Festival Films
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Cover image: Images from some of the 21 films to be screened during the Lotterywest Festival Films (see In Focus).

Form and function transformed
The unique Playmakers series brings together music makers, master craftsmen and instruments as part of the UWA Perth International Arts Festival’s Great Southern program.

Securing the future of a ‘living fossil’
UWA researcher Dr Nicola Mitchell explores how climate and other elements interact with physiology to determine sex ratios in New Zealand’s endangered tuatara.
The midsummer arts festival that brings the best of international music, dance, theatre and art to Western Australia's doorstep opened with a dazzling pageant reflecting the State's links with Indian Ocean communities – from Sufi singers to chanting Buddhist monks. The Lotterywest Festival Celebration was preceded by a traditional Noongar welcome to the UWA Perth International Arts Festival. Included in the PIAF program are numerous on-campus events that reflect the Festival's UWA origins.

At the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, the compelling, multi-layered paintings of postmodernist Imants Tillers are attracting many to the campus gallery. Evoking notions of loss and survival, the compositions of fragmented images, Imants Tillers: The long poem, are on display until 21 April.

Also on campus is the Perth Writers Festival, with its focus on fine writing, lively debate and big ideas (28 February to 2 March) and the Lotterywest Festival Films that run until 19 April.

As part of the Great Southern program, Albany residents will have an exclusive insight into the making of musical instruments. Playmakers: Mandolin Mania will feature master craftspeople (including Paul Duff and UWA graduate Scott Wise). For details of the full PIAF program, visit the website: perthfestival.com.au

The University's science expertise in a range of areas – from hydrodynamic processes to astronomy – was recognised when the WA Premier hosted a gala dinner in December to mark the presentation of the Premier's Science Awards. Premier (and UWA graduate) Colin Barnett paid tribute to the exceptional talent and achievements of Western Australia's science community at the award ceremony that highlighted the University's role as the State's pre-eminent research and teaching institution.

Environmental engineer Professor Jorg Imberger won the $100,000 prize as WA Scientist of the Year. The Director of UWA's Centre for Water Research, Professor Imberger is internationally recognised for iconic projects involving the Venice Lagoon, Lake Como and Lake Victoria.

Dr Ben Corry of the School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences, whose research could provide cheaper ways of generating clean drinking water through desalination, walked away with the Young Scientist of the Year award while Honours student Jacinta Delhaize (see UWA 'stars' at awards) was the Science Student of the Year. SymbioticA, the Centre of Excellence in Biological Arts, won the Prize for Excellence in Science Communication.

When mathematicians gathered at UWA last month for the first ever Group Theory, Combinatorics and Computation Conference, the occasion was an opportunity to mark the 60th birthday of UWA's Professor Cheryl Praeger. The conference saw the reunion of many of Professor Praeger's former students now working in universities and industries around the world. Also present was Oxford University's Professor Peter Neumann with whom she worked on the groundbreaking Neumann-Praeger recognition algorithm used by mathematicians internationally.

At a birthday dinner, Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Robson, reflected that while Michelangelo ‘saw the angel in the marble and carved to set him free’, Cheryl Praeger saw 21st century applications in the theories of a 19th century French mathematician – ‘releasing’ researchers to advance the digital information technologies so widely used today.

A Scientist of the Year finalist in the recent Premier’s Science Awards, the much-honoured UWA mathematician is also a talented musician who sails, hikes, cycles – and conducted a Body Pump class during the conference! Professor Praeger was awarded a DPhil from Oxford in 1973 and a DSc from UWA in 1989. Recognised internationally, the highly-cited researcher is the first Australian-based mathematician to serve on the Executive Committee of the International Mathematical Union.

WA Scientist of the Year, Professor Jorg Imberger with WA Premier Colin Barnett

Imants Tillers’ Lacrimae Rerum (for Dzidra)
The image we recorded is a window in time, allowing us to peer into the distant past," said Dr David Coward, Senior Research Fellow and Project Leader of UWA's Zadko Telescope, the only Australian facility to detect this burst that signals the death of a star and the birth of a black hole.

Dr Coward says exploring our Universe – that teems with flashes of light and fast-moving bodies – is one of the aims of the state-of-the-art telescope donated to the University by Jim Zadko, CEO of the WA-based Clare Energy.

UWA's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Robson believes the Zadko is creating a new profile in robotic astronomy for Western Australia. It is linked to a global network of telescopes that communicates with NASA's Swift satellite ground station.

"Another key aim of the Zadko Telescope Project is to encourage high school participation in research in partnership with UWA's science enrichment SPICE program, the WA Department of Education and the School of Physics," says Professor Robson. The telescope will be officially launched in April.

The dramatic recording happened shortly before the State Government announcement of a $20 million international radio astronomy research centre on campus. The UWA-Curtin University of Technology joint venture will drive Australia’s bid to accommodate a new radio telescope (see From Here to Infinity: The Royal Observatory Greenwich Guide to Astronomy by John and Mary Gribbin (available at the Co-op Bookshop and the UWA Visitors Centre).

Also brimful of ideas about sustainable living and renewable energy is the Perth Sun Fair held annually on the Oak Lawn at UWA. Last year some 15,000 people attended what has become the major sustainability event for WA – and one that this year has a more significant UWA presence. The Fair will be held on Sunday 5 April. For more information: www.perthsunfair.com.au

**UWA telescope – a link in a global network**

Heralding the International Year of Astronomy in 2009, UWA researchers recorded an extraordinary event last December: a massive gamma ray burst that occurred 11 billion years ago, well before our planet was formed.

The full program (www.extension.uwa.edu.au) includes talks by Li Cunxin, author of Mao’s Last Dancer, and the remarkable Geraldine Cox, who runs a Cambodian orphanage.

**Perth Sun Fair**

Also brimful of ideas about sustainable living and renewable energy is the Perth Sun Fair held annually on the Oak Lawn at UWA. Last year some 15,000 people attended what has become the major sustainability event for WA – and one that this year has a more significant UWA presence. The Fair will be held on Sunday 5 April. For more information: www.perthsunfair.com.au

**UWA student ‘stars’ at awards**

Also timely in the International Year of Astronomy (marking Galileo’s first astronomical observations 400 years ago) was the selection of UWA student Jacinta Delhaize as Science Student of the Year recently.

Completing Honours in Astronomy and Astrophysics, Jacinta also tutors physics and assists with programs promoting astrophysics to high school students.

Last year, a scholarship took her to the Gemini Observatory in the Andes Mountains. "The work was fascinating and I enjoyed the atmosphere of being in an international community," she recalls.

Also marking the International Year of Astronomy are the Gingin Observatory’s Beginners Astronomy Course and UWA Press’s publication of From Here to Infinity: The Royal Observatory Greenwich Guide to Astronomy by John and Mary Gribbin (available at the Co-op Bookshop and the UWA Visitors Centre).

Close to $25m has been raised from corporate and private donors who have contributed not only to the new building but to a Futures Fund to support staff and students.

The Advance UWA insert in this issue acknowledges this wide support from both individuals and corporations.

**New chair in management**

Preparing to move into his new office in the Business School’s impressive riverside accommodation is Professor David Day, who recently became this University’s inaugural Woodside Professor of Leadership and Management.

Professor Day is determined to promote a more scientific approach to leadership, development and management. "It’s interesting that Woodside is funding a chair in management – as opposed to things central
to its technical core,” says Professor Day. “Like many organisations, they have realised that when it comes to finding skilled people, buying them is not always an option, particularly in this skills-scarce region, so there is a growing emphasis on developing their own leadership capabilities.”

Welcoming this new appointment, Ms Tracey Horton, Dean of the Business School, emphasised the need to develop a critical mass of highly-skilled graduates capable of leading and undertaking all the challenges that lay ahead.

“This new chair provides exciting opportunities for UWA but also benefits the business community as a whole,” she says.

Professor Day, who will take a leadership role in the development and delivery of executive programs for industry and in research training, came to Perth from Singapore where he was Professor of Organisational Behaviour at Singapore Management University.

Prior to that, he was Professor of Psychology at Penn State University.

Clough support for new centre

UWA’s long association with the Clough family and with Clough Limited was further consolidated with support for a new centre that will provide an enhanced study environment for first year Engineering students.

Clough Limited, founded by UWA graduate Dr Harold Clough, already funds scholarships and prizes, vacation employment and research projects and was involved in the establishment of the UWA Futures Foundation for Oil and Gas Education.

Engineering graduate Jock Clough represented his father at the recent signing ceremony. The Clough First Year Centre will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics, Associate Professor Carolyn Oldham, said the centre, combined with the Monadelphous Integrated Learning Centre (opening next year) would create a very contemporary learning environment. The latter will provide an environment for team-based learning, increased project-based learning and the collaborative use of laboratories across study disciplines.

Representatives from major engineering companies were present at the signing. Apache, Chevron and Shell are working with UWA to meet the demand for engineers.

This year, some 700 freshers will study engineering units at UWA – the annual intake has consistently increased by 10 per cent in recent years. The new centre will be ready to welcome next year’s students.

In this issue we welcome back to campus former parliamentarian Kim Beazley, Rhodes Scholar in 1973 (see From politician to professor), and farewell WA’s newest Rhodes Scholar, graduate John McAnearney. The coveted Oxford University scholarship recognises not only academic excellence but all-round achievement and community commitment.

John McAnearney’s double Engineering/Science degrees bring together twin passions and will see him undertake a DPhil in Biomedical Engineering with the Pattern Analysis and Machine Learning Group, part of Oxford’s Robotics Research Group.

The UWA graduate is particularly interested in ‘brain computer interface’ that aims to facilitate direct communication from the brain to an external device such as a computer.

Research in this field began in the 1970s and is the focus of the Oxford research group – a world leader – that John will join.

“The primary goal is to one day provide a means of communication for people with severe disability, caused by stroke or paralysis, without the voluntary control of any muscles,” says John.

A recipient of the David Allbrook Prize, this graduate’s goal to advance innovative biomedical engineering technology makes him a worthy recipient of the Rhodes. We wish him well.
his time between China and Australia; and an
teresting short story by
Mark O’Flynn about Dorothy
Heyworth, says that previously the school had neither toilets nor a drinking water supply.

