Colloquium on Innovating Research

Program & Abstracts

Wednesday 29th September 2004
Duxton Hotel
328 Flinders St. - Melbourne
Conference Themes

Innovation, creativity & invention

Alternative modes of research

Supervision, higher education policy & research education

Commercialization of research and industry collaboration

Engaging the community and cross-cultural research

Innovation and new media
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A delegates list can be found on the Research Training Group website: [www.rmit.edu.au/rtg](http://www.rmit.edu.au/rtg)
It is with great pleasure that we, on behalf of the office of the Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation, welcome you to this year’s annual research on research conference. In 2004 the conference takes the form of a colloquium on the theme of innovating research and, like other years, brings together researchers from across RMIT for a day of discussion and debate dedicated to research.

Innovation is very much on the agenda these days, both locally, nationally and internationally, as universities come under increasing pressure to reduce their reliance on the public purse, and also, to contribute to national prosperity. In this climate, researchers are expected to transform from scholars into entrepreneurs.

This colloquium provides an opportunity for researchers to discuss how they are responding. The key question it takes up is that of what researchers at RMIT are doing with the innovation agenda: how are we innovating research? The diversity of presentations that appear in the program demonstrate that RMIT’s researchers are nothing if not innovative in their response of this agenda. Research is being redefined, and often in unexpected ways.

A special welcome is also extended to our invited speakers, Prof John Fien, of Griffith University, who is providing the opening address, as well as RMIT’s Innovation Professors, Leon van Schaik, Paul James, Chris Triggle and John Handmer who will participate in a panel discussion on innovation.

Enjoy!

Conference Convenors

Dr Robyn Barnacle
Ms Helen Lennox
Prof Robin Usher
Information for Presenters

Please note:

Presenters are asked to keep to time, and chair their own session.

Please familiarise yourself with the location and facilities of your room prior to your presentation.

In order to make your session interactive, please allow time for questions and discussion.
Opening Address

Professor John Fien

John Fien takes up a position at RMIT in January 2005 as Innovation Professor of Sustainability. At present, he holds a professorial position in the Faculty of Environmental Sciences at Griffith University, Brisbane.

With a broad interdisciplinary background in natural resource management, environmental sociology, and education policy, he has been at the forefront of the emergence of education for sustainable development in community, TAFE, university and school education.

In recent years, he has been a resource person in sustainable development for UNEP and UNESCO at meetings of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the development of frameworks for the 2005 -1024 UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. He was also the author of the UNESCO multimedia program, Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future - URL:  
www.unesco.org/education/tlsf

He has been awarded three ARC Large/Discovery and two ARC Small research grants (eg. on environmental attitudes, public participation and environmental biography), and has been a Program Director in the Sustainable Tourism, Coastal Management and Catchment Hydrology CRCs. He has also conducted consultancy projects for the OECD (on sustainable consumption), WWF-International (conservation education) and the UN University of Peace, Costa Rica (sustainable development education).

John Fien was the director of the Young People and the Environment Project that analysed the environmental knowledge and values of young people in the Asia-Pacific region and which has been published as Environment, Education and Society in the Asia-Pacific: Local Traditions and Global Discourses and Young People and the Environment: An Asia-Pacific Perspective (both with Helen Sykes and David Yencken). He is also the co-editor of the IUCN book, Education and Sustainability: Responding to the Global Challenge.
### Colloquium on Innovating Research

