

Stirling's encyclopaedic gallery of Aboriginal Australia was opened to the public during 1914 and remained the most authoritative reference for defining Aboriginal culture and society in this city for the ensuing 70 years. In the interim, two developments exerted a major effect on attitudes towards indigenous collections. The first was the emergence of Aboriginal art, introduced to the public by sustained scholarly enquiry of a handful of anthropologists. During the 1930s Norman Tindale pioneered the method of gaining tribal distribution data and mythological routes by collecting crayon drawings on brown paper, from named Aboriginal artists. During the 1940s Charles Mountford lifted this category of documentation from a museum context into the realm of western art galleries and exhibitions, preparing the ground for broader reception of the Western Desert art movement. It is worth remembering also that Mountford was a major publicist for the work of Albert Namatjira, a vital linking figure between the arcane realm of Aboriginal ceremonial art and European forms. Mountford's collection, like Norman Tindale's in the South Australian Museum, or Donald Thomson's in Museum Victoria, is a keystone collection of the State Library of South Australia today.

With galleries and museums beginning to recognise named Aboriginal artists and their distinct styles, the anonymity and ahistorical parameters of indigenous collections began to fall away. This process was hastened by a second major development in early 20<sup>th</sup> century museology, somewhat indirect, but potent nevertheless. During 1929 the South Australian Museum curator, Norman Tindale, assisted by his director, Herbert Hale, undertook a pioneering archaeological excavation at Devon Downs on the Murray River. It was the first scientific excavation in Australia, in which distinct layers of human occupation were identified and later dated. Not only did Tindale's excavation open the way for the work of later scholars and scientists, such as John Mulvaney at nearby Fromm's Landing; it also swept away the residual assumption that Aboriginal occupation of Australia had been timeless and unchanging.

Aboriginal historical agency, the dynamism of Aboriginal art and its innovative qualities are all taken for granted today, and these assumptions underpin most of the exhibitions deriving from the collections along North Terrace and beyond, from the Flinders University Art Museum to Tandanya. Sometimes it appears as though this paradigm amounts to a new orthodoxy, in some ways as problematic as the old orthodoxy it overtook some time during the 1970s and 1980s. Collections which were once exemplars of deep-rooted unvarying cultural practices and traditions are now readily deployed to illustrate innovation and creative dynamism. In these unreflective times such contradictions often go unobserved, but for those tracing our intellectual history these shifts are revealing, and salutary.

## RON RADFORD

### *Acquiring and Presenting Aboriginal Art in Art Museums: My First 30 Years*

I have been asked to talk about the role I have played in presenting and acquiring Aboriginal art as art, in art museums. I suppose I was asked because I am now the only senior museum professional still working in an art museum who dealt directly with Aboriginal art during the 1970s and 80s. I vividly remember the difficulties and the indifferent attitudes back then.

However, having agreed to speak about my own role I decided instead to try to document the bigger and more interesting topic of when and how Aboriginal art was gradually accepted, collected and prominently displayed by art museums around Australia. But I soon realised after commencing this paper what a huge task that was, deserving of a much larger treatment and indeed, a book. So I hope you will forgive me if I revert largely to the original request – that is, to describe my own role in the acquisition and presentation of Aboriginal art. I am uncomfortable that so much is about me, but that is what I was asked to do.

Nevertheless I still want to touch on some of the steady progression long before my time. I want to tease out for example some of the implications of Baldwin Spencer's commissioning and collecting over 200 bark paintings while at Oenpelli, Arnhem Land, in 1912, and giving them to the National Museum of Victoria in 1917. He was not only the honorary director of the National Museum of Victoria but also a trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria which then shared the same building. He was an avid private collector and patron of contemporary Australian painting and encouraged the reluctant Bernard Hall, director of the National Gallery of Victoria, to collect more earnestly works by local artists such as Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin and Hans Heysen.

In 1912 he held an exhibition of the Arnhem Land barks which was advertised in the Victorian Artists Society's journal with the slogan 'PATRONISE AUSTRALIAN ART'. Spencer encouraged established artists like John Ford Paterson, McCubbin, Streeton and Heysen to acquire Aboriginal art. The National Gallery of Australia has recently acquired a small bark painting once owned by Heysen (and displayed in his house at Hahndorf) which almost certainly came from his patron Baldwin Spencer's expedition. The Spencer bark paintings were regularly on display in the Museum of Victoria and when I was growing up in Victoria in the late 1950s they seemed to be framed and displayed as art. As children we did not distinguish between the art and the ethnography visible in the same building.

In 1934 the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Australia's oldest and largest regional collection, accepted a gift of a work by Victorian Aboriginal artist William Barak. This seems to be the first Aboriginal work acquired by an art gallery. In 1939 the Art Gallery of South Australia purchased a watercolour landscape by Albert Namatjira. It was the first Aboriginal painting actually purchased by an art museum in Australia. During 1941–45, at the insistence of the Yale University Art Gallery's director, Theodore Sizer, eleven

Baldwin Spencer barks and three drawings by Tommy McCrae had been included among 144 works in the Carnegie Corporation's exhibition 'Art of Australia 1788–1941' that he and Sydney Ure Smith co-curated for a tour of North America, first shown at the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

In 1946 the Adelaide-based anthropologist C. P. Mountford was consultant to the Museum of Modern Art, New York, for the few Aboriginal works in its exhibition 'Arts of the South Seas'; in 1948 Mountford led an American-Australian expedition to Arnhem Land and in 1956 distributed the collected bark paintings to all the state art museums in Australia in the hope of stimulating them to begin active collecting programmes of their own, which they did, most notably at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. There Tony Tuckson's enthusiastic collecting of Tiwi burial poles and Yirrkala bark paintings from the late 1950s, meant that by 1960 onwards Aboriginal art, for the first time, had a highly conspicuous presence in an Australian art museum; in 1960 he also organised a large exhibition of bark paintings for nationwide tour of State galleries. Tuckson, a major painter, was Deputy Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The Art Gallery of South Australia received more than its share of Mountford's collection as I shall explain. But even earlier, in 1952, Daryl Lindsay, the director of the National Gallery of Victoria, had sought bark paintings for its collection.

In 1949, when Sir Kenneth, later Lord Clark – connoisseur, art scholar and former distinguished director of the National Gallery, London – saw Aboriginal bark paintings in Adelaide at the South Australian Museum, he found their rare beauty a revelation and declared they should be celebrated around the world. It has taken half a century for Theodore Sizer's, C. P. Mountford's and Kenneth Clark's wishes to come true.

The momentum that had been built up in the 1950s and 1960s for the acquisition and the showing of Aboriginal art in art galleries began to dissipate in the early 1970s to early 1980s. For example, Tony Tuckson died in the early seventies and Frank Norton, the director of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, who had been extremely active in acquiring works in the 1960s and early 70s, through illness largely ceased to collect after 1974. Gallery directors in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s were not as interested as some of their predecessors. And it needs to be documented that in the 1970s the emergence of Western Desert paintings caused some confusion among those who had become familiar with the more traditional art forms from Arnhem Land. Art museums were very reluctant to accept them. Adelaide played a major role in their acceptance. The Flinders University Art Museum for example played a role as pioneers in the promoting of Western Desert painting.

In my expanded paper I will talk in some detail about the difficulties I had when I became Curator of Paintings and Sculpture at the Art Gallery of South Australia in acquiring the first Western Desert painting, Clifford Possum's *Man's Love Story* 1978, to hang in a State art museum. I will talk about the first survey exhibition of Western Desert paintings in a State gallery which I curated in early 1984 and the criticism I faced when in 1983 I included eight Western Desert paintings in a major survey of Australian paintings of the 70s and 80s.

The Art Gallery of South Australia was asked to curate the major Bicentenary art exhibition which was to tour every State gallery. I was asked to be its curator. I was

determined to include as much Aboriginal art and craft, past and present, from all over Australia, as I could. But again this was not to be so straightforward even among the Aboriginal community. I will elaborate on Adelaide's collecting and display of Aboriginal painting and objects in the 80s and 90s including the prominent permanent place for Aboriginal art in the new 1996 west wing entrance atrium of the Art gallery of South Australia. This time culminated in the major Clifford Possum Retrospective which toured the State galleries in 2003/4.

I will then go on to mention my current role as Director of the National Gallery of Australia in strengthening the balance and filling the gaps in the National Gallery of Australia's Indigenous Australian art collection. The National Gallery was to undergo a building extension when I arrived. It was known as the 'front door' project. New visitors could seldom recognise where to enter the National Gallery building and we did not have the front-of-house facilities expected of a present-day art museum.

