Connecting online has its rewards.

Did you know that as an alumnus you’re entitled to a range of exclusive benefits?

- Change your perspective on exclusive Director’s tours at the Ian Potter Museum of Art.
- Sharpen your knowledge and enrol in discounted study under the Community Access Program.
- Excite your intellect and attend the Public Lecture Series.
- Consult the experts and browse the University’s range of online journals.
- Kickstart your career via the online job search and networking services.

To know more, visit unimelb.edu.au/alumni/benefits

I enjoy reading about the events and news of the University, even though I am no longer part of that world. There are always opportunities to learn something new or attend entertaining events.’

Alumni eNews reader

By connecting with us, you can take advantage of these and future benefits. Simply:

1. Sign-up for Alumni eNews* and each month we’ll deliver the latest alumni announcements straight to your inbox.
2. Tell us what you’re interested in and we’ll tailor an eNews bulletin to suit you.

Sign-up for Alumni e-News by July 31, 2010 and you’ll go into the draw to win a $1000 travel voucher.

*Available only and free to University of Melbourne alumni.

The Longevity Risk: Word of warning or window of opportunity? Alumni unravel Australia’s latest demographic trends.
Contents

Our Features

1 Letter from the Vice-Chancellor
2 Contributors
3 University Update
6 Alumni Voices
8 Events Calendar
10 Alumni in Conversation: The Longevity Risk
Word of warning or window of opportunity? Alumni unravel Australia’s latest demographic projections.
13 Crusader for Change
14 Visionary People
The Bionic Eye project marks a new era in research.
18 Project Inspiration
Students and alumni in the developing world.
22 Postcards
23 Passing the Stress Test
24 A New Era in Indigenous Programs
Leading the way with greater access to learning.
27 Surveying the past to model a brighter future
28 On the path to excellence
30 Food for Thought
32 Parkville Revisited
34 Class Notes: In Your Words
37 The Last Word

Cover Story:
Alumni in Conversation
p10

Project Inspiration
p18

A New Era in Indigenous Programs
p24

Would you prefer to read Melbourne University Magazine online?
Join the online community by visiting mag.alumni.unimelb.edu.au

Got a passion for the law?
The Melbourne JD cohort of 2010 is bursting at the seams with students who have explored their first passion, who are now studying law to ensure they can really make a difference in their area of speciality. This year’s cohort consists of students that have experience across forty areas of professional life ranging from anthropology to visual effects and video game development.
For more information on the Melbourne JD: The Law Degree for Graduates, see www.law.unimelb.edu.au

The Melbourne University Magazine

Melbourne University

The Last Word

It may not be a common reason for enrolment, but as alumnus Sean Dooley explains, becoming a law student was the best way he could think of to launch a career in comedy.

There are many reasons for doing law at Melbourne Uni: the prestige, the social contacts, the quality of the teaching, being a part of a great academic tradition that goes back to the 1880s. These virtues and many more were repeatedly pointed out to me by parents, teachers and career counsellors—even by other students in my class who were already mapping out their path to the Supreme Court.

But for me, studying law at Melbourne was desirable for one reason only—in this city, it was the traditional route to get into comedy.

It all began at sixteen with a phone call from Mick Molloy who had been two years ahead of me at school. I had been in school plays with Mick and appeared in revue sketches that he had written. He was now at Melbourne University, albeit briefly, and rang up to say that he might get a kick out of seeing a show he was in called the Melbourne Uni Law Revue. Catching the train up from Seaford I was like a country rube gapping slack-jawed at them big buildings and funny looking folk wearing black, but the real revelation was when negotiating a contract that covered my eyes, hiding a look of utter bewilderment as everyone around me bantered knowingly about jurisprudence, mens rea and chambray shirts, which, it turns out, was not the name of a seventeenth-century French jurist.

I was out of my depth but held on with grim determination to my goal of getting into the Law Revue. Trouble was, I failed the audition, I couldn’t believe it. How could quoting TS Eliot while pretending to be a piece of frying bacon be anything but a sure-fire winner? I spent a bleak year flailing about and was about to chuck it all in when, luckily, they brought forward the next year’s revue to fit in with the Comedy Festival. The auditions were held in November, right around exam time, and this time I got in. (I also somehow managed to scrape through first-year law with marks in the low fifties.)

Though I came to know the interior of the theatre department, coffee lounge and neighbouring pubs far better than any lecture theatre, over the years I did begin to find, much to my surprise, that my interest in the law actually grew. I attribute this to the fact that being involved in theatre and comedy opened my eyes to a wider world and generated a hunger to explore it more fully. The latter years of the law course gave the opportunity to do just that and my marks steadily improved year after year. (Notwithstanding the year I got zero for every subject because ‘I forgot’ to sit my exams as I was in a show at The Last Laugh.)

By the end of my degree, I was even at the point of contemplating practising, I decided to give myself two years to see if I could earn a living out of my creativity. Two years and a couple of gigs as a TV writer later, I gave myself another two years. More than a decade on I have not exactly earned from writing comedy what I would have as a lawyer, but I am still doing what my 16-year-old self desperately wanted to do, and when negotiating a contract with a producer or television network, the degree comes in handy—I summon up everything I learnt about law at Melbourne Uni and call a lawyer.

The Melbourne JD cohort of 2010 is bursting at the seams with students who have explored their first passion, who are now studying law to ensure they can really make a difference in their area of speciality. This year’s cohort consists of students that have experience across forty areas of professional life ranging from anthropology to visual effects and video game development.
For more information on the Melbourne JD: The Law Degree for Graduates, see www.law.unimelb.edu.au

Please note:
The Melbourne University Magazine is published bi-monthly, and is distributed to students, staff, alumni, and the community. The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily endorsed by the University.
The University’s Cultural Treasures Day on Sunday November 14 will celebrate the enormous riches contained in the University’s many inherited cultural collections, residing across the campus in many different venues such as the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the Baillieu Library, the University Herbarium, the Grainger Museum and the School of Physics Museum. There will be exhibitions, curators’ talks, tours and special activities for families. Alumni will be specially welcome: for more information, email treasuresdays@unimelb.edu.au

Visitors to the campus will notice significant changes to the shape of the Parkville campus. For our students, among the most important are the new learning spaces which are now popular across campus, including the newly opened Eastern Learning Precinct and the renovated Brownless Library. These innovative spaces were inundated by student use even before their official opening early this year.

It is also an extraordinary time for major infrastructure projects at the University. Over $1.6 billion of capital works for research infrastructure supported by State and Commonwealth funding are underway or soon to start in and around the Parkville campus. These initiatives are part of a strategy that sees the University building an ever closer association with research institutes and hospitals in the Parkville Precinct.

The new projects affirm the place of the Precinct as a world centre for leading edge work in the neurosciences, immunology, life sciences computation and such prestige national projects as the bionic eye program (profiled on page 14.)

At the same time, important new initiatives have begun in research and partnership-building with other communities beyond the campus. One of these is the Murrup Barak Institute for Indigenous Development, which brings together research and teaching expertise from across our faculties and schools to assist indigenous Australia in achieving its deepest aspirations. (For more on our indigenous programs, see page 24.)

2010 marks the half-way point in studies for many of our first-generation Melbourne Model students. Throughout the introduction of the new Model, Melbourne has continued to record one of the highest student retention rates in Australia. At the end of 2010, the first cohort of students will complete Melbourne Model undergraduate degrees.

Many will go on to embrace our new graduate offerings in 2011. At this point the University will shift from a predominantly undergraduate university to becoming a university more evenly balanced between undergraduate and graduate education.

On the alumni front, our engagement program continues to grow with events in most capital cities, several Victorian regional centres and fifteen locations internationally.

Over 9500 alumni attended events in 2009—almost double the previous year. This included over 500 alumni registering for the Festival of Ideas, a sellout Potter Museum tour series and 1500 attendees to A Night at Pompeii at Melbourne Museum. And we have a program of exciting events to inspire you in 2010.

We’ve also finetuned how we communicate with our alumni, including how we stay in touch with you online. You can now tailor our eNews to suit your interests and location to ensure you get the most out of your alumni experience. eNews will keep you informed about the benefits available to University of Melbourne alumni around the world, throughout the year.

You can also read all the articles and features in this and future editions of Melbourne University Magazine online. If you would prefer to receive the online version of MUM, or wish to subscribe to eNews, just submit your email address at alumni-office@unimelb.edu.au

Glyn Davis
Contributors

As well as staff, student and regular contributors, this year the Melbourne University Magazine asked many experienced alumni writers, photographers and artists to contribute to the magazine, creating a publication that is both for and by alumni.

Justin Arter (LLB, BCom 1985)
Justin took the position of CEO for the Victorian Funds Management Corporation in November 2009 after an eighteen-year career with Goldman Sachs JBWere as one of Australia’s leading equity analysts, managing the Australian equities business and management roles in strategy and proprietary trading.

Elizabeth Barnett (Arfine 2005)
Elizabeth is an artist, designer, illustrator and quilt maker. She works in a variety of media including etching, relief, drawing, painting and textiles.

Michael Cross (PGDipFineArt 1998)
Michael is an accomplished artist and illustrator—and he’s got the Corinella certificate to prove it.

Olivia Davis (BA 1991)
Olivia works in dispute resolution and as a freelance writer and editor. She has contributed to The Age and Sydney Morning Herald newspapers and has had poems and short stories published in several literary journals and anthologies.

Oslo Davis

Sean Dooley (BA (Hons), LLB (Hons) 1996)
Having worked as a writer for numerous television comedies (Full Frontal, Comedy Inc, Spicks and Specks), Sean Dooley has yet to use his law degree (much to the relief of potential clients). His third book, Cooking with Baz, was published in 2009 and he is currently editor of Wingspan magazine.

Ellaine Downie (MVisArt 1986)
Ellaine is a secondary teacher, freelance journalist and a trained audiologist.

Eamon Gallagher (BSc (BEd) 1990)
Eamon discovered photography while studying to be a geography and science teacher. For the past fifteen years he has worked as a photographer for Australian and international newspapers and magazines including Good Weekend, The Bulletin, and Baw.

Will Gourlay (BA, BCom 1990)
Since graduating from the University of Melbourne, Will has travelled extensively in Europe and the Middle East working as an editor, writer and teacher in Melbourne, Spain, Turkey and London. His writing has appeared in The Age, The Australian, Quadrant and Bookseller & Publisher.

Dave Hockin (BA 1997, BPT 2002)
Dave has written for The Big Issue, Australian Book Review and Medical Observer. His short films have screened at festivals around the world, and his short fiction has been published in Doctor Who Short Trips Transmissions and Midnight Echo.

Sonia Kretschmar (MVisArt and TV 2003)
Illustrator Sonia Kretschmar originally wanted to be a graphic designer but launched herself as an illustrator after returning from a trip to Europe brim full of ideas. Her work has appeared in The Australian, Good Weekend and The Law Institute Journal.

Amy Little
Amy Little has worked in communications in London and Melbourne, and now works as a Marketing Manager for the Melbourne Law School. Amy also works on assignments for a freelance photographer editing, researching and developing articles.
Congratulations to alumna Professor Elizabeth Blackburn AC (BSc (Hons) 1970, MSc 1972), the first Australian woman to win a Nobel Prize. Professor Blackburn and her US-based colleagues Carol Greider and Jack Szostak were jointly awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize for Medicine, for solving a major problem in biology: how chromosomes can be copied during cell divisions and how they are protected by telomeres. Understanding of the role of the telomeres and the enzyme that forms them, telomerase, could assist in the development of new cancer-fighting drugs and lead to greater understanding of human ageing.

In March 2010, Professor Blackburn visited Melbourne to speak about her work from both a research and personal perspective. She acknowledged the difficulty for women in research combining family and work, but noted that a future that does not support women in research ‘has social and economic repercussions.’

In reference to her success, she noted that a career is played out over decades, and that it is important to invest in the bigger picture … and be cautious about interpreting data!

A former Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Sir Edward Woodward (LLB 1949, LLM 1950, LL.D 2001), died in April, aged 81 years.

Sir Edward's association with the University began more than sixty years ago as a student and included chairing a curriculum review in the Law Faculty and two terms, totalling eighteen years, as a member of the University of Melbourne, culminating in eleven years as Chancellor. His contributions to our wider society were no less significant.

Graduating from the University with a Bachelor and a Master of Laws, he rose from barrister to Queen’s Counsel to judge in an illustrious legal career. As a barrister, he played a pioneering role in the fight for Aboriginal land rights in the 1960s and 1970s.

Sir Edward sat on seventeen Royal Commissions, and served as President of the Trade Practices Tribunal, a Justice of the Federal Court of Australia, and Director-General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation.

He will also be remembered as passionate supporter of the University cricket club. His autobiography, One Brief Interval, was published by Melbourne University Press in 2005.

