The brave new world of online universities
In 2013, an election year, experience suggests that higher education must expect little airtime in the electoral contest. The issues that will command attention – health, schools, disability and economic policy among others – all deserve sustained debate. Yet elections also pass over many matters. Vast numbers of government responsibilities are left off the public agenda and rarely discussed.

This year, universities have sought a little more visibility. Cuts to university funds provoked a community backlash. The cuts did not become a parliamentary issue – both major parties supported the budget reductions – but the electorate is not happy to see opportunities for present and future students put at risk.

This change in sentiment reflects the growing significance of universities in the life of our society. Universities have become deeply engaged in the business of the public – as centres of thinking, as places for conversation and, in practical ways, as large employers in the local economy. People who study and work in universities are among the most passionate followers and advocates of policy arguments. Increasingly, their concerns are shared in the wider community.

At the most fundamental level, universities contribute teaching and research. Across disciplines from architecture to zoology, from the arts to the sciences, students invest huge efforts to master the latest knowledge in every field. Their teachers are busy curating existing understanding, and extending the boundaries of knowledge. Research can transform our capacity to cope with food and water shortages, disease, or to understand better the sinewy metaphors of TS Eliot’s *Four Quartets*.

Universities are also hubs of innovation. Just this year, for example, the sector has pioneered the public availability of knowledge through eLearning and the brave new world of MOOCs (massive open online courses). The University of Melbourne’s engagement with Silicon Valley start-up Coursera, for example, has taken some of our most talented teachers to an audience of more than 240,000 new students studying online.

Universities contribute directly to public debate and the workings of democracy. This year, we launched the Melbourne School of Government, a professional school ready to inspire and train the next generation of public servants, community advocates and government staff.

Academics contribute their expertise to popular web media such as *The Conversation* and support ventures such as *The Citizen*, a newspaper edited and compiled by graduate journalism students. Vice-Chancellor’s Fellows such as former Premier John Brumby (BCom 1974) and former Member for Kooyong Petro Georgiou (BA(Hons) 1970, PhD) bring their extraordinary experience of government to teaching and events on campus. We might hope, amid an election campaign, that many voices from the University will contribute to expert commentary on issues, and so encourage public discussion marked by substantive contributions and a commitment to evidence and analysis.

Both public and public-spirited, the University of Melbourne seeks to make a difference. Students, academics and graduates contribute in many ways. Outstanding individuals like Dr Samuel Pisar, profiled on page 18, highlight the extraordinary impact the University’s graduates can have.

All this work is made possible by public funding, by the contribution of students to the cost of their education, and through the kindness of philanthropy. Thus while melanoma and skin cancer remain major Australian health problems, Mrs Pamela Galli has decided to contribute to the solution. A generous donor, she has endowed the Lorenzo Galli Chair in Melanoma and Skin Cancers, in memory of her late husband. Building on her amazing generosity, the University has also worked with Mrs Galli to establish the Lorenzo and Pamela Galli Chair in Developmental Medicine, representing a commitment to improving the lives of children with disabilities and their families.

Inspired by the dedicated Melbourne people who have contributed to this University’s goals over the years, the University has launched a major philanthropy initiative: *Believe - the Campaign for the University of Melbourne*. The Campaign, chaired by Allan Myers AO QC (BA 1969, LLB (Hons) 1970, LLD 2012), is about the next generation of students and academics, about making available even better opportunities to contribute.

Whoever leads the Government, your University will continue to play its role as a vital contributor to our public life.
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This publication is fully recyclable, please dispose of it wisely.
Hundreds of books buried deep in Melbourne University Publishing’s (MUP) back catalogue are being resurrected for purchase as e-books.

MUP is converting 300 books on its 350-book backlist into files for digital readers and has so far completed more than 200. The e-books from the backlist will join new releases on the virtual shelves of MUP’s online store.

MUP chief executive Louise Adler AM says the phrase “out of print” is now obsolete. “For the reader, books are always available and heaven is a library without borders,” Adler says.