From my very first months at the National Gallery I was therefore involved in redesigning the front door project with the architect Andrew Andersons. It was to be a costly and complex exercise with a great many practical and heritage issues. I decided that if we were to go to so much trouble and expense, why not add some new collection-display galleries as well. The original Gallery building was designed in 1969 to show 1000 works but was not completed and opened until 1982. The collection now has some 150,000 works, which poses a real challenge of how to extend the Gallery's permanent collection space in future. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art did not have a specially designed space in the original building and when it opened only a correspondingly small number of Indigenous works were included in the displays.

By the time I began at the National Gallery it was a fast growing area of the national art collection and in my opinion, one of the most important, particularly for the National Gallery of Australia. So we incorporated into the design of a new entrance and facilities, on the ground level a specially designed space for the Aboriginal Memorial 1988, and on the principal display level, ten galleries for Indigenous art, the first new permanent collection spaces to be added to the original building.

The new so-called 'front door' extension was formally opened by the Governor General of Australia on 30 September 2010 and is called Stage One of the Gallery design development. The new indigenous galleries were designed as beautiful gallery rooms lit by natural daylight from above – a similar light to that in which the works were created. Each of the eleven spaces or rooms for the first time shows a different geographic region or aspect of Aboriginal Art.

In all there are over 600 Indigenous works on display in the new spaces at the entrance to the National Gallery, the largest display of Australian Indigenous art anywhere. And so it should be. Since the collection began in 1972 it has grown into what is now the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art collection, with over 7500 works. Many have been recently acquired with the new galleries in mind, to make the display comprehensive and balanced. As it happens, half of the works on display in the ten first-floor galleries have been acquired in my tenure as director. And so as not to seem to be ghettoising Indigenous art, throughout the current non-Indigenous Australian displays upstairs, Aboriginal art is also included as it has long been.

# CLAIRE SMITH

## *New Tribe, New York: an Indigenous Presence in New York City*

A small group of people stand in a circle beneath the dome of the George Gustav Heye Centre, the New York City exhibition space of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. Tomás de León, a Kuna man from Panama enacts a solstice blessing ceremony, wakening spirits in the hills of Panama, and bringing them to New York, where they will linger for four days. The rhythm of Tomás' words matters as much as the words themselves: he calls out the names of the spirits, some loudly, some quietly, according to the character of each, 'like human beings'. Hearing their names, they wake from slumber. Tomás' body can feel when they enter this space. His words keep them alive.

Normally, Tomás de León would burn cocoa beans when conducting a solstice ceremony, but he doesn't use this in New York, as the power he would solicit would be too strong for those who are unused to it. When he calls them, the spirits are ubiquitous: they are in New York, the Panama, 'everywhere' at the same time. Tomás uses contemporary metaphors to describe this ancient phenomenon:

Like a radio, not battery, just sleeping. With a battery you can hear everywhere, just like this. When I burn cocoa beans, they are like a battery. They [the spirits] hear way back to the mountains. Like [the radio from] Europe, you can hear the news.

The George Gustav Heye Centre is the former Customs House. The group is looked down on by the luscious images of maritime explorers and colonisers, ranging from Verrazano and Gómez to Hudson and Columbus. A monument dedicated to Native American trade with the Dutch stand across the road from the museum. This is thought to be the place where Peter Minuit purchased Manhattan from the Carnasie Indians for around 60 guilders worth of trinkets and beads.

This presentation ponders the juxtaposition of an Indigenous living heritage in an archetypal colonial space. Tomas de Leon's presence at the Museum coincided with the exhibition *New Tribe: New York*, in which Native American artists based in New York challenge conventional ways of viewing this iconic city and use the city's space to explore new directions and connections. New York City has the largest concentration of Native American people in the United States, and these artists are part of a "new tribe" who are using cultural institutions to re-mark an Indigenous presence in a busy, multi-cultural space and a rapidly changing, interconnected world.

## MARGO NEALE

### ***'Songlining' White Spaces: Re-Jigging Indigenous Modes of Cultural Practice In Art Galleries And Museums.***

Museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can no longer ignore Indigenous peoples and their rights and responsibilities. How do art and history museums discharge their obligations to us as Indigenous people – our histories, our values and our voices – within the dominant culture's hierarchical knowledge system, without being politically correct and patronising? How do Indigenous peoples, previously captive to anthropological discourse and unequal power relations, interrogate the histories and attitudes that defined them as 'lesser' and 'other', and now as 'special – to be approached with caution'. We, as Aboriginal people, engage in self-liberating strategies by negotiating new positions that release us from these old plot lines of imposed narratives and from newer positions of political correctness.

I will explore an active form of Indigenous agency conducive to an authentic engagement in a shared institutional environment of intercultural exchange. It is a scenario where Aboriginal people can challenge hierarchies and structures that restrict us to Indigenous-only areas – golden cages that bear comparison with our relegation to the roped-off front sections of picture theatres in the 1960s and 1970s. We can interrogate the codes of entry to the domain that includes only those Indigenous artists and curators who conform to the image of the 'other' as projected by the dominant order. Institutions can go beyond statistics (the number of Indigenous employees, collection sizes and gallery sizes) as a measure of their efforts in the Indigenous area, to instead gauge the quality of engagement through the integration of Indigenous ways of thinking and being into the structures and processes of the institutional culture.

Indigenous societies in Australia operate with flat structures that incorporate the individual in integrative networks. Conversely, Western cultural institutions are hierarchical, and have departments that capture knowledge in 'silos', promoting territorialism rather than sharing; competition rather than the cooperation and interactivity found in Indigenous knowledge systems such as the Tjukurrpa (Dreaming Law).

The Aboriginal concept of songlines is an ancient system for the retention and transmission of knowledge, derived from the stories and song cycles of travelling through country. It is a multi-layered concept which, in contemporary times, refers to the lines that connect sites of knowledge from different and shared cultures across time, place and space. For as long as Aboriginal people have been in Australia, every new piece of knowledge, every novel phenomenon, every new landform, has been incorporated into these songlines to the point that all of Australia is mapped. What is a museum or an art gallery if not a new structure for archiving and transmitting knowledge?

We could 'indigenise' the whole museum or art gallery by incorporating it into this songline structure which, as radical as it may sound, makes good sense in a number of



ways. For example, the National Museum of Australia, like the National Gallery of Australia, has the collection and the exhibition strength as well as the political will to substantiate this. Put simply, we can draw on 'indigenous' ways of thinking, as visualised in the songline concept, to connect diversity through networks of criss-crossing lines within and between cultural institutions, in ways more imaginative than the 'silo' structure allows. In western terms the songline structure has some essential affinities with the interconnectedness of the matrix model.

Aboriginal knowledge systems such as those embedded in the songlines and the dreamings concept are dynamic and responsive to change. The arrival of foreigners such as the Macassans and the Japanese with their different cultural practices were accommodated in enriching ways, and even the brutality of the British colonisation process did not erase Indigenous ways of knowing. Rather, it caused a re-configuration of these networks in different ways across the continent. New arteries were formed as new encounters were mapped in.

I will consider how a remapping of the institutional cultural terrain based on the integrative principles of the Aboriginal songlines has the capacity to unify diversity and connectedness into an eminently flexible network of interrelated themes and ideas. It would create a network that offers alternative to linear models which are currently common, and which I maintain subvert Indigenous participation.

This paper will therefore discuss how the songline principles can serve two purposes. One is to provide a re-jigging of museum and art gallery structures and processes to enable the normalisation of the employment of Indigenous staff in areas that do not currently employ Indigenous curators or administrators, such as the Asian department, the Pacific department and Australian art and material more broadly, or to non-curatorial areas such as public programs and executive management.

Secondly, and the point I will mostly focus on, is the incorporation of Indigenous practices to inform our exhibition programs. A current example of the Indigenous agency to which I refer is embedded in the National Museum of Australia's recent Aboriginal exhibitions such as *Yiwarra Kuju (One Road) – The Canning Stock Route* and a forthcoming Indigenous project on the 'Seven Sister's Songlines'. I will argue that *Yiwarra Kuju* has pioneered a new model of partnership and has set a benchmark for future Indigenous relationships with public institutions – relationships that will see a shift away from museums and art galleries being mostly the originators of Indigenous programs to them becoming more the facilitators and receivers of those programs: a shift away from the super curator model in which the curator, like a conductor, orchestrates and choreographs an exhibition, selecting, rejecting and combining works based on a self styled theme rather than a community-based model such as that pioneered in the Canning Stock Route project.

