“We are proud of our diverse research projects, innovative industry collaborations and leading-edge engagement with this influential sector.”

— PROFESSOR MARGARET GARDNER AO
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT
MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

I am pleased to present this overview of RMIT University’s capability in the Media and Communications industry. It showcases the creativity and expertise that RMIT demonstrates in this sector and some of the important work that is being carried out at RMIT for this industry.

RMIT prides itself on strong industry links developed over the University’s more than 120-year history, originating in our beginnings as the Working Men’s College. RMIT has offered engineering and technology programs from its early days and then introduced communications during the Second World War, when it trained RAAF personnel in radio communications as part of the war effort.

RMIT’s collaboration with industry is integral to its leadership in applied research and education, and to the development of work-ready, highly skilled and globally focused graduates. We ensure our programs are relevant to industry and that they address industry’s skills requirements via our program advisory committees and continuous engagement with industry at many different levels. It is critical to our success of being a first choice provider of work-relevant learning in Australia that we continue to do this and it is why our graduates are so highly sought by industry.

Industry support enables us to deliver dynamic teaching and provides opportunities for RMIT students to gain valuable work-relevant education through our industry connections, including industry placements, industry-supported projects and simulated work environments.

RMIT has a strong and robust reputation for nurturing the media and communications professions. From our outstanding and award winning programs, students and staff in public relations, multimedia, creative writing and more, to our dynamic teaching environments such as the Room With a View magazine radio show on Triple R and The Works educational design consultancy studio, RMIT stays ahead. The demand for these exceptional programs remains high with, excellent outcomes for our graduates and alumni.

RMIT has extensive experience in the research and teaching of technology. Technology developed at RMIT has enabled creativity to flourish in the media and communications sector. The technology to develop the MP3 player was established at RMIT, as was the technology for Dolby sound. RMIT is currently involved in many pioneering projects including having access to cutting-edge satellite communications technology via an industry standard two-way earth terminal; data visualisation with Deloitte Digital to enhance user online experience; and the design of smaller and more powerful patch antennas.

The University has three research institutes that address the social, technical and design aspects of the media and communications industry. These institutes work with industry to address current and future issues and are helping to shape Melbourne to become a centre of design and converging technologies in this sector.

RMIT is proud of its status as one of the most international Australian universities, with two campuses in Vietnam and a strong educational presence in Singapore, Hong Kong, mainland China and Malaysia. We are committed to providing graduates with a global passport – a qualification that arises not only from an internationalised curriculum, delivered by internationally experienced academic staff, but also one that incorporates first-hand experience of world’s best practice.

Collaboration between universities and industry is integral to the continuous innovation and growth of the media and communications industry, globally and nationally. We welcome, acknowledge and encourage your further engagement with RMIT.

Professor Margaret Gardner AO
Vice-Chancellor and President
RMIT University
RMIT has a strong reputation in the traditional media and communications disciplines, coupled with strength in information technology, engineering, business and social sciences. RMIT delivers outstanding multi-disciplinary professional and vocational education and high quality outcome-orientated research. We achieve this through our valuable industry collaborations and by attracting excellent teaching staff and researchers, and creative and talented students from across the globe.

Collaborative research with our industry partners is being undertaken in a range of innovative areas including data visualisation, satellite technology, cultural communications and high speed search engines. Our applied research provides industry with pioneering solutions and ground-breaking findings that deliver real outcomes.

RMIT has three research institutes that directly address many of the local and global challenges facing industry, demonstrating the University’s leadership and commitment to providing research that is focused on industry and community needs. Our Institutes are multi-disciplinary centres of excellence, working on smart, practical and creative solutions that will have an impact on media, communications and technologies that we use on a daily basis.

We deliver a cross section of programs to support the media and communications sectors, ensuring high quality work-ready graduates. Our programs address the communication and design professions as well as the new platforms and technology enablers, providing our students and industry partners with access to a multi-disciplinary education experience.
Our robust commitment to this industry is showcased by the diversity of our research projects, the value we place on our partnerships, and the accomplishments and passion of our students and staff.

— PROFESSOR MARGARET GARDNER AO VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT

COMMUNICATING IN THE CITY
With a strong reputation in all areas of media and communications, RMIT also has a long history of commissioning innovative architecture, and continues to set the standard with a new home for the School of Media and Communication and a landmark building to house the Design Hub.

RMIT’s School of Media and Communication – an amalgamation of the former schools of Creative Media and Applied Communication – will be housed in the renovated City campus Building 9. This heritage-listed, 71-year-old building, which was originally built to train RAAF personnel in communications as part of the war effort, has had two additional storeys added and substantial renovations to its interior. Ultimately, it will be decked out with sustainable design features and innovative teaching, learning and office spaces, as well as keeping its original art-deco façade intact.

Previously housed in seven separate buildings across the city, this single location for the School will better enable cross-disciplinary teaching and learning within this communications ‘hub’. The School will be one of Australia’s largest dual sector schools. Staff and students have moved in to some of the newly renovated areas in the building and the project is due to be completed by December 2012.

RMIT’s Design Hub is being developed to support and expand the University’s position as an internationally renowned leader in design education and research; it will also strengthen Victoria’s global reputation as a centre of design excellence and carve out a distinctive niche for Australian design in the global economy.

The Design Hub will provide facilities, accommodation and a collegial research base for RMIT’s diverse range of design initiatives, design research groups and postgraduate programs, including the Design Research Institute and Design Victoria. Its research and education programs will be enriched by and developed in consultation with industry members and will be characterised by a work-integrated and industry-embedded focus.

The Hub will have a highly visible presence from Swanston Street north of La Trobe Street and will feature leading-edge facilities. It will be distinguished by environmentally sustainable design features including a climactically responsive ‘second skin’ – that will reduce the need for cooling in summer and heating in winter; warehouse-style accommodation for in-house design research teams; permanent exhibition space; and the capacity to broadcast information streamed via the internet throughout the building.

RMIT – THE BIG PICTURE
- RMIT is the largest dual-sector university in Australia
- In 2001, RMIT established Vietnam’s first and only fully foreign-owned university. RMIT Vietnam now delivers internationally recognised degrees from campuses in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.
- RMIT offers 924 programs ranging from apprenticeship training through to doctoral programs.
- The University has campuses in Melbourne’s CBD, in Brunswick and Bundoora in the city’s northern suburbs, and a learning centre in Hamilton in regional Victoria, as well as in Vietnam.
- The student population of 70,245 includes 10,000 international students at RMIT’s Melbourne CBD and suburban campuses and 4,000 students at RMIT Vietnam.
- RMIT delivers 55 programs to 11,700 students in association with 23 partner institutions in Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia and elsewhere.
- The University has teaching and research connections on every continent.
- One of Australia’s original education institutions, RMIT was established in 1887 as the Working Men’s College.
- The University is a member of the Australian Technology Network and the Global GU8 Consortium
- RMIT has 3,530 staff in Melbourne and 392 in Vietnam.
Visit the newsroom at any Melbourne media outlet and chances are you’ll find RMIT graduates making up much of the staffing profile. The story is the same in public relations and film industries – RMIT’s programs providing platforms from which our students build successful media careers.

RMIT’s Media programs integrate the skills that industry has always required with a nimble approach to the technologies that allows information delivery to be increasingly immediate, sophisticated and accessible.

Our teaching practices provide students with opportunities to learn by doing in an authentic workplace environment, guided by academic staff who are leading industry practitioners. Students undertake industry internships, gaining practical experience and contributing, even before graduation, to RMIT’s industry partners.

Our programs in Media, Journalism, Film and Television and Public Relations recognise that the media landscape is becoming more connected and more fragmented and that new approaches are needed.
From affordable living and rights, to subcultures and adventures in paradise, the RMIT student radio program Room with a View, on Melbourne’s Triple R radio station, covers all bases.

Program Director for Professional Communication at RMIT, Bruce Berryman, said, ‘Room with a View is a chance for students to delve into the issues that they feel are important and that would be of interest to the 3RRR community. It’s been running for 25 years, almost as long as Triple R itself. ‘Each show is presented, written and produced by a different group of Media students, but also contains chat, interviews and music. It gives students a voice on radio and is often a stepping stone to employment in the media for our graduates.’

The one hour magazine program sees five groups of students rotate over the year to produce the weekly segment. The show mirrors industry, with the students working as a team, that includes presenters, a producer and a panel operator, to broadcast the program each week.