E-books are changing the very structure of the publishing business with inventory management no longer one of the dominant factors.

“Books need not gather dust in warehouses. Our print runs can vary from one copy to infinity and we can print on demand to orders as they arrive in our e-store,” she says.

Founded in 1922 as a bookseller to students, MUP quickly turned into a publisher of academic works. More recently, under Adler, MUP has broadened its reach to include serious general readers, publishing general interest titles.

The book industry is in transition and more mergers and closures can be expected in the next 12 months, she says. “The future is going to be challenging but it is also exciting – MUP’s wonderful stable of writers can now reach a far broader audience across Australia and internationally.”

The new e-books include the iconic A History of Australia Volumes 1-6 by Manning Clark (BA(Hons) 1938, MA 1944, DLitt 1974), Michael Cannon’s The Land Boomers and Voyage to Australia and the Pacific by Edward Duyker OAM FAHA (PhD 1981). Still to come are Irresistible Forces: Women in Australian Science by Claire Hooker and Letters of Mary Gilmore.

Adler says not all books on the backlist are suitable for conversion. “Books that are highly illustrated are more complex to convert for digital readers, so we’re considering each of our lavishly illustrated and beautifully designed Miegunyah titles as to their suitability for conversion,” she says.

The e-books can be read on any electronic device - computers, iPads, e-readers (including Kindles and Kobos) and smartphones. MUP’s e-books are priced from $9.99 to $29.99. The e-books and other MUP titles are available at the publisher’s e-store, www.mup.com.au. Alumni get a 25% discount at the online store.

— To register go to www.mup.com.au/page/alumni_offer

The University of Melbourne is bidding to become the Pacific’s centre for policy and good governance with its new School of Government.

The multi-disciplinary school, which sits in the Faculty of Arts, was launched in mid-June, bringing together lecturers and subjects from law, social sciences and business and absorbing the Centre for Public Policy.

Public Policy Professor Helen Sullivan will be the school’s first executive director.

Professor Sullivan, who came to Melbourne early in 2012 from the University of Birmingham, is keen to place the new school in its regional and global context.

“Of course we are interested in Australia but it’s not enough to understand your local context – you have to understand how you fit globally,” she says.

The new School of Government is aimed at local and international students working in government, corporates and not-for-profit organisations. It offers programs to help students learn how to develop public policy and maintain good governance.

“The big American universities have been very successful in attracting people from this region. If Australia is to be in and of the region, then it has to understand it has a big role to play and there is a lot to learn from being engaged. This is a good place from which to do that work,” Sullivan says.

The new School of Government will initially offer the three existing programs – the Master of International Relations, the Master of Development Studies and the Master of Public Policy and Management – with new subjects and programs coming on stream next year.

The new school will also provide tailored public policy advice as well as executive education programs.

“It’s also for people who work in the private sector and want a crash course in working with governments and their institutions,” Sullivan says.

“Policymakers face great challenges and the new school aims to equip future leaders to make better decisions, build stronger systems of governance and improve outcomes for their communities.”
The romance that’s Kong

The biggest musical in Melbourne, King Kong, is a dream come true for a group of VCA graduates.

Throughout the auditions for King Kong, Adam Lyon thought he was aiming for an offstage cover role – a kind of understudy who steps into another actor’s shoes should any mishap occur. It partly explains his reaction when he was offered the role of one of the handful of principal characters who carry the show. It was the Executive Producer of Melbourne-based production company Global Creatures who told him the good news, and Lyon asked if the man was too rich for a hug. After the embrace, the 31-year-old performer bolted from the theatre.

“Which I think was understandable under the circumstances,” he says. The circumstances in this case are that Lyon’s first professional production since graduating from VCA’s Bachelor of Music (Performance) degree in 2011 sees him in a lead role in the largest, most expensive musical ever created in Australia, with some reports placing Kong as the second biggest musical ever produced anywhere.

It wasn’t the scale of the show itself which left Lyon cowed, but the suddenness of his appointment.