In this new model the exhibition is the by-product of a multi-disciplinary journey taken over many years by a diversity of Aboriginal artists, filmmakers, elders and youngsters from some 12 different language groups across 3 deserts involving some 200 people where the majority have relationships relevant to the site-specific stories they choose to explore. The project is initiated, directed and managed from the ground up reflecting traditional Indigenous values and practices.

The mounting of the exhibition in this model is not the final event as it usually is in current institutional practice but is rather a staging post on the journey, one of many different strategies for sharing knowledge, synonymous with the role of ceremony in Aboriginal society. For example nine new art centres have been created on Aboriginal Countries along the stock route and the skills and capacity building amongst those involved at all levels have launched new careers and activated expanding archives in the NMA and community centres simultaneously.

A major project the NMA is embarking on, initiated by desert communities and lead by an elders' council, takes the journey process to an even deeper level of engagement and access. *Alive with the Dreaming: Songlines of the Western Desert* tracks the Seven Sisters songlines (connected to the Orion and Pleiades constellation) through multiple Aboriginal countries from the west to the east of the continent

The indivisibility of art as history is songlined through the custodianship of the NMA where culture is manifest as a multi-dimensional never ending story.

## **Session Five**

### ***Scientific Institutions and the Humanities***



# OLIVER MAYO

## *Scientific Institutions and the Humanities: a CSIRO-Influenced Perspective*

A little over 20 years ago, I left the safe house of the University of Adelaide for the wilder shores of CSIRO. I was not then and am not now engaged in the humanities, a topic that I can't find in Dr Johnson's dictionary, which provides only 'humanity' meaning '4. Philology; grammatical studies. In Scotland, *humaniores literae* [i.e. Classics at Oxford etc.]'. I take the humanities to constitute a modern concept (post-Johnson, at least) and to include the disciplines of the arts (including Classics) and a little more. And I do not wish to argue about the place of economics, psychology, sociology or anthropology.

In joining Australia's pre-eminent scientific research institution, I became part of an enterprise whose remit did not and does not cover the humanities, though as the years pass it employs an increasing number of social scientists. Table 1 lists the prime function of CSIRO, viz. to conduct research for the benefit of Australia. Nowhere in the Act are the humanities mentioned.

I shall discuss only the public sector because I am almost entirely ignorant of science-based industrial companies, from Bayer to Monsanto, from Hollerith to Microsoft. I'm a professional statistician who can find no relevant statistics to present, so I shall be entirely anecdotal.

Joseph Priestley, Isaac Newton and Blaise Pascal would not have understood our topic, since for them there was no dividing line, except that theology was more important than science. Logically, they were right, since they all believed in variants of the Judaeo-Christian God, who by definition was more important than details of the real world. I mention them because they found no boundary between science and the humanities and used the same mode of investigation for everything.

Here is Priestley in an open letter to the Swedenborgians, trying to demonstrate Swedenborg's errors: 'According to the uniform language of scripture, God is equally, and every where present; and if so, what form can he possibly have? It can be nothing but that of infinite space.

To give to God the form of man, is to assign him all the functions of man, and a mode of life similar to that of a man. The form of any particular animal, beast fowl, or fish, is adapted to its own occasions, and to nothing else. If the form be changed, as from a caterpillar to a butterfly, the whole mode of life is changed in proportion. In fact, therefore, to give the Divine Being the form of a man, is to make him a man, and nothing more. In like manner, should the form of a horse be given to a man, it would be nothing less than changing the man to a horse.

...

You say, [God] consists of nothing but the properties of *wisdom, love, and life*. But what relation have any of these to *form*? It resembles Addison's apparition, which was in the shape of *the sound of a drum*.

Hoping that amusement will not be wholly inconsistent with instruction,  
(Priestley, 1989, pp. 50-51)

Why spend 200 words on a minister of religion's theological correspondence? Priestley, who died 206 years ago, was part of the Enlightenment, but still held that everything was connected to everything else, and that everything was the legitimate object of philosophical (that is, scientific) investigation. ('Everything is worthy of the attention both of a philosophical and a political reader of history which can contribute to make a people happy at home, formidable abroad, or increase their numbers; because a numerous, a secure and a happy society is the object of all human policy.' Priestley, 1788/1826, p. 295)

The world's first independent scientific research institution, the Royal Institution of Great Britain, was founded in March 1799. To quote its website, it 'was founded to introduce new technologies and teach science to the general public [and] much of the early effort concentrated on strictly utilitarian work'.  
<http://www.rigb.org/contentControl?action=displayContent&id=00000004193>  
(accessed 16 August 2010)

This was the post-Enlightenment era: research was undertaken by increasingly specialised scientists, often very religious people (one thinks of Michael Faraday), but in the absence of the humanities. The famous exchange between Laplace and Napoleon set the scene. (When Laplace wrote his celebrated *Mécanique Céleste*, Napoleon asked him why there was no mention of God in the book. 'Je n'ai pas besoin de cette hypothèse,' said Laplace; Laplace was pointing out that he'd moved on from Newton.)

The goal of physics was, if possible, to limit variation to one variable and study its properties. When this was impossible, the goal was to limit the number of variables and to control them as precisely as possible. Similarly, hypotheses were to be made as simple as possible. This is the highly successful method called, pejoratively, reductionism.

Today, we can consider very large numbers of variables simultaneously, and large numbers of interactions also, though most of us cannot visualise more than a few dimensions at a time. Nevertheless, we still, as working scientists, leave out as many human factors as possible, unless we are working on human behaviour or the like.

What effect does this approach have? I want to comment on this question, without answering it, by considering one scientific institution's experience with one topic that has aroused intense interest outside the institution. In doing so, I note that CSIRO is the direct descendant of the Royal Institution, with perhaps minor influences from the Smithsonian (1846) and Humboldt's ideas for universities (1808).

Genetic engineering is the topic I want to discuss in the light of the possibility that when we rationally threw out the bathwater (the idea that religious authority was relevant to what science might discover), we perhaps threw out the baby, by not doing science in a cultural context.

One may define genetic engineering as the artificial introduction of genetic material (usually DNA) from one organism into another taxonomically separate organism, so that it is distinct from any type of cross-breeding and is essentially outside the normal

process of sexual reproduction. It was begun in micro-organisms in the 1970s, then in plants and then in animals in the early 1980s (Palmiter *et al.* 1982).

When I joined CSIRO in 1989, I found my Division held, among many other groups, a technically brilliant team trying to make transgenic sheep (examples of genetically modified organisms GMOs) that would grow faster, grow more wool, grow different wool. The group tested first in mice what was planned for sheep. While the team had some major successes, such as the production of mice with evolutionarily novel metabolism (Leish *et al.* 1993, Saini *et al.* 1996), it did not succeed in producing any transgenic animals that are relevant to livestock production, let alone ready for release to producers, before it was wound down through lack of money.

Over the same period, CSIRO's plant scientists have made and continue to make a major contribution to transgenic fibre and food crops.

CSIRO's experience mirrors the general situation worldwide: GM drugs (e.g. insulin) are produced and accepted almost everywhere, GM crops are grown on a huge scale, though rejected in some countries, and there are no GM livestock in production systems as yet. Why do we have this situation, and how has CSIRO contributed, for good or ill?

We began by seeing the advantages clearly, assuming the risks would be properly evaluated by the scientists concerned and Government agencies (today the Gene Technology Regulator) and failing to note that others might object in principle to what we were trying to do.

In 1999, the ABC published an on-line forum on GMOs.

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/slab/consconf/question.htm#science> (accessed 6 August 2010). In answer to the question 'What constitutes an acceptable risk of introducing GMOs into the food chain?' Jim Peacock, Chief, Division of Plant Industry, CSIRO, and later President of the Australian Academy of Science, wrote

GMO products entering the food chain must comply with all food standards and regulatory requirements for our foodstuffs and thus pose no greater risk than existing foods. In fact, many GMO foods will reduce the level of risk we frequently accept with existing foods. It is likely that GMO foods will provide greater food safety with reduced probability of chemical residues resulting from production processes, will have enhanced quality characteristics such as better nutritional composition, better shelf and storage life and may reduce prices as a consequence of reduced production costs.

Professor Peter Wills, Physics Department, University of Auckland, wrote 'No assessment of risk can be made without reference to a set of values or moral principles. Our modern global society places a higher value on human activity than on natural processes. This leads us to circumvent the limitations of ordinary physiological processes, like sexual reproduction, so that we can produce organisms regarded by some people as more "desirable", largely for commercial reasons. No intrinsic value is assigned to the provenance of three billion years of evolution – human intervention has superseded it and humans now assume to manage its future. It is my view that the large-scale application of genetic engineering in the service of current human goals, especially

the “modernisation” of food industries, will turn out to be a more destructive way of exploiting the natural world than any previous technological innovation, including military applications of knowledge gained in nuclear physics’.