Health Science graduates in India

Study at UWA increasingly involves sharing skills, extending a helping hand and acquiring
knowledge of conditions in neighbouring countries.

Improving conditions in an Indian village with contaminated groundwater recently motivated
a group of Health Science students and staff during a field trip to India.

The group worked with a NGO in Karnataka to help fund and launch construction work
on a rainwater and groundwater supply system, along with the installation of composting toilets at a village school. The aim was to promote rainwater harvesting.

UWA Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, Dr Jane
Heyworth, says that previously the school had neither toilets nor a drinking water supply.

“The trip was a fantastic learning experience and the students were able to gain first hand experience of many public health issues as well as develop cross culture awareness and communication. In particular they saw public health at the coal face every day, experiencing the breadth and interrelatedness of water, waste, air, food, nutrition and health,” said the
UWA lecturer.

Share your memories
of UWA

The University’s historic Old Senate Room on
James Oval – the original Irwin Street building that welcomed UWA’s first students – recently
witnessed the inauguration of a society devoted to preserving UWA’s history.

The launch of the UWA Historical Society is timely
given planned University Centenary celebrations between 2011 and 2013. Convocation, The UWA Graduates Association, sponsored its establishment as a Centenary project and is inviting alumni to share their memories and participate in a range of project groups – from research and exhibitions to publicity and programming.

The society aims to foster appreciation of
UWA history among staff, students, graduates and the community; to contribute to the development of the historical record and displays of material; and to improve access to historical resources.

Warden of Convocation
Simon Dawkins said the
UWA Historical Society was one way of recognising the University’s position as one of the State’s key public institutions.

“More than 100,000 students have passed through this University and many of them will have memories of student days and stories to tell,” he said. “We particularly want to capture the feeling and tone of all periods of the University experience. Convocation – which contributed to the preservation and moving of this building to its present location – feels it has a natural role with regard to history.”

Emeritus Professor Reg
Appleyard is President of the Society. If you would like to be involved, please contact Heritage Officer
Shobha Cameron (phone 61 8 6488 3556; email: shobha.cameron@uwa.edu.au).

You can discover the rich
eritage of the campus in
the company of heritage
architect Ron Bodycoat,
landscape historian Gillian
Lileyman and historian
Dr Robyn Taylor during a
series of heritage walks in
May. Discover the Crawley
Campus: Art, Architecture and Landscape is part of UWA Extension’s autumn program. The walks are sponsored by the UWA Historical Society. Details are at www.extension.uwa.edu.au
Graduate brings new skills to State’s hospitals

The health of Western Australians is the big winner when scholarships take high-performing graduates overseas to medical units that are in the vanguard of treatment and technology.

UWA graduate Rukshen Weerasooriya’s postgraduate research at one of the world’s leading cardiac arrhythmia units in France gave him the knowledge and skills to establish a similar unit in Perth.

The Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine recently returned from his third visit to Hôpital Cardiologique du Haut-Leveque in Bordeaux. Following two previous fellowships (supported by Athelstan and Amy Saw scholarships) the UWA graduate established a complex arrhythmia ablation program at Royal Perth and Hollywood Private Hospitals as well as taking up a UWA appointment.

“My initial time spent in Bordeaux was crucial in guiding me during the establishment of the new service in Perth. I was fortunate to have great mentoring in France that enabled me to proceed safely and confidently on my own in Perth,” recalls the graduate.

“It would be impossible to gain such knowledge by reading journals or attending conferences. Techniques are always being refined and most of my mentors have now visited Perth and undertaken difficult cases with me,”

Wishing to further explore emerging technologies in Bordeaux, the UWA researcher became a visiting Associate Professor in Bordeaux from May to October last year.

“When I graduated in 1994, the field of atrial fibrillation ablation was non-existent in clinical cardiology,” he recalls. “Today more than 500,000 procedures are performed annually worldwide and the number is growing exponentially.”

During his recent sabbatical in Bordeaux, Professor Weerasooriya explored the long-term results of patients who underwent catheter ablation five years ago. “Because this centre was the first to perform the procedure, researchers are in a unique position worldwide to provide the most complete long-term data,” he says.

New technologies in the field of cardiac electrophysiology are enabling surgeons to work more accurately and with less risk to patients.

Professor Weerasooriya believes that robotics and magnetic steering systems are likely to be commonplace in the very near future – and he had the opportunity to use the first generation of these systems.

“I expect we will have the newer technologies in Perth within five years,” he speculates.

“The WA Government has been proactive in planning to “future proof” the new Fiona Stanley Hospital so that these technologies can be installed – even at a later date – without the need for new infrastructure. Before these newer technologies are more widely adopted, the major research laboratories must iron out various problems and make them more user-friendly. I am confident this will happen over the next few years.”

Back in Perth, Professor Weerasooriya is launching his own research and establishing a medical student teaching program at Hollywood.

Atrial fibrillation is a chaotic disorganised heart rhythm. While this electrical heart problem is located in the upper chambers, it affects overall heart contraction and efficiency to some extent. A major risk factor for stroke, it is the most common rhythm disorder affecting five per cent of the over-60 population.
Our University moves into 2009 with major new initiatives that reflect our abiding quest to achieve international excellence.

On the research front, the Western Australian Government announced late last year that our University would host a $20 million international radio astronomy research centre. In a joint venture with Curtin University of Technology, the new UWA centre will drive Australia’s bid to be the site of a new $2 billion radio telescope – the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) – which will turn this State into a global hub of radio astronomy. Australia (with a site based in the ‘radio quiet’ outback north east of Geraldton) and South Africa are the only two countries left in the race to host the project, with a decision expected in 2012.

Much of the work so far has been conducted by UWA’s two Premier’s Fellows, Professor Peter Quinn and Professor Lister Staveley-Smith, considered among the world’s foremost experts in astronomy and astrophysics. Locating the centre at our University is further recognition of our outstanding research in collaboration with partners across Australia in this important international venture.

In another landmark development, many hundreds of alumni – either individually or as a result of their continuing relationship with the University – provided valuable input into the two year consultative process that aimed to restructure our academic courses to better equip future students. The final report, Education for Tomorrow's World, has stirred wide interest on campus and beyond. Your input has been extremely important in shaping the final recommendations which were considered and approved by the University’s governing body, Senate, in December. Senate's approval followed endorsement by the University Academic Board.

We will now begin an implementation phase to ensure a seamless transition from the current course structure to the new framework, most of which will not come into effect until at least 2012.

The simple and flexible framework for undergraduate courses has an emphasis on the development of a broader knowledge base as well as comprehensive research and communications skills, and a community service component. In addition, the relationship between undergraduate and postgraduate degrees will be reshaped to prepare students more fully for a changing world. There have also been some important staffing changes at senior management level which I am sure will help position the University for the years ahead.

At the end of 2008 we farewelled Professor Margaret Seares, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who retired after a highly distinguished career with the University (over more than thirty four years) spanning the School of Music, community and external relations portfolios, and for the last five years as Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor. In addition, Professor Seares brought great credit to the University through her many major external appointments with State, Federal and community organisations, including her position as Chair of The Australia Council.

Professor Bill Louden took up the role of Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the beginning of this year. He is the former Dean of the UWA Faculty of Education and is chair of the Curriculum Council of Western Australia.

In 2008 we also welcomed Professor Tony O'Donnell as the new Dean in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. And in 2009 we have new Deans in the Faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (Professor Krishna Sen); Engineering Computing and Mathematics (Professor David Smith); and replacing Professor Louden as Dean of Education is Professor Helen Wildy.

Through the strength of the leadership provided by these new appointments and the exciting new directions the University is taking I am confident that our reputation for excellence at international standards will continue to bring benefit to all who engage with us – students, staff, graduates, supporters, partners and the wider community.

Alan Robson
Vice-Chancellor
GET A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON NEWS

WAtoday.com.au combines the relevance of local WA news with the national strength of the Fairfax Media network, incorporating The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age and The Australian Financial Review.
“In my career I seldom planned things – except perhaps deciding when the time was right to move on to the next challenge – so my career has essentially been a string of serendipitous opportunities,” says Professor Margaret Seares, who retired as UWA’s Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor last month. “If you’d suggested 15 years ago that I would chair the Australia Council or be sitting here in the Vice-Chancellery, such a notion would never have made it onto my radar. I guess it was a case of being in the right place at the right time.”

The UWA graduate does however concede that her own strengths have played their part in the upward trajectory of her career path.

“I get on well with most people and over the years have become better at understanding another person’s perspective. I am not by nature a process person, so I had to become more so working in government and the Vice-Chancellery. I think I balance that with good intuition and research skills!

“The job of Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor at UWA is a complex one, involving line management of all the Faculties, as well as overall direction of staffing policy. I’ve had to be involved with people ranging from the Senate to the Unions to individual members of staff, and come to know people whose UWA workplace is in Albany or Kalgoorlie or at one of the metropolitan hospitals. There have been some interesting and challenging times, and I don’t think there’s much that surprises me any more!”

During 30 years she has witnessed great change in the way both universities and the arts organisations function and are funded, and a gradual build up in pressure for those working in the two sectors.

“Working in higher education and the arts have been enormous privileges for me. I look at other people who ‘have a job’ and realise that I have worked in areas about which I have felt passionate and committed all my life. It is tough going in universities now and probably won’t change despite all the government rhetoric. But do I wish I’d been doing something else, with more of a nine-to-five focus and no working at night or weekends? Absolutely not!”

Professor Seares acknowledges that her career has given her unique insights into the place of the arts in our society – how they are perceived by State and Federal governments, by educators, corporations, the paying public, and artists themselves; and how Australian arts rate internationally.

The UWA graduate has long been a champion of the arts and cultural practice and her leadership is valued in many sectors. Delivering the Reid Oration at UWA recently, she emphasised that it was in Western Australia’s best interests to strengthen support for the arts.

“At a time when it’s a priority for the business sector to attract new and talented young employees to Perth – or keep young West Australians from joining the extensive diaspora – the need for a lively, stimulating cultural life in our capital city is a key issue for the overall economic, social and cultural welfare of the State,” she stressed.