“Usually you pay your dues. You come up through the ranks, do some understudy work. That’s what I found daunting, jumping that queue. There’s a level of guilt mixed in with awe and gratefulness.”

Chris Ryan is another VCA graduate to step into a principal role in the production, though his dues are thoroughly acquitted already. He began his career in the Bell Shakespeare Company’s schools program and has worked for most major theatre companies in the country, including STC, MTC and Malthouse Theatre.

Ryan didn’t set out to become an actor per se – he first studied classical singing at VCA and after graduating applied to study music theatre at WAAPA. He didn’t get in but at the same time VCA offered him a place in its acting stream. That’s why one of the country’s most prolific stage actors hasn’t performed in a musical since a stint in Les Miserables at Altona Civic Theatre in 2001.

“The big thing I learned from VCA is that acting isn’t what I thought it was,” he says. “I had in my mind that it was some kind of formula. I soon realised I didn’t know anything at all.

“You can’t create a performance by making it up in your head. You’ve got to use everything that’s around you and whatever’s inspiring you at the time. Whatever you’re reading and watching and the people you see out in the streets. And it’s the people you’re working with as well. It’s not a formula. Anyone can come up with an Academy Award-winning performance in their bedroom but you get into the rehearsal room and it doesn’t work.”

Kong’s cast numbers more than 40 and the roster of creatives working on the show in total edges into triple figures. It takes 11 to animate the six-metre beast at the show’s centre, which makes the prospect of a mere human attempting to win an audience’s attention back from such a spectacle an intimidating one.

“When we saw Kong’s first entrance during rehearsals,” says Ryan, “it was so impressive that we just looked at each other and went: ‘Sheesh. People are going to hate us talking after that. They’re just going to want the ape back.’ But that actually feeds your performance. You have to step it up.”

Kong’s cast includes a host of other VCA alumni – Ross Hannaford, Sam Hooper, Leah Lim, Chris Ostrenski, Joshua Robson and Jacob Williams – and has the largest number of VCA Music Theatre graduates of any musical ever. Leah Lim was in the inaugural year of the Music Theatre course and describes the ensemble as “a big family”.

Lim says that the most useful thing her studies provided was connections with colleagues she would later end up working alongside. “The best thing that the course prepared me for came through the people I met, people I ended up performing with. The networking was just incredible, to observe professionals teaching us who we now get to work with. And it’s always nice to have a friendly face in auditions, too!”
Leigh Clifford AO (BE 1968, MEngSc 1971, International House), Deputy Chairman of today’s Campaign, says the 1955 publicity materials provide a fascinating insight into how things have changed.

“Undoubtedly infrastructure is still very important. Our students and staff need the best facilities in which to excel,” he says. “But the focus of the University is so much wider today than in 1955. Then, it served Victoria; today we operate on a global scale, with a student body from around the world and partners in many different countries.

“And while we do still face financial challenges, the current Campaign is really about ensuring the University of Melbourne can reach its full potential, in every way. That means supporting the brightest, most deserving students to achieve, funding research that will tackle the greatest challenges facing humanity, and contributing to communities, locally and further afield.”

In 1955, the Appeal brochure issued this call to action: “We cannot stand still, we must not retreat, let us all set our hands to the plough and not look back.”

For Mr Clifford and his colleagues leading the current Campaign, that message still has great resonance: “We have an opportunity to change the lives of future generations, in so many ways. We have a duty to do what we can to make it happen.”

— Find out more at campaign.unimelb.edu.au
Start-ups are the new black

Melbourne is emerging as a hub for creative start-ups. Proving it is not just a degrees factory, the University of Melbourne is funding the Melbourne Accelerator Program (MAP), which helps engineering and business students develop their own start-up business ventures. Now in its second year, MAP gives winning applicants office space, $20,000 in kick-start funding and access to a network of entrepreneurs, venture capitalists and angel investors.

MAP manager, Rohan Workman (BCom, 2007), who is director of his own start-up RosterCloud, says the program is about “nursing entrepreneurship on campus” by building networks and managing the formal funding program.