Your generosity towards the 2009 University Fund Annual Appeal meant that over $1 million was raised to support students in the long and short term. In real terms, this means that the best and brightest students can continue to study at the University regardless of their circumstances, and that the University's faculties, research, libraries and cultural collections will continue to enrich students in future generations.
**IBM partnership with the University of Melbourne**

A life sciences partnership between IBM and the University is set to accelerate research into treatments for cancer, epilepsy, Alzheimer’s and other serious diseases. The partnership will dramatically boost the research and computing capabilities of the University-led Victorian Life Sciences Computation Initiative (VLSCI). Based in Parkville, it will be the first IBM research collaboratory in the southern hemisphere and the first IBM life sciences collaboratory in the world.

The partnership will enable thousands of life sciences and medical researchers in Melbourne to work with computational biology experts. It will also provide access to high-performance computing, such as IBM’s Blue Gene supercomputer, to study human disease. Scientists will be able to access results and information that would normally take years to obtain in just a few days. The Victorian government and the University established the $100 million VLSCI in 2006 to strengthen the research capabilities of Victorian life scientists.

**Top of the class: Academy roles for Melbourne University education experts**

Leading Melbourne University education experts have been elected to head two prestigious Australian academies. 

Australia’s four learned academies are non-government organisations made up of the country’s best and brightest minds, and Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) professors Barry McGaw and Joseph Lo Bianco AM (MA 1986) have claimed the presidencies of two of them.

Professor McGaw, who is also Chair of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, was elected President of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, which unites leading scholars from all disciplines of the social sciences.

“What the academies add are multidisciplinary views on research and policy issues,” Professor McGaw says. Professor Lo Bianco, MGSE Chair of Language and Literacy Education and Associate Dean (Global Engagement), was elected President of the Australian Academy of Humanities.

The academies, which also represent science, technological sciences and engineering, provide independent advice on national issues.

Professors Barry McGaw (left) and Joseph Lo Bianco (right).

**What’s for dinner?**

The Welcome to Melbourne program aims to enhance international scholarship students’ experiences of Melbourne by pairing them with an alumnus host for a meal. Sylvie MacBean (BA 2005) volunteered in 2009. “The experience gave me new friends and confidence to meet new people,” she said. Her guest, Ben, said he felt more confident meeting local students after learning about Melbourne culture through Sylvie. Since

meeting Sylvie through the program, Ben said he felt closer to Australia and ‘part of this community.’

Get involved by visiting www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/welcometomelbourne
Battling climate change with a laser beam

University of Melbourne researchers are using groundbreaking laser technology to measure and slash greenhouse gas emissions from Australian cattle farms. Led by Associate Professor Deli Chen (PhD 1996) from the Melbourne School of Land and Environment, the team is the first in Australia to accurately measure livestock emissions using open path laser and Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy systems. Results show the average methane emission is much lower than estimates currently used in Australia, but the average ammonia emission is substantially higher.

Assoc. Prof. Chen says ‘you can only find ways to reduce greenhouse gases if you can reliably measure them’.

By sending a beam of light through the air, scientists can measure concentrations of methane, nitrous oxide and ammonia in the atmosphere. The beams are bounced back from a reflector and the particles in that area detected. Emissions are then calculated using a computer model to work out the origin of particles in the air.

The work has spurred new research into the use of inhibitors that can be applied to manure and soil to reduce emissions. Preliminary results indicate emissions can be reduced by up to 80 per cent and the efficiency of nitrogen fertilisers significantly improved.

Dr Zoe Loh measuring methane and ammonia emissions from a feedlot using open path lasers.

Vet Science students in remote Australia

A University program boosting the health of canines in western Arnhem Land, ‘dog dreaming’ country, has been recognised with a Vice-Chancellor’s Knowledge Transfer Excellence Award. The Western Arnhem Land Dog Health Program, founded by Dr Elizabeth Tudor, sees vet science students travel to remote communities to provide culturally appropriate veterinary care. Dr Ben Kaye (BVSc 2009) (pictured) performs surgery on a dog at Gumnarringga outstation. Ben says he felt fortunate to experience ‘the extraordinary and probably spiritual interaction between the indigenous community and their dogs’.

Go further, faster.

Melbourne Graduate Schools

The University of Melbourne continues to break new ground with the introduction of Australia’s first comprehensive graduate schools. This innovative curriculum aligns Melbourne’s programs with the very best US, European and Asian higher education models, and ensures that all our students graduate with a truly world-class, highly transportable qualification.

With over 340 professional entry and professional development masters programs across all fields of study, Melbourne Graduate Schools are the head start you’ll need to meet all your career aspirations.

Visit us on Open Day, Sunday 15 August 2010, or see our graduate schools for more information.

www.unimelb.edu.au

Melbourne University
Magazine 5
THE SWIMMING CLUB
BY HANNIE RAYSON
Alumni Voices

University of Melbourne alumni continue to make a significant contribution to Australia’s cultural and intellectual identity. Here we feature just a small selection of the most recent and forthcoming books, music, performances and exhibitions from alumni in Australia and around the world.

Books

**HISTORY**

_Killing: Misadventures in Violence_ by Jeff Spivak (MUP 2009)

Jeff Spivak (BA 1989, BA (Hons) 1990) explores the nature of violence, asking the important question about how ordinary people learn to take a human life?

_Cubism & Australian Art_ by Lesley Harding and Sue Cramer (The Miegunyah Press 2009)

Lesley Harding (BA 1989, BA (Hons) 1990, PGdipArts (CurSt) 1994, MA (FineArts) 1998) and colleague Sue Cramer have created a beautiful accompaniment to their stunning exhibition _Cubism and Australian Art_ at Heide Museum of Modern Art.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

_Cooking With Baz_ by Sean Dooley (Allen & Unwin 2009)

Sean Dooley (LLB (Hons), BA (Hons) 1996) writes about getting to know his father by cooking with and for him as he struggled with cancer.

_The Danger Game_ by Kalinda Ashton (Hardie Grant Books 2009)

Kalinda Ashton’s (BA (Hons) 2002) debut novel _The Danger Game_ beautifully describes the impact of living in a damaged family.

_A Darker Music_ by Maris Morton (Scribe 2010)

Maris Morton’s (BA 1959) first novel recently won the inaugural CAL Scribe Fiction Prize. Due for publication in October, it is the first novel for the author, now in her seventies.

**YOUNG ADULT FICTION**

_Pink_ by Lili Wilkinson (Allen & Unwin 2009)

The latest novel by young author Lili Wilkinson (BCA 2002, BCA (Hons) 2004), _Pink_ is the story of a group of teenagers grappling with friendships, relationships and growing up.

Food

_Little Kitchen_ by Sabrina Parrini (Hardie Grant Books 2009)

Sabrina Parrini (BA 2002) has created a delightful cookbook aimed at children. Using the recipes honed in her cooking school of the same name, Parrini has also created a range of cookware designed for little hands.

**POLITICS**


Dr Madeline Grey’s (BA (Hons) 1989, MA 1992, PhD 2005) fascinating book brings to life the stories of many of the women who have entered Victorian politics in the last twenty-five years.

**LAW**


Lee Godden (BA (Hons) 1979, MA 1982) and Jacqueline Peel’s (PhD Law 2007) in-depth book is designed to explain environmental law in Australia through a variety of disciplines and case studies.

Screen

“Jonathan auf der Heide (BHT 2007) directed, wrote and produced the acclaimed film _Van Diemen’s Land_. He worked with producer Maggie Miles (pgdpdipt (Prod) 2007) and leading actor Oscar Redding (gdipAnimat 2004).

Stephen Curtain’s (_Bett 1995_) _Winter Dreaming_ is a record of the Australian Alps in winter, capturing this unique environment at its most astonishing.

The Sundance Film Festival Shorts Jury awarded Young Love by Ariel Kleiman (VCA graduating student) an Honorable Mention in Short Filmmaking.

Exhibitions

_Cubism & Australian Art_ at Heide Museum of Modern Art was curated by Lesley Harding and Sue Cramer (see accompanying book above).

Oscar-winner director and writer Adam Elliot (gdipdipt 1997) has developed an exhibition in collaboration with ACMi for his film _Mary and Max_.

From June 23, Amber Wallis (pgdpVisArt 2007, MVArst 2009), Andy Hutson (pgdpVisArt 2007, MVisArt 2009), Dane Lovett (MVisArts (Hons) 2007), Linda Tegg (MVisArts 2009), Lucy Griggs (pgdpVisArt 2006, MVisArt 2007) and Nicola Page (gdipEd 2005, pgdpVisArt 2007, MVisArt 2009) will all show their work as part of Worm Mountain, an exhibition of emerging artists at CG Contemporary Art Space.

If, like some of these contributors, you are a higher-degree art history or philosophy graduate, be sure to attend this year’s reunions.

For more information, contact Tamsin Courtney on +61 3 8344 8985 or tamsinc@unimelb.edu.au.

Photo: Chase & Galley
Events Calendar

Below are some highlights from the University’s alumni events calendar. We look forward to your participation in these upcoming lectures, tours, exhibitions and reunions in Australia and around the globe.

**Lecture: Your Personal Genome: For All to See?**

FRIDAY 16 JULY | 2:00–5:00 PM
Sunderland Lecture Theatre, corner Grattan St and Royal Pde, Parkville

Join alumnus Professor Jeffrey Zajac, Head of Department of Medicine, Austin Health and Northern Health, at the annual ethics seminar to discuss the economic, social and political implications of genetic testing.

Cost: Free
Further information: +61 3 8344 9800 or mdhs-rsvp@unimelb.edu.au

**Forum: Conversation at Masani with Alumnus Andrew Bassat (BSc 1986, MBA 1994)**

THURSDAY 22 JULY | 6:00 PM
Masani Restaurant, 313 Drummond St, Carlton

Join fellow alumni for sumptuous Italian cuisine and stimulating conversation led by the CEO and co-founder of SEEK, Australia’s leader in online employment and education services.

Cost: $25 for alumni
RSVP: online at www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/masani or call +61 3 8344 1746 for further details

**Networking: University of Melbourne Leadership Series**

JULY
Singapore, Beijing, Shanghai, Melbourne

This global initiative is designed to help alumni in the early stages of their career to develop insights into the skills essential for aspiring leaders. The series reveals the secrets of successful leaders and the steps you need to take to progress your career.

RSVP: online at www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/leaderships series or call +61 3 8344 1746 for further details

**Exhibition: Exclusive Alumni Event: Melbourne Museum’s Family Fun Day**

SUNDAY 1 AUGUST | 8.00–10.00 AM
Melbourne Museum, Nicholson St, Carlton

Spend Sunday with your family, discovering dinosaurs, mega fauna and other contemporary critters at the exclusive opening of the Science and Life Gallery. Experts will provide commentary on displays including fossils, animatronics and live animals, sharing their knowledge of dramatic events that shaped the past 600 million years in Victoria.

Cost: Free for alumni and their families
RSVP: online at www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/museum or call +61 3 8344 1746

For your full calendar visit alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/events/calendar
For all public University events go to www.events.unimelb.edu.au
Reunion: 2010 Alumni Reunions

Throughout 2010
Various Locations

Reunion: 2010 Alumni Reunions

Where are your university classmates now? The University of Melbourne is holding over forty alumni reunions in 2010—and we want you to be involved! Check the calendar to see when your reunion is coming up.

Further information: online at unimelb.edu.au/alumni/reunions/reunions.html or call Charity Bramwell on +61 3 8344 1764

Careers: International Virtual Careers Fair

16–25 August | 10.00–5.00 PM

Make your next career move at this interactive event. Use specialised webcam, audio and text software to network with international industry leaders looking to recruit Australian university graduates and undergraduates.

asvp: online at www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/ivef2010

Art: Director’s Tours of the Potter for Alumni: Basil Sellers Art Prize

Thursday 16 September | 6.00 PM
The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Swanston St, Parkville

Join Director Chris McAuliffe for an exclusive tour of the dynamic artworks short-listed for the second biannual prize, which encourages artists to critically reflect on Australia’s fascination with sport. Conclude with fine wine and cheese among the works.

Cost: Free for alumni and friends
asvp: online at www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/potter or call +61 3 8344 1746 for further details
Image: David Bay, Second 2008, porcelain, underglaze and lustre, 20 x 35 x 8 cm
Photo: Shannon McGrath

Symposium: Untold Stories: Hidden Histories of War Crimes Trials

15–16 October | 10.00–5.00 PM

Attend a two-day international symposium to uncover and explore some of the lesser known war crimes trials, both international and domestic. There will be papers on the war crimes trials held in Bangladesh after the secession, the recent genocide trial in Ethiopia and on the post-war trials under Australian jurisdiction in the Far East.

Further information: online at www.law.unimelb.edu.au

Art: Faculty of the Victorian College of Arts and Music Masters Exhibition

December (TBC) | Tues–Sat 12.00–5.00 PM
Margaret Lawrence Gallery, 40 Dodds St, Southbank

Take the opportunity to preview exciting works by Australia’s emerging artists in a show of ambitious creations from the Master of Visual Art and Master of Fine Art programs.