Professor Seares has urged our State Government to create a role similar to that of Chief Scientist (currently held by UWA Professor Lyn Beazley) to advance the cause of the arts, advise on policy and strategy, advocate for the sector, bring disparate groups and organisations together around common
themes, and make the community aware of the benefits that derive from these sectors.

She would clearly like to see Perth becoming an incubator of creative industries, just as it aspires to be innovative in areas such as biotechnology. She believes we already have a strong track record of producing high calibre writers and performers, citing the number of fine young artists the State has produced – from writers Tim Winton and Robert Drewe to opera singer (and UWA graduate) Sara Macliver and actors Frances O’Connor and the late Heath Ledger.

“We could build on this track record by developing and marketing our abilities as an incubator for arts, culture and creativity by sponsoring programs of visiting master artists – musicians, writers, dancers, theatre directors, actors, designer and architects – who could work with young West Australians. We could provide support for accommodation and studio space for young artists to develop their craft. We could also establish exchange studios for artists from all over the world, bringing a steady supply of new artists and ideas to WA, but also helping young West Australians gain exposure internationally.”

She believes the time is right for such initiatives because, “Australian arts have really come into their own internationally through involvement in events like the Venice Biennale, tours of The Australian Chamber Orchestra and the work of centres of excellence like SymbioticA at UWA that brings together cutting edge art and science”.

Having been involved with music from the early years of her career, Margaret Seares believes that a good music education is the foundation that nurtures both fine musicians and discerning audiences. In 2005 she chaired the National Review of Music Education and is disappointed that, despite acknowledged research findings about the benefits to students of both music and physical education, both are still considered non-core activities.

“Countless research projects have demonstrated to both Federal and State Governments that a sustained engagement with music advances learning, thinking, communication skills and the like, not to mention enhanced mathematical reasoning,” she says. “The research also illustrates the importance of music as an avenue for children for whom the standard approach to schooling does not work, and for those whose home environments lack the enrichment that other homes take for granted.

“Yet despite this there still remains a huge prejudice that arts and music education in schools are diversions. There is no plan, for instance, to include them in the new national curriculum. Until that happens, and until arts and music are taken seriously by bureaucrats, we are always going to be pushing against the tide.”

“At the 20/20 Summit, a key recommendation was that arts education should be mandatory. But it has not been taken up. That is curious because the direct upfront costs in doing this would be minimal compared with costs associated with other programs being implemented. And bringing artists into schools would help sustain the artists and musicians who live and work in our community.”

One of Professor Seares’ final tasks at UWA has been advancing the University’s desire to create a Cultural Precinct. This challenge will now be taken on by arts academic and curator, Professor Ted Snell (see In Focus) who has been appointed Director of the UWA Cultural Precinct.

“The University is fortunate in having fantastic collections and we need a Cultural Precinct to showcase them appropriately. Most of the amazing art and artefacts in the Berndt Museum of Anthropology have never been seen by the public and while the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery can accommodate the gallery’s program of changing exhibitions, there is not enough space to bring together all the Howard Taylor or Sydney Nolan works that we have in the UWA Art Collection.

“We also have groups like SymbioticA that work very much in the laboratory, but have created worldwide interest. Now that these artist/researchers have been acknowledged as a Centre of Excellence – they need a ‘front-of-house’ where their unique work can be appreciated,” says Professor Seares.
“While it is a difficult time to be talking about ambitious building projects, we are determined to gradually establish a precinct extending from the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery across Fairway and down to Broadway. It may also include an outdoor space for use by Indigenous communities that traditionally have close ties to the collections in the Berndt Museum. The overall aim of the precinct is to create synergies between the University’s collections.”

A Commonwealth scholarship initially brought Margaret Seares to UWA’s School of Music, for musicology studies. After graduating and moving to the United Kingdom, a telegram from Sir Frank Callaway, head of the school, invited her back to replace staff who had gone on study leave and to lecture in an area of research that was the focus of her Masters and PhD degrees – 18th century music and the baroque era.

When the UWA-based FM radio station 6UVS began broadcasting from the campus, she became the station’s inaugural music producer while continuing her involvement with the School of Music. After serving as research assistant to Professor David Tunley for several years, she later succeeded him as Head of Music.

The early 1990s saw Margaret Seares becoming involved with arts politics when she was invited to chair the State’s new Arts Advisory Committee. An invitation to head the Department of Arts followed. “I really agonised over that decision because I was happy at UWA but wondered whether I would later regret not taking the punt,” she recalls.

The then Vice-Chancellor, the late Professor Fay Gale, advocated secondment and it turned out to be a good decision, introducing her to the workings of a government department, areas of the arts she had not explored and WA’s major cultural institutions.

“It was a complete eye opener,” she recalls. It also gave her an insight into the Federal arts arena when attending the cultural ministers meetings in Canberra.

“I must have come to someone’s notice because I had a call from Federal Arts Minister Richard Alston asking whether I’d be interested in chairing the Australia Council – a very big job. I suspect they wanted to appoint someone as far from Sydney as possible!”

She took it on, dividing her time between the Council and her post as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Community Relations) at UWA.

“It was a fantastic experience introducing me to extraordinary people like Charles Perkins, David Gonski, Sigrid Thornton and the like, and taking me to parts of Australia I’d never seen – from Darwin to Hobart. I did it for four years but when they asked me to stay on, I declined – while I plan very little in my life, I do always like to plan when I will leave. And the time was right.”

So what lies in the future for a member of the University Executive known for her zeal for hard work? Undoubtedly Professor Seares’ wealth of experience both in academia and beyond will keep making demands on her time and she still sits on the Australian Research Council Advisory Board, the Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee, and the Board of the WA Symphony Orchestra to mention but a few.

Margaret Seares is, however, determined to spend more time on her property in the Karri forest in Northcliffe where the peace of a bushland setting and the piano she has ignored for too long are enticing.

“I also want to get back to my baroque music research,” she says, “and to brush up my French language skills and spend time in France. Will there ever be time to truly enjoy the karri forest, my piano and my new-found passion for gardening and home-grown food? It’s going to be interesting to find out!

“But one thing I know for sure is that one of the things I always regret, when moving on, is leaving wonderful people to whom I have become very attached. That is the case with leaving my colleagues and friends in the Vice-Chancellorcy, but I know that my job is in very safe hands with Bill Louden and that, with Alan Robson at the helm, things will go from strength to strength.”

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Photo: Richard Woldendorp
Graduate’s musical success story

Shaun Lee-Chen is one of many School of Music graduates participating in the UWA Perth International Arts Festival. But it has been a dramatic journey since the talented musician graduated.

Not long after Shaun Lee-Chen graduated with first class Honours from UWA’s School of Music in 2000, health professionals diagnosed an overuse injury in the hand that nestled his violin to his shoulder. They warned the talented musician that he faced the prospect of being unable to pursue his chosen career. At the time he was completing postgraduate studies at the National Academy of Music in Melbourne.

Returning to Perth, Shaun abandoned performance to teach at UWA (which he continues to do). It was a difficult time for the exuberant young musician who began playing the violin aged three and who grew up in a house of musicians – his mother is a violin teacher, his sister, Semra Lee, is now Associate Principal Second Violin with the WA Symphony Orchestra (WASO).

Faced with an uncertain future, Shaun began re-educating his body in terms of posture, using Feldenkrais movement techniques. He was helped by Sarah Wiin, a Feldenkrais practitioner and physiotherapist, who has worked with many musicians in Perth, including students and staff from the School of Music. It was a lengthy process, but it paid off.

In 2005, Shaun joined his sister in WASO and two years later his career was totally back on track when he became the ABC Young Performer of the Year. The finals were in the Perth Concert Hall and were attended by Shaun’s family, friends and supporters from UWA. “He really thrashed that fiddle!” confirmed one.

The media immediately took to the hyperactive young musician who rode skateboards and track bikes, sported skin-tight jeans and, until just before the ABC finals, a wild afro.

“I am not very ambitious; I’m just seeing where my music takes me,” says the UWA graduate. “After I joined WASO I knew I should start building my solo repertoire, so I worked on several pieces for the ABC Young Performers Award, including the Shostakovich’s Violin Concerto I played in the finals.

Shaun’s teacher and celebrated violinist Paul Wright, the Coordinator of String Studies at UWA, says that his pupil loves to explore the full possibilities of the music he is playing: “He’s not afraid to express
himself. He doesn’t play safe and that makes for a very compelling performance.”

Shaun admits to taking risks when performing. “You have to,” he says. “I get very nervous when I perform and I’ve found that throwing myself into the music – becoming completely immersed and making myself go quite deep – is the only way to get through those nerves.

“I have been lucky to have Paul as a teacher because he encourages you to find your own way. He’s gentle and inspiring and so modest. When he plays the violin, he will turn a phrase in such a way that you wonder: where did that come from? “He is still my teacher and it is he who points out my follies. Whenever I know things are not right but don’t know why, I play the piece for him and he tweaks my approach and it comes right. I still need that sort of guidance. The learning never stops and every musician develops at his or her own pace. I really take issue when I see young kids being pushed far and fast by parents. Paul always insists that you must take time to develop as a musician.”

Winning the Young Performers Award is opening many doors for a young musician but for this UWA graduate, the most satisfying ‘prize’ was the reaction of fellow musicians in WASO.

“People always go on about the rivalries in big orchestras, but I feel very much a part of a team – and when I won everyone was genuinely happy for me. It was a good feeling and I won’t forget it.”

“Shaun played superbly on the night and there was quite an emotional response from the audience when he was declared the winner,” says UWA’s Paul Wright. “I thought he was going to be given the keys to the city at the reception afterwards! The award has brought him instant recognition around the country and provided him with wonderful performance opportunities.”

When Shaun reached the category final in the ABC awards, local arts patron (and UWA graduate) Janet Holmes à Court was approached to help provide the young musician with a better instrument – the superb 19th century Joseph Rocca violin he now uses in performances.

Paul Wright knows all about getting the best out of a fine instrument.

“To do justice to a fine violin the player has to have the sensitivity, imagination and technical skill to extract the tone colours from it,” he says. “Great violins have real personalities and the exciting part for the player is the relationship that can develop over time until one day the player can say: ‘now I know what you like and don’t like to do and what I have to do to make you give of your best’ – a bit like what I imagine the relationship between a fine horse and a skilled rider might be.