3RRR Program Manager, Mick James, says that Room with a View and the news bulletins that the RMIT journalism students produce each year reflect Triple R’s commitment to playing an educational role not only in what it broadcasts but also in how it broadcasts. ‘Many of the students have no familiarity with Triple R before they join Room with a View. So, they get the experience of having to learn about a station and its sound, as well as facing the challenge of trying to create programming that is relevant to an audience of people very different to themselves. It’s an experience that should hold them in good stead in other radio sectors, be it government or commercial,’ he said.

All editions of Room with a View are archived for streaming on RMIT’s ROAR website—see story below.

ROAR-ing on Two Continents

Imagine people producing radio programs on two different continents yet still working seamlessly together and being able to comment on each others work at any time. Impossible?

ROAR or Radio Online at RMIT is already letting students work together in this way to produce radio content, even though they live thousands of miles apart and in different time zones.

Program Director for Professional Communication at RMIT, Bruce Berryman, said, ‘ROAR started as a website to showcase and distribute RMIT students work to potential employers. But it’s ended up as much more than that; it’s also a really useful tool for the contemporary radio producer, as online is a large part of what radio does these days.’

Students from RMIT have been collaborating with students at Lincoln University in the UK to connect communities of interest through ROAR. They have been working on the same story in totally different geographic locations, looking at immigration from the UK to Australia, and vice versa, and how it has changed over time.

Using ROAR, both teams of students have been able to communicate and update their findings, upload interviews, blog on the project, collaborate via forums and review, and comment on each other’s work. Their findings have shown that in the 1950s it was mainly tradespeople immigrating to and from Australia and that now it is mainly finance and IT people who are on the move.

‘ROAR has proved to be a one-stop-shop for these students. They can access it anywhere, anytime. It’s been indispensable for working on this project and a perfect learning platform for this new digital environment,’ said Mr Berryman.

Left: RMIT student Patricia Niklas on air at Triple R radio in Melbourne

RMIT AND 3RRR

3RRR started life as an educational broadcaster back in 1976. Originally known as 3RMT, the station initially operated on a one year ‘experimental’ licence that stipulated that it broadcast ‘messages containing matter of an educational character’.

The very first broadcast began with a message from the then Vice Chancellor of RMIT, followed by 25 minutes of literature reviews. Eventually the students of RMIT were allowed on air to broadcast some music. In August 1978 the station was granted a three year ‘E’ for educational class public broadcasting licence.

The station chose 3RRR for its new call sign to symbolise the three ‘R’s in education and Rock.

The first decade of Triple R was a tumultuous time including financial difficulties and licence renewals, but due to individual and collective ingenuity, passion and determination the station survived many close calls. Three decades later, the cutting edge music and critical approach to contemporary culture at the heart of Triple R, has helped make Melbourne what it is today.
RESEARCHING THE AUDIENCE NOT THE DRAMA

Text- and production-based histories of cinema have dominated Cinema Studies since its inception in the 1950s and 60s. These approaches have been very productive, but they have often emphasised national cinemas at the expense of examining the movement of films across social, regional, linguistic, and international borders.

Too often they have assumed the stability of the film text and the significance of the director’s intentions. Discussion and analysis often revolves around figuring out what the director meant, for example, why a film is lit in a particular way or the significance of a ruby red dress.

Research by RMIT Associate Professor Deb Verhoeven is forging a different path in cinema studies. It focuses on Australian cinema audiences, and how they consume films, rather than what is happening on the screen. This involves producing histories of cinema that focus on the relationships between cinema distribution and exhibition as business practices, and cinema-going as a cultural practice in a wide array of locales and periods. An example of this new approach is Cinemap.

Cinemap is a multidisciplinary approach to the analysis of Australian cinema consumption that combines industrial, economic and geo-spatial approaches. Although film production occupies a prominent position in Australian cultural subsidy schemes, policymakers are not well served by detailed empirical evidence about the competitiveness of local films in the rapidly changing Australian marketplace,” said Associate Professor Verhoeven.

The research undertakes a detailed analysis of the highly specific conditions of the Australian exhibition and distribution nexus at a local, regional and national level. The commercial questions addressed in this analysis have the longer-term potential to change thinking and behaviour in the industry.

EVERYONE’S TALKING ABOUT FILMS

The School of Media and Communication works closely with the Australian Writers’ Guild and the Australian Directors Guild, providing office space and organising a series of events which provide for dynamic liaison between students and those within the industry.

With the dramatic changes that are taking place in the global media landscape in the twenty-first century, it is essential for all stakeholders to have the opportunity to come together regularly and interact. These industry events provide a forum for sharing information, identifying issues affecting the industry and suggesting opportunities for industry-relevant research.

“One of the standout events this year’s events was a session with the filmmakers of The Jammed,” said Mark Poole, Victorian Chair of the Australian Writers’ Guild (AWG), the professional association for writers in the areas of television, radio, screen and stage.

The Jammed, an independent feature film focusing on illegal sex trade in Australia, took the Australian film industry by storm on its release in early 2007. Central to the film’s success was its outstanding screenplay. The event explored the innovative writing method adopted by the film production team, including use of a life coach to develop the script and support the work of the actors.

“I interviewed writer/director Dee McLachlan and producer Andrea Buck in front of a large audience comprising AWG members, screenwriters, RMIT staff and students,” Mr Poole said.

RMIT Senior Lecturer in Cinema Studies and Media, Lisa French, said, “Through these events we can focus on key industry issues to inform our teaching, research and the industry at large. We get 30 to 60 students and industry members at each event, with one attracting 190 people. They give students a great opportunity to liaise directly with people within the industry.”

The industry interaction also supports RMIT’s work-integrated learning priorities, providing a forum for the development of students’ work and industry-readiness and facilitating networks for feedback.

Mr Poole believes the relationship between AWG and RMIT is valuable from the industry’s perspective as well.

“It’s useful to get input from the up-and-coming people studying at RMIT who will be tomorrow’s success stories. At the same time it enables us to fill a vital need, within the industry, for research on key issues,” he said.

The Australian Directors Guild (ADG) also runs regular events in conjunction with RMIT’s School of Media and Communication. A talk and film screening on ‘Establishing a Unique Directorial Style’ involved award-winning short film directors John Evagora and Jonathan Auf de Heide sharing their insights with students, graduates and emerging filmmakers.

In a second event on how to make your first feature, the director and co-producer of the film Lake Mungo discussed their experiences with more than 50 students.

THE AFI RESEARCH COLLECTION

Housed in RMIT’s School of Media and Communication, the AFI Research Collection is a non-lending library of international film, television and communication industry resources maintained for over 35 years by the Australian Film Institute (AFI). Described by the National Library of Australia as a ‘heritage collection’, it features a wealth of film literature, journals, film and TV scripts, film directories, stills, posters, reports and festival catalogues dating back to the beginnings of cinema.

The AFI began operating a library in the mid-1970s. In 2002 the AFI Library moved to RMIT University where it is known as the AFI Research Collection. As its custodian, RMIT maintains the Collection as a research facility with public access.

www.afiresearch.rmit.edu.au
RECOGNITION FOR OUTSTANDING COMMUNICATORS

RMIT’s Communicator of the Year award, organised by final year Public Relations students, recognises an Australian who has used communication to outstanding effect in achieving important community outcomes.

Former High Court judge, Michael Kirby, and community activist and m.a.d.woman founder, Melina Schamroth, were worthy joint winners of the award in 2009. Past winners include internationally renowned climate change authority Professor Tim Flannery, and Choir of Hard Knocks founder Jonathan Welch.

Presenting the awards to Mr Kirby and Ms Schamroth, Lauren Murray, Dean of RMIT’s School of Media and Communication, said, ‘It says something about the diversity and calibre of Michael and Melina’s achievements that our selection panel determined it would recognise two people this year.’

Ms Schamroth is the founder of Make a Difference, known as m.a.d.woman, an organisation that champions a wide range of community-related causes through public awareness campaigns and by finding volunteers to work for them. In 2009 she has actively supported bushfire-affected communities in Victoria.

Quoting the Federal Attorney-General, who recently called the retiring High Court judge ‘the great communicator’, Ms Murray praised Mr Kirby for his wide-ranging commitment to community wellbeing.

‘He is known for more than his ability to make difficult and technical concepts comprehensible and accessible to the layperson. He’s also renowned for speaking out, sometimes at personal cost, on community issues ranging from gay rights to animal cruelty.’

RMITV – GIVING STUDENTS A FAIR GO IN TV

RMITV is Australia’s leading community television production house. Each month it produces several hours of television programming for community television networks across Australia.

It operates on a ‘by students – for students’ principle. Although programs produced span many different genres and categories, at its heart RMITV is a student media production house.

