

About the CRC in Construction Innovation at RMIT Business.

Background

The CRC in Construction Innovation research group is located in the Business Development Unit of the Faculty of Business where it has been undertaking research since early 2002. A second part of it is the Faculty of engineering where two research projects are currently underway. The current combined research projects for RMIT represents just over \$1million of cash research funding with at least that amount more contributed in in-kind support.

Team Members at RMIT Business

The CRC in Construction Innovation team consists of the project leader Professor Derek Walker, Research Fellows Dr Andrew Wilson and Peter Goldsmith, and PhD students Vachara Peansupap and Tayyab Maqsood. A second large project is starting with Professor John Dalrymple leading it working closely with Professor Derek Walker and a research fellow (TBA).

Current Research Activities

The CRC in Construction Innovation is currently involved in delivering two major research projects in conjunction with other CRC members. The first project is examining the nature of the diffusion of information and communication technologies within major Australian construction enterprises with the aim to determine best practice in this process. The second research project currently being undertaken by the CRC in Construction Innovation is examining the effectiveness of knowledge management as it pertains to business processes as undertaken large Australian construction enterprises, with the aim again of determining best practice in this activity.

Proposed Future Research Activities

The CRC in Construction Innovation has a number of prospective research programs at various stages of maturity that will be undertaken as the current programs are completed in the middle of 2004. These programs include knowledge management/ risk management model building in conjunction with the CSIRO, supply chain diffusion of Internet based resource distributive systems, and knowledge management/quality management process determination in conjunction with the Centre for Management Quality Research at RMIT

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Interview With the School of Management's Assoc. Prof. – Julie Wolfram Cox

BC: You are relatively new to RMIT, can you tell us a bit about your academic background and what you were doing before coming here?

JWC: My undergraduate education was in psychology and I hold B.A. (Honours) and M.A. (Research) degrees from the University of Melbourne. My PhD is in organisational behaviour from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio and my dissertation was on emotion and identity consequences of organisational change.



Associate Professor Julie Wolfram Cox

I have taught at undergraduate and (mainly) graduate levels in organisational analysis and management theory, organisational change and behaviour, and research methods. Before I joined RMIT I worked at Monash University for five years, and was Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Management and Deputy Chair of the Faculty of Business and Economics' Graduate Studies Committee. Before that I lectured at the University of Melbourne for four years and also worked as a research fellow at the Melbourne Business School on a project on benchmarking and quality management.

BC: What is your area of research expertise?

JWC: My research lies in the area of organization theory and analysis. I am most interested in critical and post-modern approaches to organization and management studies (particularly organisational change) and I have also been doing some work on aesthetic representation in organization theory. I enjoy theorising emerging and popular trends in management studies and revisiting taken-for-granted tenets in research methods.

BC: Can you describe some of the research projects and activities that you are currently involved in?

JWC: I am currently working on several co-authored papers including an analysis of organization theory as decorative art, development of a cubist approach to organisational analysis, studies of conversion stories of organisational change and of the introduction of human resource information systems, and commentaries on triangulation and on retrospective research. I am doing some empirical work on the restructuring of the Victorian public health system during the 1990s and I am editing a special issue of the Journal of Organizational Change Management on change as shifting conversation, narratives and stories. I have an ARC Discovery Grant application into the consequences of organisational restructuring for the work and personal lives of middle managers under review – fingers crossed!

BC: What do you see as some of the major challenges facing research in the business disciplines at RMIT?

J W C: The need to facilitate and build research capability and confidence in an environment that demands high teaching loads. The need for staff to develop track records that will enable them to apply for competitive external research grants.

BC: Can you offer any advice to aspiring researchers that may help them achieve their career and research goals?

J W C:

- Work on topics that you enjoy and to which you are committed – these are the ones that will sustain you through to completion of your projects.
- Seek mentorship and ask advice in terms of how and where to submit your work for publication.
- Work in teams so that you can support and energise each other.
- Don't be timid - get out to appropriate conferences so that you and your work become known and so that you are able to develop an external reference group of similarly-minded colleagues in your area/s of interest.
- Be persistent and reasonably humble – learn to deal with feedback and revise your work within short time periods (I'm working on this one!).
- Work to deadlines for conference and journal submissions in order to minimise 'draft drift'.