“With a good instrument there is not a lot one can’t do. However, like horses, instruments can be temperamental and refuse to obey your commands on occasion, mainly due to atmospheric conditions rather than things like Monday blues.

“Shaun understands all of the above and has the necessary talent to bring out the best in the Rocca. For the creative artist, having access to a great instrument is truly life-changing and we should never underestimate the value of philanthropy and the enormous significance it has for art in Australian culture.”

This year is shaping up as a busy year for Shaun. His performance schedule began with a January recital of Bach, Brahms and Ravel as part of the Summer Series in the Government House ballroom. Valentine’s Day in February will see him perform solo violin with the WA Youth Orchestra in the Synergy Symphony Under the Stars in King Park. In March, as a member of the WA Symphony Orchestra, he will perform in a major PIAF artistic collaboration, A Flowering Tree, at the Perth Concert Hall. Later in the month he will join his UWA violin teacher Paul Wright and musicians of the internationally-acclaimed Pacifica Quartet to perform one of the pinnacles of Western string chamber music, the Mendelssohn Octet in E flat.

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Photos courtesy of the WA Symphony Orchestra
Reading the impressions of Australian women visiting Paris around the turn of the century, it’s easy to capture the joie de vivre with which these adventurous expatriates explored the city.

“What heaven to be in Paris, to be young… every day after we’d dunked our brioches in our bowls of chocolate, we sallied down to the foyer to explore Paris. It was not spring, the chestnuts up the Champs-Elysées were bare – but it was still the most beautiful and romantic city in the world…”

That is the memory of the Australian-born Eugénie Louise Delarue who visited Paris in 1902 with her sister to explore their French origins. It is quoted by UWA’s Honorary Research Fellow, Dr Rosemary Lancaster, in the introduction to her recently launched Je Suis Australienne, Remarkable Women in France, 1880-1945 published by UWA Press.

Dr Lancaster began collecting these recollections – ranging from First World War nurses to notable artists and writers – when she retired from teaching at UWA several years ago. “While I had done a lot of work on French poets and artists, I really wanted to reflect on links between our countries, and to explore the writing of women who were deeply affected by their time in France.”

That mission took her to the Australian War Memorial where she paged through the letters and journals of First World War nurses, and to other sources of information that helped her chart these rite of passage journeys.

The Australian women she chose to portray found themselves in France for many different reasons. They include Daisy White who was sent to finishing school; painter Stella Bowen who lived among Montparnasse’s artists with American writer Ford Madox Ford; author Christina Stead whose embrace of Marxism found literary expression in a Paris moving towards the brink of war; and wartime heroine Nancy Wake, whose extraordinary exploits furthered the cause of the Resistance following France’s surrender.

I WANTED TO EXPLORE THE WRITING OF WOMEN DEEPLY AFFECTED BY THEIR TIME IN FRANCE
“What heaven to be in Paris, to be young... every day after we’d dunked our brioches in our bowls of chocolate, we sallied down to the foyer to explore Paris. It was not spring, the chestnuts up the Champs-Elysées were bare – but it was still the most beautiful and romantic city in the world...”
One of the most moving chapters, Digger Nurses, on the Western Front, brings together the recollections of some of the 127 Australians attached to British units in Belgium and the Somme. Into their journals and letters, the young field nurses recorded the trauma of their daily lives.

“Today I had to assist with 10 amputations one after another… I seem to hear that wretched saw at work whenever I try to sleep. We see the most ghastly wounds and are all day long inhaling the odour of gas gangrene. How these boys suffer! We hear the guns quite clearly here,” wrote Staff Nurse Elsie Tranter. Her journal goes on to record the “feast of beauty… gorgeous tulips, all shades, brown, gold, red and such perfect blooms…” beyond the blood and gore of the field hospital.

During an air raid in 1918, Ethel Gray recorded a terrifying scenario: falling bombs, bursting shells and flares in the night sky. “The patients … are wonderfully brave, one little soldier with an amputated arm, called his night nurse and said to her, ‘Sister, you go down to the dug-out, we’re alright here…’. Of course no Sister who was on duty would leave her post…,” she wrote.

“Even though they were totally exhausted by the end of the day, these nurses felt compelled to write because they knew they were living through momentous times,” says Dr Lancaster. “And whenever they enjoyed the briefest of respite on leave, they were drawn to Paris because of its almost mythical status as a great city of culture. So they would go to L’Opéra in Paris or down to Monte Carlo.”

In contrast, artist Stella Bowen, left her Adelaide home “eager to paint and forge a life of her own” – one of several artists, including Western Australia’s Kathleen O’Connor, to do so.

“Such women, many of whom were to become the female leaders of Australian modernism, saw the overseas trip as a chance to imbibe the artistic modes that flourished in the wake of French impressionism and post-impressionism, and to break free of their felt (and actual) exclusion from the male-dominated pastoralist Heidelberg school,” observes Dr Lancaster.

Bowen’s love affair with Paris began in 1922 at the height of the expatriate migration to the Left Bank. She described the city as the ‘nerve-centre of the arts’. This was the Paris of the Hemingways, the Pounds, James Joyce and Gertrude Stein, and while Bowen’s relationship with the respected American author Ford Madox Ford eventually founder, she later wrote in her memoir, Drawn from Life.

“What I got out of it was a remarkable and liberal education, administered in ideal circumstances. I got an emotional education too, of course, but that was easier. One might get that from anyone! But to have the run of a mind of that calibre, with all its inconsistencies, its generosity, its blind spots, its spaciousness, and vision, and its great sense of form and style, was a privilege for which I am still trying to say ‘thank you’.

The UWA researcher is already well advanced on her next book on France’s great 20th century poet, René Char, a close associate of Picasso, Miro, Braque and other celebrated painters. Dr Lancaster will make a pilgrimage to Char’s hometown, spending six weeks in Provence. She anticipates that her book on the poet will be published in 2010.

Dr Rosemary Lancaster was previously a Senior Lecturer and Convenor of French Studies, teaching language and literature. In 2005 she was presented with the Chevalier de l’Ordre des Palmes Académiques, an award for outstanding service to French education that was initiated by the Emperor Napoleon in 1808.

Her fascination with France began with a love of the language that she studied at high school. She went on to complete a BA, Masters and PhD at UWA before teaching at the University. Over many years, working with the Education Department, she conducted accelerated courses for language teachers in France.

Je Suis Australienne is available at the Co-op Bookshop and other major book sellers.

Dr Rosemary Lancaster Phone: +61 8 6488 2174 Email: rlancaster@cyllene.uwa.edu.au
When he graduated and became the State’s 1964 Rhodes Scholar, Bruce Bennett debated whether to become an academic – pursuing a life-long passion for Australian literature – or join the Department of Foreign Affairs. The latter career path would have followed a fascination he still has for the world of international politics and diplomacy.

However, the UWA graduate never regretted his choice and today he is widely acknowledged for giving Australian literary studies a significant place in Australian universities and internationally. A Canadian academic describes him as “the face of Australian studies around the world”.

During his time at UWA, the graduate was Associate Professor of English and Director of the Centre for Studies in Australian Literature and co-editor of the literary journal *Westerly*. He is author and editor of more than 25 books.

Bruce Bennett is best remembered locally for developing bibliographies, writing literary histories, editing anthologies and introducing Australian literature as a full subject of study in 1972-73.

In 1993 he took up an appointment as Professor and Head of the School of English at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) in Canberra. To honour his achievements, the Academy organised a colloquium at the National Library of Australia in Canberra last October.

The event, *Home and Away – Writing About Place* was sponsored by the University of New South Wales at ADFA and the National Library of Australia and it reflects this graduate’s special interest in the lives of writers and their interactions with place. It brought together a veritable *Who’s Who* of Australian literature including Helen Garner, Peter Porter, Frank Moorhouse, Alexis Wright, Robert Drewe and Nicholas Hasluck – to name but a few.

“When asked how I wished to be acknowledged, I thought it would be good to bring together writers and academics on an issue that is important for Australia and for Australian literature,” says Emeritus Professor Bennett. “Our relationship with place, region and community are crucial aspects of our identity as Australians.

“I have always pushed very hard in universities, schools and professional associations for writers and academics to participate together in discussions and readings, and not isolate themselves. There is a danger of academics talking to one another rather than to practitioners, so it is satisfying to have an event that keeps lines of communication open.”

About 180 people attended and organisers were heartened that so many people (academics, writers and members of the public) gathered to listen to discussions on places inhabited or imagined in literature and life. As Bruce Bennett is a frequent user of the National Library – which he calls his ‘local’ – the choice of venue was appropriate.

Professor Bennett visited this University recently en route to present research papers in the United Kingdom and India and was understandably delighted.

UWA graduate and author Professor Bruce Bennett has spent a lifetime promoting Australian literature at home and abroad and recently some of Australia’s most important writers gathered for a colloquium that honoured his contribution.

*Graduate honoured by colloquium*

*UWA graduate and author Professor Bruce Bennett has spent a lifetime promoting Australian literature at home and abroad and recently some of Australia’s most important writers gathered for a colloquium that honoured his contribution.*

continued on page 36

*Above: Authors Alex Miller, Helen Garner, Professor Bruce Bennett and Robert Drewe at the Home and Away colloquium held to honour the UWA graduate. (Photo: Gary Schafer, courtesy The Canberra Times)*

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New Zealand’s endangered tuatara are often described as ‘living fossils’. Nocturnal reptiles equipped with unique interlocking teeth – three rows of them – they have been hunting down prey since dinosaurs stalked the landscape more than 200 million years ago.

These reptiles are extraordinary in several ways. They have skeletal features that link them with fish and turtles in evolutionary terms. The sex of tuatara offspring is determined by temperatures experienced during a critical period of embryonic development, with higher incubation and nest temperatures producing males.

This latter characteristic known as temperature-dependent sex determination has scientists wondering whether the tuatara – now restricted to a string of 36 islands off New Zealand – can survive the additional threat of global warming.

It is a question that Dr Nicola Mitchell, an ARC Research Fellow at UWA’s Centre for Evolutionary Biology, and a team including Dr Michael Kearney of the University of Melbourne have addressed in a study recently published in *Proceedings B*, the Royal Society’s flagship biological research journal.