In 2000, as part on an INRA/OECD forum in France, I wrote a review of safety issues in livestock GMO research. I chose not to mention ethics, because I had nothing new to say (Mayo 2001). By that year, I was talking frequently to community groups who were concerned about GMOs. I frequently met people who were irreconcilably opposed to GMOs and whose intellectual worldview barely overlapped with my own. It was difficult to avoid shouting matches, impossible to avoid some dialogues of the deaf.

Why were we scientists so incompetent, both in failing to anticipate scepticism, hostility etc. and in failing to engage with those with different worldviews?

We had failed to learn from history because we did not know much and what we did know was Whiggish: by and large, viewed from the point of view of working scientists, the history of science is a history of progress. Think of how we have come from Aristotle’s ‘nature abhors a vacuum’ to Pascal’s and others’ experiments demonstrating that a vacuum was a physical reality to those with eyes to see and then last century to experiencing (at least vicariously) the near vacuum of space.

We had also failed to understand how our worldview, so reasonable to us, simply did not include what was important to others. Many of us still cannot comprehend others’ ability to hold what we regard as irrational, antiscientific opinions at the same time as they take for granted the fruits of science, yet it should be obvious that the state of the world is what it is, virtually regardless of any individual’s perception. If we had learnt the proper lesson of Joseph Priestley’s apparently obstinate clinging to the obsolete phlogiston theory in the face of the new chemistry of Lavoisier, we would find our own and others’ behaviour all too comprehensible.

Our monoglot culture contributed to our failure to understand other points of view, even when we used studies in other languages (and hence cultures) in our own (see e.g. Leach and Mayo 2005 for consideration of Brieger 1930, who did work that still needs explication).

So building great scientific institutions without including the humanities has been a failure despite all the scientific and industrial successes of these institutions. We must change. Thinking of what to bring into them, I would start with history and languages. We have artists in residence; historians and linguists in residence may not work, but somehow these disciplines must inform us.

### **Acknowledgements**

I thank Michael Detmold, Ian Franklin, Sue Magarey and John Mayo for helpful comments on the MS. All remaining mistakes are my own.

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Table 1. Extract from the Science and Industry Act 1949 (as amended)

## 9 Functions of the Organisation

(1) The functions of the Organisation are:

(a) to carry out scientific research for any of the following purposes:

- (i) assisting Australian industry;
- (ii) furthering the interests of the Australian community;
- (iii) contributing to the achievement of Australian national objectives or the performance of the national and international responsibilities of the Commonwealth;
- (iv) any other purpose determined by the Minister;

(b) to encourage or facilitate the application or utilization of the results of such research;

# ALEC COLES

## *Museums and the Humanities*

Although the session is entitled Scientific Institutions and the Humanities, I have been asked to speak specifically about Museums. This should not lead to the erroneous assumption that all Museums are scientific institutions in their own right, which they are, of course, not.

Ironically, there are many museums that would consider themselves as museums of the humanities and which exhibit some of the most rigorous scientific practice imaginable, whilst there are others claiming scientific credibility that hover on the edge of pseudo-science, at best.

My premise is that all museums, irrespective of their purported specialism, have key roles to play in the humanities and it is often those that consider themselves to be scientific institutions that have the greatest resonance of all.

There is a danger, when engaging in any discussion which implicitly places two concepts in opposition, in this case the humanities and science, that the author, or in this case, speaker, is driven to a series of dictionary definitions and the argument becomes one of semantics rather than one of facts: but then, semantically, what is a fact?!

So what do we mean by the humanities? Many of the dictionary definitions from Oxford English to Macquarie focus on study of the classics and the arts, and several suggest that the social sciences are outside the scope of the humanities. Wikipedia, (as has often been said, there are only two kinds of people that use Wikipedia, those that admit to it and those that don't) has what I believe is one of the more helpful definitions of the word: '*...academic disciplines which study the human condition, using methods that are primarily analytic, critical, or speculative, as distinguished from the mainly empirical approaches of the natural and social sciences*'.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to science, the etymological source of the word is the Latin noun *scientia*, meaning 'knowledge'. In classical Greece, Aristotle practiced scientific theory and experiment and his views of the world held sway well into the Renaissance and in some cases beyond.

Since the time of Aristotle, science has been closely linked to philosophy from classical times, the two words being used interchangeably any number of times since. What was, in the 17th century, 'natural philosophy' is what, today, we might call natural sciences, or, just to further confuse the issue, natural history.

Similarly, the physical sciences may distinguish themselves from the natural sciences, but the further distinction from the social sciences can become tenuous, not least in the areas of evolutionary biology, sociobiology, ethology and medicine.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia Definition of Humanities

Similarly, the study of history has long been considered an element of the humanities, but in modern institutions of higher education, there seems to be a growing trend towards creating positions in social history and of course social science. Not only have the boundaries become blurred, but it seems like everyone wants to be a scientist these days!

Where do Museums sit in this space? The International Council of Museums (ICOM) describes a museum as: 'A non-profit making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment'.<sup>2</sup>

The Museums Australia Constitution (2002), rather more helpfully defines a 'museum' as an institution with the following characteristics: 'A museum helps people understand the world by using objects and ideas to interpret the past and present and explore the future. A museum preserves and researches collections, and makes objects and information accessible in actual and virtual environments. Museums are established in the public interest as permanent, not-for-profit organisations that contribute long-term value to communities'.<sup>3</sup>

Explicit in Museums Australia's version is the fact that museums come in many shapes and sizes, and that those collections need not be of material culture – they could be virtual or even conceptual.

The British Museum is, arguably, the World's foremost museum of the humanities. In his history of the British Museum, Wilson<sup>4</sup> writes: 'The Museum's *raison d'être* is to illuminate and explain the past of the whole world through material culture'.

Perhaps this 'illumination' is a clue to the nature of museums in the service of both science and the humanities. It also crystallises the very nature of the British Museum, for that veritable institution is both the epitome and the result of the wonder, creative thought and the new empiricism that characterised the years of the Enlightenment. Sir Hans Sloane, the father of the British Museum, in his pursuit of knowledge and a very fine collection, himself embraced the spirit of the Enlightenment like few others.

The Museum's own Enlightenment Galleries, completed in 2003, are without peer when it comes to demonstrating this period which so re-defined people's relationship with the World,<sup>5</sup> and this is a critical touchstone because, for me, this is the *raison d'être* of all good public museums, irrespective of their bias towards, art, history or science.

For instance, with respect to the institution that I lead, the Western Australian Museum, our vision is :

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<sup>2</sup> International Council of Museums, *Code of Ethics*

<sup>3</sup> *What is a Museum?* Museums Australia definition

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, D.M. (2003) *The British Museum A History* British Museum Press, London

<sup>5</sup> Sloan, K. And Burnett, A. (Edited) (2003) *Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, British Museum Press, London

To be a place where people explore their identity, heritage, environment and sense of place, and experience the diversity and creativity of this extraordinary state.<sup>6</sup>

We believe that this is a bold and aspirational vision for a forward thinking museum. Many would say that this is language of policy makers, some might even accuse it of being politically correct. Strange then, that like so much of what museums do, it too has its roots in an eighteenth century philosophy which pre-dates the museum by over a century and yet is, save a few nuanced words, as fresh today as it ever was. Our forebears would have recognised this vision and, I believe, supported it wholeheartedly.

Returning to the British Museum, established, as it was, in 1753, the Museum itself did not distinguish between humanities and the natural sciences. It was not until 130 years later that the natural science collections were physically separated from the rest of the museum to be located in Alfred Waterhouse's signature building in South Kensington. A further 79 years passed (1962) before the Natural history Museum, or as it was then known The British Museum (Natural History) became a separate entity,<sup>7</sup> finally achieving its brand definition – the Natural History Museum – only in 1992.

The Natural History Museum is, unquestionably, a scientific institution in its own right, with a substantial part of its work devoted to pure and novel scientific research, although interestingly it remains attached, through its funding agreement, inalienably, to the British Government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport!

Meanwhile, the British Museum could also claim to be an institution with much scientific endeavour and kudos, be it the intensive programmes of research into the material properties of its collections, or the analytical approaches of modern archaeology, which includes physicochemical analysis, digital imaging or geophysical surveys.