Cost: Free for alumni and friends
No bookings required
Further information: +61 3 9685 9400
Image: Kotoe Ishii (brineArt 2006, brineArt (Hons) 2007), Master of Fine Art, Sprouts, DVD video, 20 seconds, looped
Alumni in Conversation: The Longevity Risk

Word of warning or window of opportunity? MUM invited six alumni to consider the challenges and possibilities of our ageing population.
Our panel

1. John Daley (BSc 1987, LLB (Hons) 1989) is one of Australia’s leading strategists and is the CEO of the recently established policy research centre the Grattan Institute. His varied background includes roles in law, finance, education, worker’s compensation and academia.

2. Briony Dow (BSW 1981) is the Director of Preventative and Public Health at the National Ageing Research Institute. Her research interests include carer support, older persons mental health, health service evaluation, elder abuse and aged-care workforce.

3. Chris Leptos (BCom 1980, MBA 1991) is a partner with KPMG. His previous roles include general manager of corporate development with Western Mining Corporation. He is also a volunteer firefighter. In 2000 Chris was awarded an Order of Australia for his work on the sustainability of the global mining sector.

4. Buck Rosenberg (PHD 2008) recently completed a PhD in anthropology in the areas of home culture and theory of lifestyle. He is currently researching lifestyle of the ageing and retirement.

5. Rebecca Russell (BSc, BE (Hons) 2002, MBA 2009) is a civil (structural) engineer and mathematician who currently works with Boston Consulting Group. She is on the board of Engineers Without Borders.

Ellaine Downie, facilitator, is a secondary teacher and freelance journalist with a vested interest in being employed into her dotage.

Ellaine Downie (Facilitator): Briony, you work at the National Ageing Research Institute. How do you see Australia’s ageing population impacting the health budget?

Briony Dow: Hopefully we won’t spend all the health budget by building lots of residential aged-care facilities that are never going to be needed beyond a certain point, but rather on ways to help people manage chronic disease and on disease prevention. However, we should see this as a medium-term problem. We will need to spend more money on health, but only for a brief period.

Ellaine: We should see this as a transition period rather than a ‘crisis’?

Chris Leptos: I think the notion that this is a crisis is deeply wrong headed! This is the biggest marketing and business opportunity that’s landed on us in a generation.

Buck Rosenberg: Do you mean like building age-specific gyms for the over fifties? Most of the older people I’ve been interviewing prefer not to have to get on an exercise machine beside someone in their twenties. And they’d be willing to pay for these specialised clubs.

Chris: We’ve got this untapped sector. The Commonwealth is projecting 12,000 centenarians by the year 2050 who will be alive and active. And people call it a ‘crisis’?

Ellaine: Chris, what opportunities do you as a business man see as a result of a larger pool of older people in our society?

Chris: Universities could be where there is the next boom business. Forget building aged-care facilities—that’s not a boom business. I think education in the age of the centenarian is going to be a boom business.

Ellaine: You want to live to 100?

Chris: Yes, definitely, although the odds are against me. My 12-year-old son, however, has a life expectancy of eighty-eight, but with a couple of medical breakthroughs he’ll live to 100. This will change the way we think about university education. Undergraduates won’t just be under twenty—one anymore: if you live to 100 you could be an undergraduate at the age of sixty.

Buck: As far as education for older people goes, there could be more courses targeted towards education as leisure.

John Daley: Or interest.

Buck: Or learning for a particular career change, perhaps, like my mum, who re-trained and started nursing when she was forty.

Briony: My brother is a builder and at forty-five he went back to TAFE and did a Certificate in Residential Care and then went into that field. He then studied for an arts degree.

Chris: Yes, transition courses would become the norm. If we look at universities today, they generally don’t do career transitions. But once you start planning to live to well-over 100, you do things very differently.

The notion that at thirty to forty you work maybe eighty to 100 hours a week to accumulate wealth and then coast downhill is an old-fashioned way of thinking. You are never going to make 100 if that’s your plan.

Ellaine: Because you will have killed yourself long before you get there?

Chris: Yes, because you haven’t paced yourself. You haven’t thought about multiple careers over a long lifetime. Indeed, this could in turn produce an accelerated career for younger people.

They won’t have to wait until they are forty-five to get into whatever exalted status they want. It will happen because the people in front of them will be doing other things, like working a little bit, running their own business, going back to study.

These older people will not feel threatened by younger ones but will be more prepared to mentor young people in the workplace because, with a different mindset, they won’t have to fight to hold onto their jobs.

Ellaine: But, despite anti-ageing discrimination laws, older people are not being taken on or kept on by employers. What incentives do employers need to change their thinking?

Rebecca Russell: One real disincentive is tenure-based employment, which has regular increases in remuneration that significantly impact on their willingness to keep on older employees.

Briony: Another thing would be to remove some disincentives. For example, if you are on any kind of pension, once you start earning even small amounts, you lose your pension.

“We’ve been trying to achieve a longer life for so long, but when we get there, they call it a “longevity risk”!”

Chris Leptos
John: The challenge of change is one of the tough questions to think through, particularly because it requires you to act in a long way in advance. When a problem is right in front of you it’s pretty easy to deal with, but when you need to change ‘x’ so that such and such doesn’t happen in fifteen–years time, that’s much harder.

Rebecca: There have been some studies done by the Oxford Institute of Ageing that indicate an older workforce has an enormous amount to give but definitely want to change the way they work.

John: There are certainly people wanting to move into low–pressure, lesser–paid jobs. They may have spent thirty to forty years working and already built an asset base. The problem is that in highly regulated environments the rules are that you are never allowed to have a lower salary than you had yesterday. Consequently, it’s very hard for an employee to move into the kind of role they want to do in a way that would be productive for the employer.

Ellaine: But what if a person says, ‘I’d be happy with two–thirds of my wage if I only have to work two–thirds of the time’?

John: It’s a difficult problem because there’s very good reasons why we have laws that say that you can’t pay me tomorrow less than what you paid me today.

Chris: I don’t think it’s really a difficult thing. This is really a tax–driven issue. It comes from what is called the ‘Monday to Friday scheme’, where on Friday you were an employee, then you take a big redundancy (which is tax effective) and turn up on Monday as a contractor. Then they say, ‘for tax reasons’ it can’t be done. But why don’t we just say, it can be done!

Buck: Speaking of part–time work for older people, when I was in Brisbane last year, virtually every bus I got on had posters of a grey–haired 65–year–old woman in a bus uniform, advertising jobs as bus drivers. Apparently they wanted to fill the peak–hour needs with bus drivers doing a two to three hour shift.

I guess it was a good thing that there were jobs available for older people but problems could be created if people over sixty–five are just herded into these part–time jobs out of necessity.

John: I wonder if the low retirement age is a disincentive. There’s a lot to be said for thinking about lifting the retirement age significantly.

Rebecca: Speaking of retirement, one of the interesting dynamics we’ve seen at Engineers Without Borders is that there is a whole generation of baby boomers retiring in their sixties and then spending time giving back to our organisation. We’ve seen highly skilled technical engineers and managers or previous CEOs pairing up and voluntarily mentoring young graduates. Together they are providing amazing solutions to communities in need.

Briony: But that is what we all need, isn’t it? To have meaningful activity and feel that we are making a contribution—it’s part of what makes life worth living. I think one of the main barriers to employing older people is ageism. When you’re older, you’re on the scrap heap with nothing to offer.

I hope that one of the good things to come out of having a bigger pool of older people will be that we will get more cross–generational engagement. A lot of younger people don’t have a lot to do with older people and I think that contributes to them holding negative views.

John: We need to think carefully about the kinds of policies that encourage social connections as distinct from discouraging it. Otherwise, there is a danger that we will wind up with a segregated population and start to see real cleavages through society based on which side of the retirement age you are on.

Chris: Well I’m a fan of making the retirement age 110! That would be an incentive. If you can’t get the pension till 110 you must start thinking about what that means for your whole life.

Ellaine: Thanks Chris, and thank you everyone for a stimulating conversation.

i Dunstan, B. ‘Clarity sought on plans’, Australian Financial Review, 15 March 2010, p. 45

To read a full transcript visit mag.alumni.unimelb.edu.au

The reinvention of retirement

The Australian economy is experiencing a cultural shift as baby boomer decide to prolong their retirement and stay in the workforce. Researchers Associate Professor Leisa Sargent and Paul Evans from the Department of Management and Marketing explore this further in Re-invention of Retirement: A study of baby boomer managers in Australia and Canada, and are seeking Australian baby boomer professionals to participate in their study.

To participate in this research, please contact Paul Evans on +61 3 8344 7083 or via email evansp@unimelb.edu.au
Crusader for Change

Since alumnus and advocate for youth mental health reform Professor Patrick McGorry was awarded Australian of the Year, Australian mental health services have come under the microscope.
By Amy Little.

Until recently, the community has not understood what a mental health problem is,' says Professor Patrick McGorry (MD 2003). 'Mental health literacy leads on to mental health first aid. It's about knowing what to do with people who have emerging mental disorders and ensuring they get the help they need.'

Professor McGorry, who completed his Doctorate of Medicine at the University of Melbourne in 2003, has been lobbying the federal government to shift mental health services from hospitals to community-based facilities. He said the sector had suffered enormously since being moved out of 'asylums' and into hospitals in the 1990s.

'The pie is far too small,' says Professor McGorry, who wants the federal government to commit at least $200 million in new services this year. 'A complete overhaul of the system is needed so that resources are directed where they are needed most, there are improvements in mental health literacy among Australians and we have a workforce that has the skills and motivation to help implement this reform.'

It was while Professor McGorry was studying for his undergraduate degree in Sydney that he was first attracted to working in mental health.

'I saw that there was a huge disparity between reality and what was possible,' he says. 'The early 1970s was a time of radical change with an anti-psychiatry movement gaining momentum and a number of social causes of mental illness, such as drugs and alcohol, becoming more influential.'

'I began to understand that there was serious neglect of people with mental health disorders, particularly psychotic and severe mood disorders, which could be improved through a preventative approach.'

Professor McGorry grew up in Newcastle and later returned as a registrar at the Royal Newcastle Hospital in 1980. He then moved to Melbourne and founded Orygen Youth Health's Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre (EPPIC) in 1992, which has gone on to influence health services worldwide.

'I guess in many ways the expansion of EPPIC was a turning point in my career,' says the father of three children. 'It was also a really crucial step for psychosis treatment on a global level.'

Professor McGorry is also Director of the National Youth Mental Health Foundation (Headspace) and says the foundation has helped create much-needed awareness of youth mental health issues in the community.

'Headspace has been a ground-breaking initiative and thousands of young people have been assisted through our thirty newly established Headspace centres across Australia,' says Professor McGorry.

'However, there is a need for sixty new centres to provide mental health, education, employment and drug and alcohol services to a much larger population of young people.'

A six-month stint in Ireland in 2009 showed Professor McGorry that it is possible to build an effective mental health network.

'Ireland's system is more limited but the communities are more cohesive,' he says.

Professor McGorry hopes to continue to use his Australian of the Year title as a platform to progress the mental health reform agenda, and says his return to Melbourne from the Emerald Isle has brought a renewed commitment to developing an accessible system of mental health care.

'Some solutions are very simple,' says Professor McGorry. 'Ultimately it is about intervening young people at the earliest point when treatments are most likely to be effective.'

Professor McGorry is working to progress youth mental health reform nationally and internationally in partnership with other research and treatment centres.

Illustration: Michael Cross
A bionic eye was once an idea mooted only in science fiction, but thanks to a new research partnership led by the University of Melbourne, the dream of restoring vision will soon become a reality. Alumna Justine Costigan reports.

If you’re blessed with perfect vision or are simply too young to have experienced the inevitable degeneration of sight that accompanies ageing, it may be hard to imagine the impact of gradually losing one of the senses fundamental to both independence and the enjoyment of so many pleasures in life.

Imagine living life permanently at dusk, with just the barest hint of light or shape, or gradually having your sight reduced to tunnel vision so you can only see a tiny fraction of the world around you. This is the experience of people living with macular degeneration or retinitis pigmentosa.

Despite all the conditions that cause vision impairment, people living with these diseases may soon have a change in fortune. Thanks to Bionic Vision Australia (bva), a new research partnership led by the University of Melbourne, partial restoration of sight is about to become a reality.

The word bionic is a merger of two words—biological and electronic—but for anyone watching television during the 1970s it will forever be linked to the show *The Six Million Dollar Man* and its spin-off *The Bionic Woman*. In both these programs the main characters were implanted with bionics that transformed them into people with superhuman abilities.

‘In the popular imagination this is how people think of bionics,’ says a smiling Professor Tony Burkitt, Director of bva and Chair of Bio-Signals and Bio-Systems in the School of Engineering. ‘They associate it with augmentation, but in medical bionics we hope to restore neural function to something like what it was before for patients who have lost the function of some particular part of their nervous system due to damage or degeneration.’

In the case of a bionic eye, this means giving people with very reduced vision a greater ability to differentiate between light and dark and to possibly see large objects, with the aim of restoring mobility and independence. While this version of the bionic eye will move into clinical trials soon, bva is already working on a second-generation implant.

‘It will be a two-stage process,’ says Professor Burkitt. ‘Stage one will involve clinical trials using a wide-view neurostimulator to provide sufficient vision to give them back mobility. Stage two will move to a higher acuity neurostimulator that will allow people to recognise faces and large print.’