Reflections of a Doctor of Project Management Candidate from Canada

From The Outside: A Look at RMIT Critical Success Factors

“How do they do it?” “Why Melbourne, Australia?” That is what I have been asking myself since joining the RMIT Doctorate in Project Management (DPM) program led by Prof. Derek Walker of the RMIT Business Research Development Unit. Motivated by natural curiosity, perplexed from the business theoretical principles, and intrigued by entrepreneurial envy, I wondered at just how RMIT has become a world class international continuing education facility.

What may have seemed an enigma at first, I have resolved at least from my international viewpoint, that RMIT has become successful by reinventing itself, with staff thinking broadly and globally, congealing faculty and industry partnerships, and by leveraging several sound and innovative learning delivery models (using internet chat/collaboration).

For example, when I compare RMIT to local and other international educational institutions, I see how a successful domestic organization has reached out to the multicultural and global market to offer comprehensive and competitive continuing education courses at various Australian points of presence, as well as through internet.

Certainly the different international monetary fund exchange rates have also attracted international students like myself away from similar yet more expensive programs offered in Canada, US, UK, to just name a few I am familiar with, but it is also the unique blend of student and faculty culture,

streamlined program execution, and contemporary content focus which ultimately won over the enlistment and loyalty of myself and several other student peers.

Additionally, the RMIT programs offer broad, contemporary, and updated curriculum content, covering most of the social and business-related educational fields. Some of the graduate and undergraduate programs appear to be designed to leverage this theoretical cross-field exposure.

Customer relationship management (a term I live with every day in my business field) is, from my experience, also very well practiced at RMIT. Anytime I have asked for help from Professors, other faculty support, and administration, I have gotten first class help. So now you know I am a big fan of the university and of education.

So that is my own reflection on the query about how and why RMIT is an international success. From a pragmatic stance, I ask myself why it took me so long to find this exciting and rewarding continuing education endeavour. Before joining RMIT as a student I faced my educational pursuits pretty much in isolation, with limited peer collaboration opportunities – now I have real, challenging, and innovative collaboration and learning opportunities. As I proceed through the RMIT educational experience I am sure I will have more observations to share.

RMIT Doctor of Project Management Student Profile – East-coast Canada



Ken Strang

Born, raised and working as a professional project manager in Eastern Canada, I began my career about 20 years ago at Blue Cross Life/Health (well-known in North America), then moved through several public sector government portfolios, and for the last five years I have been a management consultant. I typically manage small to large projects, facilitate workshops, offer strategic analysis, and almost any service related to information technology planning and management.

My wife and I are quite active in the community as we love to volunteer for non-profits. I personally love to do research, and volunteer for project management, which nicely compliments my professional work. My wife works as a social psychologist for a non-profit organization (like many spouses, she is the *sounding board* for many of my far-fetched business ideas).

One of the interesting business challenges here is the fact that we deal with two languages, English and French. Additionally, since we are a large country, geographic distances often present business challenges, therefore we, like Aussies (I think?), love to use technology such as the internet and email to close that distance gaps!

Having travelled many places throughout the world, my 2002 visit to Australia definitely fascinated me. Maybe was the respectful attitudes, the social diversity, or the service innovations; maybe it is the unique ecology, environment, and wildlife, such as the

Platypus, Koala, Kangaroo, and so on. My visit there to start the DPM program was one I will fondly remember and I intend to return there sometime in the next several years.

Canada (www.canada.ca) is geographically much larger and much more diverse than Australia. Most of the country here has four seasons, ranging from summers like Australia's (but not quite so hot – usually 25-35C), and brutal winters, with ice and 1-2 metres of snow over most of it. The winter temperatures below -40C in the far North and ranging from -30C to -10C on average elsewhere (again there are exceptions such as the west coast where winter it is much like Melbourne). Spring and fall are in between these extremes, and I recommend travelling to Canada in the fall to see the beautiful foliage. We usually have a severe ice storm in the eastern regions every 5-10 years which knocks out the power for up to a week. I don't want you to think winters are bad, in fact, nothing beats our Christmas as we can sit by our wood fireplace, burn a few logs, and watch the powdery snow fall. On the other hand I always make sure I have at least one four-wheel drive vehicle for these winters (I've gone through a few now over the years....).