Their research demonstrates how climate, soil and topography interact with physiology and nesting behaviour to determine sex ratios in the species.

Left: UWA researcher Dr Nicola Mitchell
Next page: Tuatara – a ‘living fossil’
(images ©courtesy of Frans Lanting)
The model they developed involved modelling nest temperatures at different depths across an island ‘ark’ that accommodates one of the reptile’s two remaining species: the Brothers Island tuatara, *Sphenodon guntheri*. A larger tuatara, *Sphenodon punctatus*, inhabits or has been relocated to other New Zealand islands, most of which have been cleared of the Polynesian rat that, along with introduced mammals and habitat loss, have taken a toll on populations.

North Brother Island in Cook Strait, four hectares of weathered bedrock falling to sheer cliffs, was the researchers’ windswept ‘laboratory’. Tuatara share this island with lizards, geckos, penguins, petrels and shearwaters, sometimes even occupying burrows with seabirds.

However, at nesting time in late spring, female tuatara emerge to dig a nest cavity that may be between five and 25 cm deep, and may take up to two weeks to complete. The nest shelters eggs that take a long time to hatch: up to 15 months might elapse before hatchlings emerge. The Brothers Island tuatara takes 15 years to reach sexual maturity and females breed about every nine years – this slow rate of reproduction is another factor contributing to the tuatara’s uncertain future.

“Half-way through the embryonic cycle, during a thermosensitive period, the sex of the embryo will irreversibly develop into a male or a female. At about 22 degrees Celsius embryos will develop into males, at 21 degrees into females,” explains Dr Mitchell.

“Our conclusion is that if climate change brings a three to four degree Celsius rise in average temperatures, all tuatara that hatch on the island would be male by the year 2085 if tuatara do not compensate by changing their nesting behaviour,” she says. “We’d like to think that the mechanistic model that we have developed could be used to explore options for saving the reptile. Clearly tuatara can’t migrate to cooler temperatures like some animals affected by warming because they are now isolated on small islands. Our model can also be used to assess what might happen if females began to nest at different times of the year; or dig a deeper, cooler burrow? The latter might be possible on some islands, but is unlikely on North Brother where the soil is shallow.

“Some creatures – like fruitflies that breed fast and have huge genetic variation – may be able to adapt to climate change. However, tuatara have lots of factors working against them.”

North Brother Island is dominated by a lighthouse and has three houses that accommodated keepers before the island was turned into a sanctuary not long after the tuatara was protected from poaching in 1895. The main expense of field research was being flown by helicopter on and off the island, and Dr Mitchell was grateful for funding by The Royal Society and the *Journal of Experimental Biology*.

The tuatara (a Maori word meaning ‘peaks on the back’) is important in Maori culture, featuring in legends as a messenger of the gods of death and disaster. The first mainland sanctuary for the reptiles, the heavily-fenced Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, was established near Wellington in 2005.
Originally misclassified as a lizard, tuatara were included in a reptile order later described as ‘a wastebasket taxon’ before it finally found a home in the order of Sphenodontia, along with its closest relatives.

While nocturnal, tuatara will emerge to bask in the sun on their wild and chilly island sanctuary. They tolerate temperatures lower than most reptiles but are relatively inactive during winter. Breeding takes place in late summer when males darken their olive brown skins, raise their crests and circle females on stiffened legs in a courtship dance.

When hatchlings emerge, their parietal (or third) eye on the top of the head, is visible, however, within months it is covered with scales. Researchers speculate that it might absorb ultraviolet rays to manufacture vitamin D, or be used to determine the position of the sun when cloud envelopes the island.

Today captive reared tuatara have been released on several islands on which rats have been eradicated. Sphenodon guntheri occurs naturally only on North Brother Island where there are currently several hundred of the reptiles.

When Dr Mitchell travelled to New Zealand several years ago to join her husband (UWA biologist Dr Oliver Berry) who was then studying for a PhD, she learned that the fate of the tuatara had become a high priority area for research. She then successfully applied to the Royal Society for research support.

“While the physical work on this project is complete, work on our model is ongoing. If we can get additional funding, we want to use the model to identify reserves that would suit the reptile’s physiology under climate change – if they need to be translocated,” says Dr Mitchell.

“Tuatara are a window into the past,” says Dr Mitchell. “They show us what early vertebrates might have looked like. They were scurrying around the feet of dinosaurs and were part of a group of reptiles that largely died out when a new lineage comprising lizards and snakes became dominant.

“The tuatara has some strange characteristics. These features are seen in fossils of creatures now extinct – but the tuatara is still around. If we lose it, we lose part of our biological heritage.”


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Helping Deliver a Healthy WA
There’s a lot of history on the walls of Professor Kim Beazley’s office in UWA’s Department of Political Science and International Relations.

Memorabilia traces the UWA graduate’s rise through parliamentary ranks to Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition. There are black and white photographs of the young parliamentarian outside Parliament House, colour images of the Hawke and Keating Governments and of his landmark addresses in the House of Representatives. There are also models of naval vessels along with plaques of appreciation from the Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Fleet, Australia’s Chief of Naval Staff (“for the vision, the faith and the budget”) and from Pennsylvania State University for a contribution to American-Australian relationships.

These relics of a distinguished career in the service of Australia cover one wall; another is filled with books, many on defence issues and even more on history. The latter is an abiding passion for Professor Beazley, who now shares his wealth of experience and knowledge with students, but who remains in high demand in many spheres. His part-time role at UWA, along with his appointment as Chancellor of the Australian National University, vie for attention with consultancies – and a firm intention to write several books, when he gets the time.

Kim Beazley’s early interest in history and politics was nurtured by his parliamentarian father, the late Kim Beazley Snr. “It wasn’t possible to participate in the nightly seminars that happened whenever my father was at home unless you shared his fascination,” he recalls.

UWA’s new Professorial Fellow of Political Science and International Relations has always been passionate about history and politics. He talks to Trea Wiltshire about a political career spanning 27 years.

From politician to professor

Above: Professor Kim Beazley in his UWA office
(Photo: Ron D’Raine)
He went on to study history and politics at UWA and became the 1973 Rhodes Scholar. While at Oxford he befriended both Tony Blair and Geoff Gallop, who went on to become Britain’s Prime Minister and WA’s Premier respectively.

As an aspiring politician, the graduate was elected to the seat of Swan at the 1980 election and his talents were soon apparent to an earlier UWA Rhodes Scholar, Labor leader Bob Hawke. On forming his first ministry, Hawke appointed Kim Beazley as Minister for Aviation. He went on to become the nation’s youngest Minister for Defence (1984 to 1990), a term of office he clearly relished.

Dubbed ‘Bomber Beazley’ for his fascination with fighter jets, submarines and tanks, on retiring from politics in 2007 he described the House of Representatives as “the battlefield, parade ground and mess hall of national politics”. While his 27-year ‘tour of duty’ is over, his passion for politics, public policy and international relations remains – and are his focus today at UWA.

“As a graduate of UWA and Oxford, I found that I used the history and international politics I studied – encompassing strategic and national defence issues – as soon as I got into politics,” he recalls. “I was Defence Minister within a decade of leaving Oxford, so those studies were of overwhelming importance to me,” says Professor Beazley. “Sometimes tertiary studies prove useful chiefly in teaching you how to think, while the actual data you manipulate may be of marginal importance in your career. However, in my case it was not so; both the thinking processes and the data proved incredibly useful.”

Along with the influence of his politician father, Kim Beazley says that the impetus to get involved in politics began here on campus during the Vietnam War. “University campuses in those days seethed with foreign policy debates,” he recalls. “There is nothing like a conscription policy – and a war that arouses passions – to focus the mind! Being socialised politically through the Vietnam War helped me to see the consequence of mistaken policy and to explore the roots of that policy.”

Professor Beazley cites both Defence and Education portfolios as being among his most satisfying during a career that must make him one of the nation’s longest serving Labor politicians.

He made education a key election issue in his quest for electoral success and while he dismisses media magnate Rupert Murdoch’s claim that Australia has “a 21st century economy with a 19th century education system” he agrees that education is under-funded and leaves many children behind.

“Murdoch was wrong only in exaggeration, not in his general proposition. Australia does moderately well in terms of literacy and numeracy and a commitment to science, but we do badly on Year 12 completion rates and in movements onto tertiary education.

“If I had control of our ‘education revolution’ my focus would be on pre-school education (in which we are monumentally backward) and it most certainly would be in the tertiary area.”

He also advocates rethinking the current situation where “every university in Australia delivers the same product”.

“If we were to adopt research/teaching ratios in relation to our universities, as in the United States, we would probably have three or four research-intensive institutions,” he says. “I believe we must start to comprehensively underpin excellence and if we are going to do that, we can’t treat all universities the same. And we will need to bring in outside judgement on the quality of our institutions, so that decisions are not made politically.”

Conversations with Kim Beazley invariably range across the world and through many topics.

The global financial crisis? “I suspect we will see far less enthusiasm for deregulation and much more emphasis on prudential and governance issues in relation to the operation of markets. While central bankers take out their Depression manuals, it is quite satisfying, as a social democrat, to see that the default position of Western capitalism is socialism.”

The ‘history wars’ with their differing perspectives of history? “They were terrific because they got
people arguing about history. It’s been a struggle over the last few decades to get any focus on non-functional aspects of building civilisations, so to have a debate in the sphere of culture and intellect is great. And it’s the essence of history that debates such as this are never over…”

The world after 9/11? “It seriously destabilised America’s national security planning and resulted in a series of errors that will take time to correct. The important thing to remember is that this was an unprovoked attack by an ideology which has absolutely nothing to recommend it and is characterised by a culture of death and abysmal oppression, neither of which, in my understanding, play any part in the noble faith of Islam. It is astonishing to those of us who are believers that some fellow players can so misinterpret their mission that they are led unremittingly down such a path.”

