Professor Antonio Sagona walks in the footsteps of the first Anzacs

MEDICAL MARVEL  THE MAKING OF A PRECINCT
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Medical marvel
The making of a precinct

The concentration of medical institutions dedicated to learning, research and treatment puts Parkville on the map both nationally and worldwide.

You’ll have noticed that this magazine not only has a new look - it has a new name too. It’s like a new name too. It’s like most people these days, you rely on email and social media for written communication, you may not recognise 3010 as the postcode for Parkville. The postcode is unique to the University of Melbourne and while today the University extends far beyond 3010, we wanted to recognise the place where it all started 161 years ago.

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Val McFarlane
Editor
Ken Merrigan/Mediaxpress
Design
Bill Farn/Mediaxpress

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A living treasure
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A model for education excellence
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Cover story
War and Remembrance
An archaeological survey of the Gallipoli battlefield has revealed more about life in the trenches.

Our cover:
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Picture: Craig Sillitoe

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CAMPAIGN

Believe off to strong start

The University has been overwhelmed by the generosity of alumni since the launch of Believe – the Campaign for the University of Melbourne. Of more than 15,600 donors who have given to the Campaign, which was launched publicly last May, more than half are alumni. Their donations have helped push the Campaign total to $293.3 million (as of the end of March).

The Campaign, the biggest in the University’s history, aims to raise $500 million by 2017 to support three priorities: educating tomorrow’s leaders, finding answers to the world’s grand challenges and enriching our communities.

Sue Cunningham, Vice-Principal (Advancement), says: “Our alumni know what a very special place the University of Melbourne is. It is wonderful to see the lifelong pride (Advancement), says: “Our alumni know what a very special place the University of Melbourne is. It is wonderful to see the lifelong pride that they have in their alma mater and their faith in the University’s ability to transform lives.

“The University has received some remarkable gifts from its alumni, including $10 million from our Campaign Chairman Allan Myers AO QC and his wife, Maria.

“Believe is an outstanding example of the many smaller gifts received which, when added together, can have huge impact. It has also been fantastic to see so many alumni at the Campaign celebration events around the world.”

Their gifts are already having significant impact in a whole range of ways, from supporting students through scholarships, funding ground-breaking research and helping with projects that enhance communities in Australia and overseas.

To find out how you can give, visit the Campaign website at: campaign.unimelb.edu.au

Follow @believeemelb on social media for the latest news on the Campaign

RANKINGS

Melbourne still No.1 in Australia

International rankings continue to endorse Melbourne’s reputation as world leader.

This year the University has again been named Australia’s top university in the Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings. It is placed 43rd in the world, cementing its position as Australia’s leading university.

The 2014 reputation rankings are based on the world’s largest invitation-only survey of academic opinion, featuring 10,536 respondents from 133 countries.

The University was also ranked number one in Australia in the National Taiwan University (NTU) Ranking, Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities 2013.

The NTU rankings, previously known as INEXACT, offer annual performance rankings for the world’s top 500 universities based on the production and impact of their scientific papers.

Melbourne, now ranked 38th in the world, slipped three places this year but remains the Australian leader and is the only Australian university in the top 50.

The excellence of individual disciplines was recognised in the QS World University Rankings by Subject, which list the top 200 universities around the world in 30 subject areas.

Education at the University was ranked second in the world, Law and Accounting and Finance were ranked eighth in the world, psychology was ranked 10th and medicine, environmental science and linguistics all ranked 12th.

SCIENCE AWARD

Cochlear pioneer receives prize

Laureate Professor Emeritus Graeme Clark AC (pictured below) has been honoured with one of the world’s most respected science prizes for developing the modern cochlear implant – the “bionic ear”.

Professor Clark, Honorary Professor, Electrical Engineering and Distinguished Researcher at NICTA, received the Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award alongside fellow cochlear developers, Professors Ingeborg Hochmair of MED-EL, Innsbruck, Austria, and Blake Wilson of Duke University, North Carolina, USA.

In the late 1970s, Professors Clark and Hochmair created prostheses that deployed multiple electrodes and routed particular sounds to different parts of the cochlear. These devices improved the ability of deaf people to understand speech.

Two decades later Professor Wilson designed a speech-processing strategy that minimised distortions and omissions, enabling implant recipients to understand words and sentences without visual cues.

In 1982, the first device was implanted, allowing the recipient, Graham Carrick, to hear for the first time in 17 years. Today about 320,000 people worldwide are fitted with cochlear implants.

The Lasker-DeBakey Awards honour visionaries whose insight and perseverance have led to significant advances that will prevent, reduce, disabilty and diminish suffering.

PARTNERSHIP

$100m fund for scholarships

The University has joined forces with the Westpac Bicentennial Foundation to establish the largest private education scholarship program in Australian history.

The $100 million fund, launched in April, will provide about 100 scholarships every year in perpetuity, starting in 2015. The University will offer three of the five types of scholarship instigated by Westpac. Programs are expected to be fully operational by 2017.

Deputy Provost Professor Susan Elliott says the University welcomes the addition of the program to the Australian scholarship landscape. "The University is thrilled to announce its partnering foundation with Westpac Bicentennial Foundation and looks forward to working closely with Westpac to strengthen our existing programs on offer." "The foundation was launched by Westpac Chief Executive Gail Kelly and Westpac Chairman Lindsay Maistry to mark the bank’s approaching 200th anniversary in 2017. The University of Sydney is also a founding partner.

Scholarship programs include:

future Leaders scholarships will be awarded to recent graduates for postgraduate study at a global institution. Recipients will come from various disciplines, with preference given to Australia’s relationship with Asia, and technology and innovation.

A Best and Brightest program, with prizes for post-doctoral researchers. Recipients will be selected on their research, which will focus on enhancing Australia’s competitive position in technology and innovation, or strengthening ties with Asian economies.

Asian Exchange scholarships will allow undergraduate students to spend a semester at a leading Asian university, with a focus on increasing the number of Asia-literate graduates in Australia.

ELIZABETH BLACKBURN TRIBUTE

Science school opening a boost for bright sparks

A specialist senior secondary school for Victoria’s brightest science students, named after Australia’s first female Nobel Prize winner, has opened in Parkville.

The $7 million purpose-built school was named in honour of Professor Elizabeth Blackburn AC, an alumnus of the University of Melbourne and University High School. The Elizabeth Blackburn School of Sciences is in the University’s western precinct, next to the High School. It was officially opened in March by Victorian Minister for Education, Martin Dixon.

The specialist Year 11 and 12 school will cater for 200 high-performing science students from across Victoria. Students have to sit an entry exam and undergo an interview to gain admission. The school was created from a partnership between the University of Melbourne, University High School and the State Government.

Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis says the students will be mentored by scientists from the university’s science faculties, its Bio21 Institute and other science, engineering and mathematics institutes around the Parkville Precinct. The school’s building has a five-star green energy rating. It will be heated and cooled by a geothermal system fitted by the University’s Geotechnical Group of the Department of Infrastructure Engineering. Students will carry out research on data generated by the building. Professor Blackburn (BSc(Hons) 1970, MSc 1972, Janet Clarke Hall) was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or medicine in 2009. She is professor of biology and physiology at the University of California, San Francisco. In a video message at the school’s launch, she said she was deeply honoured that the school was named after her. She said the school’s location would enable students to have easy access to outstanding scientists. “There is a hub of tremendous minds and scientists in the Parkville Precinct and you will have the benefit of these great people as I did when I was there,” she said.