My home town in the province of New Brunswick (www.newbrunswick.ca) is not only quite different from Melbourne, it is actually a stark contrast to the rest of Canada, in the sense of a much lower cost of living, low population, slower-paced lifestyle, and small town/country culture for the most part. For example, we have a provincial population of almost 800,000 while prime residential land can be purchased for \$10,000 an acre outside suburban areas and \$30,000 a lot inside the cities. Waterfront property typically costs \$90,000 in the urban areas and \$35,000 outside the cities. Houses range from \$60,000 to \$180,000 in cities, and \$45,000 to \$70,000 in the country (all depending on acreage).

The city I live in, Fredericton (www.city.fredericton.nb.ca), the provincial capital I might add, has a population of 45,000 on a busy day. My own personal interests allow me to really enjoy the environment (which nicely relaxes me from my busy professional work). I usually run every morning on a beautiful trail beside the Saint John River (which goes right through the province, much like the Yarra River does in Melbourne – but this one you can swim in during summer and skate on it over the winter!). In the winter I run into the forest on a frozen snowmobile trail (for those unfamiliar with this winter recreational all-terrain vehicle, snowmobiles go up to 100KM+ per hour over the snow).

Like many Canadians, we keep ourselves quite active, to embrace the climate, instead of letting it control us... For myself as an example, I love to ski (mostly cross-country and occasionally downhill) and skate in winter, I swim, boat (I have two), bike, and hike (which I especially love!) in the summer, spring and fall. We have a nice house by the river for boating/swimming and also beside the "Trans Canada Trail" for running/walking/biking, a dog, a daughter starting university, and all that typical family life stuff! I even roller-blade once in awhile during the summer (OK it's been awhile since I've been a teenager but I nostalgically hold onto that as long as I can!).

Wildlife abounds here. We often see deer, fox, rabbits, eagles (outside the city); whales, porpoises, seals (if you are close to the ocean); dozens of wild bird species, and much other wildlife, almost every day (sometimes even a bear or moose – one of each we had strolling down the Fredericton city streets a few days last spring!).

In closing, I look forward to continued studies at RMIT, and as I mentioned above, one day I plan to return there for a longer visit when I finish my DPM. I wouldn't want to write so much without actually contributing a bit of real value to the international educational community so in closing what I offer (for my two cents worth so-to-speak) is when you are searching for literature (especially outside Australia) note the subtle differences in the spelling of certain keywords differs – for example "organisation" is "organization" here in Canada and other places, and also the use of certain

words may not be as common outside either your field of research or culture. Sometimes you can miss a great works because the keyword is spelled differently.

Article by Ken Strang, MBA, CNA, FLMI, PMP

A special thanks to DPM candidate Ken Strang for providing this reflective piece on his impressions of being a research student at RMIT from the other side of the globe. To contact Ken please email Ken.Strang@excite.com

Recent Submission

The RDU is pleased to announce that the following research students have recently submitted their theses for examination:

Lionel Boxer, PhD, School of Management.

Thesis title: Using positioning theory to understand how senior managers deal with sustainability.

Reikman Aritonang, PhD, School of Economics and Finance.

Thesis title: The effect of non-debt tax shield on capital structure: Indonesian evidence.

Chye Hock Soh, Master, School of Economics and Finance.

Thesis title: Business failure prediction using neural networks for small and medium size companies in Singapore

Pramayanti Meitisari, PhD, School of Economics and Finance.

Thesis title: The impact of international activity on capital structure: Australian evidence.

Youngmi Choi, Master, School of Business Information Technology.

Thesis title: The use of communication and information technology by the boutique fashion small and medium size enterprises in Melbourne.

Rainer Schnittler, Master of E Business (Research), School of Business Information Technology.

Thesis title: Automotive Telematics: Configuring and scoping an innovative service model for Australia.

Suthida Jamsai, PhD, School of Management.

Thesis title: Practices and practicalities in strategic human resource planning in Thailand: lessons from the Asian economic crisis.

What's New in the RDU Library

The following publications are available from the RDU for staff and students:

External Working Papers

Kells, S., 2003, 'Explaining the breadth of expert estimate ranges in auctions of rare books', *Department of Economics Research Papers*, Research Paper No. 873, The University of Melbourne, February 2003.

Basov, S., 2003, 'Bounded rationality: Static versus dynamic approach', *Department of Economics Research Papers*, Research Paper No. 874, The University of Melbourne, February 2003.

Chaudhuri, A., & Gangadharan, L., 2003, 'Gender differences in trust and reciprocity', *Department of Economics Research Papers*, Research Paper No. 875, The University of Melbourne, March 2003.