**PROGRAM AT A GLANCE**

**Wednesday 29th September 2004**

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<td>9.00 – 10.00am</td>
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<td>Prof Fien’s research centers on environmental education and environmental attitudes and beliefs. He will be joining RMIT as Innovation Professor in 2005.</td>
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| 11.00 – 11.30am   | Black and white together make blue  
Lesley Duxbury | Novel alternatively powered hearing aid for the third world – reflections on innovation and commercialisation  
Aleksander Subic, Bane Jakovljevic, Hao Shen & Nick Johns | Doing what we know: harnessing innovation to build research culture  
Kathryn Hegarty |
| 11.30 – 12.00pm   | A bear blanketed by words (getting a box of stuff accepted as a Ph.D thesis)  
Peter Burrows | Innovation and commercialization in polymer research  
Margaret Jollands & Rahul Gupta | Backing Australia’s researchers?  
Vannessa Hearman |
| 12.00 – 1.00pm    | Lunch  
(Duxton 1 & Vestibule) | (Ballroom A) | |
| 1.00 – 2.00pm     | Panel discussion on innovation:  
Chair: Prof Nita Cherry  
Panellists: RMIT Innovation Professors: Leon van Schaik (architecture), Paul James (Globalism Institute), Chris Triggle (biotechnology) and John Handmer (risk management) | (Ballroom A) | |
| Workshops         | Ballroom A | Ballroom B | Duxton 3 |
| 2.00 – 3.00pm     | Supporting ethical approaches to innovation in practice-based T&L research  
Rosemary Chang, Kathleen Gray, Nita Cherry & Barbara Polus | A cross-disciplinary exploration of creative processes in the postgraduate research experience  
Laura Brearley, Kipps Horn & Gerry Katz | A community of practice approach to supervision  
Sandra Jones, Deanne Koelymer, Owen Lockwood, Diana Maldonado Rey & Ahmed al Mousa |
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Researching outside the square | Ballroom B  
New media | Duxton 3  
Cross cultural research |
| 3.30 – 4.15pm | Engaging the community: research and practice  
Laurene Vaughan, Mary Johnson, David Warne, Rob Fenton & David Hodges | Network literacies: innovation as necessity  
Adrian Miles & Jeremy Yuille | The challenges of conducting research in China  
Ian Fraser |
| 4.15 – 4.45pm | Creating new patterns from existing threads  
Adele Flood | Researching multimedia  
Adrian Bruch | Corporate sponsorship and cross-cultural collaboration  
Steve Middleton |
| 4.45 – 5.00pm | Wrap up – Prof. Robin Usher |
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A cross-disciplinary exploration of creative processes in the postgraduate research experience
Laura Brearley, Kipps Horn, & Gerry Katz

This workshop will bring together supervisors and students from a range of post-graduate research programs, including the Koorie Cohort of Post-graduate Researchers, Master of Arts (Music) and Master of Creative Arts Therapies. Within the workshop, participants will be invited to engage in an exploration of the dialectics, paradoxes and tensions of undertaking creative processes in post-graduate research.

This workshop will explore three key questions:
- What is the nature of the experience of undertaking creative post-graduate research, from students' and supervisors' perspectives?
- How is the inter-relationship between scholarship and creative practice currently being experienced?
- In what ways are multiple ways of knowing, including Indigenous perspectives, being incorporated into creative research experiences?

These questions will be explored from experiential, theoretical and critically reflective perspectives. The workshop will include a collaborative musical improvisation, stimulated by artwork, poetic text and stories of research.

The intention of the workshop is to create a space where conceptual exploration, conversation and creative processes can combine to deepen our understanding of the complexities of undertaking creative work in the context of academic research.

Contact: Laura Brearley – Email: laura.brearley@rmit.edu.au

Researching multimedia
Adrian Bruch

I am offering a single panel presentation (reflections and demonstrations) of ways to overcome the limitations of the printed word in researching multimedia. I will be showing the strategies I have been forced to develop in capturing dead Media (obsolete technologies) as well as commenting on how to best exemplify the real meaning of Multimedia in a dynamic document format.

While superficially we need to deal with ways to get onscreen grabs, there is more to it than what is included in the standard Operating System software. The other important ingredient to the presentation success is the use of the portable document format (PDF) in Adobe Acrobat to add the audio, video, hypertext and print capabilities.