Rob Newton, the Principal of University High School, says the new school represents a fresh approach to the study of sciences and to the link between secondary school and university. “This is an innovative way to help reverse the decline in the numbers of young people studying sciences at school and at tertiary level,” he says.
New projects and bold thinking are helping to raise the Parkville Precinct’s status as a world leader in medical research.

BY JO CHANDLER

In a generation the disease went from being uniformly fatal to a 75 per cent cure rate. "That arose from medical research here in Melbourne.”

For Ng this proved a motivating parallel of the power of translational research — ushering the latest insights from laboratories into practice on the ward and in the community. It’s a rare capacity even in neighbourboods boasting elite institutions, requiring access to the precious resources of patients, tissue samples, data about how patients respond as well as an engaged corps of research and clinical professionals.

Having resolved to switch from the clinical to the research realm, Ng found, again, that he didn’t need to venture far to find an opportunity: many young scientists would cross hemispheres to reach. Next door at the storied Walter and Eliza Hall Institute (WEHI) was a laboratory recognised as a world leader in deciphering, and interrupting, the behaviour of cancer cells. Soon Ng was pursuing his research PhD in a unit founded by the legendary Professor Don Metcalf, who at age 85 can still be found working at his laboratory bench, and with whom Ng went on to co-author several journal papers. Think of it as the scientific equivalent of the just-signed guitarist being invited to share a set on stage with the Rolling Stones.

Ashley Ng could be the poster child for the cluster of institutions known collectively in the game as the Parkville Precinct — educated, inspired, nurtured, employed, equipped and deployed within the space of a couple of city blocks, ultimately to the benefit of both Victorian patients and the national medical enterprise. But he’s also no wide-eyed ingenue.

Having worked both sides of the track — Royal Parade historically separating the hospital and research jurisdictions of the Precinct — he’s had a glimpse of the challenges ahead in the more porous, collaborative future being orchestrated for the research, educational and clinical institutions of Parkville.

The Precinct is undergoing dramatic change, most obviously flaunted by the shiny new kids on the block. There’s the $210 million Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity (PDI), where 700 infection and immunology specialists are now settling — among them knockabout Nobel Laureate Doherty himself, who confesses to still feeling discombobulated entering a building with his name on it. On the opposite corner the $1 billion Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC), the new home of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and the research and clinical services of the nearby hospitals and University, is rapidly taking shape.

But the change is, as Ng observes, "about so much more than the buildings. It’s the way of thinking about how we approach disease and treat it in a collaborative way, both for the patient today and also for the patient who comes in 10 years time”. And it won’t be easy.

“Between 2008 and 2010, patients in Australia with blood cancers . . .”

"We need a small earthquake to shake our thinking out of historical and political slodes,” he says. The seismic shifts are starting to be felt, and are both welcome and challenging.

“We know we need to initiate projects and embrace a culture that allows us to collaborate effectively across the partner institutions, to deliver cutting-edge clinical care as well as to become a vanguard of cancer research worldwide."

"The nice thing about Parkville is that we have institutes here with the experience and the technology to do this work. The idea behind (the emerging) alliances is to get together and try to optimise all those things, to pull them all together to try to answer specific questions in the best and most cost-effective way we can.

“We have a major opportunity with the initiative of the VCCC. The bulk of the hard work however, to achieve our aspirational goals, still lies ahead of us.”

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK:

Professor Stephen Smith outside the Peter Doherty Institute; and (above) the view from the top of the building, with the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre under construction on the left.

PICTURE: MAIL PARCELGRAPHY

S

ometimes monumental institutions can hide out in plain sight in a blindingly dense built-up neighbourhood where they are part of the furniture.

The Parkville Precinct is the product of careful and thoughtful planning in recent years, capitalising on origins that long recognised — if rather more organically than explicitly — the synergies of medical, education, treatment and research. Proximity, not mere serendipity, has played a powerful role in shaping the way of thinking about how we approach and treat disease, hence our need to step away from the bedside and return to the laboratory.

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Tucked away in various corners are the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, the Nossal Institute for Global Health, the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (CSL), the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) biochemistry unit and Victorian College of Pharmacy – Monash University – among others.

“There’s not a lot of places where you can stand on a corner and see such a collection. It’s an extraordinary place to work,” says McColl. Layered on top of that is opportunity for “the next phase”, gluing together the collaborative links.

McColl sees parallels between what is occurring now and what he observed within the WEHI 20 years ago when then director Professor Gus Nossal (PhD '69, LLD '97) was shaking things up, exploiting the opportunities of a new building to break old barriers.

“WEHI divisions were their own little silos to some extent. So Gus put one tea room on the top floor looking north and there were three rules when you came to work at the institute – thou shalt go to morning tea, afternoon tea, and the WEHI seminar. Gus was saying all those informal connections were very important!”

For all the ease of electronic communications, proximity matters as much today as ever, argues McColl. “I’m a great believer in the corridor. About 50 per cent of my business is transacted in corridors”.

And no wonder – we’re standing outside the Melbourne Brain Centre. “Here you’ve got master scientists and master clinicians coming together and saying, ‘What do we need to do around neuroscience?’ We built a building so scientists with slightly different views on the problems of neuroscience are all sitting together with the platforms of technology they need. “That’s the other thing that’s championed with research – the notion of me having my laboratory and all my own equipment, it doesn’t make sense. The (Gus) Nossalian thinking is to put all the platforms there. Give them the stuff to let them do what you want them to do, the cognitive bit.”

It’s a very impressive facility, a very impressive precinct, compared to anything I know in the United Kingdom or even in the United States,” says the Dean of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Melbourne, Professor Stephen Smith. Having taken up his position only last September, he still brings the perspective of the outsider.

Few neighbourhoods around the world can boast the basics of the critical trifecta: university, research institutions and hospitals. Fewer still have proven calibre attracted to all of them.

“Some things here are absolutely world-class – the medicine is the obvious one.”

Parkville paediatrics, microbiology, infectious diseases, inflammation and stroke expertise all resonate in the top tier of their respective international spheres.

“But the precinct itself is less well known and needs to be shouted about a bit more,” says Smith. This isn’t merely a matter of institutional pride, he argues, but the driver of jobs, investment and better patient outcomes, the benefits resonating far beyond Parkville.

Smith flips open a random recent copy of Nature, one of the handful of journals that define the currency of elite institutions and, inevitably, determine their attractiveness to investors, donors, specialist staff and patients.

He points to a recent study on schizophrenia and flips to the list of authors affiliations – Harvard Medical School; the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai; Massachusetts General Hospital; the Welcome Trust Sanger Institute in Cambridge, UK; the Karolinska Institute in Sweden; and the Centre for Human Genetics in Belgium.

“That is modern science,” he declares. “You have to have the infrastructure to do that. And the collaborations.”

It’s not just about having the intellectual grunt, the specialised teams and the expertise to run increasingly complex and expensive technologies, but also – critically – access to the patient populations required for testing modern therapies, which target tightly defined, precise sub-populations within the disease landscape.

“What Australia hasn’t done is move fast enough to integrate its institutes, hospitals and universities. And that is what we can do here, and we’re moving as fast as we can to do that.”

It matters “because, first, there are the jobs”, in the building phase and beyond. “We think there are about 10,000 scientists, clinician scientists, doctors, technicians, nurses etc in the biomedicine business in the Parkville Precinct. We should be thinking about how to grow that to 15,000. “Second, because unequivocally patients get better treatment.”

Centres that have an academic bent deliver better health outcomes. “You get the very latest treatments coming into the system. You can’t just buy this in from elsewhere – you need the doctors at the forefront of the research.”