The war in Iraq? “A disastrous mistake! That is not hindsight; it’s what we said at the time. The main casualty – apart from thousands of civilians and soldiers – has been the right outcome in Afghanistan. We missed key opportunities and took wrong paths basically because we were distracted by Iraq and now we have an almost impossible situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Can you stabilise that border area and deal with large elements of Al-Qaeda? Perhaps…”

The Obama victory? “We’ll see a different America and one that’s more of a challenge to Australia. The new order reflects a new generation. Obama seeks allies in problem-solving and the criteria will be not how much you commit but how much you contribute to resolving a problem. In a couple of years’ time that may impact on our commitment in Afghanistan. I think a lot of people will want to help this new leader – the globe has an investment in his success. A president from a classic multicultural multiracial background has become the most powerful man on earth. You would not want him to fail.”

While many Australians warmed to the genial parliamentarian whose knowledge of the sweep of history and the complexity of international relations made him a singular politician, some labelled Kim Beazley “too decent” for the rough-and-tumble of Australian politics. However, he has always been phlegmatic about the ups and downs of political life that twice conferred on him the mantle of Leader of the Opposition but denied him the nation’s top office. He describes his years of service as “a great privilege and great fun” and he is clearly enjoying returning to the campus at which he studied.

“It’s a marvellous opportunity because it has allowed me to do a bit of reflection and in the best possible environment,” he enthuses. “However, while I planned to concentrate on writing two books, I have found myself in high demand for speeches, papers and articles, some for academic conferences, some in the media and broader community. While I am absorbed with all this and with lecturing, I hope over summer to get started on one of the books – on the Labour Party and the US Alliance.

Will his books include an autobiography? “Absolutely not,” is the emphatic response. “I find it is hard enough to be objective about situations in which I’ve been involved when writing on defence and national security matters. God knows how I would handle a piece of self-analysis!”

Professor Beazley has contributed as a Guest Lecturer on a range of subjects including ANZAS, defence policy, the media and politics, leadership, terrorism and the Iraq war.
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Violet Bacon knew she wanted to work within the Aboriginal community as soon as she began her career in social work. Her commitment and experience in this area would later be recognised when this University invited her to bring an Indigenous perspective to its social work curriculum. Clearly this initiative, which had strong support from UWA’s School of Indigenous Studies, has been widely appreciated by Social Work and Social Policy students who nominated Ms Bacon for an Excellence in Teaching Award which she went on to win.

“In my experience, you never stop learning,” says Ms Bacon who won the national Neville Bonner Award for Indigenous Education. “My teaching philosophy is grounded in what I consider to be the core element of social work – working for the betterment of humanity – and this philosophy has been strengthened by the introduction of narrative therapy into aspects of my teaching.

“By highlighting the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, my students can listen and question – and that is crucial, for there is always another story in the answers we receive. As social workers we need to yarn with a purpose and to listen to the multitude of layers interwoven within every answer we receive.

“Social workers are taught to look for strengths within their clients, families and communities so they can build on these strengths when confronting problems.”

Ms Bacon (née Ryan) was the oldest girl in a family of seven and she believes the challenging games and sports of older brothers helped to engender a competitive spirit that won her basketball and squash trophies. Violet’s family lived in Geraldton in a house that her father – who had served in New Guinea during World War II – helped to build.

Her mother had spent most of her early life in the New Norcia Mission. “She never talked about it, but there is great sadness for the mother she never knew and for the family life she did not have – strong families being the core element within Aboriginal communities. Because of my mum’s loss, I treasure my relationship with her and my daughter and son,” she says.

“My own journey towards consolidating my identity has been long and complex but what has sustained me was the overriding knowledge that I am part of a loving family where we all cared for and supported each other. My parents’ work ethic and values have been a big influence on my life and on my other siblings.”

The UWA lecturer laments the fact that Aboriginal history is not compulsory at all Australian schools and that many students often arrive at universities knowing little about Indigenous culture. “We don’t want people to feel guilty about the past,” she says, “but we do want them to understand it.”

Ms Bacon first confronted identity issues when her own immediate family moved from Geraldton to Perth. “It was the first time I was really aware of my Aboriginality. When I came to Perth I no longer had that strong sense of who I was, of being part of an Aboriginal family and community.”

However, she knew with certainty that she wanted to study and contribute, and during her children’s teenage years she went to night school and enrolled as a mature-age TEE student.

Above: Excellence in Teaching Award winner, Ms Violet Bacon (Photo: Ron D’Raine)
After graduating as a Bachelor of Social Work in 1987, her first job was with the WA Alcohol and Drug Authority. “I was an Aboriginal person working for Aboriginal people and I quickly became aware of the alcohol and drug problems in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Whilst increasing my knowledge, experience and skills in this field, my Aboriginal identity was also growing stronger,” she recalls.

“I was extremely lucky during my identity journey to work with two Noongar elders who shared their knowledge and experience with me and who were my mentors early in my social work career, along with other social workers,” she says.

Initially, Ms Bacon came to this University on secondment from the Authority. Her brief was to bring an Aboriginal perspective to the social work curriculum, and she received great support from Ms Jill Milroy, Dean of UWA’s School of Indigenous Studies.

In 1999 she had the satisfaction of seeing UWA’s first Indigenous Social Work unit introduced and become a compulsory unit. This year is the 10th anniversary of its introduction. Violet has gone on to develop units in counselling, alcohol and drugs, narrative therapy and teaches across a broad range of social work units. She also teaches across other Departments within the University.

Violet Bacon says that her social work career has taken her on an exciting, sometimes scary path. “I hope that my role within the education and social work field and other community work I have undertaken helps me to give something back to the Aboriginal community. I strive to do the best I can in assisting future social workers to learn more about ‘self’ – an important wisdom complementing UWA’s mantra of Seek Wisdom – as well as helping them to learn more about the ‘ways of working’ with Aboriginal people,” she says.

“I have worked through many life stages to consolidate my own Aboriginal ‘self’ but there are still gaps. Consequently, the topic of identity, Aboriginal families, reconciliation and counselling in a culturally appropriate way are some of my most passionate subjects. And the learning never ceases.”

Ms Bacon’s commitment to the area in which she works is clear to those she teaches. In supporting statements for her nomination for an Excellence in Teaching Award, one student described her as “both informative and passionate about reconciliation.”

Another stated, “If I had a gold medal for acceptance and tolerance of students, Vi would get it. She has been a living example of how to combine Social Work values with social work practice.”

Ms Violet Bacon Phone: +61 8 6488 2481 Email: vbacon@cyllene.uwa.edu.au
Seeing your research published in one of the world’s most prestigious journals, *Nature*, is a major career landmark, but for UWA researcher Ruth Ganss it also marks a significant milestone in her long-term goal to advance the field of cancer research.

Life-threatening tumours are fed by the uncontrolled growth of blood vessels that allow them to thrive and to halt disease-fighting cells in their tracks. Reversing the growth of these vessels enables the body’s immune cells to enter the tumour and fight the cancer.

Associate Professor Ruth Ganss, a German-born researcher at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), has identified a master gene that occurs in blood vessels surrounding tumours.

“We believe that by reversing and rearranging the growth of new blood vessels, the body’s immune cells are better able to fight the cancer,” says Associate Professor Ganss, who joined the WAIMR team in 2006.

“The growth of blood vessels in a tumour is a process called angiogenesis and by removing the master gene RGS5 in mice, we have been able to reverse the process so that tumour blood vessels appear more normal. This means the barriers are broken down and activated immune cells can enter the tumour and do a better job.

“Importantly, this normalisation changes the tumour environment in a way that improves immune cell entry, meaning tumours can be destroyed. In laboratory tests using mice, we have seen improving survival rates.”

Associate Professor Ganss’ breakthrough came after she joined WAIMR from Heidelberg where she

Above: Associate Professor Ruth Ganss
had conducted her research at the German Cancer Research Centre. Her WAIM r research has been largely funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and recently the Cancer Council WA granted her a Research Fellowship. Doctors Juliana Hamzah and Mitali Manzur are members of her newly established team at WAIM and co-authors of the recent study.

Facilities at the UWA-based Centre for Microscopy, Characterisation and Analysis (CMCA) have played a critical role for her research team.

“To study vessel morphology in tumours, we need a confocal microscope that allows us to visually dissect tissue and reconstruct a 3-D picture. The Centre’s facility at QE II and Dr Paul Rigby, who is co-author of the Nature paper, were very important for this research.” Dr Rigby is a Senior Lecturer in the CMCA.

Confocal microscopy has significantly advanced biological imaging by offering a rapid, cost-effective means of examining thick tissue specimens. Increasingly used as a basic tool in biomedical research, it allows the analysis of thin optical sections of tissue without the need for physical sectioning. Additionally, confocal microscopes can produce images with greater sensitivity, contrast and resolution than those produced with normal light microscopes.

What lies ahead for Ruth Ganss’ team?

“We know that RGS5 plays an important role in remodelling tumour vessels and lymphocyte entry into tumours. However, we don’t yet know what signalling pathways the master gene controls and how it is regulated in tumours. The next challenge for us is to identify these pathways with the long term goal of developing drugs that can modulate the gene’s function and tumour access for anti-cancer cells.”

WAIMR Director, Professor Peter Klinken has high praise for Associate Professor Ganss’ team, saying its work is one of the most significant discoveries to come out of WAIMR.

“The potential for this new knowledge to positively impact the lives of cancer patients in the future is exciting,” he says, “and the fact that it has come during our 10th anniversary celebrations is fantastic.”

Desperately seeking doctors

Screened last month on SBS Television was a documentary that gives a dramatic and engrossing insight into the problems facing rural GPs – and it ‘stars’ two UWA graduates and was made by a graduate.

Desperately Seeking Doctors was produced for SBS and the BBC by Brian Beaton who graduated in 1974. After working for Richard Branson at Virgin in London, Brian completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Film and Television at Middlesex University. Returning to Perth in 1975 he worked as a Media Producer at the Health Education Council before setting up his own production company, Artemis International, in 1981. He is the company’s executive producer.

For the last 27 years he has been producing documentary programs for national and international television and has collected many international awards. One of his productions, Who Do You Think You Are? last year earned SBS the highest ever ratings for an Australian produced program. Artemis is currently making a second series of the show.

Desperately Seeking Doctors addresses Australia’s chronic shortage of doctors in the bush and in country towns.

“Overseas trained doctors have now become commonplace, but how do they cope once they arrive in the middle of nowhere and how do locals cope with them?” says Brian. “Australia’s medical schools are also trying to deal with the shortage by sending final year students out for a term in a rural town in the hope that they gain an understanding and appreciation for life as a bush doctor. With most of our medical students being city slickers, this experience can be an eye opener.”