Its mission is to enable students from every course and facility to envision their television and new media concepts and ideas, as well as to provide hands-on practical experience and training across all areas of television production. RMITV helps young, often first-time producers realise their goals and dreams in the complicated yet fulfilling industry of television production. It is a full member of the Melbourne Community Television Consortium (MCTC) - the organisation that runs Channel 31, and is a part of the RMIT Student Union.

In 2009 RMITV’s flagship program Studio A – a live variety show featuring comedians, sketches, regular segments, bands and special interview guests – won the Channel 31 Antenna Award for ‘Program of the Year’.
Technology is not an end in itself; it enables creativity and production its fullest impact. Yet we are rightly fascinated with it. It fills our lives and informs how we earn our livelihoods. It has transformed how we experience culture and how we communicate.

The ‘T’ in RMIT stands for technology. From our beginnings in June 1887 to today, RMIT University has devoted itself to producing graduates versed in the most recent technology, and to creating spaces in which researchers can take those technologies to new levels.

In the realm of Media, Communications and Technologies, our research leads the way – from the latest findings in green IT, to the race for smaller and more powerful patch antennas; from researching how young people use and trust the internet, to coming up with better and more speedy net searches. RMIT engages with industry on all media and communications fronts to keep Australia ahead.
Data visualisation is emerging as a hot topic in industry, with data itself rapidly becoming a driving force on today's Web 2.0 powered Internet. Locally, a research project exploring the role of data visualisation in enhancing user experiences, A Collaboration between Deloitte Digital and ACID at The University of Queensland, is examining how these actions fit into a larger Mental Model of practice.

"Using these research findings, together with our knowledge of social software and visualisation, and the next generation of innovative products and services,' said Mr Yuille. "It is the first step in prototyping and visualisation could help enhance their clients' online experiences."

"This is an area where Deloitte Digital is revolutionising the way people interact with data and is looking at what further insights can be drawn from these actions into a larger Mental Model of practice."

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 encrypted but still make it easy to ID people. We
encrypted your identity

SMART SERVICES

The Smart Services CRC is a $120 million, commercially focused collaborative research initiative, developing innovation, foresight and productivity improvements for the services sector. Services are the largest sector of the economy representing approximately 80 per cent of Australia’s GDP and 85 per cent of employment opportunities.

Initial research outcomes and demonstrators will principally be associated with the digital media, finance and government sectors (including the health sector).

Smart Services is a research and development partnership between 10 major industry players and six Australian universities, funded by the private sector and governments under the Australian Government’s Cooperative Research Centre program.

CLOUDING THE ISSUE OF E-COMMERCE

Research at RMIT, via the Smart Services CRC, has been looking into online financial services and how consumers and small businesses use e-commerce.

The research has found that young people, aged 18 to 25 years old, have different attitudes towards online privacy and security in the area of financial transactions. Young people use the internet as a default search option for e-commerce rather than phoning or visiting a store in person.

Professor Supriya Singh, said, “They are not as concerned about privacy in what they buy or over the payments they make via the internet. They are a very internet-savvy generation; even a bad experience on the internet doesn’t puncture their trust in the medium.”

This trust in the internet extends to banking and security online and to social media sites such as Facebook and Flickr.

“Young people put up large amounts of personal information about themselves and have no problem with doing this on sites such as Facebook. But in reality all this information is archived and is not easily erasable,” she said.

The way of the future for this industry is ‘cloud computing’, which is already being used by such applications as Gmail and YouTube. This means that the applications and the content they contain are literally up in a ‘cloud’ rather than being stored on a hard drive.

“One advantage of this is that it makes collaborating on projects much easier via the internet. The downside is that there are real issues regarding regulation, protection for users’ privacy and security. In this new landscape a personal computer becomes an access point and not a storage device, as it has been up to now.

“Ultimately this could lead to more effective technology for everyone, but there is a real case for greater regulatory oversight to protect young people from themselves,” she said.

BETTER SEARCHES

No longer are we reliant on media programmers to see the latest music video or hear our favourite song. YouTube has changed everything; if you have access to the internet in your home, you have 24-hour access to a never-ending jukebox via YouTube.

However, there are still some searches that you currently can’t make on such applications as YouTube, but researchers at RMIT are about to change this. Working on a Smart Services CRC Social Media project they are researching and producing technological outcomes to improve user experiences with multimedia within social media contexts.

In collaboration with Wollongong University, an online web-based video tagging tool ‘Tagit’ has been developed for collaborative tagging and collection of user-level semantic meta-data. ‘Tagit’ has a wide range of applications such as enabling users to tag and interact with online videos, for example news stories, simple video editing such as ‘mashups’, or as an educational learning tool.

RMIT researcher and Head of School, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Professor Ian Burnett, said, “We are investigating techniques to extract metadata such as automatic event or scene detection, topic/keyword extraction from speech-to-text, object/person detection and tracking in video, video action detection, and determining scene ‘mood’ from an audio soundtrack.

‘Such content-based metadata can be used for semantic search and indexing multimedia such as enabling a user to search YouTube for all videos that contain a red car, which is not currently possible,” he said.
HOW GREEN IS YOUR BUSINESS?
Everyone knows that information technology (IT) uses energy, but did you know that IT can also enable your business to become more sustainable?
State-of-the-art technology and the latest computers use less energy, but not everyone is in a position to use the latest laptops and technologies available. Companies are often tied into leasing arrangements for their computers and there is also the high cost of procuring the latest versions, the issues of availability and upgrading whole systems to be able to use them.
Even more of a problem is the ‘electronic waste’ that results from using IT in the first place. Each year over five million pieces of e-waste head for Australia’s landfills.
Associate Professor Alem Molla, School of Business Information Technology, said, ‘The latest computer screens have energy performance ratings and some products now incorporate biodegradable plastics or use other materials instead of plastic to house computers in. Lead and mercury are also used in computers and if e-waste containing these toxic substances reaches landfills it can leech into the soil and water systems.

Zettair was produced by the Search Engine Group from RMIT’s School of Computer Science and Information Technology in collaboration with the University of Melbourne. Designed for simplicity as well as speed and flexibility, Zettair allows the user to index and search any text collections, including web pages, with its primary feature being the ability to handle large terabytes of text.
Head of RMIT’s Information Storage, Analysis and Retrieval Group, Associate Professor Andrew Turpin, said, ‘A lot of the algorithms being used by Google, Yahoo and Microsoft are based on ideas developed by our Search Engine Group. Our work focuses on speeding up text searching, whether on the Internet, or in company databases. This achievement highlights Melbourne as an internationally-renowned centre for information retrieval research.’

Zettair is primarily aimed at university research and is predominantly a technical search engine for companies and those who want to build software. However, the Search Engine Group is undertaking new initiatives to make it more accessible to the general public.

SPEEDY SEARCHING WITH ZETTAIR
In 2008, global software giant Microsoft chose RMIT researchers as the only Australian tertiary recipients of funding for a program to improve the usability of Microsoft’s internet search engines.
RMIT’s expertise in search engine development was also recognised by a study through the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. The study compared the results of 17 open-source search engines and concluded that the RMIT-designed program Zettair was at least three times faster to index than its nearest competitor. Zettair was found to be a clear winner in answer quality and the third-fastest in answering queries.

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When the Australasian Cooperative Research Centre for Interaction Design set out to optimise the ABC’s Pool website, it turned to staff and students at RMIT for help. Using software developed by an RMIT PhD candidate, and after undertaking research, they refreshed the visuals and restructured the site’s design to maximise its transparency.

This commitment to integrating the highest level of industry expectations and practice into RMIT teaching permeates our programs in this industry sector, which cover advertising, photography, communication design, graphic design, graphic communication, communication and creative media.

Industry expertise and engagement is built into our array of educational pathways – a range of traditional, technological and cutting-edge environments, including rigorous, supportive and dynamic studio environments – through the participation by leading professionals in advisory committees.

The results can be seen in the work of students who win accolades at a global level, fueled by their thorough knowledge of design principles, combined with an individual design aesthetic and understanding of technology.
Pool is a social networking website that showcases media – image, text, audio and video – to its users. Run by the ABC, the site is used by students, emerging media practitioners, industry professionals and ABC producers and employees to see, interact with and comment on other people’s media work.

RMIT Lecturer Media and Communication, Marius Foley said the website has a vibrant community built around people who make very good quality media work that is showcased on the site.

‘Pool connects people in many ways and people are attracted to the site for different reasons. Students and emerging media practitioners see Pool as a place to display their work, to build a portfolio and a professional reputation. Other users see it as a place for storing their work, but then after receiving feedback from ABC professionals spend more time evolving their media pieces,’ said Mr Foley.