Contact: Adrian Bruch – Email: adrian.bruch@rmit.edu.au
A bear blanketed by words (getting a box of stuff accepted as Ph.D thesis)
Peter Burrows

The idea that a PhD Thesis is an amalgam of words sandwiched between two thick pieces of cardboard is a deeply socialised and taken-for-granted notion. For most people a thesis is that which one finds on a bookshelf. So, the successful student of a PhD thesis is inducted into a discipline-based orthodoxy of research and research-writing. The PhD student learns to do things properly and a proper PhD thesis is always written work.

Phillips (1997, p.xiv) says “doing something properly is a way of not doing it differently.” So what happens when you declare that the preferred container for your thesis is a box because you want to include ideas that are beyond words and you want readers to handle your thoughts?

I discovered that if I wanted to include a teddy bear in a thesis I must blanket the bear in words. In the context of a thesis words comfort and reassure where the teddy bear disturbs. The teddy was one of a series of artefacts and embodied ideas in my thesis-as-box. Amongst these artefacts were a twisted wire sculpture, a fragment of brown paper bag with raffia handle, a leather ‘detail’ axed from a size-nine male business shoe and a shard from a tea-cup. The artefacts said what couldn’t otherwise be said… But gaining acceptance for a thesis-as-box and teddy-as-text required the reassurance of a thick blanket of words – without the words it could not be a proper thesis.

Contact: Peter Burrows – email: peter.burrows@rmit.edu.au

Supporting ethical approaches to innovation in practice-based teaching & learning research
Rosemary Chang, Kathleen Gray, Nita Cherry & Barbara Polus

Abstract for Innovating Research: Where to after “Backing Australia’s Ability”? Sub-theme: The contribution of practitioner or practice-based research to innovation

Key words: Research innovation; practice-based T&L research

This workshop will explore ethical issues in the scholarship of teaching and learning. It will focus on the questions that face teaching and learning staff as they innovate in their professional practice through practice-based research. Using a case study of Action Research in Teaching and Learning (ARTL) projects in the SET Portfolio, the workshop will not only examine some of the more obvious ethical issues - and how we engage with them - but also how we might remain sensitive and alert to more complex issues as they emerge.

The workshop will also focus on broader implications for the university, such as: How are staff and students communicated with in relation to these issues? How can staff be supported in their professional development in these areas?

This topic will interest delegates involved in or connected with research into the teaching practice – especially in the context of RMIT Teaching & Learning targets such as CEQ outcomes, and the broader context of the federal Learning & Teaching Performance Fund.

Contact: Rosemary Chang – Email: rosemary.chang@rmit.edu.au
What is invention?
Linda Daley, School of Applied Communication, RMIT

Keywords: Invention; responsibility

Abstract:
This paper will undertake a literary, philosophical, historical investigation of the concept of invention to demonstrate that the concept is divided between that of revelation or discovery on the one hand, and on the other, that of technique or fabrication. Rather than being disabled by this equivocal history, invention as an ideal is exposed to what is other than itself, and therefore exposed and implicated in a responsibility towards what is unknown and unknowable.

Interest to delegates:
The paper is speculative. It is not based on personal research experience of the production of a technical innovation, a patented invention, or any thing or thought that has broken ground and been authorised as such. The aim is to reflect on what constitutes invention, and to refer to some key thinkers and meditations on the nature of invention in order to put the thought and practice that goes into naming something as "innovative" or an "invention" into a conceptual history. That is, to provide a framework for talking about a very diverse set of practices, experiences and ideas surrounding "the new".

The demand to be original is an explicit requirement of research practice, but what are the stakes of this requirement? What constitutes originality? What is the connection between originality and genius? How does the grand design of the genius fit with the serendipity of innovation? If innovation and invention are not wholly of the order of knowledge and calculation, what are the consequences of this for the institution in which such practices occur and, which should do so according to government, with increasing calculation and programming?