The message is clear: there always has been a positive natural association between museums and the humanities. As with so much of life, it is only the human desire and disposition to classify and categorise that leads to confusion: a disposition that is very much part of the human condition considered by the humanities, and a process – classification and taxonomy – so close to the heart of scientific institutions!

Back in South Kensington, facing the Natural History Museum across Exhibition Road is the Victoria and Albert Museum which had its origin as Henry Cole's Museum of Manufactures. A kind of spin off from the Great Exhibition of 1851, this was a museum of applied arts and science, and whilst the majority of the science collections were subsequently separated to form the basis of the Science Museum in the 1880s, there is still a substantial science, engineering and design theme running through the V&A's collections.

Stepping back in time, the John Tradescants of London (John the Elder and his son John the Younger) are credited with creating the first museum in Britain.<sup>8</sup> Both were gardeners, travellers and collectors and they created the first recognised 'Cabinet of

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<sup>6</sup> Western Australian Museum *Draft Strategic Plan* (2010)

<sup>7</sup> Stearn, W. T. (1981) *The Natural History Museum at South Kensington*, Heinemann, London

<sup>8</sup> Potter, J. (2006) *Strange Blooms The Curious Lives and Adventures of the John Tradescants* Atlantic Books, London

Curiosity'. As such, they were clearly early scientists, but their legacy is the core of the collections of Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum, surely another of the World's greatest museums of the humanities?<sup>9</sup>

In Australia, Museum Victoria grew out of two predominantly scientific institutions, the Museum of Natural and Economic Geology (latterly the National Museum of Victoria) and the Industrial and Technological Museum.<sup>16</sup> Despite their epithets, both developed collections beyond what would have been considered purely scientific and certainly that is the case of Museums Victoria today.

Here in South Australia, in 1856, an Act to provide for an institution that would incorporate a public library and museum was assented to. The Act promoted 'the general study and cultivation of all or any of the branches or departments of art, science, literature, and philosophy' through lectures and classes and also united cultural societies under one institution.<sup>17</sup>

In the institution for which I am responsible, the Western Australian Museum, the Museum's origins were in history and the humanities, but the Museum has developed a strong and internationally respected science dimension, not least because it sits in one of the World's acknowledged biodiversity hotspots, on some of its most ancient landscapes, occupied by one of its oldest civilisations and adjacent to some of the most extraordinary marine archaeology.

No surprise then, that as well as its historians and anthropologists, the Western Australian Museum has built up an impressive coterie of marine and aquatic biologists, terrestrial zoologists, earth scientists and marine archaeologists. The Western Australian Museum regards itself, very much, as a Scientific Institution.

This does not, however, prevent it from playing a major part in the wider cultural life of its constituency and in particular, the humanities. This is particularly the case in World where the holistic nature of our being is better appreciated and in a country where the indigenous Aboriginal communities have long understood the link between the natural world, the spirit world and the human psyche.

Our anthropologists work with Aboriginal peoples to ensure a mutually beneficial approach to heritage, oral and material culture: our marine archaeologists reveal the stories of the settlers from overseas. Together, these two constituencies make up many of our users to day – how important is this work in the sphere of identity and identity politics?

Our historians maintain collections that chart every aspect of the human condition from design and manufacturing to religion to family life and childhood. Our Earth scientists are at the forefront of work on meteorites and on celestial bodies that could yet provide the very clues to our existence.

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<sup>9</sup> Brown, C. (2009) *Ashmolean: Britain's First Museum* Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

<sup>16</sup> Rasmussen, C. et al (2002) *A Museum for the People* Museum Victoria, Melbourne

<sup>17</sup> South Australian Museum (2004) *A Potted History*, South Australian Museum website

And then there are our biologists. It is fashionable in some circles, these days, to sneer a little at taxonomic biologists as ‘old hat’. An ignorant senior scientist in the UK said in recent years that there was no further need for taxonomy as we had done it all – so much for his scientific rigour in checking the facts: our small group of zoologists alone named 114 new species to science, from WA, just last year.

The cause of the natural science curator is probably not helped by the amusing but slightly eccentric accounts of their activities, both recently,<sup>18</sup> and in the past.<sup>19</sup>

But, while our scientists may be identifying and classifying obscure groups of animals, it is the health of the communities of these animals that describe the wealth of our environment; their population ecology may in turn reflect the health of it; their future may yet define ours. When people ask what our taxonomists are working away on in their laboratories it is with no flippancy that I say ‘They are saving the World’ – what could be more humanitarian than that?

All of this work has very tangible benefits for humanity: but what of the human condition. The mere contemplation of science and in particular of the natural world can be uplifting, releasing and rejuvenating. A spiritual experience in every sense. With this in mind perhaps we should leave the last words to the sometimes renowned, sometimes notorious naturalist, collector and fundamentalist Philip Henry Gosse:

‘The emotions of the human mind – surprise, wonder, terror, revulsion, admiration, love, desire... are made energetic by the contemplation of the creatures around him.’<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Fortey, R. (2008) *The Secret Life of the Natural History Museum*, Harper Perennial, London

<sup>19</sup> Barbellion, W.N.P. (1919) *The Journal of a Disappointed Man* Chatto & Windus, London

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## **Session Six**

### ***Digitising Culture***





# GRAEME TURNER

## *Digitising Culture*

Anyone involved in trying to find ways of funding the digitisation of cultural and research resources will know how difficult this has proved to be. Our history of success in this area is a string of specific achievements that, while important, fall well short of providing us with what we need: a large, collaborative, coordinated, interconnected facility that could address a broad national remit. What we have instead is a mix of projects, with many at the level of cottage industries, as well as the occasional large enterprise connected to an institution such as the NLA. To bring all these things together would involve reasonably large outlays initially as well as continuing funding for the creation, translation, and preservation of digital materials. The attempt to win support for such a thing has a chequered history, and it is probably worth rehearsing some of that to set this panel discussion in context.

Some years ago, I was appointed to serve as the Academy representative on a committee called ARIIC – the Australian Research Information and Infrastructure Committee. When I turned up, I was warmly welcomed by the chair, who expressed an interest in knowing more about what the needs of the humanities might be. Despite that promising beginning, the meetings continued to be focused largely on questions raised by the operation of already funded facilities in the hard sciences – on the management of middleware issues for instance. While there was some interest in new proposals, it was very clear that the definition of what constituted research infrastructure was constrained, from the outset, by the dominance of a scientific or medical definition of research practice. At this first meeting, Warwick Cathro of the National Library attempted to secure support for what seemed to me to be a fundamentally important infrastructure project – the digitisation of Australian newspapers. This was rejected because newspapers were content, not infrastructure, and therefore outside the remit of the committee.

At that point (and indeed over the whole life of the committee, as it turned out), there had been no significant investment from this committee into anything that could be called research infrastructure for the humanities. While this was certainly embarrassing, it was not regarded as a strong enough reason for broadening the definition of infrastructure to more accurately reflect the needs of researchers in the humanities. Digitisation, in particular, seemed to be absolutely beyond the pale. The argument that funding the creation, reformatting, curation, and preservation of digital material did indeed constitute an investment in infrastructure proved fruitless.

As a response to our lack of success in this context, the Academy approached the then federal Minister for Education, Julie Bishop, seeking funds for a scoping study to ascertain just what would be involved in a project of digitisation that encompassed both research and cultural heritage materials. While this was framed as in some ways an investment into infrastructure that would transform the practice of humanities research, it was the potential of a major digitisation project of historical and cultural materials as a nation-building initiative that ultimately attracted the Minister's support. Digitised art works, historical documents, journals and newspapers would not only be

available through research institutions in universities, but might also be accessed through local libraries, schools and so on. As a result of the Minister's interest, there was some money allocated for a scoping study which was completed and eventually published as *Towards An Australian Humanities Digital Archive* in October 2008.

The other major research infrastructure committee set up as part of the Coalition's Backing Australia's Ability policy was NCRIS, the National Collaborative Research Information Strategy, established in 2006. It, too, was dominated by a model of research that proved incompatible with what the humanities did; so much so, in fact, that of more than \$500 million in research infrastructure funds allocated through this committee, not a cent was spent on the humanities. After the Labor government was elected, the new Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Kim Carr, required a review of NCRIS and demanded that a working group be established to examine how NCRIS should address this exclusion. I was asked to chair that working group in 2008, and worked with them over that year towards the preparation of a bid to the 2009 Budget for a HASS initiative as part of what was then called *The Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure*. Our bid argued that:

Dedicated access to eResearch Infrastructure is needed that is open enough to allow discovery, sharing and leverage of data by HASS researchers and those of other disciplines; and enables innovative and internationally comparable ways of creating, analysing and modelling data within HASS. Two broad streams of work are proposed, in addition to which key support mechanisms are required to support both streams. (40)

The two streams were:

(a) data creation and digitisation of research materials: this involved the reformatting, preservation and curation of existing data (textual, visual, multimedia), and the adoption of new techniques to improve the capacity for data to be born digital.