Even with clinical trials more than twelve months away, there has already been huge public interest. As soon as word began to spread, Professor Robyn Guymear, Head of the Macular Research Unit at the Centre for Eye Research Australia and a member of the bva team, started hearing from people keen to take part. ‘I get one or two emails a week from people who have poor vision,’ she says, ‘and I’ve already started compiling a list of possible participants [for the clinical trial]. But we also want people with advanced retinal diseases to come forward.

**Despite all the conditions that cause vision impairment, people living with these diseases may soon have a change in fortune.**
now in order that we can learn more about their current circumstances, so we’ll be contacting patient groups to let them know about research projects that will start this year. This early work will help us start assessing patients to find the most suitable subjects.’

Interest in bva’s research should come as no surprise. Macular degeneration is the predominant cause of visual impairment among people over sixty-five in Western countries and it is responsible for 48 per cent of all legal blindness in Australia. Currently costing Australia $2.6 billion each year, this figure is forecast to grow to $6.5 billion by 2025.

Retinitis pigmentosa is often even more devastating. Another degenerative retinal condition, it affects 1.5 million people worldwide and generally occurs in a younger age group, resulting in costs that are 2.5 times those of age-related macular degeneration: the lifetime cost of a patient with retinitis pigmentosa is estimated at $34 million.

Investment and interest in bionic eye research clearly makes sense. Not only does it have the potential to help millions of people around the world, a bionic eye will also reap huge financial rewards for the company that successfully takes it to market. That’s why research teams in the USA, Europe and Japan are also currently working on a version of the bionic eye, with clinical trials in the US already underway. Professor Burkitt is not fazed by the competition: ‘It’s not a case of being the first to develop the implant, but who can design an implant that will do the job best. We have the team of experts to compete with anyone in the world.’

Initially raised as an idea at Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s Australia 2020 Summit in 2008, BVA is one of nine projects funded by the federal government as a result of the summit. BVA chairman Professor David Penington says the $42 million allocated to the project over four years will allow the bva team to really test the technology and the research. ‘In four years it won't be ready for production,’ he says, ‘but if we’ve solved the technical issues we will be able to attract funding from venture capitalists. But it’s a long track.’

Professor Penington speaks from experience. Like many of the BVA team, he was involved in the development of the cochlear implant and while he says the bionic eye technology is much more complex, ‘they also said the cochlear implant was impossible.’

While the technology may be different, Professor Burkitt says a similar multidisciplinary approach—using biomedical engineers, clinical experts and neuroscientists—could have similar success in the development of a bionic eye.

Professor Steven Prawer from the University of Melbourne is one of the experts Professor Burkitt is

The bionic eye: how it works

The bionic eye will consist of an implant on or near the retina, designed to stimulate target neurons (nerve cells) within the middle and inner retinal layers, replacing damaged or degenerated photoreceptors (which help us interpret information and surroundings from visible light reaching the eye).

The patient will wear glasses that enclose a miniature video camera, which will capture visual images, process and transmit them wirelessly by a radio frequency link to the implant, creating sight.

*Image courtesy of Bionic Vision Australia*
relying on to help make the project a success. Head of the University’s Materials Institute, he and his team are focused on finding the right materials for the project. ‘Making sure the materials are biocompatible and robust is crucial,’ he says, ‘but we’ve already done enough to know we have the tools, we just need to do the work.’ This work includes growing polycrystalline diamond into the shape of tiny spikes that will be used to stimulate the retina.

Like so many of the experts involved in the project, Professor Prawer is confident he will achieve his goal. ‘The real challenge with this project is not the technology but making sure all the people involved work effectively together.’

Careful management of the project, including regular meetings with the whole BVA team, which incorporates the University of New South Wales, the University of Western Sydney, the Australian National University, the Centre for Eye Research Australia, the Bionic Ear Institute and National ICT Australia, will be crucial to the project’s success and will set the benchmark for future collaborative projects of this type and scale.

Like the Bionic Ear project before it, Professor Burkitt hopes the current project will also be an opportunity for the next generation of scientists to learn and receive world-class training in medical bionics. ‘It’s good to give these opportunities to the next generation,’ he says. ‘I benefited from the experience with the cochlear implant and it’s an important part of the project to make sure these skills are passed on.’

PhD students Samantha Lichter and Emily O’Brien are just two of the many students working on the BVA project and each hopes their work will contribute positively to it. Lichter, currently working on designing a hermetic seal for the electronics in the implant, says her work is ‘a critical piece of the puzzle. If it isn’t done quite right the device will fail. I’m hoping I will be able to suggest a good option, something that is really useful to the design.’ O’Brien says her work modelling the stimulation of the retina will become more important once the device is implanted.

The excitement expressed by these two students is typical of everyone involved with the project. As well as a unique collaborative project and an exciting technical and clinical challenge, at the heart of BVA is the understanding that success will bring real change to millions.

‘I want to look someone in the eye,’ says Professor Prawer, ‘and know that they can see me because of a piece of my technology. That will be the most amazing thrill you can get.’

---

**Prime Minister launches BVA**

Bionic Vision Australia was officially launched by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd at a ceremony held at the University of Melbourne, during which consortium unveiled its prototype device; a wide-view neurostimulator concept that the Prime Minister described as ‘one of the most important medical advances we see in our lifetime’. To watch a video of the launch, visit live.unimelb.edu.au/episode/bionic-vision-australia-launch

To hear more from members of BVA and see how Bionic Eye will improve the lives of those who use it, visit the *Visions* website to stream the vodcast at visions.unimelb.edu.au/episode/86

*Photo: Prime Minister Kevin Rudd launching Bionic Vision Australia, 2010.*

---

**Experts see the light**

Experts believe that with a large number of electrodes, patients can learn to walk unassisted and recognise faces of loved ones. Want to know more? Visit the Up Close website, to hear the University’s Dr Shane Huntington put it to the experts, and discuss how neural interfaces are being used to give hope to individuals who once only had minimal prospects of interacting with the external world. Download the podcast at upclose.unimelb.edu.au/episode/251
Project Inspiration

Whether they are University of Melbourne Master of Development Studies graduates or they are using their skills in architecture, communications or economics, the opportunity to make a difference to people’s lives continues to draw alumni to careers in development. Alumnus Dave Hoskin reports.
Movies tell us stories, and one night they told Laura Spano (BA 2008, DipML (French), BA (Hons) 2009) a story called Hotel Rwanda. Laura wasn’t expecting that story to change her life. She’d only just returned from fifteen months living in Canada and was mainly watching the movie to beat her jet lag. However, two hours later, Laura began to google. She’d been planning to do an international internship, and the next morning she told her parents she was going to Rwanda.

Standing in a reconciliation village in Rwanda eight months later, Laura heard a different kind of story. She was speaking to a tall, kindly man who looked straight into her eyes as he told her how he’d killed six people with a machete. It was a shocking confession, but the truly extraordinary thing was that the man was not alone: next to him stood a woman, and she identified herself as the mother of the six people he had murdered.

Reconciliation villages are communities in which both the survivors and the perpetrators of the genocide live side by side, a living demonstration that Rwandans could coexist in a spirit of forgiveness. Laura knew that high-minded ideas like this didn’t always match reality, but earlier that day she’d seen the man and the woman laughing together. At one point they’d even shared a friendly embrace. As far as she could tell, this remarkable woman really had forgiven the murderer of her children and was now his next-door neighbour. When Laura later wrote about her experiences she singled out this woman’s story as something that gave her hope.

After returning to Melbourne University, Laura created an internship with Never Again Rwanda (NAR) for twenty-five of her fellow students. ‘NAR is a local human rights organisation that aims to prevent genocide ideology and promote community integration through the encouragement of cross-cultural discussion,’ says Laura. Among many other things, a key goal of the internship was to combat what she calls the ‘danger of the single story’. Laura feels that it’s wrong for countries to be reduced to one simple stereotype and she continues to work to bring cultures together. Movies like Hotel Rwanda can tell us stories that are perfectly true, but Laura is living proof that sometimes the ones you hear firsthand can be even more inspiring.

This idea of competing realities applies equally well to the study of development in the last sixty years. In 1949 Harry Truman declared that America ‘must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.’ In practice, says Andrew Dawson, Professor of Anthropology and Director of Development Studies at the University of Melbourne, development in the period mostly consisted of Cold War antagonists investing in client states. The study of these large-scale processes was largely confined to disciplines such as economics, economic geography and political science, but the 1990s saw development undergo a radical shift. In this postcolonial world there was a new emphasis on the need for people in the developing world to have a role in their own transformation. ‘It led to a whole array of approaches in development that amount to really the same thing: participatory development, grassroots development,’ says Professor Dawson. ‘Academically, disciplines such as anthropology, which were attuned methodologically to understanding how ordinary people impacted upon the world, tended to come to the fore.’

David Lansley is the senior economist at World Vision Australia. In his experience the best strategy for economic development is to narrow your focus and do a few things well. ‘The whole process of development is unpredictable,’ he says. ‘It’s affected by a whole range of things which vary in different situations and it’s very difficult to pick why countries do develop.’ The first step is attempting to secure a position where offering economic alternatives and market opportunities becomes viable. Many developing countries are bedevilled by civil unrest and large numbers of internally displaced people, and, consequently, the best response may be high-level activity like lobbying governments or the UN to try to achieve peace. Once relative stability is achieved, David sees World Vision’s economic development role as that of a facilitator. ‘You can do things like help people identify...
possible viable projects,’ he says. ‘And that’s where you need their knowledge.’

David nominates the Humbo Ethiopia Farmer Assisted Natural Regeneration Project as a good example of this consultative strategy. Once upon a time the Humbo Valley was covered in millions of trees, but short-sighted farming techniques left the region almost completely denuded. The first consequence of this over-harvesting was that the valley’s inhabitants, who once relied on the forest for at least part of their livelihood, were now totally reliant on farming maize. To make matters worse, frequent droughts threatened the maize crops’ viability, continued soil erosion caused floods and landslides, and the valley’s sediment run-off became so extensive that it has caused the water of nearby Lake Abaya to turn red.

Determined to alter this crippling status quo, the Humbo Project is a collaboration between the valley’s local community, World Vision offices in Australia and Ethiopia, the World Bank and the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority. Where traditional methods of reforestation had achieved only limited results, the Humbo Project showcases a far more effective technique. The Ethiopian farmers had cut down trees at ground level, but the stumps and root systems they left behind often survived. Each living stump is capable of growing twenty new shoots, and with careful tending by the locals, at least two or three new trunks can be regenerated. The result is that the Humbo Project pays multiple dividends. ‘It’s provided people with clearly more sustainable livelihoods,’ David explains. ‘They’re getting a mix of things that can provide them with income. It’s cheap and effective and people have shown it’s worked well.’ Best of all, the Humbo Project creates an opportunity for Ethiopians to play a role in combating climate change. Not only will the reforestation create 338 000 tonnes worth of carbon credits that can be sold overseas, it’s also literally changing the weather. ‘Apparenty, this process of revegetation that we’ve been involved in, it’s even had a regional climate effect,’ says David. ‘It actually affects the rainfall as you start getting trees and vegetation coming back on a sufficient scale.’

Beatriz Maturana (MUD 2004), founder of Architects for Peace (arch-peace), is particularly passionate about the need to tailor projects. ‘Each country is a different reality,’ she asserts. ‘And within those there are different realities. Unless we understand that, we are not really able to assist.’ She uses an example of a project in East Timor where arch-peace are involved in designing shelters for a community of weavers. The weavers have requested the project be environmentally sustainable and achieved with local techniques, and the arch-peace team are mindful not to let the drawings get too technical. ‘These are mainly very rural people,’ Beatriz explains. ‘They don’t understand technical drawings in the same way that I would.’

Unfortunately, this careful tailoring of a project to match a client’s needs isn’t always possible. Beatriz was excited when she read that the Victorian Building Commission had volunteered to organise a building code for East Timor. It looked like a wonderful opportunity, but upon investigating the project she discovered problems. The building code was promoting the use of brick veneer construction, which isn’t suitable for East Timor—even if the materials could be imported, they are impracticable in an area prone to earthquakes. Relatively minor details were also off-key, with the commission specifying that all emergency signs be written in English. Beatriz explains that while English is spoken in East Timor, it’s a secondary language and its use is therefore disrespectful and potentially dangerous. ‘We can assist to a degree, and we have the best of intentions,’ she says, ‘but we could do much better if we were a little bit less ignorant.’

Exemplifying the benefits of the grassroots approach is a program called Deadly Blokes and Kids, which is based in the far-north Western Australian town of Kununurra (a place where ‘deadly’ is slang for ‘cool’). Polly Banks (MDS 2009) is employed by Save the Children to coordinate the program. ‘Our development strategy grew out of the vision of Peter Brandy,’ she explains. ‘Brandy is a highly respected Indigenous elder and a talented musician who performs throughout the East Kimberley Region and the Top End. In 2006 he proposed...’
a project where Indigenous men, particularly those men deemed ‘at risk’ or ‘hard to reach’ could interact in a positive and safe way with their children. The core theme of the strategy is music, with workshops being run every week to allow male caregivers and their children to write songs and practise music with each other.