The Precinct is, in Smith’s view, a useful benchmarking exercise of the internationally recognised benchmark brands of Oxford, Cambridge, Stanford, Yale and Harvard, which attract the hottest young post-docs from the highly mobile global pool and the biggest corporate investors and partners.

“The point, of course, is the human capital. The buildings are part of the mechanism of getting the capital.

“We have to make sure that Melbourne is seen by clinicians and scientists and health informatics people and bioinformatics people as a place you would naturally consider stopping as part of the global journey of your career.”

FROM PAGE 7

multiple sclerosis, Huntington’s, motor neuron disease, brain and spinal cord injury, depression, schizophrenia, mental illness and addiction. Such preeminence continues to boost Melbourne’s medical brand.

Professor Geoff McColl, Senior Associate Dean (Academic) at the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, stands at the hub of it all – Grattan Street and Royal Parade – and shouts a tour over the traffic.

“You can walk for one minute and go from what will be a world-leading cancer centre, and an infection and immunity and teaching facility on this side, to an established general adult hospital with an international reputation in stroke and in cardiothoracic surgery (RMIH), then the Royal Women’s Hospital around the corner, the WEHI – where I did my PhD – and then this oldish but still iconic ‘60s building that has the medical school.”

Avenues open up

Undertaking her fourth year of medical studies, Jade Lim is already getting a very impressive precinct, compared to anything I know in the United Kingdom or even in the United States,” says the Dean of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Melbourne, Professor Stephen Smith. Having taken up his position only last September, he still brings the perspective of the outsider.

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“We have to make sure that Melbourne is seen by clinicians and scientists and health informatics people and bioinformatics people as a place you would naturally consider stopping as part of the global journey of your career.”
New search for the Anzac story

The trenches and dugouts of Gallipoli have proved a fertile and emotional research ground for Professor Antonio Sagona.

BY GARY TIPPET

n certain mornings at Gallipoli in 1915, the Turks inflicted an added, unintentional, pain on the Anzacs dug into the ridges below. If the conditions were right, a breeze would waft down upon them carrying the unmistakable, tantalising smell of warm, freshly baked bread.

That, notes Professor Antonio Sagona AM, must have been a special sort of torture for the Australians and New Zealanders surviving on meagre rations of bully beef and hard biscuits. Sagona, of the University of Melbourne's Classics and Archaeology Program, heads the Joint Historical and Archaeological Survey that has uncovered the evidence for this small but evocative aspect of daily life during one of Australia's and Turkey's defining periods.

The distance between the Anzac and Turkish trenches near Quinns's Post, where the fighting was often fiercest, gets down to 27 metres – “little more than a cricket pitch”, says Sagona. And not far to the rear on the Turkish side, at a location known as Merkez Tepe, the survey team has found remains of a battlefield oven. There are locally handmade bricks, some with the makers’ thumbprints, and large flat stones, which would have been heated in the ovens before thin dough was poured on them to bake flatbread.

“What such finds are helping us unfold is a very interesting story of life in the trenches,” Sagona says.

“This shows one area where the two sides differed … a colleague sent me the (Turkish) menu. They had lentil soup for breakfast and went forward with pouches of dried fruit and nuts. So they would have had fresh food.” The Anzac diet, on the other hand, was “pretty awful” – tinned, salty meat and nuts. So they would have had fresh food. “The Anzac diet, on the other hand, was “pretty awful” – tinned, salty meat and hard, stale bread.

Sagona (BA(Hons) 1977, GDipEd 1983, PhD 1984) is an expert on the archaeology of the Greater Middle East and has worked in Turkey for more than 30 years, but until the survey had never visited Gallipoli. The experience has been moving. “When you’re there you tend to focus on the job; you photograph and record and you’re pretty tired by the end of the day, but you can’t help but feel, when you have a quiet moment, that it is an extremely tragic place.

“When you look at the trenches and dugouts and realise the shocking conditions both sides were in, it must have been horrific. What we can’t recreate is the incessant noise, the shells going off.” The remnants of shrapnel lying around – which would have been flying everywhere in 1915 – add to the horror, he says.

To a lesser extent, the challenges for the team are also taxing. Since the Peninsula became a national park it has become overgrown with trees and scrub, some three times as tall as the archaeologists. Combined with the steepness of the landscape and the effects of erosion on the trenches, tunnels and dugouts, it is what Sagona describes as “probably the most difficult terrain I’ve ever had to survey”.

Though Gallipoli is of critical, near mythical, importance to three of the nations – Turkey, Australia and New Zealand – that battled there, it has never been investigated using modern archaeological methods and techniques. “It is not really understood,” says Sagona.

The Joint Historical and Archaeological Survey began in 2005 after the Australian Government launched an inquiry into the management of the site. Following high-level diplomatic negotiations between the three governments, a proposal was approved for the first detailed survey and when the University of Melbourne won a tender, Sagona became field director, with project permits held by nearby Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University.

The team made its first reconnaissance trip in 2009 and its goal is to pull together historical data, landscape archaeology and artefact analysis into a new assessment of the site and provide the three governments with what Sagona calls “some kind of defining document”, a report in book form, for the centennial next year.

A journalist visited in 2012 and later wrote of Sagona as “one of those infectious archaeologists in the mould of Indiana Jones from Hollywood’s Raiders of The Lost Ark … (who) loves nothing more than getting into the scrub”.

He laughs at the comparison: “I do get excited about artefacts and about archaeology and I think my students would vouch for that – but not in the Indiana Jones style. I hope that’s what the journalist meant, that it was about passion, rather than illicit digging or whip-cracking.”

That passion has been life-long. Antonio Sagona was born in Tripoli, Libya, and came to Melbourne with his parents when he was four. “I was always fascinated by the ancient past. I remember...”
extensive fieldwork in north-eastern Turkey, notably at the sites of Anatolia and the Caucasus. From 1988-2003 he carried out archaeology of the ancient Near East, in particular the regions of Mesopotamia. It goes back to my student days when I was interested in a particular culture and just kept pulling on the chain, which drew me up to Anatolia and the Caucasus. I like the idea of working on frontiers. The Caucasus is that area where Eurasia and the Near East and that interaction of frontier societies fascinates me.

And though his work at Gallipoli is his first dig into the 20th century, the Peninsula has links stretching back into antiquity. Few know it, but Lone Pine was above an important Roman farmstead settlement and Troy is nearby. “A lot of the officers went to Gallipoli with translations of Homer, and many had the idea that they were going to a new Trojan war.”

“A lot of archaeologists are, how can I put it, a bit apprehensive about crossing historical boundaries, in the sense that you become a specialist – in fact, like so much research these days, it’s becoming reducitionist. But like crossing boundaries – I’ve worked in Turkey, I’ve worked in the Caucasus, I’ve worked classic, late historic and prehistoric sites and now this.”

The period doesn’t bother me,” he says. “I started as a student, 30 years as a lecturer. It’s a bit like Hotel California – you can’t get out of here. As a student, 30 years as a lecturer. It’s a bit like Hotel California – you can’t get out of here.

Now peace has come, but they that fell
Know only that they sought it well.
They cannot know that peace has come
Let us make haste and let us build
Great worlds with strength and wonder filled,
Then shall they know their peace has come.

The war was a catalyst for change in Australian society and that of course was reflected in the University. The thing about Twitter is that your experience depends entirely on who you choose to follow. The vast majority of people I follow are fellow scientists and science communicators, and in general they make up a community that is articulate, chatty and eager to share interesting and/or useful information – not to mention often wildly entertaining.