Raimondo, R.C., 2003, 'Hart effect and equilibrium in incomplete markets I', *Department of Economics Research Papers*, Research Paper No. 876, The University of Melbourne, March 2003.

External Research Reports

National Natural Science Foundation of China, *Category of Programs and Funding Scope*, NSFC.

National Natural Science Foundation of China, *2001 Annual Report*, NSFC.

National Natural Science Foundation of China, *Guide to Programs: Fiscal Year 2002*, NSFC.

Research Funding Opportunities

For details regarding other current research funding opportunities please visit the Research & Development Funding website which provides a list of grants, awards, scholarships and fellowships available to staff and students and is updated weekly at:

<http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse?SIMID=jg30k3i1c6l>

Also for a listing of scholarships available please visit the Joint Academic Scholarship On-line Network (JASON) website. JASON is an on-line database of scholarship information for postgraduate students. For further information please visit:

<http://jason.unimelb.edu.au>

Some current research funding opportunities that are open to suitably qualified staff and research students are:

Japanese Government: Scholarships for 2004

The Japanese Government is offering scholarships to Australian Citizens for study at Japanese Universities. The research awards are tenable for 2 years starting in April 2004 or 18 months starting in October 2004. Applicants must be graduates or final year students under 25 years of age on 1 April 2004. Applicants must also be willing to study the Japanese language and to receive instruction in that language

Further details of the scholarships are available on the following website:

<http://www.japan.org.au/Embassy/educscho.html>

Closing date: 27 June 2003.

Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST): Research Fellowship Scheme

The DEST Research Fellowship Scheme brings researchers to work in the Department of Education, Science and Training for a period of up to 12 months. Research Fellows conduct a major research project and participate in the Department's policy, programme and research activities.

Further details of the scholarships are available on the following website:

<http://www.dest.gov.au/research/fellowship/fellowship.htm>

Closing date: 9 June 2003.

National Archives of Australia: Australian Summer Scholarships Scheme

The National Archives of Australia invites university students to apply for the National Archives 2004 Summer Scholarships scheme. The scheme is open to third and fourth year undergraduates, as well as students enrolled in a graduate diploma or the first year of a

postgraduate award. Students must be Australian residents studying in Australia. Two six-week scholarships will be awarded. Scholarship students will undertake the scholarship program in Canberra and will be provided with travel costs, accommodation, meals and a small honorarium. In return, they will undertake research projects utilising the Archives' collection. The scholarship will culminate in a short presentation to Archives' staff.

Further details of the scholarships are available on the following website:

<http://www.naa.gov.au/>

Closing date: 31 October 2003.

Australian Academy of the Humanities / Academy of Social Sciences in Australia: Special Joint Project Funding Australia and Britain

The Australian Academy of the Humanities, the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, and the British Academy have launched a new scheme for the support of joint projects between Australian and British scholars. One award (of up to £8,000) for a project which covers both humanities and social sciences disciplines, or two awards (of up to £4,000 per project) will be available each year, to cover travel and maintenance expenses.

Further details of the scholarships are available on the following website:

<http://www.assa.edu.au/International/uk.htm>

Closing date: 30 September 2003.

Australian Academy of the Humanities / Academy of Social Sciences in Australia: Exchange Program with The Netherlands

The Exchange Program between the Australian Academy and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (The Netherlands) began in 1987 and the Australian Academy of the Humanities was included in 1991. The Joint Academies facilitate visits by scholars to specific research institutes or conferences in the Netherlands, preferably for periods of one or two weeks. The scholar is responsible for the cost of the international airfare to the Netherlands, but the Royal Netherlands Academy will meet the cost of living and approved internal travel during the period of stay. Applicants will need to propose a program for the approval of the host Academy. A reciprocal agreement covers the cost of visits by Dutch scholars to Australia. The Academies would welcome suggestions for such visits.

Further details of the scholarships are available on the following website:

<http://www.assa.edu.au/International/netherlands.htm>

Closing date: 15 August 2003.

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The aim of this newsletter is to keep staff informed of research activity within RMIT Business and of research opportunities both outside and within the faculty. If you have any contributions (we are always interested in research or researchers for our feature article) that you think would be of interest to the faculty please contact Liz Merlot at the RDU.

The *Business Research News* is also available for viewing on the RDU's web site shortly after it has been distributed in paper form. The web site also contains information for research staff and students including the RDU's library holdings.