Two of the young graduate doctors featured in the series, Nabilah Islam and Jennifer Martins, graduated in 2007.

Mr Beaton is currently working on a documentary featuring an Iraqi refugee who left his homeland when he was five and only recently discovered that his father was one of many victims of Saddam Hussein. The documentary covers the man’s return to Iraq to piece together the events that led to his father being found in a mass grave uncovered by American troops.
Taking singing seriously

Professor Jane Davidson, UWA’s Callaway-Tunley Chair of Music, is convinced that denying people a musical voice is to diminish an intrinsic part of human expression. She talks to Rita Clarke about her efforts to musically invigorate the older generation.

Medical and scientific fraternities are working hard to ensure that we live longer but lengthy old age has its problems. People can be lonely, ill, emotionally bereft and much too enervated to rage against the dying of the light, despite the homilies of Dylan Thomas.

According to UWA’s Professor Jane Davidson, however, malaise may be cured, not by artificial stents but by the atavistic art of singing. Sold already! Is there any serious contest in a choice between scalpel and baton?

Age, asserts Professor Davidson, shall have less dominion over septuagenarians if they’re willing to sing for their supper.

“People often shake their heads in fear, and say they’re tone deaf, but everyone can sing – it’s almost the first thing we do as infants,” she says.

To prove this theory Professor Davidson, along with UWA colleagues, has been organising and researching group singing for people over seventy. This is not just another well-meaning attempt to show older people a good time. Pre-singing exercises and proper breathing techniques are deemed essential.

“Singing is something we need to take seriously because it’s such an important part, and need, of our existence as human beings,” says the UWA researcher.

Professor Davidson grew up in Durham in the UK and was surrounded by music from elementary school, although she was almost put off during high school years by the elitism she encountered. She points out that even though music is one of the first things children relate to, it has been slowly allowed to fade from the educational experiences of all but those who value it and can afford it.

“There are 900 schools in Australia where there is no music being taught at all! That’s very worrying. There’s been a big injection of money recently in the UK to get all children in schools singing, and in recognition of this the Australia Council has made a statement that there should be an Arts and Health Strategy which would include singing. People shy away from singing, yet if people were in a garden and there was a ball on the ground, no-one would feel inhibited from having a kick at it, would they?”

“If you go into any pub in Ireland there are groups playing and singing in every corner – people sing to you for no other reason than that they want to.”

She’s hoping that music, like sport, will be seen as an essential part of our education. “Everyone decided to get behind sport, it was heavily funded – an Institute was built and filled with talent – and look how
As speaker at the First Ordinary Meeting of Convocation, the UWA Graduates Association, Professor Davidson will speak about her work and her ambition to establish a procedure for making singing groups work. “They’re much more than a social event, with the usual coffee and jokes, however much fun that may be. Learning how to control breathing and develop voice and rhythmic coordination is the principal factor. It makes people feel exercised, and much happier through the sense of closeness they feel standing shoulder to shoulder with other singers.”

Apart from this feeling of well-being, she says, singing is a cognitive challenge, helping memory, rhythmic coordination and the learning of new skills. Though it aimed to supply research data to sponsors, so successful was the pilot program with the Stirling Silver Singers (conducted by Nicki de Hoog) that none of the participants wanted to give it up. The same is true of the People Who Care Choir, conducted by Robert Faulkner. With sponsorship from among others, Healthway, Musica Viva and Silver Chain, the groups will continue, with the addition of two new groups in WA (making six in all) and two in NSW.

Professor Davidson has recently been awarded a Wicking Trust grant to organise groups of singers made up of carers and people with dementia in WA and NSW. “My colleague Dr Nicholas Bannan has been doing research into singing and Alzheimer’s disease,” she says. “Since music makes demands on different parts of the brain to spoken language, many dementia patients are still able to sing, so group singing should not only benefit them, but give carers respite, companionship and some sorely needed fun.”

Professor Jane Davidson Phone: +61 8 6488 7176
Email: jwd@cyllene.uwa.edu.au
2009 Postgraduate Research Travel Awards

Convocation, the UWA Graduates Association awarded 18 Travel Awards to postgraduate research students for 2009. Pictured are some of the recipients and guests at the Convocation Awards Ceremony in October 2008.

Convocation welcomes donations to the Postgraduate Research Travel Awards, Sports Bursaries, Matilda Awards and Undergraduate Prizes. If you would like to donate please phone +61 8 6488 3006, or email convocation@uwa.edu.au

BankWest representative Mr Russell Stokes (centre) with BankWest Award winners Annette Tyler and Blake Klyen

Professor John Newnham, Geoffrey Kennedy Award winner Elizabeth Newnham, Vice-Chancellor Alan Robson and Mrs Sue Newnham

Professor Robyn Owens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) with Convocation Award winner Annaleise Mason

PSA Award winner Holly Clifford with PSA President Daniel Bond

Convocation Award winner Stephanie Bell with Mr Blair Bartley

Alexander Cohen Award winner Sanna Peden with Clinical Professor Alexander Cohen AO
The yearly 50th reunion of UWA Graduates was held in Winthrop Hall, on 23 November 2008, where guests were treated to a display of memorabilia curated by Convocation Councillor, Dr Val Casey.

Professor Lesley Parker AM, former Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University, gave the keynote address, drawing on 30 years’ experience in leadership, research, teaching and policy in all sectors of education at State, national and international levels. Below are photographs, courtesy of Mr Quang Ly, of some of the guests attending the luncheon.

Mrs Gwenda Robson with guest speaker Professor Lesley Parker AM FTSE

Roger and Patricia Watt

Betty and Gerry Brennan

The 50th Reunion in full swing

Warden of Convocation Simon Dawkins with Pro Chancellor Penny Flett, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Margaret Seares and Dr Peter Flett
Brian Glenister (BSc 1949) studied Geology under his supervisor Rhodes Fairbridge, who arranged for him to work with Curt Teichert at the University of Melbourne, where he received his Master’s degree in Science in 1953. He accepted a Faculty position at UWA, but within 12 months was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study in the USA. Three semesters later, he had completed his PhD. In February 1954, he married and the couple returned to Australia. In 1959, he joined the Iowa University’s Faculty of Geology and remained there until his retirement in 1997.

Malcolm Dunney (MB BS 1965) has worked in Papua New Guinea, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Geneva. He now works for the Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service, in Kununurra.

David Coulter (BSc(Hons) 1969) returned to Perth in 2005 after working in both Sydney and Auckland for the past 34 years. He completed an MBA and now owns his own business in food retail and manufacture. David also does contract work with MS Access and enjoys travelling and other pursuits.

Moreton ‘Mort’ Harsslett (BA 1970; PhD 1983) is currently a lecturer in Education at CRe Curtin University at the Geralton Universities Centre. He lectures to Bachelor of Education and Graduate Diploma in Education (secondary) students, including flexible course delivery through on-line and electronic modes to regional students. Prior to that appointment, he was Principal of Geralton Secondary College, a Post Doctoral Research Fellow at Edith Cowan University, District Superintendent of Education (Mid West), Superintendent of Education (Geraldton) and Subject Superintendent of Education (Social Studies). He commenced his career with the Western Australian Education Department as a Primary and then a Secondary school teacher. Mort enjoys serious cycling for recreation and fitness.

Dr Ray George (BSc(Hons) 1962; PhD 1968) retired to Albany after working for seven years with the CSIRO Fisheries and 26 years with the Western Australian Museum. He first studied the biology of the Western Rock Lobster and then explored species around the world. Ray writes that he relaxed for the first three years after retiring in 1984, caravanning around Australia. He then decided to draw on his years of research and reviewed his concept of rock lobster evolution, which involved learning about plate tectonics and lobster fossils. The result was a series of papers, the last being published in 2005. While golf and home brewing are pastimes, Ray now coordinates the unique Dinosaurs in Schools program in Albany. He writes that a team of volunteers visits local schools to relate their interesting life experiences—and it is proving to be fun for both seniors and juniors.

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Climate change challenge

Daniel Heredia (MB BS (Hons) 2006) When Green Cross Australia put out a call for people to get involved with their Consensus Conference and Citizen’s Panel, medical graduate and Medicare employee Daniel Heredia was enthusiastic. The Australian affiliate of Green Cross International (founded by Mikhail Gorbachev) focuses on the humanitarian impact of climate change induced sea level rise in the Asia-Pacific region. Daniel was one of 14 chosen across Australia to attend the National People’s Assembly, which attracted the attention of Federal Climate Change Minister Penny Wong.

* "This NGO aims to better prepare communities by anticipating and resolving conflicts over natural resources and by building community resilience,” says Daniel. “We heard from a broad range of experts and reviewed current literature and data before deciding upon recommendations for the Federal Government, with the final report being received by the Minister’s representative. We hope that the Australian Government considers the recommendations together with those of the Gannawarra Climate Change Review given the impending and significant impact sea level rise will have on Australia and its neighbours.”*

Daniel’s work with Medicare involves the provision of medical/technical input to senior management in relation to compliance and integrity of the Medicare system, education and stakeholder relations. He is currently studying for an MBA.
Glen Capelli (BA 1978) writes that he still weaves English, History and Economics in his life as a Professional Speaker. He travels nationally and locally to speak and educate in the fields of thinking, learning, creativity, innovation and leadership. In the early 90s, he wrote and presented the award winning cable television series Born to Learn that aired to over 26 million households weekly in the USA. He is co-author of Maximising Your Learning Potential and The Thinking Learning Classroom and author of Thinking Caps, a book of radio pieces that air weekly on 720 ABC. He and his wife have run their speaking and education business since 1981 and through CO-ID (Cooperative International Development) they have built and funded a school on Bhola Island, Bangladesh. Some of Glenn’s recent presentations include working with the Western Australian Institute of Medical Research, the National Employment Services International & National Conferences and running his Innovation program in Hong Kong.