Once I got going with Twitter as a professional networking and info-sharing tool, it became clear that a lot of people are connected by a network of science mediated by the universe and are thrilled to have a chance to ask questions of a real scientist.

I’ve gradually adjusted my own Twitter stream to be as much about outreach and science communication as it is about maintaining a professional community. When I tweet about a cool new result, I sometimes include a few tweets of background information to put it in context. I answer questions about black holes, the speed of light, the Big Bang and what the expansion of the universe really means.

These days, I frequently get requests to write articles for popular websites or do interviews or podcasts based primarily on my ability to explain things on Twitter. It’s a fantastic tool for science communication, and it’s a great way for the public to get access to a real scientist and find out what all this research stuff is really about.

When a scientist on Twitter veers away from the pure science and talks about the life they’re balancing with (or building around) a research career, it helps break down stereotypes and increase public trust in science. I think it can be an especially good opportunity for women or minorities in science to become role models for young people hoping to follow the same path.

The number one question people ask me about using Twitter as a scientist is, “How much time does it take?” It’s a question I can’t answer. It doesn’t take time in the traditional sense. It’s a rather weird experience. I started using Twitter as a professional tool in 2012. A colleague was using it to share astronomy-related news and papers with others in the field, and he asked me if I’d be willing to live-tweet a conference for him because he was going to miss the talks. I agreed, and discovered that it was a nicely focusing task, having to find at least 140 characters from each talk that were significant enough to share and remember. (In case you don’t have an innate feel for how long a tweet actually is, this sentence is 140 characters, with the parentheses included.)

I tweeted a lot for conferences and collaboration visits, so I often introduce myself to students and colleagues. Recently, when I say, “Hi, I’m Katie Mack,” there’s every chance the other person will pause inconsequently, then say, “Oh! You’re AstroKatie!”

My profile on Twitter — as @AstroKatie — has grown steadily for the past couple of years and now have almost 90,000 followers. It’s a rather weird experience. I started using Twitter as a professional tool in 2012. A colleague was using it to share astronomy-related news and papers with others in the field, and he asked me if I’d be willing to live-tweet a conference for him because he was going to miss the talks.

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Mourning a lost generation

As the University’s War Memorial on the South Lawn records, 1725 of our students and graduates’ part in the Great War. In commemorating its students’ and graduates’ part in the Great War. In

The University has previously been a somewhat insular, elite place, its membership largely drawn from the wealthy and well-connected. Now peace has come, but they that fell
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The University of Melbourne in the service of the nation."

The University of Melbourne is performing strongly, but faces a number of strategic challenges unparalleled in the higher education sector. Experts have described these challenges as “deep, radical and urgent transformations.”

The most significant challenge is the online ‘evolution’. Digital technologies are transforming the way education is delivered, accessed and supported. With the rise of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and resources such as Khan Academy, TED talks, and Google search, university lecturers and libraries no longer hold a monopoly on knowledge. The rate at which we create knowledge is unmatched and far beyond the capacity of universities alone to curate and to organise.

Digital technologies and the ubiquity of knowledge have particular implications for students and learning. With the prevalence of wholly online and blended learning (formal programs in which students learn in part through online delivery of content), alternative economic models for tertiary delivery are likely to emerge. Universities must innovate to meet student demands for technology-enabled learning.

As the cost of research infrastructure escalates, fewer universities can manage large-scale research agendas alone. Collaboration and international partnerships now drive highly cited research. Precincts – which bring together industry, government and researchers to address global problems – have become a source of competitive advantage, placing some researchers to address global problems – have become a source of competitive advantage, placing some research institutions in a position to contribute more directly to prosperity in their cities.

The University of Melbourne is a successful strategy today demands continuing improvement in every field, including the impact of our research, the quality of our students’ experience of learning and our partnerships with industry and communities around the world, including alumni. Growing Esteem 2014 canvasses some important proposals in all these areas.

One dilemma for a comprehensive university such as Melbourne is balancing enquiry-led research with world-class teaching and learning and our partnerships with industry and communities around the world, including alumni. Growing Esteem 2014 canvasses some important proposals in all these areas.

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The University seeks to build innovative, blended learning opportunities into all its programs to improve student experience and learning outcomes. We seek to build on the considerable attractiveness of the University’s existing atmosphere to provide physical and virtual environments, infrastructure that will further enrich the student experience.

Effective research and teaching at Melbourne are both bound up with greater opportunities for students to engage with the world and with future employers. Industry engagement is a critical area here. Accordingly, we propose to develop new incentives to encourage more academics and research higher-degree students to engage with industry. Our international engagement and public engagement are also being enhanced in important ways.

The University of Melbourne hosts hundreds of conferences, seminars, lectures and other community activities throughout the year, providing an important mechanism for the debate of public issues and sharing of expertise. Many of our research programs are established as resources for government and community organisations, both in terms of research findings and practical application in the community. There is also an opportunity to encourage greater public engagement through an emerging precinct around public policy. A number of significant research initiatives around the University’s Parkville campus in recent years. These include the Australia and New Zealand School of Government, the Centre for Advancing Journalism, The Conversation, the Grattan Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, and the Melbourne School of Government.

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n a converted barn at Germaine Greer’s home in Essex, England, are more than 150 filing cabinets documenting her extraordinary life over six decades.

The trove includes multi-coloured hand-written notes on *The Female Eunuch*, her best-selling feminist manifesto published in 1970, along with letters from actor Warren Beatty, director Federico Fellini, writer Margaret Atwood and serial killer Myra Hindley, to name but some of the better-known correspondents.

There’s also Professor Greer’s work on a translation of *Lysistrata* for the National Theatre, which was never performed, and video recordings of her many television appearances.

University of Melbourne archivist Dr Katrina Dean travelled to Essex to inspect the collection last year. “It took me a couple of days to survey the archive and to see enough to satisfy myself it is sufficiently rich in unpublished content and has substantial research potential,” she says.

“Because the archive was offered for sale we needed a valuation and I worked with a very experienced and able valuer who has a strong track record of valuing modern archives. She is brilliant at being able to drill down and pick out items and snippets of significance, which really helps to indicate the potential of an archive. It also just helps to have a second opinion,” Dean says the collection is “in good order” and arranged by theme or format. The correspondence files, for instance, are stored in a group of about 40 filing cabinet drawers. “There is also an index which is a good guide but is not comprehensive,” she says.

The papers shine a light on Germaine Greer’s writing process, with her notes on works such as *The Female Eunuch* and *The Obstacle Race* (a book on the historic barriers facing women artists published in 1979) forming part of the collection. “There is a lot more background, context and personal perspective than can be gleaned from simply reading her published works,” says Dean. Greer’s notes on *The Female Eunuch*, for example, describe it as “my book on women for which I have not yet devised a title”.

In addition, the archive documents how Greer’s work was received: by other writers, by women whose lives were changed after reading Greer, and by those disturbed by the ways in which she challenged tradition.

“He is very interested in social networks and how they operate in terms of political and social change and cultural production,” Dean says. “The archive is network-rich if one wanted to understand some currents of UK and international public life in the second half of the 20th century.”

The University’s chief librarian Philip Kent says the University was interested in buying the collection “because we have a strength in related areas … the Women’s Electoral Lobby archive, archives of the feminist publishers the Seven Sisters, the McPhee Gribble archive …” He describes the archives as the raw material of research – “the pay dirt of history, as Germaine calls it”.

Greer was an English major at the University of Melbourne. She moved to Britain to study at Cambridge in 1964. A young Greer described Melbourne as a “progressive university at the time”, says Kent.