RMIT has been involved with Pool via ACID – the Australasian Cooperative Research Centre for Interaction Design. ACID has been reviewing the Pool website to optimise the site visuals and to restructure the design of the site to make it legible.

Mr Foley, also Project Leader of the ACID Research team at RMIT, said, ‘The research we carried out about how people interact with and use the site led to the design solution. Our role is to consolidate the site for its current community and to help grow a new audience for the site into the future.

‘In the new, ever-changing media landscape that radio is part of, a radio producer’s role has changed from being primarily an audio one. Radio is now part of the social media space and with this comes more openness and community involvement,’ he said.

Executive Producer, ABC Pool, Sherre Delys, said, ‘To my knowledge no other ABC website has been designed with quite the same level of transparency and community collaboration as the Pool re-design. ACID’s meticulous user-focussed approach was the perfect fit for a highly participatory project like Pool.’

Summing up, Mr Foley said, ‘it’s been a fascinating project to work on. Pool is helping to break down the barriers of the different ABC areas and will act as a possible bridge to further interaction and more media projects.’

The research team includes Jeremy Yulle, Director; Interaction Design Association and Interaction Design Researcher; Chris Marmo; and Reuben Stanton.

ADVERTISING LIONS ROAR IN CANNES

Two RMIT students became the first Australians to win the prestigious Cannes Future Lions student advertising competition.

Future Lions challenges students to develop an idea for advertising a global brand in a new and innovative way. The annual competition attracts entries from more than 700 teams world-wide, with students from the five winning teams introduced to industry leaders attending the Cannes Lions Festival. There are no rules in terms of media or technology and no restrictions around product or target audience.

Final year RMIT advertising students Jason Deacon and Ebony Holmberg created their strategy and concept titled ‘The Warm-Up’ for travel website Expedia as part of coursework in Advanced Art Direction. They produced an engaging video clip depicting young people using geolocative mobile phone applications to find hidden codes around Melbourne’s iconic sights.

Mr Deacon said, ‘We tagged the entry ‘The treasure hunt that warms you twice’, to highlight the connection between Expedia and travelling to fun in the sun.’ He said travelling to the Debussy Theatre in Cannes to receive their prize was a thrill, and gave them a great opportunity to network with key people in the industry.

Winning students Jason Deacon and Ebony Holmberg in Cannes.

Pool is a groundbreaking experiment in User Generated Content.

— DR MARGARET SIMONS
CRIKEY CONTENT MAKERS’ BLOG, 05/01/09
A CUTTING-EDGE CONNECTION WITH MITCHELLS

Mitchell Communication Group is known as a company that pushes the envelope in the media landscape.

Set up by Harold Mitchell in 1976, Mitchells pioneered the idea of an independent media agency. The Group, which comprises 22 separate communications businesses, includes media, digital, diversified and technology arms.

Program Director of Postgraduate Programs in Advertising, Bradley Wilson, said, ‘Our on-going industry connection with premier industry partners such as Mitchells gives our programs at RMIT a real edge in the advertising world.’

Key senior executives at Mitchells are involved in the Program Advisory Committee (PAC), teach within the Advertising Media Strategy program and provide guest speakers on many advanced media topics ranging from, media regulation and global planning trends, to all aspects of media expansion including digital media. The Group also sponsor selected awards at RMIT and offer internship awards to RMIT students as well.

ADVERTISING STUDENTS CELEBRATE WITH INDUSTRY LEADERS

The chance to share in the success of the cream of RMIT’s advertising graduates – that’s what the annual RMIT and Advertising Institute of Australasia (AIA) graduation dinner gives industry professionals.

AIA Federal President, Jeremy Hope, said, ‘The long-standing event is organised by the AIA as a means for the industry to show its support of advertising education and to recognise talented graduates who will be the ad execs of the future.’

The advertising industry sends its key decision-makers to seek out potential recruits, with the evening providing a great networking opportunity for industry and graduates alike. More than 110 students, staff and industry practitioners attended the 2009 graduation celebration held at the Athenaeum Club. Top students were recognised with a range of industry-sponsored awards, each to the value of at least $300.

The Most Outstanding Graduate award was presented to Shencina Formenton. Ms Formenton also took home Bundy Agency’s Creative Techniques in Advertising award, Grey Advertising’s Campaign Management award, and ACP Magazines’ Creative Concept Development award.

RMIT’s School of Business TAFE manager, Caryl Hertz, said, ‘It is great to see advertisers, ad agencies and the media working together to celebrate the achievements of our graduates. This year, most of the students who were looking for work were snapped up either before the graduation event or during the evening.’

Director of Research for Mitchells, John Alderton, said, ‘Our involvement with RMIT has grown over the last few years and we are pleased to have increased the association in a multitude of areas within the program. We have now commenced an internship arrangement with selected students, which we see as another valuable recruitment tool for our group of companies.’

The student internships Mitchells now offer in conjunction with the program can be undertaken as a separate unit offering program credit. The internships last approximately one month and offer the winning student/s a real opportunity to immerse themselves within a range of cutting-edge advertising companies.

MASTER PHOTOGRAPHER RECOGNISED WITH MASTERS AWARD

The expertise of RMIT’s academic staff is exemplified by their recognition at the highest level within their field and by their active engagement with leading industry organisations world-wide.

In 2008, photography lecturer Broniek Kozka was presented with one of the world’s most prestigious prizes for photography, the Hasselblad Masters Award.

Mr Kozka received the award at international photography event photokina in Cologne, Germany.

He was the only Australian amongst an elite group of 10 photographers selected from more than 1,700 entries to exhibit their work at the event.

Associate Professor in Photography, Christopher Stewart, said RMIT was fortunate to have an established photographer of Mr Kozka’s calibre passing on his knowledge and passion to RMIT students.

‘Bronek is a photographer who adheres strongly to the belief that following one’s personal vision will translate into excellence in art and commercial work. With this award, his personal philosophy has been rewarded with great success.’

Associate Professor Stewart also presented a display of recent work by RMIT photography students at ‘Academy Meets Photokina’, for which he was an international portfolio reviewer.

Associate Professor Stewart said RMIT Photography, in cooperation with the Goethe Institute Australia, was developing strong relationships with German institutions.

‘These institutions mirror our emphasis on the conceptual and the technical rigour in the creative arts. Having such a high profile at this important international event puts the spotlight on the excellence in photography teaching and research emanating from RMIT,’ he said.
RMIT DESIGN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

RMIT Design Research Institute engages with new design technologies to enhance community and individual life.

Its research focuses on the delivery of space, environments, services and products through design methodologies that elicit and guide our needs and wishes.

The Institute’s research themes are:

- customising space
- digital design and manufacture
- intervention through art
- geoplaged knowledge
- urban liveability

ART AND SCIENCE – EVOLVING SIMULTANEOUSLY

The RMIT Evolutionary Art Group was formed in 2005 to facilitate and encourage collaborative, exploratory research work between artists and scientists.

Since its formation the group has produced interesting art works based on software developed and enhanced by students.

The group’s principal investigators are from the School of Computer Science and Information Technology (CS & IT) and the School of Media and Communication. Key input has also been provided by two PhD students from CS & IT and one Creative Media master student.

Various software is used for the research work including IMAGENE – where the user interacts with the software to create images that can be aesthetically pleasing despite the semi-random process involved; and MOSAIC – used to create evolutionary photomosaic animations by distributing small, digital tiles (photographs) across a canvas progressively, resulting in an effective, animated visual that evolves from a random placement of tiles to a close match to a defined target image.

Several art exhibitions have been held, including Evolve curated by RMIT Lecturer Dean Keep, which brought together sample art works in a gallery context. This was funded by a Design Research Institute seeding grant.

Evolve was a survey of digital works produced by RMIT staff and students. The art in the exhibition was created using software designed and developed by RMIT PhD candidates Perry Barile and Sharul Badarish Mat Sah, whose vision constructed the parameters for the group to design a wide range of creative works.

Mr Keep said, ‘I believe this body of work is a shining example of how cross disciplinary practices can create new opportunities to develop research and creative practice for students and staff within RMIT. What seemed like an unholy alliance between computer science and creative media proved to be the right combination for creative frisson. The next stage will see the further development of existing software and we currently have plans to tour the exhibition,’ he said.

In 2009 RMIT third year Bachelor of Design (Communication Design) student David Yeates was crowned the Adobe Pixel Mash National winner. Adobe Pixel Mash is a live digital design tournament where competitors are given an image/object/word and have just 15 minutes to cook up an original design.