Contact: Linda Daley – Email: linda.daley@rmit.edu.au

Black and white together make blue
Lesley Duxbury

Keywords: creative, interactions

Research and innovation are inextricably linked. In the visual arts, creative practice is synonymous with innovation but does not always sit comfortably with research as a methodical investigation. Creative arts practice is often intuitive and emerges out of a physical, often playful, engagement with materials and media. When art is created as research it is in many ways contradictory, especially when devising a schedule of progress and methodology that does not allow for the unpredictable. However, a PhD by project can satisfy the requirements of traditional research, to be innovative and methodical, by combining a creative art project with an exegesis. This paper will address issues surrounding the undertaking of a PhD by project, using examples of my own artwork, to explore the ways in which interactions occur between an artwork and a viewer to encourage new interpretations that are innovative and that are contextualised in an exegesis.

Contact: Lesley Duxbury – Email: lesley.duxbury@rmit.edu.au
Creating new patterns from existing threads
Adele Flood

Rather than the heroic images of innovation that suggest ideas appear to the unsuspecting researcher, innovation (and creativity) often comes from the deliberate combination of existing ideas to find new knowledge. At other times it can come from serendipitous combinations that occur when least expected. Whether deliberate or serendipitous, at all times it is the keen and watchful eye of the researcher looking for new possibilities that results in innovative development.

This paper will discuss how I used a systems model from Social Sciences and combined it with narrative methodology, educational pedagogy and philosophical positioning of self to construct the research program in the thesis Common Threads.

I will introduce and discuss the model I developed titled “A Model for Constructing Personal Narratives of Self” and then reveal the resultant innovative constructs of self. These Textscapes and "Threadscapes" that occurred as a result of both the deliberate combining of ideas from disparate disciplines and the serendipitous positioning of data that I noticed and followed through. They proved highly significant because they reveal clearly the inner creative voice of the artist and the powerful place art making holds in the development of an individual.

Contact: Adele Flood – Email: adele.flood@rmit.edu.au

The challenges of conducting research in China
Ian Fraser

Key Words: Research China

Of value and interest because:
• Very little research has been conducted on management and strategy issues in China
• Very little has been published on the issues involved in conducting research in China for example:
  o Approaches required to gain access and co-operation
  o Chinese culture and society
  o The pace of change
  o The desire for anonymity
• Challenges to the “western paradigm” of qualitative research
  o Difficult issues of reliability and validity have had to be addressed.
  
  The presentation will contribute to a lively discussion because:
• Very little is published on the topic
• China is a country of great interest and strategic importance to RMIT and Australia
• Understanding of Chinese culture and society and of the role of universities in China is limited
• Understanding of the issues involved in conducting research in China is limited

Contact: Ian Fraser – Email: ian.fraser@rmit.edu.au
Research students in national innovation systems
Sandra Haukka

Some of the Knowledge and Innovation reforms were aimed at enhancing ‘the important contribution of research students to the national research and innovation system’ (Kemp, 1999, p.18). Lundvall (1992) argued that national education and training are missing elements in a national innovation system and called for future research ‘to integrate education and training systems and innovation systems in one single analytical framework’ (p.15). The purpose of the workshop is to present findings to date from a PhD study that is investigating whether research students in science and technology fields contribute to national innovation systems in Australia, Finland and the USA. The “contribution” of research students is being assessed within a three element theoretical framework consisting of the international mobility and migration of research students and graduates, knowledge creation by research students, and the relationship between research training, human capital and economic growth. The workshop will provide an opportunity to explore the features and merits of a “research training culture of innovation” that aims to enhance the contribution of research students to a national innovation system.

Contact: Sandra Haukka – email: sandra.haukka@rmit.edu.au

Backing Australia’s researchers?
Higher Education funding cuts and Backing Australia’s Ability II
Vannessa Hearman

This presentation aims to bring the focus back on fostering early career researchers and how government policies affect the renewal process of those engaged in research.

In particular, the focus is on the possible impact of “Backing Australia’s Ability II”, the Federal Government’s key plank in terms of research and innovation policy. The claim of expanded government funding to research must be examined in the context of increasing cutbacks to the higher education sector as a whole.