“She found the place to be invigorating academically.”

The Australian material includes family history, school reunions and papers relating to the protest movements of the early 1960s, including the women’s liberation and anti-war movements. A Cambridge diary from 1964-5 describes “a round of lectures, poker, parties and evensong”, says Dean. In the 1970s and early 1980s Greer went on journalism assignments in Africa and Asia, and material from this period is included, too. It documents her life as a public intellectual and environmentalist.

Dean will travel again to Essex in coming weeks to pack up the collection in coming weeks.
The art of fulsome correspondence on matters of substance seems to have waned as email and most forms of social media are not the mediums for this.’

Professor Greer discusses her archive in an email exchange.

If someone writes me a letter, it does not occur to me to throw it away after I have answered it or even if I haven’t answered it. I have kept files ever since I was a student - files of my research, my written essays, and, once I became an academic, of my lectures and of my interaction with students.

The importance of the correspondence files is that they offer a genuine insight into the processes of historical change. The letters, reviews and so forth provide documentary evidence of the gradual change in awareness that has taken place over the last 50 years. There are bits and pieces from celebrities, and biographers of a whole range of people will find material to interest them.

If there were, there still are, especially to Australians who have no idea what I have been doing since The Female Eunuch.

I have not spent my life re-reading my own correspondence and recyling my own research. It is now time for other people to use this enormous resource to track down not me, but the development of the issues that have kept me busy, whether they be women’s health or abortion rights or eco-feminism or conservation or Australia or none of the above.

I use the papers to remind myself of what I have already written about certain issues, especially when I am accused, of being inconsistent, or a ratbag, and so forth, but I don’t do (that) so often.

That depends upon the others. A sociologist will use the collection differently from a psychologist or a historian or a graphologist or a linguist. A great deal will depend upon the retrieval system, which will probably involve digitisation of the originals so that they are machine-readable. The cataloguing system, too, will direct readers in certain ways, which will not and should not be under my control.

I am always delighted to receive a letter from a friend, from my godchildren, and most delighted to get one from my sister. These days I get wonderful emails from a young botanist known online as Plant Nerd. He sends me really hard stuff, which I regard as a huge compliment.

I have had letters from a young man threatening to burn himself at a May Ball, from a woman I had never met who wanted to plunge a knife into my stomach because I denied her love at a May Ball, from a woman I had never met who wanted to plunge a knife into my stomach because I denied her love at a May Ball.

I have had letters from a young man threatening to burn himself at a May Ball, from a woman I had never met who wanted to plunge a knife into my stomach because I denied her love at a May Ball.

We keep letters from such people in the file under the names they are using, with copies and cross references to the nutters file, so that we can check when the same handwriting appears over different names. In most cases we have succeeded in getting help for the disturbed person.

WHAT'S IT LIKE HANDING OVER A SIGNIFICANT PART OF YOUR PAST?

I haven't done it yet. I'll tell you when the 200 file drawers are empty.

They made for an imposing entrance to the University of Melbourne, where they had stood in Grattan Street since 1876. But soon after the photograph below was taken in 1957, the large gates and pillars were dismantled and removed. The gates from what was then Gate 6 (now known as Gate 10) were relocated to near the Botany School. The Gothic-inspired pillars were designed by the architects Reed and Barnes. Joseph Reed designed several significant campus buildings, including the old Wilson Hall, which was destroyed by fire in 1952. Reed also designed the Melbourne Town Hall, the original State Library, Trades Hall, the Royal Exhibition Building, Ormond College, Rippon Lea House, and a great number of churches.

MAKING AN ENTRANCE: Gate 10 on Grattan Street as it is today (above), and as it was Gate 6 in 1957 (below).
Pathway to top of the class

Amid rising alarm at Australia’s decline in international student rankings, the Melbourne Graduate School of Education offers a model for transforming our schools.

BY CAROLINE MILBURN

Matthew McDonald is one of a new breed of data-savvy school teachers, whose expertise has been honed by a teaching degree ranked as one of the world’s best.

He is an alumnus of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE), which recently won global recognition for its groundbreaking approach to teacher training.

“You hear a lot of teachers bag their teaching training course because it didn’t prepare them well for the reality of the classroom,” McDonald (below) says. “But my course overall has been very useful. We had inspirational lecturers and tutors and everything had a practical application, it wasn’t just theory.

“We spent three days a week at university and two days a week in a school placement, with block placements on top of that. It meant you could take an idea from what you were learning at university and try it immediately at your school placement ... it meant you were never operating in a vacuum.”

McDonald is in his third year as an English and history teacher at St Leonard’s College, Brighton. Last year he was nominated for a National Excellence in Teaching Award and has taken on the role of student debating co-ordinator at the school.

His stellar academic record as a high school student and then as a graduate of the University of Melbourne, earning an arts law degree with honours in 2010, is typical of the high calibre but diverse backgrounds of graduates who apply to enter the Graduate School’s Master of Teaching program.

Demand for places is outstanding supply, and in February the Graduate School was recognised as one of the world’s best education faculties. It was ranked second in the latest QS World University Rankings by Subject.

In the same month, the Graduate School’s reputation for pioneering a more rigorous model of teacher training led the Federal Government to appoint the school’s Dean, Professor Field Rickards, to an expert panel responsible for reviewing Australia’s beleaguered teacher education system.

The system has been regularly criticised in teacher surveys and several studies for producing graduates ill-equipped to handle the demands of classroom teaching. One-year diploma courses, very low tertiary scores for entrance into some courses, weak links between theory and practice and not enough practical teacher training in classrooms were listed as the main flaws of many courses run by universities nationwide.

The criticism has gained urgency against a backdrop of Australia’s slide in international student test results also reveals the nation’s schooling system has reached a critical point.

“At a broad level our schools have been doing things in a similar way for decades but the world changes and I don’t believe our schools have changed sufficiently to adapt to those changes,” he says. “That’s why we need a Master of Teaching degree. Teaching has always been a challenging profession. But it’s now even more complex and challenging and so we need to better equip the next generation of teachers with skills that can adapt to the changing environment.”

The University of Melbourne introduced an overhauled model of teacher training in 2008 with a seeding grant from the Federal and Victorian governments and the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne. A year later an extra $8 million was provided by the Rudd Government for the next three years.

The University replaced its traditional courses with the two-year, graduate-entry Master of Teaching course. The program is based on a “clinical model” of training, equipping teachers with higher-order diagnostic skills to act as researchers in their classrooms. Trainees are taught to collect and analyse student data and use it to take a more interventionist approach to their pupils’ learning needs.

Unlike traditional education courses, trainees spend a lot of time each week working and learning in schools. Many universities offer much less practical training time in schools, mainly because it is highly expensive.

Despite the Graduate School’s clinical model being more expensive to run, it is achieving impressive results.

An external, independent review in 2010 surveyed its graduates employed in primary and secondary schools. The survey was taken six months after the graduates started their first job. It found 90 per cent of those surveyed said they were well prepared for their new profession.

Other surveys of new teachers conducted in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom typically reveal about 40 per cent of new teachers are satisfied with the way their courses prepared them for the classroom, according to Rickards.

He says it is pleasing to see the Graduate School receive global recognition from the only international measure that examines the quality of university subjects. The QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Rankings is an annual league table of the top universities. For the 2014 rankings by subject, QS evaluated 3002 universities and ranked 689.

“The QS ranking reflects our research and the impact of that research, including its impact on teacher education,” Rickards says. “It also reflects how our peers around the world rank us and what employers think of the quality of our graduates.”