It’s a novel idea and Polly feels that it’s achieved a great deal in the community. ‘Participants in the program have developed the confidence to perform to large crowds of people, with audiences of more than 2000 people at some concerts,’ she says. ‘Several adult participants, who were unemployed when they joined Deadly Blokes and Kids, have now found stable work. Similarly, the children in the program have been attending school much more regularly since participating in the program.’ The scheme is so successful it’s even spreading into the surrounding area. A group from Wyndham (a town 100 km from Kununurra) have requested that Deadly Blokes and Kids expand to their area and recently the Ngowar Aerwha Aboriginal Corporation also expressed interest in their clients coming along to the Wyndham workshops.

There’s no doubt that working in development can be challenging. It can be extremely difficult to enact even a small amount of change, recognition may be scant, and the financial and emotional stresses can be gruelling. Despite this, when I ask my interviewees why they do what they do, they all emphasise the rewards. ‘The biggest reward to development is forming the human connection,’ says Laura Spano. ‘Learning about different cultures, other ways of thinking, being and doing.’ Laura now works for the World Federation of United Nations Associations as the coordinator of the Responsibility to Protect program. Although it’s a lot of work and an unpaid position, she insists she couldn’t be happier. ‘Not too many people can say “I love going into work and I love running three volunteer programs that means I work ninety-plus hours a week”,’ she says. ‘But I do.’

Meanwhile, back at Melbourne University there are plans to once again expand development studies beyond its traditional disciplines. ‘We’ve got a development studies masters degree, but now we also have a stream in gender, and I think it would be nice to have a stream in health and engineering,’ says Andrew Dawson. He feels that these new disciplines would be a good fit with the program, and although he emphasises that this current there are already discussions about how to achieve it.

* ‘That’s the basic line,’ he says. ‘Taking it out to the rest of the University is what we want to do.’

---

**Fostering a lifelong commitment to community engagement**

The University’s Leadership Involvement and Volunteer Experience (LIVE) unit provides a platform for students to get involved on and off campus in leadership, community engagement and volunteering activities in Australia and overseas.

An opportunity for students to develop an understanding of social, cultural and linguistic diversity as well as respect for the environment and human rights and dignity, LIVE experiences foster a lifelong passion for community involvement.

LIVE welcomes enquiries from organisations able to provide volunteer opportunities for students. If you or your organisation would like to provide a student with a volunteer opportunity please contact Theresa Li in the LIVE unit on + 613 8344 3378 or theresa.li@unimelb.edu.au

Visit www.pasi.unimelb.edu.au/development for more information on the University’s development studies programs.
A degree from the University of Melbourne can really take you places. We catch up with three alumni who have taken their skills to cities, towns and villages around the world.

Postcard from Tanzania

Gemma Sisia (BSc 1992)

I volunteered at a Ugandan school after graduating from university, and it was on this trip that I travelled to Tanzania and met my husband, Richard, who was my safari driver. Marrying Richard meant making Tanzania my home, as there is little call for a safari driver in Australia!

My experiences in Uganda inspired me to sponsor the education of disadvantaged children in Tanzania. In 2002, with help from Rotary volunteers from Australia, the School of St Jude opened with three students. We now have over 1300 as well as 360 staff across two campuses.

We rely on donations to keep the school running. Most schools in Tanzania have no teaching resources other than chalk and a rare textbook—ours has three libraries with over 30,000 books. We have around twenty-five students per class, around half the size of typical classes in Tanzania.

I had to make a few adjustments when I moved here—learning Swahili, getting to understand African culture and adjusting to a much slower pace of life. But the Tanzanians made it very easy as they’re very warm and welcoming people.

www.schoolofstjude.co.tz

Postcard from Papua New Guinea

Jim Thomas (BSc (Hons) 2000)

I came to live and work in PNG through my interest in conservation and tree kangaroos. I learned of the plight of PNG’s Tenkile Tree Kangaroo while on a trip to North Queensland with the University’s zoology department. Around the campfire, lecturer Roger Martin shared his adventures in PNG and said he thought tree kangaroos would become extinct due to human hunting.

I’d worked at Zoos Victoria for nearly ten years when it started the Tenkile Conservation Alliance—a non-government organisation in PNG that aims to save tree kangaroos from extinction. In 2003 my wife Jean and I moved here to take over management of the organisation. We’ve been able to help the people and their environment significantly, and the population of tree kangaroos is increasing. We live in Lumi, a very remote place that is close to the tree kangaroos and the villages that have them on their land. Our house was a bush hut with a pit toilet when we started but has since improved somewhat. Our lifestyle is very basic. We eat fresh fruit and vegetables and most of our meat comes from a tin.

We enjoy living here because of the program’s successes and the beautiful environment with all its special creatures.

www.tenkile.com

Postcard from Macau

Michael Gilders (DipDramArt 1989, GDipArtsMgt 2003)

I moved from St Kilda to Macau in 2007 when I was offered a position with Cirque du Soleil. At the age of 40 I was running away with the circus! As assistant head of lighting for Zaspira, a permanent production, I’m responsible for the show’s special effects.

Macau was settled by the Portuguese, and the landscape reflects its blend of European and Chinese cultures. Catholic churches stand on several high points of Macau Peninsula, others are capped with Portuguese forts built to fight off local pirates when the original trading port was established in the 1550s.

My life in Macau is worlds apart from life in Melbourne. One great thing about living here is that travel to all parts of South-East Asia is easy and cheap—a week in the Philippines costs less than a week at Phillip Island and a long weekend in Hanoi or Bangkok is not out of the question. A ferry to Hong Kong to enjoy a night at the theatre or dinner with friends is almost routine for me now, but very different from taking a tram from my flat in St Kilda to see a show in the city.
Passing the Stress Test

Almost two years after the Global Financial Crisis first exposed the weaknesses of the business world, many in the financial services industry are still reeling from its effects. Alumnus Justin Arter, current CEO of Victorian Funds Management Corporation, outlines three common strategies that may help companies get back on the road to recovery.

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) put unprecedented financial strain on companies in the financial services industry. While high-profile corporate collapses and the rapid reduction in risk appetite dominated media discussion, few businesses in the financial sector emerged from the crisis unscathed.

But those who did survive have some worthwhile tips to follow. Here’s just a few:

**Maintain a very high level of board commitment**, not just about governance and policy, but also about the broader welfare of the entire organisation.

Those organisations where the board became preoccupied with issues of immediate financial stress, or worse, survival itself, quickly found that employee morale diminished quickly, with adverse effects on financial results. Many boards worked vigorously to adhere to pre-defined corporate values and culture. Those companies that had ‘stuck to their knitting’ and adhered to these values found them to be enormously useful in dealing with the turmoil presented by the GFC.

Indeed, while many were tempted to discard these values in the quest for survival, those who stuck to them have found that they have generally been thanked by stakeholders for doing so.

Many corporations have consequently emerged from the crisis with a fresh determination to review their corporate philosophy and to use the opportunity to expand their corporate values into ten or more considered and strongly worded values against which they would be measured.

**Improved communication and corporate culture**

While so often talked about as a reason for companies’ success, corporate culture is seldom defined with enough specificity to move it beyond the realms of ‘feel-good’ statements. While it has no unique advantage in this respect, the Victorian Funds Management Corporation worked hard throughout and after the GFC to translate its business objectives into a series of operating rules and practices that can be loosely defined as corporate culture. This is more than simply ‘the way we do things’. It consists of staying in touch with clients and stakeholders throughout both difficult and good times.

While the old saying is that ‘merry loves company’, we found that raising communication levels with clients through this period, even when things were not going our way, strongly improved the quality of our relationship with them.

In good times this is easy. In bad times it becomes a much more challenging conversation and one that is critical for any business committed to the long term.

**GFC as catalyst for change**

Before the GFC, ‘fast’ capital had been attracted to far too many areas in the financial services space without due heed to risk. The usual culprits of over-leveraging, poor due diligence and strategic insights into the long-term outlook for certain businesses caused the collapse of many companies.

Many of the post-GFC corporations have actually used the crisis as a reason to refine their business model. Some have withdrawn from certain areas of business where they discovered profits had been competed away forever. In others, the departure of suppliers and aggregators in certain types of assets left ‘patient’ long-term capital, with a far more sensible playing field on which to base their business strategy. Typically, this has been based on a long-term ‘buy and hold’ approach to the business. Some organisations used the departure of short-term holders of certain long-term assets as a reason to grow business expertise there. The same could be said about many large pension and superannuation funds, whose liability streams signify that they are the natural owners of some of the very long-term assets such as infrastructure.

I believe that one of the longer term trends after the GFC will be a settling down of assets market, when opportunities will present themselves for patient capital that are after a sensible risk return rather than making massive capital gains every year or so in order to ride the cycle.
A New Era in Indigenous Programs

Since the launch of Murrup Barak, the Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development, in late 2009, the University’s Indigenous programs have a new focus. Alumna Justine Costigan discovers the innovative ways the University is approaching Indigenous development.

If you want to encourage more Indigenous Australians to aim for higher education, where do you begin? For Chris Heelan, General Manager of the Centre of Indigenous Education (CIE) at the University of Melbourne, the answer is obvious—you need to work with Indigenous youth well before they start making decisions about their futures.

Making that connection is the focus of a new program starting this year. A partnership between the CIE and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, twenty Year 9–12 Indigenous students in northern metropolitan Melbourne (a region with the second largest population of Indigenous people in the state) will be mentored by the University over four years.

‘We’re working with schools that wouldn’t normally be feeders for us,’ says Heelan. ‘It’s a deliberate push to offer more choice for students that have the ability to succeed at university.’

The program involves building a relationship with second-year University of Melbourne students while giving the high school students an opportunity to get to know the campus, courses and course coordinators.

‘It’s about getting more Koori kids into tertiary education,’ says Heelan. ‘If that means they end up at the University of Melbourne, that’s great, but if they end up studying at another university, that’s great too. It’s all about creating the aspiration.’

Giving Indigenous Australians who may have missed out on the opportunity to study is the focus of another important program at the University. The Bachelor of Arts (Extended) is the first course of its kind in Australia and involves an extra year of foundation studies while undertaking subjects within the Bachelor of Arts program. In its second intake this year, part of the program includes living on campus as a way to help the students develop a sense of community and to fully experience life at the University. While some students are from nearby suburbs, others may come from regional Victoria or interstate. Ages vary too—some students come to study after several years in the workforce.

‘We chose the students based on their potential to succeed,’ said Michelle Earthy, project coordinator at the CIE. ‘And with the education and experiences they will have at Melbourne, they will leave University not only with a degree, but also with leadership skills, personal networks and ideas that will help them to become tomorrow’s leaders.’

These programs are just two of many that are a natural fit with the philosophy of Murrup Barak. Created to coordinate and support the development of a wide range of
Indigenous programs, Murrup Barak also plans to build on the University’s desire to support Indigenous leadership and participation. ‘Universities have to move to a more active approach that builds effective pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into university’ says Professor Ian Anderson, the institute’s director. This active approach includes a range of programs supporting Indigenous students at the University. Among these are the Indigenous Postgraduate Research Seminars, which allow postgraduate students to come together and discuss concerns, research methods and any aspect about their thesis and studies at the University of Melbourne.

The Summer School for Indigenous Postgraduate Students, a five-day residential program, brings together Indigenous postgraduate students and their thesis supervisors with a distinguished faculty of senior scholars every January. It has been running since 2002 and 129 students have undertaken the program so far. In 2010 it was granted accreditation to be run as a Professional Certificate in Indigenous Training and Resource Practices, which can be put towards a graduate certificate.

Engagement programs held by the CIE, such as NAIDOC events and seminars, are targeted towards students, University staff and the wider community. The topics of the seminars provide insight and understanding of Indigenous issues relevant to the University and broader community and have been widely attended by the University community.

Professor Anderson says Murrup Barak will link the University’s work in building pathways for Indigenous students with its other academic activities such as teaching and research in Indigenous issues. ‘The aim is to ensure that University graduates have capabilities that contribute to Indigenous development and research that produces the knowledge for change,’ he says.

‘This work will be linked by Murrup Barak to other organisational development activities such as promoting Indigenous employment or facilitating discussions on a University of Melbourne Reconciliation Action Plan.’

It’s not just at the Parkville campus that University of Melbourne Indigenous students have access to greater support. Over at VCA in Southbank, the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development is a major hub of activity. The Wilin Centre nurtures and encourages Indigenous students and artists as well as providing general support and advocacy. It also plays a crucial role in fostering understanding of Indigenous arts among the wider community.

The University also has several other specialist Indigenous programs that provide students from
across the University with the opportunity to study the history and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit—led by Ian Anderson—has achieved an international reputation for its health research and teaching. Its many programs are underpinned by the principles and processes of Indigenous community development. And the Academy of Sport, Health and Education—located in Shepparton and led by Justin Mohamed—is an innovative program that has proven successful at retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in an educational setting.

It’s an extremely impressive list of activities and achievements, though up until now it has had little local recognition. With the recent launch of Murrup Barak, it’s likely Indigenous programs at the University will have an even greater profile and focus.