Where does this leave universities and student researchers, particularly those outside of the Science and Technology areas? The focus on commercial-ready research suggests that talented postgraduate students and those just embarking on their research now are increasingly undervalued.

Whilst universities are setting up commercialisation companies to market and develop research outcomes, research students continue to need concrete support to complete their research. Such support could take the form of infrastructure support and the fostering of a research environment that is not dependent on commercial-ready outcomes.

Contact: Vanessa Hearman – Email: vanness.hearman@rmit.edu.au
Doing what we know: harnessing innovation to build research culture.
Kathryn Hegarty

Developments in research and research training policy demonstrate an emphasis on partnerships, networks and cross-disciplinary research practice. Such innovations arguably enhance research culture and facilitate collegiality. The trend towards research concentrations has sharpened our institutional focus on potential collaborations with colleagues and in the broader community. We know that research students are most likely to submit in a timely manner when they have experienced a rich, inclusive research environment. Such a culture is often correlated with a research-active school/department. But how do we understand collegiality in our daily lives as researchers? How do we know we have a research culture? How do we recognize its hallmarks and embed it into our staff, student and organizational capability? Drawing on the work of Gibbons et al, and my experiences of collaboration at RMIT, this paper will explore the praxis of collegiality and research culture.

Contact: Kathryn Hegarty – Email: kathryn.hegarty@rmit.edu.au

Innovation and commercialization in polymer research
Subtheme: Innovation and commercialisation / application
Margaret Jollands & Rahul Gupta

Participants: Professor Sati Bhattacharya and Dr Margaret Jollands

Key Words: Applied research, joint project

Two examples of innovative research projects with industry partners will be presented.

The first was a joint project with Ricegrower’s Co-operative Ltd (RCL) undertaken with AusIndustry funding ($2 million over 3 years). RCL developed an innovative process to use rice husks, a waste by-product from rice milling, as a filler in polymers. RMIT undertook research into developing the process towards commercialisation, with our expertise in polymers and composite processing. 5 RMIT staff and one PhD student worked on the project.

The second was a joint project with the CRC for Polymers (CRC-P) and Qenos on the development of high melt strength polyolefins for applications in polymer film, wire and cable, and pipes. Over a period of 8 years RMIT RMPC developed technology in collaboration with the industry partners that made a significant contribution to the development of new products as well as improvements to existing products for Qenos. The total return for the industry would be several million dollars over a period of five years.

The topic is of interest to delegates because the participants will address:
- How the original partnership with industry partners was formed
- How the projects were funded
- How RMIT derived value from IP agreements
- The issues of working with CRCs or large industry partners

It will contribute to discussion as problems and issues will be discussed as well as the positive outcomes of working on the projects.

Contact: Margaret Jollands – Email: margaret.jollands@rmit.edu.au
A community of practice approach to research supervision
Sandra Jones and Deanne Koelymer

Supporting research candidates undertaking practice-based research requires a more holistic approach to research supervision. In 2003 I proposed to my, then, four Professional Doctorate candidates and 2 PhD candidates, that we establish a research Community of Practice (CoP) around the common theme of the role of CoPs in assisting the sharing of knowledge. They agreed that this could assist them given that each of them were undertaking research in the general area of change required by managers and organisations to address the needs of a knowledge era.

One year later, with the CoP still meeting on a fairly regular basis, the experience of knowledge sharing by most of the original members, and additional members who have since joined since, has exceeded our expectations and has also resulted in the acceptance for publication of a collaborative research paper on the contribution of the CoPs to research supervision.

This workshop will present the experience of the CoP as an innovative contribution to research supervision.
Contact: Sandra Jones – Email: sandra.jones@rmit.edu.au

Corporate sponsorship and cross-cultural collaboration.
Steve Middleton (AIM centre)

Keywords: sponsorship; collaboration.