For Matthew McDonald, the decision to choose teaching as a career instead of law is one he doesn’t regret. “The law degree was great and it’s given me fantastic knowledge and skills,” he says. “But when I started to do placements at law firms I realised I didn’t want to spend many years of my life as a lawyer.”

“I wanted to do something more creative. At the end of the day I wanted to feel that I was making a difference in someone’s life, that I was helping someone. That was the reason I chose teaching.”

By the numbers

Since the MGSE began offering graduate-only teaching courses:

• Almost 7000 students have completed more than 8000 courses.

• More than 3000 students have become qualified primary and secondary school teachers.
Learning takes on a foreign accent

Melbourne students are hitting the road in big numbers to take advantage of the plentiful options for studying abroad.

BY ANGELA MARTINKUS

The UK is hot in 2014 and for the first time is outstripping America’s Ivy League universities as a study destination of choice. Europe has an enduring attraction for Arts students. Commerce students fancy the US. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) students favour North America, Japan, China, while Veterinary Science. Medicine and Dentistry students are those most likely to venture into Africa and South-East Asia.

Studying overseas while completing an undergraduate, postgraduate, or masters degree at the University of Melbourne has never been more popular, or accessible. A little over a decade ago a mere 0.1 per cent of all students had an overseas study experience. Last year 18 per cent of the University’s graduating students participated in a long or short-term global study program and it is fast becoming a routine part of the student experience.

In fact, the University sends more students abroad than any other Australian institution, more than doubling the student movements (1500 coming in 1990 and 3010 in 2012) and more than $800 million per semester as a HECS loan and also received Centrelink youth allowance because I was studying full-time as an independent student away from home. The hardest part was setting in, dealing with the language and cultural barrier and homesickness at the beginning. I can now speak Spanish and travelled a lot when I was there. Doing exchange is different to travel because you build a life there, make friends and really integrate into the culture. The further out of your comfort zone, the better off you will be when you get back.”

BY NIGEL COSSAR

Elliott aims to lift the outward-bound study experience by 10 per cent a year and her team is leading an array of programs to make overseas study possible for every student.

This year, MGM Associate Director Nigel Cossar and his team of 11 mobility officers will administer more than 4500 student movements from an office in Swanston Street, Carlton.

The first overseas scholarships were offered in the 1850s, funded by shipping companies to support the travel of students to British universities. Rhodes scholarships started in the early 1900s and after World War II scholarships increased, providing the likes of former Governor-General Sir Zelman Cowen (BA(Hons) 1939, LLB 1940, LLM 1941, LLD 1973, Ormond College) and former Victorian Governor Sir James Gobbo AC CVO KSt QC (BA(Hons) 1952, LLB 2000, Newman College) with an overseas study experience.

While self-funded international students have studied at the University since 1853, many more arrived after 1951 when the Commonwealth-funded Colombo Plan commenced and hundreds of students from across the Asia-Pacific region joined the institution. This ran until the mid-1970s.

In 1990 the Melbourne Abroad Office managed an outbound exchange program with a meagre annual budget of $100,000. In 1997 the University sent more than 90 students overseas and was a founding member of Universities 21 (U21), an international network of 27 research universities in 19 countries. U21 members sign up for five years and agree to host an equal number of students over the life of the agreement. Students fund their own passage and accommodation but tuition is guaranteed a grant. OS-HELP offers loans of up to $7500, paid back with the HECS debt. Faculty funding is also available. Students are often choosing more than one experience. “If they plan enough they can do a short course overseas, an internship, all abroad,” says Cossar.

\[ \text{Back then student mobility only meant exchange.} \]

\[ \text{It was a rite of passage for a year abroad.} \]

\[ \text{NIGEL COSSAR} \]

\[ \text{MGM ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR} \]

AINSLEY SUTTON

VETERINARY SCIENCE

Work placement at the Elephant Nature Park, Thailand, January 2014

“I chose Chile because my mum is from there and I have family in Santiago. I applied around June 2012 and it wasn’t hard to get in. I am doing a BA with a double major in media and communications and Spanish so I studied arts electives and Spanish. I received a $4000 language scholarship and $6000 per semester as a HECS loan and also received Centrelink youth allowance because I was studying full-time as an independent student away from home. The hardest part was setting in, dealing with the language and cultural barrier and homesickness at the beginning. I can now speak Spanish and travelled a lot when I was there. Doing exchange is different to travel because you build a life there, make friends and really integrate into the culture. The further out of your comfort zone, the better off you will be when you get back.”

ANGELA MARTINKUS

Spent 2013 studying at the Pontificia Catholic University of Chile

**GABRIELA BRAND ARTS**

Spent 2013 studying at the Pontificia Catholic University of Chile
Student newspaper Farrago, an incubator for writers, journalists and politicians, is about to turn 90.

By Ray Gill

A former editor of Farrago, the University student newspaper, once offered a lament of her time on campus in the 1970s. “Right place. Wrong time. I started at Melbourne University in 1976 with a sneaking suspicion that I missed out on all the fun,” wrote Kate Legge in More Memories of Melbourne University (MUP).

Every student since the tumultuous 1960s has probably wondered what it might have been like to be at the centre of a cultural revolution. But each generation since has had its wars to oppose and its ideological battles to win, even if during my time in the 1980s the only on-campus demonstrations I remember was a suffragist free protest against a multinational winning a contract to run the Union caff.

The personal may have become political by then but what still endures are the stories of Melbourne University in 1976 with a student paper from its office on the first floor of Student House has also disappeared sometime in the 1980s. When Kathy Bail, John O’Hagan and Bruce Permezel were its editors. They were non-party-affiliated left who ripped the paper apart. They were non-party-affiliated left who ripped the paper apart. They were non-party-affiliated left who ripped the paper apart. They were non-party-affiliated left who ripped the paper apart. They were non-party-affiliated left who ripped the paper apart. They were non-party-affiliated left who ripped the paper apart. They were non-party-affiliated left who ripped the paper apart. They were non-party-affiliated left who ripped the paper apart.

Once upon a time the windowless bromide room was where Farrago editors repaired for Macabreillian student politics plots, drug and sex, sometimes all at the same time. I think I’d tap the young Christos on the shoulder and shout at him, “Be a little bit more responsible, mate.” But I learnt so much about editing from working with Mandy Brett that has been so important for my writing life now.

Farrago is 90 years old next year. It may be staffed by a few, low paid editors and a team of volunteers, but in its time it has outlasted dozens of other Melbourne newspapers that have crumbled under changing tastes and the continuing financial problems. It provides a training ground for a career in journalism, as it did for Ruxton who married journalist Luke Slattery and writer Joanna Murray-Smith, whom he married.

As well as being a training ground for a career in journalism, Farrago provides editors with lessons in the cut-throat political process from students who are often on training wheels for a life in politics. “We covered a federal election (Hawke versus Fraser) in our first issue and battled it out with student politicians, several of whom stayed in the game (Julia Gillard, Lindsay Tanning),” says Bail. “We got sued for defamation and lost funding for an issue as a result. We reviewed arts and cultural events, and published essays, comics, posters, fiction and poetry. “All this – the mechanical production line, negotiations, mistakes, squabbles and friendships made along the way – was just the right training for a career in media and publishing as it turned out,” she says.