As a result, it’s all good news for current and future Indigenous students. A tiny proportion of the University population (currently less than 184 students out of 47,000), as their numbers grow they’ll gradually build an alumni group that will further encourage and support students of the future.

‘Once we have students they do very well,’ says Chris Heelan. ‘We just have to let them know the opportunities exist. Once they’re here, we have one of the best records of retaining students.’

Connect with other Indigenous alumni

Named after the Kulin people’s word for the Melbourne region, the annual Narrm Oration provides a forum for leading global thinkers to present on Indigenous knowledge and development. This event promises to be the University’s signature event in Indigenous studies.

As part of an ongoing effort to strengthen connections with Indigenous alumni, you are invited to meet Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis, Director of Murrup Barak, Professor Ian Anderson, and this year’s keynote speaker for wine and canapes prior to the oration.

Date: Thursday 4 November
Time: 6.00 PM
RSVP: www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/indigenous

Did you know?

You can register your interest in indigenous culture via the alumni preferences portal and receive tailored information on upcoming lecturers, publications and alumni activities.

Visit alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au to find out how.

Interest in Indigenous studies grows

Enrolments in the University’s first-year Indigenous studies subject jumped from 180 students in 2008 to 380 in 2009. Philip Morrissey, the program’s academic coordinator, says the sudden growth in enrolments is due to a fortunate mix of both opportunity and interest. ‘The Melbourne Model means more students have the opportunity to study this subject,’ he says, ‘and there’s been a generational shift—many more students are open to a vision of Australia that includes Indigenous Australians.’

An interdisciplinary subject, the course has input from art, history, cinema studies, and publishing and communications. ‘We’re interested in multiple conceptual approaches and a range of perspectives,’ says Philip, ‘and it’s an approach that’s really effective.’

Philip says the students often comment that the course is very different to what they learnt at high school. ‘Students come away with a sense of unity and diversity among Indigenous Australians. They’re aware of different histories and aspirations. They come away as informed readers of commentary, with a sophisticated approach and the ability to critique.’

The course is part of a greater plan that saw a major in Indigenous Studies formally approved last year and an honours program under development this year. Investigations into the possibility of a masters program is also already underway.

‘Many of the Australian Indigenous studies students will never go on to do a major in the subject,’ says Morrissey, ‘but they will have been exposed to a great course.’

Did you know you can take this course as part of the University’s Community Access Program (CAP)? To find out more visit www.unimelb.edu.au/community/access
Surveying the past to model a brighter future

For Thomas Werner (B Geome, BSc 2007), life is about seizing opportunities.

As president of the Melbourne University Geomatics Society, Thomas helped establish the Engineering Societies Board to forge links between students, academics and industry leaders ‘outside of the lecture theatre’.

During this time Thomas also sat on the School Education Committee, advocating student issues and liaising with faculty staff to resolve them.

Today Thomas is Manager of Terrestrial Laser Scanning at Vekta (formerly Survey21), an innovative national land engineering and aerial surveying company. Recent projects include creating a 3D model of Melbourne’s Church Street bridge and the redevelopment of the Brisbane and Sydney town halls.

‘I am incredibly lucky to be in the position I am today,’ he says. ‘I’ve got responsibility, autonomy and opportunities for travel and recreation.’

Thomas maintains close ties with the School of Engineering both to honour the links he helped establish through the school’s societies and committees and to create leadership opportunities for other students to make their mark.

However the 25-year-old feels somewhat conspicuous at the Engineering Donor Receptions—something he hopes will change as more alumni his age get involved.

‘Think of the opportunities you may have had during your time at Melbourne Uni,’ he says. ‘Give to ensure others have the same chance as you did.’

Thomas Werner’s experiences at the University of Melbourne opened a world of opportunity. And now, as alumna Anita Punton discovers, he wants to give another student the same chance to shine.

Make your mark on the University

Whether you choose to support a student in immediate financial need or give to your faculty, as a donor you decide how your gift will be allocated.

Some donors make their mark by committing long-term support for scholarships, while others give to a particular cultural collection. Whichever way you choose to support the University, your gift will be allocated as you wish, and we’ll report back regularly with updates on how your support is making a difference.

For more information, visit www.unimelb.edu.au/giving
On the path to excellence

University of Melbourne Provost John Dewar introduces four dynamic young adults forging their own unique paths to excellence through study under the Melbourne Model. With interviews by alumna Olivia Davis.

It is with great pleasure that I read these stories of student experiences at the University of Melbourne. These students are pursuing their passions through breadth of study encountered in our undergraduate degrees, and investigating the specialisations in our professional programs. All of them are working with researchers tackling some of the biggest issues of our time, and putting their skills and talents to the service of the wider community.

At the end of 2010, a new generation of Melbourne graduates will be making decisions about their futures: employment, further study, travel, community work and more. At the same time, the university continues its evolution as we unveil the full suite of professional graduate programs that will set new benchmarks for professional education in Australia. As the new Provost, I look forward to sharing news of these developments with you as we continue to realise our ambition to be one of the world’s finest universities.

Sonja Zivak, age: 25
Current studies: final year Juris Doctor

Previous tertiary studies: Bachelor of Arts at Curtin University, WA. Honours degree in literary studies at University of Melbourne.

For Sonja, the Melbourne Model came in at the perfect time. Fresh out of school, she decided she was too young to go straight into law, so she completed her arts degree then went travelling. After two years working in London, she felt ready to pursue law, but was worried she might have missed her chance by not signing up as an undergraduate, as postgraduate study is typically so expensive.

‘Thankfully Melbourne Uni has switched to this graduate model. There just weren’t any universities doing graduate law that you didn’t have to pay upfront for. Now you have this possibility to do graduate courses under HECS.’

The graduate model also means that her fellow law students tend to be older, with more life experience. ‘The student cohort is made up of people from all walks of life—it’s really enriched my experience of being at uni.’

Sonja says there have been myriad opportunities available via her studies: she has done three clerkships with commercial firms and was part of the team that won the Australian round of the Jessup moot, the world’s largest moot court competition. She is also a recipient of the Eleanor and Joseph Wertheim Scholarship, worth $20,000.

Sonja’s own experience of being forced to flee her home in Bosnia as a child has led to her being a strong advocate for reconciliation. She volunteers for Most Mira, a youth arts festival in Bosnia that brings together Bosnian, Serb and Croat children to participate in fun and creative activities. www.mostmiraproject.org

Shuang Ma, age: 24
Current studies: second year Master of Science

Previous tertiary studies: Bachelor of Science in cell biology and genetics in Canada.

Shuang has been interested in biology ever since she was a little girl. But that doesn’t mean she plans to spend the rest of her days in a white coat in a lab. ‘I am more interested in doing science-related work in a company than doing research in a lab. I like to look at science in a broader context,’ she says.

She has been pleasantly surprised by how practical her studies at the University of Melbourne have proven to be. ‘It’s more than I expected. Melbourne Uni is world renowned for its research, I already knew that before I came to Australia. But it’s also quite practical, not purely scientific knowledge but how that is applied in an industrial context.’

Next semester she and her fellow students will be allocated to various industries to do a group project. They
Sonja Zivak

Bridie Day

Shuang Ma

Daniel Stow

Photos: Cameron Gallagher

Mag.alumni.unimelb.edu.au

Daniel Stow, age: 18
Current Studies: first year Bachelor of Arts

When Daniel finished school last year he travelled to India to join a volunteer program providing manual labour to assist local workers build a school. ‘It was an eye-opening experience,’ he says.

‘Coming out of Year 12, I thought I knew what hard work was, but some of the kids at the school were five years younger than me and studying eight or nine hours per day. And probably only about half of them will go onto further education,’ he says.

Daniel is making the most of the opportunities he has found at the University of Melbourne. The Melbourne Model has allowed him to continue honing his Indonesian—a bonus for someone intent on pursuing a diplomatic career—while trying other areas of study. ‘As an undergrad we take ‘breadth’ subjects, so 25 per cent of my subjects are taken outside of the Faculty of Arts. I’m doing the Ecological History of Humanity, which I find really interesting, and next semester I’m going to do Climate Change, both of which are part of the Environmental Science Department.’

Daniel was recently accepted into the Left Right Think Tank, Australia’s first independent and non-partisan think tank of young minds. ‘We are preparing a policy to put forward to government about rural versus metropolitan inequality.’

www.leftright.org.au

From assessing irrigation systems in Vietnam to building a prosthetic knee joint, from developing networks for disadvantaged kids to promoting women’s health in Kenya, the Melbourne Model is enabling new learning experiences and new ways of creating positive outcomes in the community.

To learn more about the Melbourne Model, including reforms in the curriculum, redesigned learning spaces, innovative teaching practices and investment in IT and infrastructure, visit www.learningandteaching.unimelb.edu.au
Food for Thought

From a passion for wine, coffee and olive oil to food education, restaurant reviewing and preserving heritage seeds, alumna Justine Costigan profiles five alumni whose diverse degrees and interests have all led (sometimes unexpectedly) to successful careers in the food and wine industry.

When Anne Ratjen (BHumBus 2007) was in her last year of high school she wasn’t sure what she was going to do with her life, but her parents’ decision to start an olive grove was just the catalyst she needed. Ratjen enrolled at the University’s Dookie campus, completing a Bachelor of Rural Business. It takes years for olive trees to become viable for commercial production, so on graduation Ratjen joined the Australian Wheat Board and then later worked for the Royal Melbourne Show. When an opportunity eventually came up to join the family business, Camilo Olive Oil, Ratjen couldn’t resist. In the same year as the company’s first commercial harvest (for which they won several awards) the company began exporting to Japan. ‘It [the export] was the subject of my final–year thesis at Dookie,’ she says, ‘and I’ve even gone back to look at my notes. I am really grateful for that.’ Despite all her years at Dookie, Ratjen says she is still learning, with plans to take night classes in Japanese and to continue with short courses related to the olive oil industry. ‘I sort of knew that’s where I would end up,’ says Ratjen. ‘I just had to wait for the trees to grow.’

Despite her parents warning there’d be ‘no future in it’, Larissa Dubecki (LLB 1997, BA 1998) completed a one–year postgraduate journalism course after graduating with a combined arts/law degree and was subsequently accepted as a cadet at Melbourne’s The Age newspaper. Dubecki happily admits that as a trainee journalist she was ‘a vegetarian living on two-minute noodles.’ But encouraged by a partner with a career in food and wine, her interest in food gradually grew. Vegetarianism was eventually abandoned and Dubecki started looking for ways to write about her growing passion, approaching the paper’s respected Good Food Guide to become a reviewer. ‘It snowballed from there,’ says Dubecki, who soon began contributing to Australian Gourmet Traveller as well. At the end of 2008, Dubecki was offered the role of restaurant reviewer for The Age’s ‘Epicure’ section. ‘I landed in a position I had only dreamed about,’ she says. The journalist now eats out at least five times a week, both to review restaurants and to keep in touch with what is happening in the industry. While Dubecki is conscious of the impact a review can have on a restaurant, she says her first responsibility will always be to her readers—‘I’ve got to call it as I see it.’

In recent years, restaurateur and author Stephanie Alexander OAM (BA 1966) has become synonymous with food education. Through her Kitchen Garden Foundation, Alexander has brought the joys of growing, harvesting, cooking and sharing food to children at 138 primary schools throughout Australia. By 2012 she hopes to increase the number to 250. Although she is still mostly known for Stephanie’s Restaurant, which closed in 1997, as well as numerous cookbooks including the bestselling The Cook’s Companion, a television series and extensive media coverage, it’s this recent phase of her career that has people talking about her in government, health and education circles.

As a university student, Stephen Shelmerdine (BA (Hons) 1973) spent his holidays at Mitchelton, the vineyard established by his parents in Nagambie, Victoria, in the late 1960s. He would help maintain vines and harvest grapes, and although it was very different work from his French, Japanese and history studies in Melbourne, the contrast was one he relished. After graduation and some time spent travelling, he moved to London to work for the Australian Wine Board. ‘Being in a family business, all my knowledge came from the vineyard, but I was interested in working in the European wine industry too. It also appealed to my interest in history—wine has been traded for thousands of years.’ Shelmerdine eventually returned to Melbourne, joined the Myer Graduate Program and spent ten years with the company, all the while continuing to help with the family wine business. In 1988 he left Myer to focus on Mitchelton Wines. After Mitchelton was sold, first in 1994 to Petaluma and then in 2001 to Lion Nathan, Shelmerdine decided to start again. In 2002 he began Shelmerdine Wines, using grapes from the family’s distinguished vineyards. In only eight years, the Shelmerdine family has created a wine label rated as five red stars (i.e. in the top 7 per cent of Australian wineries) by acclaimed wine writer James Halliday. ‘I didn’t know precisely where my studies would take me,’ says Shelmerdine. ‘I didn’t have a formal wine science degree but I learnt by doing, watching and thinking. When you start to become interested in wine, it simply becomes more and more fascinating. It’s a journey through history, geography and culture without end.’