Mr Yeates first won the RMIT round, competing against seven other Communication Design students in Melbourne, and went on to win the grand final in Sydney. For the grand final, contestants were given an image of a piñata donkey and the word ‘urban’ to work with.

‘I used the whole concept of urban myths and legends to come up with an urban god or idol that people worshipped, which was the donkey idol,’ he said.

RMIT engages with key industry player ADOBE on many fronts including an ongoing agreement to teach ADOBE at RMIT, and providing the venue for the Melbourne component of the ADOBE Pixel Mash challenge.

DESIGN VICTORIA

Design Victoria is a $15 million Victorian Government initiative delivered by RMIT that aims to drive design excellence, create a more globally competitive design sector, and encourage the design-led growth of Victorian industries.

Design Victoria’s Business Ready program, Victorian designers, design consultancies and in-house design teams are provided with skills and knowledge to grow their business and better engage with industry, locally and internationally.

The Design Ready program demonstrates to Victorian small-to-medium-sized businesses how to use design to create profitable, innovative products and services.

Design Victoria’s Business Immersions program within Design Ready demonstrates how Victorian businesses can employ design best-practice to create innovative, profitable products and services to improve competitiveness, export performance, and to drive business growth.

Case studies derived from these partnerships exemplify the enabling capabilities of design, including the re-branding of Melbourne’s Somage Fine Foods organic tea and tisane range to enter the retail market, and the re-invigorating of Melbourne First Aid with a new look and more appealing website to strengthen and improve its market share locally.
Games, animation and multimedia companies are engaged at the technological and cultural cutting edge, which is why RMIT’s practical research and industry-focused teaching offers substantial benefits.

As this area is evolving, so too is RMIT’s engagement – from providing innovative short courses for the development of iPhone games, to working with industry on software plug-ins.

Our industry engagement in these areas is built around the idea of studio practice and real world collaboration. RMIT students work with industry partners on content, adding value even before graduation.

While animation and interactivity is embedded in all fields of this discipline, our programs specialise in media specific aspects of art, design, narrative, animation, interactivity and virtual environments.

In the world of games design things have changed dramatically since the days of Breakout and Space Invaders in the 1980s; these days, games are much more complex experiences.

However, the process of creating content for today’s games is very time consuming and costly. Games artists manually create every object in a game world and consequently most games contain objects that look exactly alike.

RMIT’s Discipline Head, Games and Animation, Dr Stefan Greuter, said, ‘Repeating buildings and trees in a game landscape may not seem like a problem, but for game players it becomes extremely monotonous and boring to look at and play, especially when all monsters look the same!’

Dr Greuter has been working on a software plug-in to revolutionise the way objects are created for games, so that visual variations and randomness is much easier and quicker to achieve.

The AssetGen plug-in for Autodesk Maya allows an artist to paint a 3D object that they have created, with attributes that tell the software how elements of the object can be randomly manipulated to generate visual variations of that same object.

‘It allows the artist to continue working in the same software they have used to create the initial 3D object, while the plug-in can be used to easily cycle through different visual variations following the visual style that the artist has developed for the game,’ said Dr Greuter.

AssetGen can potentially reduce the cost of producing objects for a game world, while being part of the artist’s natural workflow. So far industry feedback for AssetGen has been extremely positive, with one company, Blue Tongue, looking to help with further development of the tool within a workplace context.

LESS REPETITIVE TREES, MORE INTERESTING MONSTERS

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Second Life allows students and researchers working in a range of creative fields to develop their ideas in a media-rich framework, collaborate internationally and reflect in very different ways on life in the real world.

SET YOUR INNER AVATAR FREE

RMIT is at the cutting-edge of education, research and development in the field of creative media, utilising sophisticated 3D environments such as Second Life.

The School of Media and Communication has set up a virtual RMIT campus in Second Life, an emerging platform which represents a highly evolved interface to the internet.

Second Life has become a focus for universities and businesses world-wide, which use the site to exchange information and host conferences in which participants log on as their Second Life avatars. And it is through their avatar that participants can set their imagination free in wildly different ways.

RMIT Senior Lecturer in Media and Communication, Dr Lisa Dethridge, said, ‘In this complex media environment, participants can explore processes in design and communication that would be impossible in a real-world scenario.

‘For example, architects can experiment with notions of space, form, gravity and transparency, and film makers can make movies or experiment with characters and sound.’

Dr Lisa Dethridge, right, with her Second Life avatar.

Dr Dethridge argues that virtual reality is more than a niche preoccupation or a fad – it could be the way in which all of us interact with the internet in future. RMIT researchers have already utilised virtual environments to develop interactive consoles to help brain-injured patients in their long road to rehabilitation.

She also suggests this technology may play a vital role in enabling complex social networking and local community empowerment for situations such as bushfire prevention and response.

RESPONDING TO NEW TECHNOLOGY – GAMES FOR THE iPHONE

RMIT offers a short course for Game Development for the iPhone and the iPod Touch. RMIT is the first university in Australia offering such a short course aimed at second year RMIT gaming students, game developers in the industry and hobbyists.

RMIT’s Discipline Head, Games and Animation, Dr Stefan Greuter, said, ‘The iTunes distribution model for games is very interesting to current students and small start-up companies. The games developed are sold through iTunes with 30 per cent of profits going to Apple and 70 per cent going to the games developer. It offers a great industry opportunity for students to see the games they develop out in the marketplace.’

The games developed are fairly simple and therefore a lot cheaper to produce than games for consoles and PC platforms.

‘We are pleased to offer this cutting-edge industry short course and to be able to respond quickly to new technology as it develops,’ he said.

IMPRESSIVE WORK LEADS TO LICENSING

monikker™ has provided an opportunity for RMIT Animation and Interactive Media students to collaborate with industry for two years in a row.

During this time RMIT students have made an impact on the animation and design scene even before they graduate.

The project was initiated by Redpoint, an Australian company which was looking for animated content designed by the same young demographic that would use their innovative call personalisation service – monikker. Unlike traditional ringtones, monikker lets the caller choose the image, animation and sound that will ring on the called party’s phone.

The project started off as market research for Redpoint, but the company was so impressed by the quality of the work developed by RMIT students that they ended up licensing some of it and also worked with some students to develop further content.
Writing, as a form of communication has evolved into a variety of platforms within the modern era, all of which are represented robustly at RMIT. We recognise that platform, intent and expression all play a key role in how writers and communicators succeed in presenting a message to an audience.

Our students work with the cream of professional writers and communicators, who give a balance of traditional academic practice interrelated with professional industry training. We have programs in mass communication, professional communication, editing and publishing, professional screenwriting and creative writing.

Our work ranges from writing and editing fiction and non-fiction, to writing poetry for mobile phones in 140 characters; from scripting the latest Neighbours episode to being a living part of the Melbourne Writers Festival.

Above: Professor Catherine Cole, Clare Renner and Antoni Jach with just a small selection of the books published by RMIT Creative Writing students, past and present.

TWENTY YEARS IN THE WRITE DIRECTION

Melbourne has been designated the world’s second City of Literature by UNESCO – and RMIT authors have played their part in that achievement for the University’s home city. Over their 20 years of operation, RMIT’s Writing programs have recorded an outstanding volume of published work by staff, students and alumni.

Dr Catherine Cole, RMIT Professor of Creative Writing said, ‘It’s fitting that Melbourne has been named a City of Literature. There is so much talent here, and I believe the depth of the Writing programs bear witness to this.

‘The program started in 1988 with just 25 full-time and 50 part-time TAFE students. Today we have more than 600 students across Higher Education and vocational programs, including 130 in Screenwriting, 420 in Professional Writing and Editing, and 60 postgraduate students.’

The University has added a Bachelor in Creative Writing to its comprehensive suite of programs, allowing students to move between vocational and Higher Education options.

An indication of the program’s impact is that more than 10 per cent of presenters at last year’s Melbourne Writers Festival were current or former RMIT writing students or staff. Approximately a quarter of the Festival’s presenters emanated from RMIT, whether current or former staff and students or holders of honorary doctorates.

The TAFE screenwriting program was developed specifically by RMIT. Clare Renner, Manager of the TAFE Writing programs, said, ‘As with all RMIT Writing programs, all our staff are practitioners in the industry.’

Creative Writing Lecturer, Antoni Jach, has been at RMIT since the program was initiated. ‘People find all kinds of niches in the industry after studying here, from authors and editors to agents.

‘But I’m particularly proud of the large number of students who have published – sometimes before they have even graduated. A growing number are finding success with their research projects, turning them into books.’
AN INSIDE VIEW AT ALLEN & UNWIN

An integral part of Writing at RMIT is its practical and relevant focus and its commitment to work-oriented learning.