GILLIAN TRIGGS
LLB 1967, PhD 1982, Janet Clarke Hall and International House

Gillian Triggs offers a businesslike handshake and beams an intense, penetrating power gaze. It’s instantly clear that a mistake has been made; the President of the Australian Human Rights Commission believes I’m at her Sydney offices for a job interview. With the error corrected, Emeritus Professor Triggs, a noted international lawyer, softens. “This should be much more pleasant,” she says with a smile, her blue eyes widening. The conversation turns quickly to the Commission’s inquiry into children in detention and her recent visit to the Christmas Island immigration facility, where 315 children are held behind a wall of wire. She describes the conditions as “disgraceful,” and the adjective is uttered in an emotional minor key. “It’s really heartbreaking to be there,” she says.

Having been offered a glimpse of Gillian Triggs, woman of steel, thanks to a case of mistaken identity, a middle-class English childhood. This “Paddington Bear” life, as she calls it, may have been socially conventional, but it was ethically broad, humane and sympathetic. “Both parents were good,” she adds and of course the public is interested. “And what emerged from it is that they had marvellously open minds on issues of race and shared a strong sense of social justice. Those attitudes were part of my world.”

En route to Australia as a 12-year-old, immediately after the British and French invasion of Suez, she vividly remembers the poverty of Eden and Cairo from 1948, and its effect on her. “I realised at that time that I’d come from a terrace in north London and was looking at a wider world.” When, more than a decade later, she graduated with a law degree from the University of Melbourne and a specialisation in international law, she headed to the United States to work as an adviser to the Dallas police chief on civil rights legislation. That “wider world” became her world. She has inhabited it ever since.

I was hugely stimulated by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, in which Australia and ‘Doc’ Evatt played such an important role, and in particular how these ideas, once articulated, are implemented.

COMMISSIONER Gillian Triggs was imbued with a strong sense of social justice. These attitudes were part of my world. “I was hugely stimulated by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, in which Australia and ‘Doc’ Evatt played such an important role, and in particular how these ideas, once articulated, are implemented.”

OLIVIA CRANWELL
BMusPerth 2010, BA 2011, MMus (Opera Performance) 2013

ing in a fat suit while playing the widow in the new Australian opera The Magic Pudding was part of the program for Olivia Cranwell when she was studying her Master of Music (opera performance). Cranwell, a soprano, was one of eight singers chosen to take part in the University of Melbourne’s inaugural postgraduate opera performance degree in 2012 and 2013. Forty-five singers auditioned for the program, each of the eight chosen was granted a scholarship.

The program, a collaboration between the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and the Victorian Opera, is the first time a training institution has partnered a professional opera company. As well as harnessing it up as a portly marsupial, Cranwell studied Italian language, German, French, English and Italian diction, researched soprano singing techniques and performed in Puss in Boots. Taking part in the inaugural program was wonderful, she says. “You get to shape and develop it, to fit what you wanted.” She has a spinto soprano voice, which she describes as a young dramatic voice. “It is a very difficult to categorise,” she says. “It is more of a rare voice type. There is not a lot of information about it.”

Cranwell says she always loved singing. “When I am having a bad day, it gives me an endorphin kick. I really do get that rush from singing.” At school she performed in school choirs, taking voice lessons in Year 11. Her singing teacher asked if she had ever considered singing opera. “I hadn’t really,” she says, adding that she loves opera now.

This year Cranwell is performing as Rapunzel in Stephenondheim’s Into the Woods with the Victorian Opera and as a soloist in the Victorian Opera Gala; she is also singing in the chorus in Carmen and Eugene Onegin with Opera Australia. She recently visited Germany and England, and acknowledges that there are more opportunities overseas for young singers.

“One needs to be modest, but not too humble,” she says. “You have to put yourself in a position where you are heard. If you don’t believe in yourself, why would anybody else?”

SPINTO SOPRANO: “I really do get that rush from singing.”
PICTURE: CHARLIE MCKROSS

LUKE SLATTERY BA (HONS) 1983

I was hugely stimulated by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, in which Australia and ‘Doc’ Evatt played such an important role, and in particular how these ideas, once articulated, are implemented.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER

THE OPERA SINGER

KATHY RIZILOS
PHILLIP URQUIJO
BSc(Hons) 2003, PhD Science 2007

Phillip Urquijo is the Justin Bieber of the physics world. Well, sort of. Like Bieber he’s everywhere. Not in the tabloids, but by the end of March he had already published five academic articles for the year and last year he published an astonishing 67 of them. He’s young too. At 31 he is the youngest ever co-ordinator of a large-scale physics experiment. He’s not just a star, he’s a “protostar”. Granted, the similarities between one of the most exciting minds in high-energy collider physics to emerge from the University of Melbourne and a Canadian teen who can sing end there – but the point is, Urquijo is big in physics.

Talking to him, though, you’d never know it. The scientist, who completed his PhD in 2007 and spent nine years working in Japan, France and Germany, wouldn’t describe himself as a science whiz at school.

The Healesville High School student arrived at the University in 2000 and four years later moved to Japan to join the Belle experiment, the first of four large experiments – Belle, ATLAS, LHCb and Belle II – that he has worked on.

Particle collider physics experiments are carried out at large facilities, such as KEK in Tokyo or the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research in Geneva. These campus-style facilities house machines that accelerate and collide particles so scientists can observe and analyse how they react. “These are huge experiments with hundreds of people working on the main experiment and hundreds more required to put together the greater facility and they cost hundreds of millions of dollars to build,” says Urquijo.

While both experiments re-created conditions shortly after the Big Bang, the Belle experiment at the KEK lab described the difference between matter and antimatter, and the ATLAS experiment at the LHC was made famous in 2012 with its discovery of the Higgs Boson – the particle that explained how particles attain mass. Urquijo moved there in 2007 as the facility was being built, before the experiments started in 2008, and worked at the Geneva facility “with a mixture of PhD students and post-doctoral researchers” for more than three years, regularly working 10 to 12 hours a day, six or seven days a week. It was an intense time.

He had wanted to live in Europe and work in a university environment for a while, so he accepted a junior professorship at Bonn University and continued to work on experiments while teaching a Masters course.

He also joined the SuperKEKB experiment and was later appointed as the Physics Co-ordinator. He is now working on the project as part of an Australian Research Council Fellowship at the University of Melbourne.

His ambition was always to make his way back to Australia, so being able to co-ordinate the experiment while working in Melbourne is a highlight.

ANGELA MARTINKUS

EUAN FERGUSON
DipForSc 1977, BForSc(Hons) 1980

Euan Ferguson might have wished, during his days at the University in the late 1970s, Euan Ferguson might have spent some time in a laboratory carrying the family name. It was named for his father, Arthur, who had been Reader in Electronics, and it remains a mark of the Ferguson’s abiding bond with the institution.

But Ferguson preferred another University landmark, the small botanic garden behind the Agriculture and Forestry buildings. It was tranquil and spoke to the love of the outdoors that had brought him to the place.

It also encapsulated the lifelong sense of collegiality and learning that the University imparted, he says. “I can recall sitting out there in the sunshine, having lunch and talking to people from my forestry course. I just got a real buzz being with a group of like-minded people and having stimulating conversations”.

He has been Chief Officer of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) since 2010. The qualities of equanimity and consultation he says he took from his university days held him in good stead when he took the role – and to face future risks posed by climate change.

Ferguson, who came to the job from a similar role in South Australia, says Victoria’s fire agencies have been through significant change recently and continue to work through the lessons and the recommendations of the Black Saturday Bushfires Royal Commission.

But there are new challenges: “There are real uncertainties about what I call extreme weather into the future. Clearly fire in rural Australia is going to present enormous challenges – and that requires us to continually look with a scientific mind at what’s happening around us and try to explain it.