‘I became more and more aware of how much people didn’t know about food…’

Stephanie Alexander OAM
government and private support. In 2004 the program attracted support from the Victorian government for a further forty schools. By 2007 Alexander had convinced the federal government that ‘this intervention could change the way people felt about food.’ Research by the University’s McCaughey Centre into the impact on the program will be published soon and Alexander hopes it will help convince the federal government of its enormous potential to change lives. ‘I believe that children need positive models in their lives to reinforce that sharing fresh, seasonal food is a joyful activity, and one that they can enjoy as long as they live.’

While Clive Blazey (Bcom 1967) may now happily admit his commerce degree has been very useful, as a student he was not particularly passionate about it. ‘My father was in business so it seemed the sensible thing to do,’ he says, ‘but it wasn’t something that excited me.’ On a visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens at twenty-one he ‘was blown away by the grandeur. I wanted to live there,’ he says. It was another six years of working for his father before Blazey decided to start his own business, but when he launched The Digger’s Club in 1978 he began a journey that would see him become one of the country’s leading advocates for self-sufficiency, sustainable food production and the preservation of heritage seeds. Although started as a mail-order club, Blazey bought Heronswood, a heritage property at Dromana, Victoria, in 1983 in order to create a garden club members could visit and learn from. ‘We wanted to show people how to grow their plants from seed.’ Another property, The Garden of St Erth at Blackwood, was bought in 1996. Blazey’s sustainability message has captured the attention of both customers and the industry. A teacher and advocate for growing your own food, Blazey suggests cities of the future will grow much of their own food. ‘I think it’s a long-term trend,’ he says, ‘there’s a great hunger for people to get their hands in the soil.’

**Learn about food security risks and solutions**

The Dean of Melbourne School of Land and Environment, Rick Roush, invites you to attend the upcoming ‘Deans Lecture Series’ to expand your knowledge on topical issues relating to food security and managing our scarce resources. Past topics have been as diverse as viticulture research, catchment and fire management, climate change, forensic soil science and the 1939 Bushfire Royal Commission. All lectures are available as podcasts and further information on the series may be found online at [www.landfood.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.landfood.unimelb.edu.au)
Parkville Revisited

On 14 November the doors to the University’s rare and unique collections and museums will be opened to the public for the 2010 Cultural Treasures Day. Ahead of this special event, and to indulge his nostalgia, curiosity and penchant for historical investigation, alumnus Will Gourlay takes a self-guided walking tour of the University of Melbourne, keeping an eye out for some of the architectural oddities, secret places and relics of times past that contribute to the fabric of the campus.

More than just prompting memories, a wander through the Parkville campus reveals tangible reminders of distant eras, fads and technologies that left an imprint on the University as it evolved from a ‘fine stone house in the bush’ to one of the world’s leading institutions. So one afternoon during the festivities of ‘O Week’ I revisit the Parkville campus to indulge my nostalgia and quietly investigate the relics of the University’s history.

After jumping off a tram at the corner of Swanston and Grattan streets, I arrive at the 1888 Building, an ornate Queen Anne-style red brick residence set in gracious gardens shaded by Canary Island palms, which offer a quiet retreat from the bustle. Shield-bearing griffons perched atop steep Dutch gables look down at me as I approach the one-time residential teachers college, which now houses the Graduate School of Research. Inside, I climb the broad staircase to the Gryphon Gallery, an elegant meeting room with ceiling mouldings and leadlight windows where Victorian schoolgirls in pinafores would not look out of place. I assume the grand piano in the corner is a favourite perch for graduate students taking a break from thesis writing to hammer out a tune.

I head onwards. It’s a warm afternoon and the University is quiet. At the end of Professor’s Walk, I encounter a couple who appear to be suffering from the heat. All taut neck muscles and rippling torsos, these are the
bluestone granite Atlantes who frame the entrance to the car park under the South Lawn. The Atlantes originally adorned the Colonial Bank of Australasia at the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets in the CBD. When the bank was demolished in 1932 they were gifted to the university on the advice of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects. I'm sure plenty of students walk past blithely ignorant of this snippet of classical Greek mythology poised between the Baillieu Library and the John Medley Building.

Heading north along Professor’s Walk is the System Gardens. The gardens were established in 1856 by the University’s first professor of natural science, Frederick McCoy. An elegant octagonal brick tower takes pride of place, the only remnant of what was once a sizable glasshouse amid concentric garden beds organised according to plant classifications. Today the tower is shaded by a tranquil Indian bean tree and ringed by beds of succulents and blood lilies. Standing at the base of the tower, surrounded by greenery, I can’t help imagining a pensive professor poring over his beloved botanical specimens in the very earliest days of the University.

Nearby on Royal Parade stands the newly refurbished Grainger Museum, commissioned in 1912 by Percy Grainger, a prolific composer and a virtuoso pianist with an international reputation. Grainger’s museum and its amazing collections will reopen to the public in September after closure for major conservation works.

Not far away in the Old Quad, the oldest building on the campus, is a reminder of the role that the University has played in shaping Melbourne’s history. A plaque on the north wall records the moment on 21 April 1856 when stonemasons working on the quadrangle downed tools and marched on Parliament House. In doing so, they inaugurated what was to be a successful campaign for the eight-hour working day in Melbourne. The movement eventually spread nationwide, and the date of the march was commemorated as a public holiday, one of the first in Australia that was not a religious holiday. This eventually shifted to become Labour Day, and the floats and processions associated with the holiday led to the 1955 inauguration of Moomba as Melbourne’s major annual procession. In the sedate confines of the Old Quad today it’s difficult to imagine how the grievances of stonemasons, all moustaches and called hands, could lead to the Moomba parade, but the plaque is a reminder of the role that the University has played in key moments of Melbourne’s history.

Nearby, Wilson Hall hails from a more modern era, but in fact the original hall was constructed in 1879. Built in a Gothic Revival style to emulate the grand architecture of British universities, it met a fiery demise in 1952. However, there are some relics of the original hall in the structure that was built to replace it. I wander past some Gothic bosses and decorative flourishes on the southern external wall, and inside the main entrance I spy the old Chancellor’s throne and chairs, which date back to 1879. The three ornately carved chairs have a distinctly baronial air about them—they would not look out of place in Hampton Court Palace. The regal ambience is only enhanced by four stone heads on the stair landing to the right. One is a dead ringer for Henry VIII, another for Anne Boleyn. These have been there since 1956 when the new Wilson Hall was inaugurated but no-one knows from where they came.

I head across campus to the McCoy Building on Elgin Street. The McCoy boasts an example of a Foucault pendulum, which demonstrates an experimental proof of the rotation of the earth. A mighty silver orb makes a complete revolution every twenty-three hours and fifty-six minutes as it swings on a 13.9 metre-long wire in the stairwell, creating languid arcs that are almost hypnotic.

This sense of slumber ends abruptly as I wander towards the Loewe Theatre foyer, which houses one of the world’s first multimedia artworks. Sound and image artist Stan Ostoja-Kotkowski incorporated a theremin in his work, though its presence in the artwork was short-lived due to the eerie sounds it emitted every time someone walked past.

My brief circuit has taken in architecture, local history, sculpture and historical quirks, and has allowed nostalgic reflection on my salad days in the late 1980s. The University’s grounds and accumulated history surely call to mind myriad reflections for the alumni who have passed through its doors, and investigating it is a very individual thing. To get started you can download a self-guided walking tour map and podcast at www.unimelb.edu.au/campus tour or just jump of a Swanston Street tram and go wherever your inclination takes you.

**Melbourne’s Cultural Collections**

Tap into the University’s collection of 32 cultural collections online at www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections in the online University’s Magazine. For more information about what’s on during Cultural Treasures Day and to register for the event, visit www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/culturaltreasures
Class Notes: In Your Words

1 Rose Hiscock
BCom 1991


Career Highlight: Travelling to Italy to ask for the exhibition A Day in Pompeii.

After a brief stint in banking, I realised I really wanted to work in the cultural sector, so I applied for a job as a customer service officer at Scienceworks and have been working for Museum Victoria ever since.

My role now includes a mix of both business and culture, including responsibility for commercial operations as well as marketing and communications across the five Museum Victoria venues. Highlights of my work with Museum Victoria include a major rebranding, a process which consolidated five independent venues into a family of brands, as well as the 2000 launch of Melbourne Museum. With fifteen years experience in the cultural sector, I am passionate about broad participation in the arts. I’m very proud to be the chair of Back to Back Theatre, which has a full-time ensemble of actors considered to have an intellectual disability. As one of Australia’s leading contemporary theatre companies, it focuses on moral, philosophical and political questions regarding the value of human lives.

2 Martha Grossman
BA (Hons) 2004

Current Position: General Manager Asia, RepuTex (Hk) Ltd.

Career Highlight: No one career highlight, it’s all been fantastic!

My background in Indonesian language and Asian commercial law has been a critical factor in the successful development of my career. After completing a law degree in 2001, I undertook research—through the University of Melbourne’s Indonesian department—to assess the impact of Indonesia’s de-centralisation laws on foreign investment. This included impact analysis studies for large mining and construction companies in Indonesia. Research led to a position as a senior analyst for Melbourne-based RepuTex, a firm providing carbon and sustainability analytics for companies and the international financial markets. In 2006 I was thrilled to return to Asia, taking up a senior position with RepuTex in Shanghai to establish the company’s China office and lead research to develop risk models for global companies, government organisations and financial professionals, focusing on the pricing of environmental and sustainability-related factors relevant to Asian markets. Now based in Hong Kong, my role has expanded to take in Asia-wide regional responsibilities, working directly with RepuTex’s major clients in the corporate risk space both locally in Hong Kong and internationally. Our most exciting project to date involves work with Hang Seng
Index Company Ltd to develop Asia’s first Sustainability Index Series due for release in the coming months.

While raised in Melbourne, I am a passionate citizen of the East and advocate of the view that Asia cannot be ignored by any serious economic, social or cultural observer. And despite my newfound love for Hong Kong and mainland China, Indonesia (particularly Java) still holds a very close place to my heart.

Luke Giuliani
BE, Bsc 2008

Current Position: Director, Squareweave Pty Ltd.
Career Highlight: Starting my own company and the success of Future Spark.

A highlight of my career so far was definitely organising Future Spark, a three-hour concert in March 2009 powered entirely by bikes and solar panels. Australia’s signature event for Earth Hour, we attracted 1500 people divided into over 140 teams to provide power by cycling. Over 7000 people turned up to watch the concert and the whole event was widely reported in media both here and overseas.

Since then, I’ve been running Squareweave, my web development company in Fitzroy, Melbourne. I love the flexibility of running my own business and that we’ve been able to do a great variety of work ranging from government and big businesses, to small (one-man) businesses and community-based projects.

Does it tell you something about Squareweave to know that we bought a coffee machine before we had a proper office?

Dr Alexandra Esther Cameron

Career Highlight: The growth of music in schools and the opportunities this offered.

After serving in the Australian Imperial Force, I came to Melbourne with no money, no job and no regrets. Someone said, ‘the Education Department is looking for music teachers.’

I spent twenty years as Australia’s first secondary school inspector of music, retiring at sixty then teaching for ten more years. For some reason or other I got an MBE. I was very proud of that. I felt it was for everybody—they had all helped so much.

I’d formed the Melbourne Youth Orchestra and had been going every Saturday morning to their rehearsals. I said I would keep on with it. We wrote a music curriculum and established several specialist music high schools and staffed them. Students could come from the country and study music.

We started the Saturday Music School like in England but had a problem getting teachers. At the beginning there was nowhere for them to teach. Another problem was getting instruments. Rose Music and Allans helped. It grew and grew.

We went overseas, all over the world. The sense of music was growing everywhere. I left that in 1980. I thought ‘I have done everything, now I can retire’. One day three boys knocked at my door. They said, ‘we’ve come to ask if you will help us to form a string chamber orchestra with all good people.’ From that has grown the Chamber Strings of Melbourne, which is famous and well-known overseas. At the end of last year I retired from the Chamber Strings.

On 30 May this year we are having a big memorial concert in the Melbourne Town Hall to celebrate thirty years. We are going to bring back as many of the old students and have a mass string orchestra.

Phillip Johnson
BAppSc 1997

Current Position: Director, Phillip Johnson Sustainable Landscape Systems
Career Highlight: Winning the 2009 Best in Show award at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show.

After completing my degree in Melbourne, I moved to the US and became a lecturer at the Environmental Education Centre at Frost Valley YMCA in upstate New York for twelve months. While in the US, I decided to return to Australia to establish my own company, Greenmark Landscapes (now Phillip Johnson Sustainable Landscape Systems). I wanted to create habitats in my work—to work with nature and not against it. This philosophy was not in vogue at the time, so I started to design sustainable landscapes featuring native plants, recycled materials, solar power, and water capture and conservation techniques.

It was a challenge to change people’s traditional tastes in garden design; educating them on the benefits of both sustainable and indigenous planting has been a long and hard labour of love.

The philosophy of my company is to create environmentally sustainable, natural landscapes that draw their design inspiration from Australia’s indigenous beauty. Sustainability comes from our trademark ‘billabong’, fed using groundbreaking water-conservation methods including greywater systems, driveway run-off, storm or roof water, and on-site treatment plants.