The Writing programs work closely with leading industry organisations in the exchange of information and ideas, which informs all of the teaching, and in the creation of work-integrated learning opportunities for its students. These relationships are valued by industry as well as by our students.

Erica Wagner, Publisher at Allen & Unwin, said, ‘We have had a number of staff members and many authors who have come from RMIT. We have had a close relationship with the RMIT writing and editing programs over a long period of time, and they have consistently produced people who are highly skilled and well prepared for work within the industry.

‘We are very proud of the authors and illustrators we have published who have been involved with RMIT’s professional writing and editing courses. It’s quite clear that their talent has been identified, fostered and developed while at RMIT, and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to work with them,’ she said.

Ms Wagner believes the practical learning provided in the course is the key to its success. ‘The teaching is of a very high standard and the guidance given to students enables them to have a clear idea of what is in store for them.’

For students, this means they are well equipped to fit into the workforce and to benefit from RMIT’s strong relationships with major publishing houses, such as Allen & Unwin, where job opportunities are prized.

Professional Writing and Editing student Pamela Coleman completed a practical placement at Allen & Unwin to find out first-hand about the industry.

‘Everyone was very supportive and generous with their time, so I was able to come away with an inside view of the whole publishing business, as well as a working knowledge of all aspects of editing,’ she said.

We are very proud of the authors and illustrators we have published who have been involved with RMIT’s professional writing and editing courses. It’s quite clear that their talent has been identified, fostered and developed while at RMIT.

— ERICA WAGNER, ALLEN & UNWIN

NEIGHBOURS – WRITING FOR A TV ICON

The chance to experience the world of television was a long-term goal for Professional Screenwriting student Meg Courtney. ‘I watched Neighbours every day for 18 months so that I could follow the trajectory of the storylines,’ she said.

That commitment and understanding of the series was rewarded with a $5,000 traineeship from the Australian Writers’ Guild to work for six weeks on the production of Neighbours.

‘It was fascinating to see what goes on behind the screen because the general public never gets to see that,’ she said.

‘The work was very pressured and fast-paced but I found it rewarding and interesting to see how it all comes together, from the story room to the finished piece on TV. What is screening now is what we were working on in the storyboard then. It’s bizarre to see it come to fruition.’

Ms Courtney said the placement with Neighbours, and the work-oriented learning provided in the classroom, helped her to find out what the work is really about and to decide on a choice of specialisation within the profession.

‘Our Screenwriting tutor ran the classes like a plotting room, so we were able to discover exactly what a working day involves.’

Executive Producer of Neighbours at FremantleMedia, Susan Bower, said, ‘FremantleMedia is committed to working with educational organisations to provide learning opportunities in all areas of television production, including scriptwriting. We produce two and a half hours of television a week, so it’s very fast-paced work with tight deadlines.’

Working at this pace, the RMIT students have a real opportunity to find out what it’s like working on Neighbours and whether this sort of writing will suit them as a career option.

‘The students sit in on storylines, take notes, write up points for stories and offer ideas on storylines and plot structure. They bring a fresh view and a different dynamic to the team, and younger people also come up with totally different story ideas which are great for us,’ said Ms Bower.
PART OF THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

With businesses such as Pan Macmillan, Penguin, Melbourne University Press, Black Inc, Dymocks, Cengage and Spinifex as employers, students bring the world of commercial book publishing to their professional development classes at RMIT. Program Director, RMIT Editing and Publishing, Michael Webster, said that the majority of students are already employed in some area of publishing before joining the program.

“This is because we work very closely with publishers and booksellers. Our emphasis on building practical skills is one of the reasons the program was the first to be accredited by the Australian Publishers Association (APA). Another reason is that all teaching staff are practising, industry professionals,” said Mr Webster.

Established in 1988 in conjunction with the APA and the Society of Editors (Victoria), the program now has over 300 graduates – most still employed in the book industry and many working overseas in Canada, the USA, the UK and Europe.

CHARACTERS FIND NEWS WAYS TO MOVE AROUND MELBOURNE

RMIT students from the Bachelor of Arts (Creative Writing) are involved with many different ingenious writing projects around Melbourne. One project is for the Melbourne Writers Festival and involves the students working on mobile phone-based poems through Twitter and Bluetooth.

Program Director of RMIT Creative Writing, Dr Francesca Rendle-Short, said, “It’s been really interesting for the students to work on writing that has a maximum of 140 characters including spaces – you can say so much. These ‘tweets’ are compressed, economical, feisty and extremely fluid.”

The 140 character poems were submitted to Mobile Textualism at the Melbourne Writers Festival and then judged by staff at RMIT. As well as the students’ contributions, the general public could also enter the competition.

“The winning poems could be downloaded to your mobile during the Melbourne Writers Festival via Bluetooth. There were over 300 entries for the competition and 35 winning poems were sent out during the Festival,” she said.

The students have also initiated LIMP or Little Independent Melbourne Publishing – a website that profiles each of them as writers in 100 words or less.

“This idea originally came out of tweets from Twitter, where we wanted to find new ways of presenting ourselves as writers in a small format. From the LIMP website we will ultimately publish a small Tweet brochure the size of a mobile phone that will promote the program and the writing we are producing. It’s a whole new way for characters to become mobile,” said Dr Rendle-Short.

I wouldn’t trade my sadness, for one whole week in Los Angeles, I’d rather stumble my way, into conversation with you,

— (118) DAN ROOKE

“Today I watched two girls breathe on cold glass. The first girl wrote ‘I love you’ in the steam. The second drew a face.

— (125) JESSICA-KATE OWEN

JANE CAMPION – A STUDY OF AN AUTEUR

Jane Campion is one of the most celebrated auteurs of modern cinema and was the first female director to be awarded the prestigious Palme d’Or. Throughout her relatively short career, Campion has received extraordinary attention from the media and scholars alike and has provoked fierce debates on issues such as feminism, colonialism, and nationalism.

In her detailed book of Campion’s career as a filmmaker, RMIT Associate Professor Deb Verhoeven examined how contemporary film directors ‘fashion’ themselves as auteurs – through their personal interactions with the media, in their choice of projects, in their emphasis on particular filmmaking techniques and finally in the promotion of their films.

Rather than analysing the themes or visual qualities of her films, Verhoeven’s book takes a unique approach, focusing instead on the creative development, critical reception and industry value of Jane Campion’s career as an internationally successful director.

Associate Professor Deb Verhoeven said, “Campion is something of an academic industry. She is studied as an academic topic across a wide variety of disciplines – from cinema studies, women’s studies, post-colonial studies to psychology and disability studies.

‘Campion’s films inspire intricate disciplinary debates that arise through competing interpretations of her films, and which are encouraged by the ambiguity and suggestiveness of her visual style,” she said.

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‘Campion’s films inspire intricate disciplinary debates that arise through competing interpretations of her films, and which are encouraged by the ambiguity and suggestiveness of her visual style,” she said.

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— (125) JESSICA-KATE OWEN
RMIT’s collaboration with industry is integral to its leadership in applied research and education, and to the development of highly skilled, work-ready, globally focused graduates – from collaborative research projects and strategic alliances, to student placements.

NEW LIFE FOR HOLOCAUST STORIES

RMIT expertise is behind an innovative and cross-cultural approach to telling the stories of Holocaust survivors through interactive technology.

A student and two graduates helped develop ‘Storypods’ – touch-screen kiosks that enable visitors to Melbourne’s Jewish Holocaust Centre to explore audio and video testimonies, artefacts and documented details, integrated for the first time.

Dr Abhijit Chattaraj, a third-year photography student, began working with the Centre to create portraits of Holocaust survivors. His inspiration stemmed from hearing tales of the Holocaust from his Hindu grandfather during his childhood in Bihar, India.

‘My grandfather was appalled by what had happened and consequently my family has always been very sympathetic,’ Dr Chattaraj said.

The project gradually evolved into the Storypod technology with help from work colleagues at Philology, a technology research consultancy. Aukrit Chadagorn and Buddhiporn Palakawong Na Ayudhaya, both recent graduates from RMIT’s Master of Information Technology, developed the software for the project and helped with interface design and content collation.

Dr Chattaraj said, ‘Storypods is a unique touch-screen interactive approach to telling the story of survivors – their resilience through immense hardship and their journey to liberty and to Australia.’

Frankie Pinch, Communications Manager for the Holocaust Centre, said, ‘Most exciting is the interface that Abhijit’s team has developed for the Storypod. They have designed a desk covered with items from the war period.