(b) data management and linkage: this aimed at bringing some coherence to the way data is linked, retained or archived and curated to develop distributed data repositories that can be accessed and used most effectively.

Importantly, to take advantage of one of the distinctive capacities of the NCRIS process, the bid included funds for personnel to develop and maintain the facility, as well as to engage in the development of software and discipline-specific tools for researchers. There was also a training element.

This constituted a breakthrough in two ways. It was the first time, over the history of their contribution to these debates, that the HASS sector had actually agreed on a diagnosis of their needs and a strategic proposal to address them. It was also the first time that government had insisted that the needs of the HASS sector must be addressed by the planned 'roadmap' for national research infrastructure development. In the end, unfortunately, this turned out to be a step too far. The HASS component was excised at the very end of the budget review process in 2009, and when NCRIS was reconstituted as NRIC, the HASS proposal had disappeared.

Within sections of the government and also within the relevant department, however, the case for inclusion has been clearly recognised so the current proposal for a register

of landmark research infrastructure facilities does at least acknowledge the possibility that proposals for inclusion on this register will involve the humanities and social sciences. Also, it needs to be said, the campaign for digitisation and for linked data bases has provided some modest allocations of funding, in one case from another portfolio, as well as encouraging particular institutions such as the NLA and the State Library of Victoria to set up their own projects – the two newspapers projects and Trove are two examples here. We are also better informed about the needs of humanities researchers in this area as a result of the 2008 scoping study and the subsequent LASP project undertaken by the Academy.

Nonetheless, it has to be said that a lot of effort has been expended to very little effect in our attempts to secure government support for a large scale project of digitising Australia's cultural and research resources. In the research context, which is the one I know most about, this difficulty has been pronounced. Indeed, most frustratingly, it is the digitisation aspect which has always been the hardest to sell to government and indeed to our colleagues in the sciences – even, to some extent, to our colleagues in the social sciences. It does seem to be one of the limit cases where there really is no fit between a medicalised model of research and the scholarly and interpretative traditions of the humanities. In such a situation, one would have thought, collegial goodwill might allow those who do not work within our traditions to acknowledge and respect them to the point where they can accept a variation in practice. However, when large but still finite amounts of money are involved, there are strong incentives for such people to see this lack of fit as a handy means of excluding our claims from consideration, thus reducing the size of the pool of potential competitors. While there are some extenuating circumstances here – it is certainly true that many humanities representatives have taken up highly unproductive and uncoordinated stances when consulted over the possibility of their inclusion – it is nonetheless a disgrace that the research infrastructure needs of an entire sector of higher education, and by extension those of the collecting or cultural institutions as well, have been deliberately overlooked. It is also a disgrace that it has taken political intervention to enforce an acknowledgement of this; the naked self interest of sections of the scientific community in Australia is exposed by their failure to demand a more equitable and inclusive process.

As I say, some momentum has built, we have learnt something about our national needs, and there are now significant individual investments which have dramatically improved our situation. Nonetheless, most of this has come as a result of the commitment and vision of particular cultural institutions and their staff. We are still some way from seeing government play its part. The introduction of the landmark infrastructure register may offer an opportunity but there is also the danger we will see the same issues arise to frustrate our hopes there was well: the resistance to digitisation as an infrastructural activity, the bias towards large physical facilities and their generation of data, and assumptions about the likely budgetary parameters for such facilities. Our best chance, in my view, remains in prosecuting only one aspect of the NCRIS bid – the interlinked, interoperable, data base network; and there is a question about how one might ramp up that activity to the budgetary levels being proposed.

The idea that digitising culture might now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, be a nation-building enterprise in the way that the establishment of national museums, galleries and libraries were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, did seem to appeal to minister Bishop when we put it to her in

2007. It may be less politically appealing now; the split in the portfolios that happened when Labor came to power has probably not helped in this regard – schools, universities, cultural institutions and research are now spread across three portfolios. To some extent, too, the fact that some of this work is already under way and funded by the cultural institutions themselves may well be regarded by government as evidence that this work can be done by others without a large scale investment from them. On other hand, it is worth remembering that the impetus for improving the current situation did come from the government and that this has had a considerable impact on how well our needs are understood within those parts of the federal bureaucracy that deal with research. As I write this, the outcome of the 2010 election is still undecided, so I will have to leave any forward projections about the possibilities of political support until I speak to this paper in person.

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# Julie Holledge & Jonathan Bollen

## ***The AusStage Story: Analysing Performance Data with Computer Visualisation Techniques.***

### **What is AusStage?**

AusStage is our key national research infrastructure for assessing the scale and significance of live performance in Australia. The project, which is based in the Drama department at Flinders University, is a partnership of 22 universities, arts institutions and the Australia Council for the Arts. It began ten years ago, with the creation of a relational database designed to store information on Australian theatre and performance. Today the database holds records on over 50,000 performance events, 82,000 contributors, 9,200 organisations, 5,100 venues and 42,000 articles, books, programs, images, videos and archival items. It provides public access to reliable information on the full spectrum of live performance in Australia to researchers, postgraduate students, policy makers in government and industry practitioners. In addition, it is a key data set for the Australian Bureau of Statistics' annual overview of Arts and Culture in Australia.

Currently in its fourth phase of development (funded by ARC, NeAT, ANDS, ARCS and the AAF), the project is addressing a general problem facing the arts and humanities: conventional database methods of text-based search-and-retrieval are no longer meeting the evolving needs of our researchers. Under the Aus-e-Stage project three new services are being designed, tested and deployed to operate alongside AusStage's current text-based search-and-retrieval service: mapping, network analysis, and audience feedback via mobile interfaces.

Two of the innovations draw heavily on our experiments using computer visualisation of maps and networks to study cultural and more specifically aesthetic transmission in our ARC Discovery Project: Ibsen Between Cultures: the Australian Experience. Our presentation today will illustrate the application of these digital tools to our work on the Ibsen project, as the Aus-e-Stage project is in the middle of its technological development stage.

### **The Ibsen experiments in computer visualisation.**

We began using time mapping techniques to address a very simple research question: what accounts for the global production success of one of the world's most ubiquitous texts: Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*? But mapping has led us to networks, and our simple research question has developed into a far more nebulous one about the nature of cultural transmission in and through performance, and what we mean by theatrical interpretation and aesthetic transmission.

No map can tell us why an artist chose to produce this play, or how an audience received it, nor can a network graphic reveal the complexities and extraordinary richness of the

adaptations, and translations of this text as it has travelled the globe. But these computer visualisations have helped us to see the importance of distributional flows through time, across geographical space, and between artists working from production to production. They have revealed interesting patterns that warrant in-depth analysis. Once a pattern emerges, it is possible to examine underlying political, social, economic, aesthetic and technological causes.

First we will demonstrate our use of mapping techniques to chart distributional global flows of the *A Doll's House* by looking at just one pattern that has emerged from the data on international touring productions of the play, and then we will zoom in on the Nordic production history using maps and network visualisations to chart a major strain of aesthetic transmission in this single performance text over a period of a hundred and twenty three years.

(Animation of late nineteenth, early twentieth century European tours of *A Doll's House*.)

In the first thirty years of its production history, the play travelled the globe on a commercial entertainment circuit tied to European expansion and migration across five continents. The first actress to cross the globe was the English actress, Janet Achurch. She performed the play's famous central character of Nora in front of audiences in Australia, New Zealand, Batavia (Jakarta), Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, and Egypt. The celebrated late nineteenth century actresses of Italy, France, Portugal, Germany and Russia transported the play West for equal distances to Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay and the United States of America. When we shift the worldview to East Asia, we can see a touring circuit to Taiwan, Korea, and possibly Manchuria and Vladivostok, which reflects Japan's growing military influence in the region following its wars with China and Russia. News of the first Japanese performance also travelled by word of mouth to Shanghai, and resulted in the first performance of the play in China.

This is just one example of the many global flows that we have been tracking with this mapping technique. We have looked at the post-colonial history of the play; its introduction into societies as a selective import of Western modernity; and its electronic distribution by radio, television, film and YouTube. We have also explored some regional foci, most significantly the Nordic production history of the play. This latter investigation was stimulated by an invitation to join Orient North, a research group based at Berkeley and UCLA, which is currently mapping various aspects of Nordic culture.