My practice-based PhD project in robotics and artificial intelligence required me to collaborate extensively with private industry and public universities in Australia and overseas. Problems stemming from unreasonable expectations arose with private industry, while curious problems of communication and workflow arose with international collaborations. The problems were overcome in unexpected, and sometimes surprising, ways.

My account might interest those seeking corporate sponsorship for research projects, and/or those seeking partnerships with academics and institutions overseas. Sponsorship and collaborations always make for lively debates. For instance, one component of my project was paid for by a multinational drug company.
Contact: Steve Middleton – Email: stevem@vicnet.net.au

Network literacies: innovation as necessity
Adrian Miles and Jeremy Yuille

Blogs are an online genre that are the first native Web genre. They are best thought of as distributed, networked writing spaces, and it is the qualities they exhibit as distributed and networked writing that separates blogs from traditional journals. Blogs are not a panacea to online learning but do offer considerable benefits to students who wish to document and reflect on their practice. The use of blogs in research, teaching and learning, raises issues for teachers and students and this presentation will introduce and explore the benefits and problems associated with educational blogging.
Contact: Adrian Miles – Email: Adrian.miles@rmit.edu.au
Research partners: working with industry on ARC linkage projects
Roslyn Russell & Rob Brooks

RMIT, like many other universities have an expressed mission to “undertake research programs that address real-world issues within an international and community context” (RMIT Research Mission). The ARC linkage grant scheme is a vehicle that helps us achieve the goals of this mission. As the word “linkage” implies, collaboration is a key component of the scheme, aiming to encourage the combined research efforts of universities and industry to investigate ‘real’ issues.

This paper will present two examples of our experience in developing ARC linkage projects. While the topics are quite different from each other and the industry partners are also different in nature, common principles and practices have been employed in order to firstly, win the grants and secondly to undertake the projects.

The first ARC linkage project is “Valuations of Business Models in Biotechnology Companies” partnered with BioDiem Ltd, a small company involved in commercialising biotechnology products. The second project is “Demand and Supply of Creative Arts in Regional and Rural areas” with Arts Victoria as the industry partner.

The presentation will outline the path of developing productive relationships with industry, benefits of the collaborative relationship and lessons learned.
Contact: Roslyn Russell – Email: roslyn.russell@rmit.edu.au

Novel alternatively powered hearing aid for the third world - reflections on innovation and commercialisation

Presenters:
Prof. Aleksandar Subic
Dr Bane Jakovljevic
Mr Hao Shen
Mr Nick Johns

The proposed panel discussion aims to provide an overview of a particular research project undertaken in collaboration with industry that has resulted in a novel alternatively powered hearing aid for the Third World. From the outset of this project, innovation and commercialisation have been identified as main drivers. That is the project "had" to produce a technologically advanced and patentable product that will be commercially viable within the Third World countries marketplace.

These requirements are in many ways contradictory and pose significant challenges to the research and innovation process. The panel discussion will engage in a reflective enquiry about these issues and their consequences. In particular, the session will take the form of a discussion between the research practitioners faced with challenges, risks and opportunities that stem from the innovative and commercial nature of their research. Also, the fact that this research is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary provides scope for a more fundamental discussion on how these boundaries have been blurred through integration and application of knowledge in this project.
Contact: Alexander Subic – Email: alexander.subic@rmit.edu.au
Engaging the community: research and practice
Vaughan, Laurene; Johnson, Mary; Warne, David; Fenton, Rob & Hodges, David

Engaging the community: Research and Practice, is a panel discussion that will explore and consider the role and potential of research to engage and change community practice. Facilitating the discussion will be four workplace researchers from the School of Education who are currently participating in the Research by Project Programs. The focus of the discussion will be on the challenges and the potential of this mode of research to support and facilitate sustainable change within the community.

The workplaces of these researchers include: Landcare Australia, the National Environment Centre, the Catchment Management Authority and Quinos - a petrochemical Company. Topics of particular interest and under question within the discussion are: community, sustainable, & change.

Contact: Laurene Vaughan – Email: laurene.Vaughan@rmit.edu.au