‘An old fob watch reveals a timeline featuring survivor video testimony alongside personal photographs, a photo reveals the survivor discussing the story behind the image, a book opens to reveal documents of the period relating to the survivor and the user can flip the pages, while an old radio broadcasts historical audio material,’ he said.

Cesia Goldberg, a Holocaust survivor, uses the Storypod.

A guided Holocaust Museum tour for Storypod IT consultants and RMIT graduates (Nat) Buddhiporn Palakawong Na Ayudhaya (left) and Aukrit Chadagorn (right), pictured with Nat’s parents and Holocaust survivor Jack Fogel.
RMIT GLOBAL CITIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

RMIT Global Cities Research Institute focuses on the processes of globalisation, climate change and sustainable communities in the urban context within and around selected cities in the Asia-Pacific region. These include Melbourne, Ho Chi Minh City, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, Port Moresby and Chennai. Collaborative research projects involve the establishment of long-term partnerships with institutions and communities across the globe.

Research themes include:
- climate change adaptation
- globalisation and culture
- community sustainability
- urban infrastructure
- human security
- learning cities

THE VALUE OF INDIGENOUS FESTIVALS

RMIT’s recognised expertise on community wellbeing and celebrations, combined with concentrated years of work with the Yothu Yindi Foundation at Garma in Arnhem Land, has led to a three year ARC linkage grant to carry out research into indigenous festivals.

Working with Telstra Foundation and RMIT’s Global Cities Institute, research work has already been carried out at festivals around Australia and overseas including Aurukun and Mapoon in Cape York, three festivals in Victoria and a hula festival in Hawaii.

PR STUDENTS CAMPAIGN FOR INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Raising awareness of indigenous issues and celebrating outstanding achievement was at the heart of a public relations campaign developed and implemented by students in RMIT’s Bachelor of Communications (Public Relations).

A group of enthusiastic students in their final year worked with an equally committed client to produce a campaign around The Long Walk; now a charitable trust supporting indigenous wellbeing.

MEMORIES PRESERVED THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING

A unique collaboration between RMIT and the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (Victoria) enabled the memories of older women from Melbourne’s Jewish community to be preserved.

The documentary/digital storytelling project was developed to meet requirements of RMIT’s Communications (Media) degree, and was supported by the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

A group of nine women, elders in a community affiliated with NCJWA (Vic), told stories from their lives to RMIT Media students, who in turn fashioned their tales into a series of short video documentaries which were launched at ACMI.

Through interviews and filming over a six-month period, the students explored the memories and stories, culture and unique experiences of the women.

Indigenous festival in Hawaii

RMIT Lecturer, Dr Peter Phipps said, ‘The research is designed to make a difference to the policy framework and industry support for this increasingly significant sector. It provides a real opportunity to make a difference to the lives of indigenous people. Indigenous festivals and events are key communication channels for reaching indigenous communities.’

The Telstra Foundation Community Development Fund (CDF) has identified cultural festivals as a powerful mechanism for impacting on the life-chances of indigenous children and young people.

‘The results of this project promise to redefine the significance of indigenous cultural festivals as part of the rapidly strengthening political and social phenomenon of global indigeneity,’ said Dr Phipps.
these women’s unique memories,’ he said.

to provide a widely accessible representation of
generations, and the presentation is designed
first-hand testimonies act as guides for younger
lives and of the history they’ve witnessed. The
these women’s stories – a snapshot of their
is an attempt to capture some essence of
Media and Communication, said, ‘This project
travels and adventures.

or in Egypt, or in a Melbourne orphanage; of
stories of childhoods growing up in Shepparton
on the other side of the world. They are also the
of loss and strength and the rebuilding of lives
flight from the devastation of occupied Europe,

World Vision has conducted two surveys – one in
Cambodia and one in Malawi.

In comparison to paper surveys, there is now
immediate access to data and no need for
laborious data entry, which has resulted in
positive feedback from World Vision.

RMIT has also been working with World Vision
on a project in Bogota, Columbia. The project
captures the lives, homes and experiences
of the people of Bogota in online videos to
tell their stories. RMIT Lecturer in Media and
Communication, Seth Keen, has worked with a
team of production people and staff from World
Vision to achieve this. Mr Keen’s work on the
project included conceptualisation and research,
non-linear script and story consultation and post
production consultation.

Above: From left, Francois Tsafack from World
Vision with RMIT Computer Science and Information
Technology students.

A VISION FOR THE WORLD –
NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

RMIT postgraduate Software Engineering
students in the School of Computer Science
and IT (CS & IT) have been working with IBM
on an applied learning project that is developing
location-based applications on mobile phones
for use in developing countries.

The objective is to develop solutions for capturing
timely, accurate and comprehensive location-
based data, particularly from developing countries.

CS & IT project manager, Astrid Bauers, said, ‘The
project also involved World Vision who wanted to
field test the software for its household evaluation
data collection using mobile technology.

‘For example, map visualisations are difficult as
there has to be manual input of data and there is
no input validation. The project demonstrated how
valuable this type of technology and application
would be to World Vision. It convinced them
to proceed with it, which has led to prototype
development,’ she said.

THE WORKS – DESIGN WITH
SOCIAL OUTCOMES

RMIT’s Bachelor of Design (Communication
Design) (Honours) program can be undertaken
in an on-campus studio at RMIT – The Works.

The Works operates as an educational
design consultancy run by students under
the supervision of academic staff and
a studio manager.

The Works is a unique environment, one which
presents an opportunity for graphic design to
make a difference in the shaping of society. The
clients selected by the studio to work with need
to align with the goals and ethics of the studio.

Students have worked on communication
design projects with such organisations as
the Brotherhood of St Lawrence on a HIPPY
campaign – this program helps children from
low income and culturally diverse families to
read and write; and on a retail store brand
(Dear Gladys) for Fitted for Work – a service
committed to helping long term unemployed
and disadvantaged women obtain work,
maintain employment and achieve
financial independence.

CLIMBING THE LADDER
TO SUCCESS

Ladder was created by the Australian Football
League (AFL) Players Association and AFL
Foundation in 2007 to address the issue
of youth homelessness across Australia.

Operating in each state, it aims to provide
programs that will give hope, inspiration and
improve the lives of homeless young people.

To run the program Ladder uses online
resources, outreach support and a housing and
support program that provides accommodation,
education and training, and mentoring services.

In Victoria, Ladder has developed a facility in
Collingwood that offers accommodation for
12 young people, as well as opportunities for
training in such areas as hospitality that will lead
to future employment. The program is managed
by ex-Essendon player Mark Bolton.

RMIT students from the Bachelor of Design
(Communication Design) (Honours) Studio,
meanwhile, worked with the AFL’s official
advertising agency to produce adverts,
a shell for the website, logos, a style guide
and much more.
RMIT is one of the most successful providers of international education in Australia, with more than 25,000 international students from more than 100 countries. International students – onshore and offshore – make up 37 per cent of RMIT’s student body, one of the highest proportions in Australia and worldwide.

The University is committed to providing graduates with a global passport – training that is industry-relevant backed up by work experience to produce graduates with the qualifications, skills and confidence essential to be the leaders and managers of the future.

The Bachelor of Professional Communication delivered at RMIT Vietnam is a hybrid program developed from two RMIT programs delivered in Melbourne – the Bachelor of Communication (Public Relations) and the Bachelor of Communication (Advertising). It reflects the current state of evolution of the marketplace in Vietnam and also where career opportunities are most likely to exist in the coming years.

RMIT Vietnam is working closely with local industry to contextualise its offerings, ensuring that there is substantial local industry input in terms of qualified guest speakers, quality samples of local work and Vietnamese case studies. It is also important for the program to develop an awareness of the delicate nuances that exist in a country and culture that is very different to Australia.

The program also features ‘industry mentoring’ arrangements and fully fledged internships. There are 125 students enrolled in the program in 2009, with outcomes expected to be excellent for the first graduates when they emerge late in 2010.
HIGH LEVEL ADVICE FOR SINGAPORE PROGRAM

One of the ways RMIT engages with industry is through its Program Advisory Committees (PACs) for all its programs within Australia and those offered by partners overseas.

Program Manager of RMIT’s Bachelor of Communication (Mass Communication), which is taught at the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) in Singapore, Dr Chris Hudson, said, ‘It’s really important to us that PAC members are key players in the industry the program represents and that they are up-to-date with the latest issues and developments affecting the industry in question.’

Committee members are appointed on the basis of their knowledge and expertise in the industry area and two thirds of PAC members are external to the University. Current industry members on the committee include representatives from SIM, Singapore Ministry of Information – Communications and the Arts, Academy Communication and The Straits Times.