We began this mapping experiment with another simple question: If the play was spread globally by the British, Italians, French, Portuguese, Germans, Russians and Japanese at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – is there an equivalent global flow of the text that originates in the Nordic countries that we were not picking up from these data visualisations?

(Series of Maps of Nordic Productions)

The first image we generated was of the tours by the major Nordic Noras from 1879 to 1954. This distribution pattern is bound by Iceland in the North and Prague in the South. After 1954, the tours that are focused on major regional cities are replaced by mega-national tours that dominate from 1960s to the end of the century. In the 1990s

the focus changes again and Oslo becomes the centre of a new global flow associated with the Ibsen Stage Festival, which begins to import productions back to Norway. This map charts the productions of *A Doll's House* invited to Oslo for the Ibsen Stage Festival from 1990 to the present day. As you can see, most of the sites of production reflect touring destinations on the earlier map, United States, Western Europe, Russia, and Japan – but there are some surprises – Pakistan, Nepal, and Mozambique. Investigating the origin of these productions caused us to generate another map that charts the soft diplomacy of the Norwegian government through its *Nora's Sisters* project. This project has more funding than any other overseas cultural programme of the Norwegian government. Across the world, Norwegian Embassies have been convening seminars on “gender equality and the respective roles of today’s women and men in different societies and cultural settings”. In many of these venues the seminar is accompanied by a performance of *A Doll's House*. Combining these two maps raises some interesting issues about cultural diplomacy and the arts and shows us that Norway has been responsible for a significant growth in productions in two key areas: Islamic Cultures from the Middle East to the sub-continent, and Sub Saharan Africa.

To summarise, these maps indicated that the early history of the play in Nordic countries saw a period of interconnection in which individual artists (mostly actresses playing Nora) were invited to give guest performances within productions presented by major venues in key Nordic cities, while nationally based companies toured complete productions to the major cities of the region. This mobility of artists and productions suggested to us that we would find a degree of aesthetic blending occurring in the Nordic interpretations of the text during the pre- First World War period. In contrast, the maps showed that in the second half of the twentieth century mega-national tours of regional centres dominated the distribution circuit, and we suspected that these were probably symptomatic of the post-war democratic arts policies in the nation states of Western Europe; they suggested a period of national consolidation of interpretive approaches. In the 1990s we thought we were looking at a re-vitalising of the tradition through the importation of new influences from international sources; and finally in the twenty-first century we concluded that we were witnessing a marketing of Norway through the creation of a national Ibsen ‘logo’ promoting a nation of progressive gender politics.

Our next research task was to explore the evidence for these probabilities. But we were up against a methodological problem, our maps were providing us with new ways of understanding the global distribution of the text, but to go further we needed to bridge the gap between this quantitative approach and the qualitative methodologies used within theatre historiography. We decided to take the data on the Nordic production history of the play and crunch it again with another computer visualisation program so that we could facilitate a qualitative analysis of specific productions. Although maps can show us the geographic distribution of productions, they cannot tell us anything about what goes on inside or between productions. After all, productions are temporary assemblies of individual artists, and artists have lives extending before and after each production. To explore the connections between the artists who worked on these productions, we jumped to social networking visualisations.

(Network images and animation of the Nordic production history)

We don't have the time to show you the series of network visualisations that we generated with the Nordic production data, but these experiments have influenced our current thinking on the network searching capabilities in AusStage. To give you a quick précis of our journey, we began by generating network graphics of the entire Nordic production history of the play, moving to graphics based on the key actors who played Nora, and finally to graphics focusing on events, in other words specific productions defined by time and place.

By tracing the flow of artists from event to event and measuring the distance of each event from the premiere production, we were able to confirm a direct line of transmission through 24 productions from Copenhagen in 1879 to Lansmuseet, Sweden in 1999. In other words, in every one of these productions there was at least one artist from a previous production in this direct line of descent from the original production in the rehearsal room. This network visualisation program was showing us a line of transmission that represented the shortest, most direct pathway through the network to span the longest period of time.

The animation you are looking at shows all the events in the line of transmission, and the arrows indicate the flow of artists between the events. This graph confirmed the first of the two distinct phases of production activity we had found in the maps, separated by a narrow neck of transition across the years of the Second World War. The post war period is characterised by several touring productions, which extend out from the network. Most of the unconnected productions also date from the post war period. But we also found something that we could not have seen from the mapping experiment because this animation shows us the interconnections between artists, not just the distribution patterns of separate productions. We realised that we were looking at an extraordinary finding – a human chain of aesthetic transmission – the interconnections that we had anticipated would die away after the initial blending period of the regional Noras were still there throughout the consolidation period that featured the autonomous nationally based productions; and these connections weren't disappearing until the global phase that emerged in the 1990s.

We realised that we were looking at a network that implied an aesthetic transmission carried by artists in rehearsal rooms, dressing rooms and green rooms over a period of a hundred and twenty years. The significance of this finding will not be immediately apparent to those of you who are not involved in theatre. Within the field of theatre historiography, we have never before been able to chart this degree of aesthetic transmission within the history of a single performance text. Looking at these graphics was a Eureka moment for our discipline!

Our current task is to analyse all the data on the productions and artists that feature in the story of aesthetic transmission that links 1879 to the 1990s. Although we can argue that theatre practice involves the transmission of production and performance knowledge through an anecdotal practice that is a common feature of rehearsal rooms, dressing rooms, and green rooms, we still have to find evidence of this transmission in the ephemera surrounding these Nordic productions. The production photographs, newspaper cartoons, reviews, articles, and actors' biographies and autobiographies are all sources that are being analysed. In this work we are moving beyond a chronological approach that might infer a transmission of influence through the witnessing of



significant productions authored by prestige artists, to a form of aesthetic transmission carried by artists participating in a creative manufacturing process.

Finally, to pull together all the data into one visualisation, we decided to combine the mapping and the networking approaches and display this journey of aesthetic transmission in a three dimensional graphic showing the distributional flow of events linked by artists through space and time. The events are marked by geo-coordinates, the movement between the events represents the flow of the artists as they tour particular productions and link the productions together, and the vertical plane shows the time dimension.

Through these experiments, we have begun to see the new research questions that computer visualisations will generate in our field of research. What took several months of trial and error exploring ways of displaying the Ibsen data as maps and network graphics will be available to researchers interrogating the AusStage data in a matter of seconds. We hope that all of you will enjoy experimenting with these new e-research tools when the new services go live on the AusStage site in 2011.

# JANET MCCALMAN

## *Founders & Survivors and the Digital Panopticon*

In 2007 UNESCO admitted the convict records of Australia to the honour roll of the Memory of the World. Their value to the global human story transcends their place in the history of convict transportation: they are remarkable because they are among the most detailed, intimate and careful records of ordinary men, women and children – of their bodies, their families, their behaviour, their experience and their capacities – for anywhere in the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Australia is unique among settler societies for having a record of a founding population for which we can know the colour of their eyes, their height, literacy, religion and skills. We can trace far more of their families and social origins than we can of free immigrants. And we can test their mettle as they passed through the closely observed trials, torments and cruelties of the convict system.

Historians have mined this rich archive in many ways from narrative to auxology. We have sampled it, extracted biographies both individual and collective, read its 'languages' both verbal and visual. Family historians have worked differently, tracing backwards to convict ancestors. Work on the worlds the convicts came from is beginning in the United Kingdom and Ireland. What it has been impossible to do until now is to study the convicts as a population, with a past and a legacy.

Apart from iconic stories of the exceptional, either as emancipists or villains, we know remarkably little about the full convict population: what really happened to them under sentence and particularly, what happened to them afterwards. How many were survivors; how many became founders of the colonial Australian population. We don't know how many went home. We now know that at least half the story of Tasmanian transportation belongs on the other side of Bass Strait, in Victoria, where we have found up to 30,000 ventured, with so many absconding in the early 1850s that the whole system broke down.

'The Founders & Survivors: Australian life courses in historical context' has been funded with a 5-year ARC Discovery Grant since 2007. It is a collaboration of historians, genealogists, demographers, epidemiologists, economic historians and advanced computing specialists. It is led from the University of Tasmania by Associate Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, but it includes researchers from the universities of Melbourne, Flinders, NSW, Oxford and the ANU, and the team has since expanded to draw in leading scholars in social science history and epidemiology from Ohio, Guelph and Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health.