Creating habitats, one backyard or balcony at a time, continues to be my great passion. I also enjoy sharing what I’ve learnt with others. Educating people on the benefits of sustainable landscaping is the most important part of my work. As well as teaching and giving lectures on sustainable landscaping, I’ve recently joined the TV show The Garden Gurus as a presenter.

Emily Westmore
BA 1991

Current Position: Corporate Strategy Manager, Department of Justice.
Career Highlight: Attracting HBO’s The Pacific miniseries to base their production and filming in Victoria in 2007 (The Pacific aired in Australia on the Seven Network during 2010).

At university I was heavily involved in student theatre, and after finishing my arts degree I decided to study performance full time. This led to roles in TV series The Newlyweds and Janus, some independent film roles and a great deal of work in independent theatre groups performing in venues such as La Mama and the Napier Street Theatre. I eventually moved from performance to production roles including production coordinator for documentary and children’s television producers December Films and then as production coordinator for the series Blue Heelers.

This experience led me to Film Victoria where I was the production services coordinator for eight years, as part of the international production attraction team whose purpose was to convince overseas production companies...
to locate film productions in Victoria. Productions attracted included Paramount’s *Charlotte’s Web* (2006), the Sony/Columbia Nicholas Cage feature *Ghost Rider* (2005) and a further Nicholas Cage feature *Knowing* (2008), the Warner Bros/Spike Jonze feature *Where the Wild Things Are*, the Bollywood productions *Salaam Namaste* and *Chah! de India* and a great deal of post-production work out of Hong Kong and mainland China.

The role required travel overseas to liaise with Victoria’s ‘client base’ in this area, meeting with producers and studios to illustrate the benefits of filming in Melbourne. I spent time in Los Angeles, Hong Kong and Mumbai production centres on various trade missions, including a secondment to Los Angeles in the role of film commissioner for Australia for the national production attraction organisation, Ausfilm. Working in LA was very exciting and very challenging—one of my greatest achievements was learning to negotiate the freeways. The day I drove across three highways, in a left-hand drive without GPS and arrived at my meeting in time remains a major personal achievement.

After more than a decade servicing the film and television industry both in production and government agency support, I decided to move further into the public service arena, working first for the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development and now for the Department of Justice. Even now I look on my arts degree as an extremely useful tool that has helped me throughout my career. Not only did I learn the skills of knowing how to access information and provide a response to it (a practice whose value cannot be underestimated!), my time at university also established contacts and networks that continue to help me in my career today.

### Peter Khalil

**BA, LLB 1997**

**Current Position:** Consultant, Hawker Britton and an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Centre for International Security Studies at Sydney University.

I’ve always been interested in analysis and strategy so after completing my degrees I pursued a career in policy, joining the Department of Defence as a strategic defence policy analyst.

I spent nine months in Iraq as director of national security policy for the Coalition Provisional Authority, and this experience was invaluable, especially as I speak Arabic.

When I returned from the Middle East I joined the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as the director of Iraq policy. Later I became a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution working on its project on US relations with the Islamic world.

In 2007 I joined the office of Kevin Rudd as his foreign policy and national security adviser and I’ve also worked for the Minister for Defence providing strategic advice on international relations including Afghanistan, Iraq, East Timor, the Solomon Islands and the US.

---

### A bequest from you could be the promise of a cure for someone else.

**Donate to something bigger.**

At the University of Melbourne, some of the finest minds in the world are leading important research into areas as diverse as medicine, the environment, neuroscience, and culture and the arts. You can share their dreams and help turn them into reality by leaving the University a bequest in your will.

If you have a particular passion or area of interest, you can nominate that your gift go to a specific faculty, research project or scholarship. If you are in a position to leave the University a bequest in your will, you can make dreams come true.

For a confidential discussion please contact Bequest Manager Sue Girling-Butcher on +61 3 8344 1056, email s.girling-butcher@unimelb.edu.au or visit: www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/giving/bequests/
Contents

Our Features
1 Letter from the Vice-Chancellor
2 Contributors
3 University Update
4 Alumni Voices
5 Events Calendar
10 Alumni in Conversation: The Longevity Risk
   Word of warning or window of opportunity? Alumni
   unravel Australia’s latest demographic projections.
13 Crusader for Change
14 Visionary People
   The Bionic Eye project marks a new era in research.
18 Project Inspiration
   Students and alumni in the developing world.
22 Postcards
23 Passing the Stress Test
24 A New Era in Indigenous Programs
   Leading the way with greater access to learning.
27 Surveying the past to model a brighter future
28 On the path to excellence
30 Food For Thought
32 Parkville Revisited
34 Class Notes: In Your Words
37 The Last Word

Our Features
Cover Story:
Alumni in
Conversation p10

Visionary
People p14

Project
Inspiration p18

A New Era in
Indigenous
Programs p24

Would you prefer to read Melbourne University Magazine online?
Join the online community by visiting mag.alumni.unimelb.edu.au

Melbourne University Magazine 2010
This magazine is for alumni of the University of Melbourne. All correspondence relating to the
editorial content of the magazine, and postal and
e-mail address updates should be addressed to:
The Alumni Relations Team
The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010
Phone: +61 3 8341 7722 | Fax: +61 3 9348 0113
Email: alumni-office@unimelb.edu.au

Magazine Editorial & Design Team
Javiera Cordoba (BA 1992), Editor
John Marvell (BA (Hons) 2005, MA (Edit & Comm))
2000: Copy editor
Jan PHOTO (BA 2001): Proofreader
Char D Gally: Design and art direction

VIEWS expressed by contributors are not necessarily endorsed by the University
ISSN 1441-1149

The paper used for this magazine is certified
under the Responsible Forestry Practices
program (RAFI). Paper is from a
sustainable source.

Editorial Board
Eliza Bellm: Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry
and Health Sciences
Leoni Bellot: Advancement Office
Shane Callah: Marketing and Communications
Chris Charny: Melbourne School of Engineering
David Cholmon: Melbourne Research Office
Greg Honeyman: Melbourne Law School
Katherine Lefkov: Advancement Office
Associate Professor Chris Mackie, Faculty of Arts
Monique Martel: Graduate Marketing and
Recruitment
Di Rachtiger: Student Engagement
Lauren Ree: Advancement Office

The Melbourne 120th Cohort of 2010 is
busting at the seams with students who
have explored their first passion,
who are now studying law to ensure
they can really make a difference
in their area of speciality. This
year’s cohort consists of students
that have experience across forty
areas of professional life ranging
from anthropology to visual effects
and video game development.
For more information on the
Melbourne.vu: The Law Degree for Graduates,
see www.law.unimelb.edu.au

Got a passion for the law?

The Last Word

It may not be a common reason for enrolment, but as alumnus Sean Dooley
explains, becoming a law student was the best way he could think of to
launch a career in comedy.

There are many reasons for doing law at Melbourne Uni: the prestige, the social
contacts, the quality of the teaching, being a part of a great academic tradi-
tion that goes back to the 1850s. These virtues and many more were repeat-
edly pointed out to me by parents, teachers and career counsellors—even
by other students in my class who were already mapping out their path to the
Supreme Court.

But for me, studying law at Mel-
bourne was desirable for one reason
only—in this city, it was the tradition-
al route to get into comedy.

It all began at sixteen with a phone
call from Mick Molloy, who had been
two years ahead of me at school. I had
been in school plays with Mick and
appeared in revue sketches that he had
written. He was now at Melbourne
University, albeit briefly, and rang
up to say that I might get a kick out
of seeing a show he was in called the
Melbourne Uni Law Revue. Catching
the train up to Seaford I was like
a country rubber gapping slack-jawed
at them big buildings and funny looking
folk wearing black, but the real
revelation came as I sat in the Union Theatre
and watched Mick and his mates
mucking about on stage.

It hit me like a shot. This was
exactly what I wanted to do with my
life—come to Melbourne to do law so I
could be in the Law Revue.

I scrape into law on the
cut-off score, which theoretically meant
that I was the dumbest guy in the room.

There were kids of seventeen with side
parts and patent-leather briefcases.
Some of the girls were pearly. I wore a
Pogues t-shirt and a floppy fringe that
covered my eyes, hiding a look of utter
bewilderment as everyone around me
battered knowingly about jurispru-
dence, mens rea and chambrey shirts,
which, it turns out, was not the name
of a seventeenth-century French jurist.
I was out of my depth but held on
with grim determination to my goal
of getting into the Law Revue. Trouble
was, I failed the audition, I couldn’t
believe it. How could quoting TS Eliot
while pretending to be a piece of frying
bacon be anything but a sure-fire
winner? I spent a bleak year flailing about
and was about to chuck it all in when,
luckily, they brought forward the next
year’s revue to fit in with the Comedy
Festival. The auditions were held in
November, right around exam time,
and this time I got in. (I also somehow
managed to scrape through first-year
law with marks in the low fifties.)

Though I came to know the interior
of the theatre department, coffee
lounge and neighbouring pubs far bet-
ter than any lecture theatre, over
the years I did begin to find, much to
my surprise, that my interest in the law
actually grew. I attribute this to the
fact that being involved in theatre and
comedy opened my eyes to a wider
world and generated a hunger to explore
it more fully. The latter years of the law
course gave the opportunity to do just
that and my marks steadily improved
year after year. (Notwithstanding the
year I got zero for every subject because
‘I forgot’ to sit my exams as I was in a
to show at The Last Laugh.)

By the end of my degree, I was even
at the point of contemplating practis-
ing, I decided to give myself two years
to see if I could earn a living out of my
creativity. Two years and a couple of
 gigs as a tv writer later, I gave myself
another two years. More than a deca-
de on I have not exactly earned from
writing comedy what I would have as a
lawyer, but I am still doing what my
16-year-old self desperately wanted to
do, and when negotiating a contract
with a producer or television network,
the degree comes in handy—I summon
up everything I learnt about law at
Melbourne Uni and call a lawyer.

by ac

m

There were kids of seventeen with side
parts and patent-leather briefcases.
Some of the girls were pearly. I wore a
Pogues t-shirt and a floppy fringe that
covered my eyes, hiding a look of utter
bewilderment as everyone around me
battered knowingly about jurispru-
dence, mens rea and chambrey shirts,
which, it turns out, was not the name
of a seventeenth-century French jurist.
I was out of my depth but held on
with grim determination to my goal
of getting into the Law Revue. Trouble
was, I failed the audition, I couldn’t
believe it. How could quoting TS Eliot
while pretending to be a piece of frying
bacon be anything but a sure-fire
winner? I spent a bleak year flailing about
and was about to chuck it all in when,
luckily, they brought forward the next
year’s revue to fit in with the Comedy
Festival. The auditions were held in
November, right around exam time,
and this time I got in. (I also somehow
managed to scrape through first-year
law with marks in the low fifties.)

Though I came to know the interior
of the theatre department, coffee
lounge and neighbouring pubs far bet-
ter than any lecture theatre, over
the years I did begin to find, much to
my surprise, that my interest in the law
actually grew. I attribute this to the
fact that being involved in theatre and
comedy opened my eyes to a wider
world and generated a hunger to explore
it more fully. The latter years of the law
course gave the opportunity to do just
that and my marks steadily improved
year after year. (Notwithstanding the
year I got zero for every subject because
‘I forgot’ to sit my exams as I was in a
to show at The Last Laugh.)

By the end of my degree, I was even
at the point of contemplating practis-
ing, I decided to give myself two years
to see if I could earn a living out of my
creativity. Two years and a couple of
 gigs as a tv writer later, I gave myself
another two years. More than a deca-
de on I have not exactly earned from
writing comedy what I would have as a
lawyer, but I am still doing what my
16-year-old self desperately wanted to
do, and when negotiating a contract
with a producer or television network,
the degree comes in handy—I summon
up everything I learnt about law at
Melbourne Uni and call a lawyer.
Connecting online has its rewards.

Did you know that as an alumnus you’re entitled to a range of exclusive benefits?

- Change your perspective
  on exclusive Director’s tours at
  the Ian Potter Museum of Art.
- Sharpen your knowledge
  and enrol in discounted study under
  the Community Access Program.
- Excite your intellect and attend
  the Public Lecture Series.
- Consult the experts and browse the
  University’s range of online journals.
- Kickstart your career via the online
  job search and networking services.

To know more, visit unimelb.edu.au/alumni/benefits

By connecting with us, you can take advantage of these and future benefits. Simply:

1. Sign-up for Alumni eNews* and each month we’ll deliver the latest alumni announcements straight to your inbox.
2. Tell us what you’re interested in and we’ll tailor an e-News Bulletin to suit you.

Sign-up for Alumni e-News by July 31, 2010 and you’ll go into the draw to win a $1000 travel voucher.

I enjoy reading about the events and news of the University, even though I am no longer part of that world. There are always opportunities to learn something new or attend entertaining events.

Alumni eNews reader

*Available only and free to University of Melbourne alumni

The Longevity Risk: Word of warning or window of opportunity? Alumni unravel Australia’s latest demographic trends.

Melbourne University Magazine