The program in Singapore is tailored specifically for the Asian region. The studies focus on Asia but also provide a bigger picture and wider context for working in mass communication beyond Singapore.

STOP PRESS! THAI PRINT PARTNERSHIP

Staff from RMIT’s International Centre of Graphic Technology (ICGT) ran a 15-week print training program in Thailand. ICGT won the Thailand Printing Industries Association (TPIA) contract ahead of competitors elsewhere in Asia.

The training is being delivered in conjunction with the TPIA in a new purpose-built facility approximately 30 kilometres from central Bangkok. The facility is modelled on ICGT’s state-of-the-art facilities at RMIT’s Brunswick campus in Melbourne. For this training, RMIT staff have been teaching 19 Thai students alongside Thai industry personnel, with the aim of building the TPIA’s training capacity.

Since the successful training in Thailand, ICGT has been approached by Cyber Group Printing in Singapore to set up a training program for their staff throughout South East Asia.

STUDENTS STORM TO SUCCESS

RMIT Business Marketing students have enjoyed spectacular success in recent years in the prestigious L’Oréal Brandstorm marketing competition.

The global competition gives student teams the opportunity to combine marketing theory and creativity by producing new concepts and marketing communications for specific product lines within the L’Oréal group. After a series of finals held in 36 countries, the winning teams travel to Paris to represent Australia in the international final.

Since 2004, RMIT teams have never been placed lower than third in the national final, competing against more than 6,000 students from 180 business schools across the country. RMIT teams were first-prize winners in 2006, 2008 and 2009, scooping the pool in 2008 by finishing first, second and third.

In 2009, the winning team comprising Melissa Lay, Ben Robertson and Evan Montero went on to record the outstanding outcome of world runners-up after competing in Paris amongst the best of the best from 36 countries.

Melissa Lay said, ‘Seeing our products and ideas come to life was one of the most rewarding experiences. We were very excited to be representing Australia in the international final, and to finish second in the world was just unbelievable.’

Students from RMIT’s Melbourne and Ho Chi Minh City campuses will collaborate on capturing a multimedia image of the Vietnamese city.

MAPPING HO CHI MINH THE MULTIMEDIA WAY

Eight Creative Writing students are travelling to Ho Chi Minh City in 2009 to work with RMIT Vietnam students on ‘mapping’ the city.

The students from RMIT’s Melbourne campus will join Vietnam-based Multimedia students to develop a conceptual map that will incorporate writing, photographs and observations of the city, its sites and experiences.

RMIT Professor of Creative Writing, Catherine Cole, said this would form the foundation of an interactive web-based resource in English and Vietnamese for RMIT students and staff, visitors to Vietnam, and the wider community.

‘The students will develop their own ideas for the project to photograph, film and write about Ho Chi Minh City. In 2010, we’re hoping to conduct the project in reverse, with eight students from Vietnam attending Melbourne to develop a similar ‘map’ of Melbourne, a UNESCO World City of Literature,’ Professor Cole said.

This project exemplifies RMIT’s dual-hub approach to its Melbourne and Vietnam campuses, bringing students together and giving all of them new and valuable work-integrated learning experiences. It will provide a model for future joint creative collaborations and multimedia resources in both Vietnam and Australia.
INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

RMIT is strongly committed to its engagement with industry and the community, an approach we have pursued for over 120 years and one which is deeply embedded in our education and research philosophy.

There are many facets to our engagement with industry, ranging from joint collaborations and alliances to input and advice, working with students and guest lecturing.

Our industry partners impact directly on the shape and direction of our education and research programs. The positive feedback we continually receive is a mark of our successful collaboration.

The university’s engagement with industry provides many different ways for businesses to connect with our talented pool of students and skilled graduates, who are ready to enter the workforce and make a contribution to the media and communications sector.

INDUSTRY FORUMS

Each year the Vice-Chancellor hosts industry forums in five key industry areas. During these forums a small group of industry leaders advise and discuss key issues and developments with senior University staff. The annual Media and Communications Forum provides an invaluable contribution to the University’s strategic direction, education programs, facilities and research focus.

PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Industry also plays an important ongoing role through the University’s program advisory committees. Each School has a range of committees responsible for guiding the development of new TAFE and Higher Education programs, ensuring that existing programs are relevant to the industry.

WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING: PLACEMENTS AND STUDENT PROJECTS

RMIT is committed to education that equips its graduates to be ready to enter the workforce. Work-integrated learning (WIL) and partnerships with industry help us to deliver programs that are focused on industry needs and issues. WIL is built into our TAFE and Higher Education programs, and ranges from paid co-operative education, field placements and internships to collaborative research projects with industry, and simulated experiences.

GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

RMIT’s Careers, Development and Employment group helps employers to promote work opportunities to our graduates. Services include the online jobs board, eJOBS, which is powered by CareerHub, and the annual RMIT Careers Expo, which is held each March, attracting more than 130 exhibiting employers and up to 2,500 students.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS: SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS AND PRIZES

RMIT was founded over 120 years ago on philanthropy and the financial support of industry and the community. This partnership continues today. Scholarships, awards and prizes are among the many ways that industry can continue to support students and the University. Many of the generous scholarships offered by the business community involve embedding our students in the workplace, sending students overseas to look at best practice in the global industry, as well as supporting and promoting researchers working on industry-relevant projects.

RMIT STAFF AND INDUSTRY

There are a number of opportunities for expert academic staff to work with industry. These include linkage research, work secondments, and the Business Faculty in Industry program.

BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

RMIT’s Business Plan Competition encourages student teams to turn their innovative business ideas into new companies and ventures. The prestigious annual competition is open to all RMIT students worldwide.

Over the past nine years, more than 2,000 students have taken part in the competition which supports students through the development of viable business plans. In 2009, teams were in the running to share in prizes to the value of $95,000.

Many former competitors now run successful companies in Australia and overseas – success that was boosted by the experience gained in developing their initial business ideas, and by the generous prize money.

The competition is a year-long program of educational, team-building and judging events aimed at nurturing budding entrepreneurs. Students can join entrepreneurship and innovation networks, and are offered free business development seminars and assistance in pitching their business concept to the selection panel.

The program provides a range of opportunities for students to form industry and government contacts – as well as a way for mentors from Melbourne’s business community to interact with some of the University’s best and most promising students.
An innovative business that lets people share on-the-spot reviews of local businesses on their mobile phones won two major prizes in the 2008 RMIT Business Plan Competition. Yabble is based around a mobile site that utilises new technology like GPS and the iPhone to deliver targeted business reviews instantly. The next stage of the venture will allow local businesses to send targeted SMS coupons to Yabble members who are near their location.

The fledgling business, founded by Ned Dwyer and Ross Hill, was awarded the $10,000 Fuji Xerox Australia second prize and the $5,000 City of Melbourne Creative Industry award in the competition.

Mr Dwyer said, “Yabble enables friends to share their tips about the coolest bars, the best cafes or the cheapest plumbers. The reviews are from people you trust – it’s like Yellow Pages written by your mates. The awards are helping us fast-track the development of Yabble and form closer relationships with Melbourne businesses.”

RMIT Business TAFE teacher, Alain Grossband, said, “First year students worked with VicRoads for four months to develop strategies and recommendations which will stress the importance of correctly fitted child restraints, to become compulsory in November 2009. This work will ultimately have a big impact on helping to save the lives of children in Victoria.”

The Centre also engages with industry via The Collie Print Trust which provides over $60,000 annually for the RMIT print industry training awards. Each year RMIT students benefit from these generous awards which enhance the student experience and assist students to take further studies and enter industry.

In 2009, ICGT was honoured with the Innovation in Continuing Education award from the Electronic Document Systems Foundation (EDSF) of the USA and Xerox, as well as having RMIT Print Services and Fuji Xerox relocate to RMIT’s Brunswick campus. RMIT Print Services at Brunswick will result in a closer relationship with a ‘live’ printing site, and greater opportunities to enhance the student experience with work-integrated learning.
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMS

RMIT offers more than 924 Higher Education and TAFE programs. A selection of program areas of relevance to the Media and Communications sectors is listed below.

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For further information on individual programs, please contact the RMIT Info Corner or the relevant School (visit www.rmit.edu.au).

For workforce development, please telephone RMIT Global Business Development on +61 3 9925 5110.
We will organise for you to meet with the right RMIT staff to discuss training solutions for your organisation.
Please direct enquiries to
Global Business Development
RMIT University

Our Industry Engagement team will connect you to the relevant academic staff and professional services.

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