The aim is to build a total population reconstitution of the ~73,000 men, women and children transported to Van Diemen's Land between 1803 and 1852. It is confined to the VDL convicts because the records are more complete and detailed than in NSW and Tasmania is already a global player in reconstituted population studies for genetic epidemiology through the Menzies Research Institute.

From that convict population we want to look backwards at their socio-economic, cultural and familial origins, study systematically their experience of and response to the convict system, and, again, systematically, follow their lives after sentence. Until scholars have such these demographic frameworks, we risk distorting convict history by 'cherry picking' the bizarre, the cinematic, the 'colourful' at the expense of the history's obligation to context, analysis and evidence based interpretation.

But the history of convict Australia does not end with the cessation of transportation. Some convicts went on to become founders of the colonial population and again we know remarkably little about how people remade their lives after servitude. We have the stories of the exceptional, but not of the vast majority. Those histories have been preserved, or more commonly, rediscovered by their descendants. Other great population reconstitution projects – the Cambridge Population Group, the Historical Sample of the Netherlands and especially the University of Umeå's Demographic Database, which has reconstituted the Swedish population, including the indigenous Sami people, from 1760 to 1900 – have depended on the skill and time of volunteers from the family history community.

We are doing the same, and our other partnership is with the global community of family historians and they are coming to us from all over the world, wherever the descendants of people transported to Tasmania may now be.

To do all this, we have had to employ advanced information technologies. This involved three key interdependent tasks;

- (1) The first was to enable scholarly work on the original convict records by imaging them and making them available through the Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT) online index to the convict records. (It is not feasible for teams to work on the originals and the microfilm created by the Mormons for Australian libraries is both difficult to read, and we have discovered, incorrectly filmed with lines of text miss-matched in two page entries.) The archives records were imaged and managed in software pioneered by Gavan McCarthy's team, now part of the University of Melbourne's eScholarship Research Centre. Being able to work from high-quality images of original documents that can be enlarged as needed, makes it possible for teams to transcribe the records from the hand-written to the print-readable while working independently. Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Alison Alexander trained a skilled team of transcribers who in two years succeeded in entering over a million lines of data on convicts from descriptions, indents, conduct records, death records, musters, work assignments and tickets-of-leave, pardons and absconding notices. The funding ran out, and another twelve months would have completed the full task of transcribing the full descriptive data including completing the wonderful dataset created by Dr Deb Oxley, now of All Souls Oxford, and a large sample of the conduct records. Much of this work will now have to be done by trained volunteers.
- (2) The second, and most complex, was to create the master-database that would link multiple records for individuals both within and without the convict system, link them to the original sources and enable new data that might be discovered by other researchers to the life history of the convict.

This is the heart of the digital humanities enterprise. The team was committed to preserving the original form of the textual documents rather than simply coding them or summarising them. The data that was to be analysed needed to retain its original form. This meant using the Text Encoding Initiative or TEI which is an established encoding standard using XML designed for marking up historical manuscripts. Our database developer, Sandra Silcot, consulted with TEI specialists in the UK and with the team that created, with Lottery funding, the superb Old Bailey Online site. We adopted the same mark-up strategy as the Old Bailey and we hope one day there will be a seamless online journey from a trial at the Central Criminal Court in London, to the hulks, the transportation voyage as recorded by the ship's surgeon (Sandra imaged all the ships surgeons' logs and diaries at the National Archives while she was in the UK); the period under sentence from the Paper Panopticon of the convict records, to life after sentence including marriage, children, death, property and so on. Concluding with a link to any direct male descendants of either male or female convicts who served in the AIF 1914-1918.

To organise all these records, including ever expanding family trees of descendants, we were very fortunate to find Assoc Prof John Bass AM, now of the Menzies Research Institute. John received his AM for devising software to manage the multitude of relationships and events contained in the medical records of Western Australians, where the state government has committed to an integrated bioinformatics grid, linking all medical records for the state. John's innovation, called LKT, connects all records and events in a cascade of binary connections that makes it possible to link relations between people as well as events and observations to individuals. The information technology involved in collating and analysing the data for demographic analysis is beyond my capacity to describe, except to say that Sandra Silcot has introduced visualisation tools like BaseX and a host of clever tools that do things like make it possible to negotiate your way through a thousand-odd Smiths without breaking the memory bank. Another rule we have adhered to is that all software must be open-source—that is non-proprietary and therefore not beholden to financial whims of Oracle or Microsoft. The linkage of multiple records of single convicts from multiple sources rendered at different times and places was largely completed automatically, with less than 10 per cent needing checking and reconciling by a human being (to quote Sandra).

- (3) The third task was the building of an interactive online workstation so that anyone, from students, children, family historians and scholars, could access the data and contribute new data on individual convicts that could be added to the convict life history once it had been confirmed/corrected by the research team. Ethics requirements also mean that donors need to give their consent for others to see the fruits of their research. Much recent material on descendants in the twentieth century cannot be displayed because of privacy legislation but can be incorporated into our research dataset once de-identified. This final dataset will be available eventually to the research community through ANDS, and we have funding to complete the documentation of the dataset for the coming year. The interactive workstation has been designed and developed by Robin Petterd of

Sprout Labs (Hobart) and by Claudine Chionh who works with us at the University of Melbourne. It is beautifully designed, after the open-source Drupal template we employed to get started, and links the collated life histories extracted from the core database or 'repository' with the images of those exact records, to an interactive web tool where volunteers can enter new data across many fields. This enables our now global team of volunteer researchers to enter data on their own ancestors, or to work under our supervision on specific projects both technical and historical. We have been overwhelmed with the enthusiasm of the public, among whom are many very skilled historians and family detectives, who understand computers, excel spread sheets, can read copperplate handwriting and who, mostly being retired and finished their own family trees, have plenty of time. They are undertaking tasks that no funding agency would ever fund us to pay research assistants to do. And it is an immense pleasure to be able to meet and work with so many wonderful people.

Which brings me to funding. When we applied to the ARC we costed the full project at \$1.6 million. Of course the ARC can't pay that sort of money to humanities and social science discovery projects, so we received \$800,000, which was very generous. But it was not enough, and had we been funded to the cost we estimated, we would have completed the entire job in five years. This was not to be and it has been very difficult to obtain additional funding from the ARC because assessors and panels consider that we have already had enough, and should be 'producing results' having no idea of the complexity of the task of translating this complex, handwritten historical textual material into datasets that can be analysed for quick results. Neither are humanities assessors, who might understand the nature of the sources, comfortable with anything where the interdisciplinarity might include a bit of statistics. The result is that we now have to go to the United States to seek funding – sad but necessary for this quintessential Australian project.

What we will one day produce however, is already being hailed as the most complex and rich intergenerational population reconstitution, or cradle-to-grave study, created anywhere else in the world. When researchers have worked backwards from the convict indents, it will begin in last third of the eighteenth century and conclude in the present day. One day it will link the convict records with the very similar records of their descendants in the First and Second AIF and even perhaps the Vietnam War. Therefore our other great partner in this enterprise is the National Archives of Australia. The only comparable dataset for the level of detail is the Union Army created by Robert Fogel and his team, and that only includes one generation. We hope to incorporate up to seven generations, where we have biological, social, economic, geographic and demographic data.

The research this enables is truly multidisciplinary: from history, to psychology, to physiology, to economic, to political and of course, to historical epidemiology and demography and the immense contribution those fields are making to the understanding of human health, intergenerational effects and the insults and interventions in the life-course. At the same time, we are able to give vast audience an immense amount of pleasure and generate material that already is being mined for schools, film and interactive online learning.

Digital humanities have enabled us to bring the archives to the public and to draw the skills and enthusiasm of the general public and the family history community into the most advanced research in our field. And as we talk to local family history societies and run workshops, we find our audiences just as thrilled by the clues that longitudinal intergenerational datasets are providing the population health scientists working on epigenetics, as they are by gothic convict tales. And we have invented a new field: what we call ‘interdisciplinary prosopography’, which is what all this data on individual life courses within a defined population, is meant to be.

***Links:***

Founders and Survivors: Australian life courses in historical context, 1803-1920

<http://www.foundersandsurvivors.org>

Old Bailey Online: <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/index.jsp>

Plebeian Lives and the Making of Modern London:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/hri/projects/projectpages/plebeianlives.html>

Historical Sample of the Netherlands: <http://www.iisg.nl/hsn/>

Umeå University: Demographic Database: <http://www.ddb.umu.se/ddb-english/>

Union Army Study: <http://www.cpe.uchicago.edu/unionarmy/unionarmy.html>

Text Encoding Initiative: <http://www.tei-c.org/index.xml>

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