Stephen Kempin (BA 1980; DipEd 1981) has just commenced a new role as General Manager, Human Resources, with Nomad Building Solutions. He writes that this follows an interesting between jobs break, when he spent four months revising an earlier life as a relief teacher. Stephen is married with two daughters. Former classmates can contact him at kempins@aspct.net.au

Sherman Ong Eng Lam (BE 1990; DBA 2008) After graduating, he worked in the high technology manufacturing industries in aerospace and semiconductor companies in Singapore. Sherman left the manufacturing industry to work in IT, initially as Enterprise Resources Planning Product Manager, then as Division Manager/General Manager and eventually as President/Chief Executive Officer of a New York based start-up consulting firm in Singapore. He obtained a Master’s degree in Business Studies with first class honours from the National University of Ireland.

Kerry Lemon (née Lenoy) (DipEd 1991) writes that she has been teaching at Sydney Grammar School since 2001 and has been the Subject Master (Head) of the Modern Language Department for the past two years. Kerry remarried in 2004.

Andrew Czarn (PhD 1994; PhD 2008)

Andrew Czarn’s parents lost everything in Poland during World War II and migrated to Australia in 1949 – so he knows all about finding the strength to overcome adversity.

After completing a Pharmaceutical Chemistry degree, the multi-award-winning student began Masters studies at UWA in statistical data mining that examined follow-up care for survivors of acute myocardial infarction. Using statistical programming software, some 5,000 people were studied in three years with the results published in the Medical Journal of Australia.

“As I proceeded, it became clear that the cost-effectiveness of coronary artery bypass grafting and coronary angioplasty were key components that had not been examined before,” he recalls. “I applied for credit for my Masters duration and was granted the time towards transferring to doctoral status.” A Postgraduate Science Research Scholarship from the National Heart Foundation supported his research.

“After completing my first doctorate I was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Public Health, a Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Foundation Research Fellow and a Royal Perth Hospital Research Fellow. I won the inaugural Sandoz Prize for Young Clinical Investigator and was elected a member of the New York Academy of Science. I also received membership of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.”

Intrigued with the possibilities of nanotechnology, he undertook a second PhD in Computer Science. Having mastered Java, he programmed the genetic algorithm and some visual computer simulations, supervised by Dr Cara Macdah and Associate Professor Kapill Vijayan and consulted with Dr Berwin Turlach. The initial learning curves were quite strenuous but he steadily incremented his knowledge through hard study.

Tragedy struck in 2000 when Andrew contracted a life-threatening virus. With the backing of sympathetic supervisors, his study time was reduced and the PhD Committee granted him an extension of time.

“Luckily I became ill at a time when most hurdles had been overcome and I could work mostly from home and log into the linux computers.”

Andrew felt justifiable pride when he finished his thesis and saw it published in the prestigious IEEE Transaction on Evolutionary Computation – the first of four journal publications. He is one of the first UWA students to have double PhDs, the CEO for Equestrian Western Australia since May last year.

Andrea Mackenzie (BA 1994) lived in London and worked with people with disabilities. Returning to Perth, she now works as a primary school teacher and is a foster mother to two children.

Kok Hwee Chia (EdD 2008) is Assistant Professor with the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education Academic Group in the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, in Singapore. He is the only board certified educational therapist registered with the American Association of Educational Therapists outside the US. Former classmates can contact him at kokhwee.chia@nie.edu.sg

Still under consultant care, Andrew hopes to work in either the UK or the US in academia once he has regained his health.

“I hope my story can inspire students in all disciplines. If you apply perseverance and fortitude, and keep your goals in sight, anyone can proudly achieve their degree from this prestigious University,” he writes.

Conquering adversity

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Sarah Paul (née Smith) (BMusEd 2002) is a Music Specialist for primary school children at Bullsbrook District High School. Sarah writes that the music program is steadily growing and the school has had success as the WA State Champions of Wakakirri Story-Singing for the past three years under her guidance.

Louise Pratt (BA 2002) was elected to the Senate and commenced her four-year term last July. Former classmates can contact Louise at senator.pratt@aph.gov.au

Linda Lim Scriven (BE(Hons) 2003; BSc 2003) is working for Alcoa Kwinana Refinery as an Area Chemical Engineer. Former classmates can contact Linda at lscriven@iinet.au

Lauren Arcus (BSc 2007) writes that she is working in Local Government as the Administration Officer for the Town of Cambridge. She works in data and project management and loves her first full-time job. Former classmates can contact her at larcus@cambridge.wa.gov.au

Special skills
Barry Fitzpatrick (BDsc 1954, MDsc 1960)

Barry Fitzpatrick attended a UWA Graduates Association function in South Australia and was delighted to make contact with fellow graduates. “It was my good luck and privilege to make contact with fellow graduates. In a country such as Bangladesh with inherent poverty and a population of 150 million, there are none for smoking or nut chewing.” While there are public health programs for malaria and cholera control and iodine deficiency, there are none for Betel chewing.

Challenges include extreme weather, physical injuries, sleep deprivation and exhaustion.“Mouth and jaw cancer is exceedingly common primarily due to the lime and tobacco sprinkled onto the Areca nut in the Betel leaf (Betel nut chewing).” While there are public health programs for malaria and cholera control and iodine deficiency, there are none for smoking or Betel chewing.

“ar a country such as Bangladesh with inherent poverty and a population base exceeding 20 million, the priority need is training specialists internally on a permanent basis,” says the UWA graduate who lives in Adelaide.

Dhaka, capital of the world’s most densely populated nation

Meditation and marathons
Grahak Cunningham (BSc 1998)

While studying at UWA, Grahak Cunningham developed a keen interest in running and enjoyed regular jogs along the foreshore. Recently he completed his first marathon, and one of the longest and most difficult footraces in the world: the 2007 Self Transcendence 3100.

Founded by Indian philosopher and athlete Sri Chinmoy, the race aims to promote the possibilities of going beyond one’s potential. To cover the 3,100 mile (4,989km) distance on time, runners must average 60.7 miles (almost 98km) a day.

Challenges include extreme weather, physical injuries, sleep deprivation and exhaustion. Grahak wore out 15 pairs of shoes, lost four toe nails and his feet swelled an extra two sizes.

Finishing third in an international field of 14 runners, he completed the race in 46 days, 11 hours and 53 minutes. He says he broke the Australian record by almost four days and then proceeded to run an extra 9km to break the Australian 5000km record.

Grahak, who has worked in the pharmaceutical industry for a decade (in sales, research and nuclear medicine production), says that the sheer length of the event and the monotonous daily routine were major challenges. “Running more than 100 kilometres a day, 18 hours a day (in sales, research and nuclear medicine production), says that the sheer length of the event and the monotonous daily routine were major challenges. “Running more than 100 kilometres a day, 18 hours a day you means you must overcome all sorts of physical and mental hurdles but eventually you reach the finish and come out a better person”.

The UWA graduate currently conducts free meditation classes for staff and students at this University. – Nicole Apostol

Christine Pridham (née McCagh) BSc 2008 has been in South Africa working on various wildlife projects since September 2006. For the past eighteen months, she has been working as a research assistant on the Save the Elephants project based in the Timbavati Private Reserve adjoining the Kruger National Park. She is involved in field work-tracking and collaring elephants, observing their movements, social groupings and behaviour. Pictured here are Christine and Mark Pridham with ‘Alex’, while he was under sedation. 10 minutes after this photo was taken, Alex was given his wake-up injection and was then up and running!

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Electronics Engineering graduate Bruce McPhail is passionate about improving education facilities for children in South Africa. In January 2009, he will be participating in the annual Tour D’Afrique Cycle Race and aims to raise $26,000 to build two grade R (kindergarten) classrooms for a school in the Eastern Cape of South Africa.

The 12,000km Cairo to Cape Town race passes through 10 countries and will take four months to complete.

Recently, Bruce co-established a fundraising organisation called Cycle2Learn which has teamed up with Phakamisa Projects, a charity committed to grassroots community development in the poverty stricken Eastern Cape of South Africa.

“I believe the only sustainable way to better one’s quality of life is through education. This is the fundamental principle that Cycle2Learn stands for,” says Bruce.

“For our cause we ask only for R100 (about $15) per person with the aim for reaching out to 1800 people to contribute R100 each.

“We’ve generated some significant media exposure for Cycle2Learn primarily in South Africa but we’re yet to gain any significant exposure in Australia,” he says.

For further details go to www.cycle2learn.org

– Nicole Apostol

Graduate honoured by colloquium

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to discuss with former colleagues the fact that UWA will host a new Chair in Australian Literature – the only other Chair being at the University of Sydney.

“Australian literature has been taken for granted, but this will help to reposition it at the forefront of research and will provide a basis for involving the community in Australian writing. Having a major chair on either side of the continent is really positive.”

Professor Bennett was recently the Group of Eight Professor of Australian Studies at Georgetown University in Washington DC and his course on Australian literature was over-subscribed. He was pleased at the interest it generated.

Now, as he puts aside a regimen of teaching (although he continues research and mentoring postgraduates) Bruce Bennett says he is ‘looking over his shoulder’ – not at the career he might have chosen in international diplomacy, but at its attendant shadowy world of espionage.

Espionage in Australia, he says, is as old as settlement and indeed many nations were intrigued by the potential of the unknown Great South Land. Britain and France, in particular, became rivals in a barely disguised race to plant their flags on the island continent.

“I like to quote John Le Carre’s George Smiley who said that ‘spying is eternal’ and in Australia it certainly goes back to that era of discovery – as is evident in records of Portuguese, Dutch, British and French explorers. As a nation, we were born in the shadow of European conflicts. We might like to think of ourselves as innocents, but we were always enmeshed in a world of lies, deceit and secrets.

“In looking at the literature of espionage, my research centres on Australia’s relations with the Asia Pacific region and the way we’ve interacted with Britain and the United States in international intelligence and politics.

“I’ll be looking at people like the diplomat Ric Throssell (son of Katharine Susannah Prichard) who was hounded by accusations of spying for the Communists; and Ian Milner, described as ‘the Rhodes Scholar spy’, who was associated with the Communist Party and allegedly gave secret papers to the Russians in the 1940s.

“It’s a subject that has always fascinated me and I have already published in this area. Working at the Academy has only fuelled this interest.”

Not many Australian writers have ventured seriously into the world of espionage, but those who have – including Morris West and Christopher Koch – have done so with distinction.

Australian Research Council grants are funding this research, along with a project on Australian expatriate writers.
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