“We’re not in control of a lot of the natural environment as a consequence of severe weather. We need a culture of shared responsibility between senior managers, bureaucrats and scientists and members of the community who have a part to play, but also may be victims if we don’t do our job properly.”

Ferguson’s love of the outdoors was sparked at Melbourne Grammar, where he was involved in the caddies and hiking club. By the time he finished he had “a passion to do forestry”. In 1975 he went to the Victorian School of Forestry at Creswick where the then Forestry Commission offered a diploma course, before doing Honours at Melbourne.

He initially worked as a field forester in East Gippsland and “was very lucky, or unlucky I suppose, that in my first three or four years as a young forester I did an awful lot of firefighting . . . fire for me was a constant recurring theme and experience and I enjoyed it.”

He later became one of Victoria’s early forest fire managers, based in Geelong, and joined the CFA as an operational officer in 1992, before being recruited to South Australia’s Country Fire Service in 2001.

Ferguson, who holds an MBA from Deakin University, is still a member of the rural fire brigade at his wife’s home town of Wossang, north-west of Bendigo.

GARY TIPPET

THE CFA CHIEF

‘These are huge experiments with hundreds of people working on the main experiment and hundreds more required to put together the greater facility and they cost hundreds of millions of dollars to build.’

PICTURE: DARREN JAMES

‘…in my first three or four years as a young forester I did an awful lot of firefighting . . . fire for me was a constant recurring theme and experience and I enjoyed it.’

THE CF A CHIEF

PICTURE: COURTESY CFA
**QUAN LAU**
BE(Civil) 2012

Since delivering the valedictory speech to her graduating cohort in December 2012, Quan Lau has wasted little time making her civil engineering career. Having landed on her feet at global consultancy AECOM, Quan has been putting what she learnt at the Melbourne School of Engineering into practice – all the while maintaining her extensive volunteer efforts.

“The most exciting thing about my job is working on real projects that will affect real people and enhance the world we live in,” says Quan, reflecting on her position as a graduate engineer at one of the world’s largest engineering firms.

These projects have spanned a diverse range of areas, including climate change flood-risk assessments, integrated water management and model stormwater flows in urban environments. Being exposed to this work has helped Quan work towards her career ambition of “making a meaningful and effective difference to the world” – an ambition also embodied in her volunteer work.

As a student, Quan became involved with the not-for-profit organisation Engineers Without Borders (EWB) via its University of Melbourne chapter, which is made up of students with a dream of combating engineering challenges in developing countries. 

The work of EWB is incredibly meaningful and makes a big impact in the context of the work we do in,” says Quan, who is the regional vice-president for the organisation’s Victorian chapter.

“I believe extreme poverty can be ended in our lifetime and organisations like EWB are part of a global movement working to achieve this goal.”

Quan’s commitment to this goal saw her travel to southern Tamil Nadu as a regional vice-president of EWB, where she worked with partners, including ChildFund, to engage the youth in agricultural activities. It was a great experience and has paid a lot of attention to both.

Since obtaining his accoutancy credentials Purushothaman has been studying. He completed honours in accountancy, an MBA and later a Masters in Applied Finance. Early on he identified what parts of his CV needed attention and sought out roles that filled the gaps – moving from breadth and butter accountancy, to project work, into strategy and later external advisory roles with KPMG. He also landed work on the privatisation of Victoria’s utility industries, valuing gas contracts “to the tune of $1.1 billion”. 

Purushothaman needs experience in a particular area he’ll chase the work regardless of its location. An appetite for complex transactions has landed him to New York and then a 12-month contract working at the management and model stormwater flows in urban environments.

As a consultant you live by your capabilities and you need to be comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty,” he says. 

“Two factors, he says, are key to maintaining a successful career as a consultant – your capabilities and your networks. Purushothaman has held a lot of attention to both.

In the US I went to a lot of industry functions, while in Abu Dhabi I made local connections to extend my network. I think it’s important that you network and that you create opportunities to connect. There is a lot of good work ahead of us,” says the Melbourne lecturer in international relations (MA(Edit&Comm) 2008).

Making a local connection

Moving to a new country to study can be a daunting experience – but University of Melbourne alumni are making it easier for one group of international students.

Each semester, the Welcome to Melbourne program pairs alumni with international students wanting to extend their time in Australia.

‘It was a great night, and a great excuse for a nice mix of people to get together,’ says the Vice-President of the Singapore alumni association, Thomas Danny Jeyaseelan (MAE&Con 2008). The largest event was held in Jakarta, where Dr Avery Poole (BCom 1999, BA(Hons) 2003), a lecturer in international relations from the Faculty of Arts, spoke to an enthusiastic audience.

The University hopes to extend Welcome Home events to more countries in 2015.
Celebration stirs memories and rekindles old friendships

Tales of women’s liberation, famous classmates, post-war history and mischievous antics filled the air at the biggest-ever gathering of the University’s golden alumni – those who graduated 50 or more years ago.

The celebration, held at Wilson Hall in October, attracted more than 420 alumni from across 10 faculties and Parkville and St Andrews campuses.

Chancellor Elizabeth Alexander AM (BCom 1964, St Hilda’s College) hosted, with guest speakers including distinguished alumni Dr James Guest, AO (BSc 1938, MB BS 1941, Trinity College) pictured) and Professor Adrienne Clarke AC (BSc(Hons) 1959, PhD 1965, Janet Clarke Hall).

Professor Clarke’s speech recalled a very different University to that of today, with the 1950s figuring heavily.

One golden reunion attendee who looked back to that time was Mr Patrick identified the key issues and challenges facing the Federal branch of the Australian Labor Party.

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Dogs, dust and long days in the stone country

BY CAMERON RAW

I am sitting with my legs stretched out over bags, veterinary supplies and banana boxes packed with our food for the next two weeks. Ochre dust kicks up from under the wheels and the back door squeaks rhythmically as we round a final corner towards Gunbalanya. Herons crouching around the nearby billabong give us little attention, ever wary of hungry reptilian eyes sitting just above the surface. Injalak and Argulluk hills rise up before us as we enter the settlement and the great stone escarpment stretches off over the horizon, a vast interlude to the surrounding floodplains. While the floodplains are green, it’s July and the middle of the dry season – which is just as well. The only way in or out of here during the wet season is by plane or boat.

For the next two weeks I will be working in a group of eight providing veterinary services to remote Indigenous communities as a part of the Western Arnhem Land Dog Health Program, or WALDHep. Dogs, locally known as durruk, are such an important part of the community in areas such as this, and indeed are part of creation stories concerning the lands surrounding Gunbalanya itself. The human-animal bond is a central part of life here.

For almost 10 years the program has been travelling to this part of the world, and each year the evidence of the impact of the work is profound. As our first week in Gunbalanya ends, we prepare to head out to the associated outstations of Kabulwarnyami, Malgawa, Mannoyi and Gamargawan with our basic but very effective mobile treatment facilities. Days of driving are rough, with around seven hours out to the furthest outstation, crossing rivers, sand stretches and rocks, but this is more than made up for by the immense diversity and beauty of the surrounding stone country.

As a veterinary student it’s something I have wanted to do for almost all my life. To be able to combine my passion for veterinary medicine with work in Indigenous communities to help bring about better health outcomes for both animals and humans has been something I have always hoped to be a part of. The chance to connect with and experience life in a remote Indigenous community is a privilege I will always treasure. Dr Cameron Raw (BVSc 2013) is a veterinarian at the Rochester Veterinary Practice, Rochester, Victoria.
BELIEVE
AUSTRALIA DESERVES A UNIVERSITY EQUAL TO THE BEST IN THE WORLD

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