“Melbourne has grown tremendously as a start-up ecosystem in the past 18 months. There are a number of co-working spaces, accelerators are doing well and there are many active investors,” he says. “Most importantly, though, people in the community are supporting each other’s start-ups through sharing knowledge and passing on advice.”

Interest in MAP is building. A series of four workshops held before the formal application process opened attracted hundreds of budding entrepreneurs in the early stages of their projects, “who wanted to see what MAP is all about.”

Last year 32 teams applied for four spots and this year 53 teams and 126 people applied for six places (see opposite for winners). “We’ve had a fantastic year,” Workman says.

Entrepreneur Leni Mayo (BSc(Hons) 1985, Janet Clarke Hall) is a MAP mentor and has played a key role nurturing young entrepreneurs and businesses.

“The start-up game is like any other high-risk activity – it can provide high returns, but most people fail and only a few make it big,” he says.

MAP’s mentors act informally, providing advice and keeping up-to-date with the teams’ activities via social nights, and more formally via the advisory board, which is committed to raising money to keep the program going.

MAP applications closed in late April. The winning teams started work in July and will host an exclusive Demo Day for potential investors on 9 October 2013.

To be eligible for MAP funds at least one member of the start-up must be a staff member or current student of the Melbourne School of Engineering (MSE) or the Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE), or have taken a subject in those departments.

Research students could also be eligible if their supervisor is from MSE or FBE. University alumni who have graduated in the past five years and studied subjects in MSE or FBE can also apply.

— For more information go to http://map.eng.unimelb.edu.au

MAP START-UPS 2013

- Scott Li, Lauren Tan and Dean Magee are working on a search engine called The Price Geek. It scans data from various online shopping portals to provide consumers with comparative information.

- Ebla is an online publishing platform. The team behind Ebla is Joseph Valente, Jason Lim and Adam Neumann.

- MobLeads’ Oliver Costa and James Merritt are working on a business that helps convert mobile traffic into customer phone calls.

- SwatchMate will manufacture a portable plastic electronic device that matches paint on a surface to a huge range of paint brands and colours.

- The 2Mar Robotics team is developing wheel chair-mounted arms for quadriplegics. Young Australian of the Year (2012) Marita Cheng is working on the project with Hok Shun Poon.

- Cortera Neurotechnologies designs implantable medical devices for the diagnosis and treatment of neurological conditions. The team consists of Rikky Muller, Simone Gambini and Peter Ledochowitsch.

SWATCHMATE

The SwatchMate team of Rocky Liang, Paul Peng and Djordje Dikic are planning to manufacture a portable electronic device that matches paints on an existing surface.

They started the project in the final year of their electrical engineering degree and have been working on it for 18 months. Having just missed out on last year’s MAP funding, they put in a lot of work this year.

With their technology sorted – they will use a smart phone application to keep the device updated as mobile phone cameras can’t match wall colour to the paint company charts – the SwatchMate team will use their MAP time and money commercialising their product and developing contacts with mentors and venture capital funders.

“We are planning to launch a Kickstarter to go directly to potential consumers to see if they can help finance the manufacturing process,” says Djordje.
Coursing ahead

The University of Melbourne has embraced the trend to free, online learning with a partnership with the US-based start-up Coursera. Angela Martinkus reports on how and why the University has moved so fast.

It was late on Saturday night on the 31st of March this year and the University of Melbourne’s e-learning designer, Peter Mellow, was up unusually late working. He had volunteered to upload the University’s first MOOC (massive open online course) to the largest free online university platform in the world, Coursera.

At midnight he logged into the secure site and uploaded week one of Principles of Macroeconomics, delivered by respected economics Professor Nilss Olekalns. It consisted of six video lectures, an online practice quiz, online resources, discussion forums, a Facebook page and a Twitter handle which had been created for the course.

With a single keystroke the University of Melbourne, in its 160th year, launched into a world where all that’s needed to access one of its prestigious courses is a computer and a curious mind.

“It was like a tsunami,” he says. “I went to bed at 1am and the next morning there were already 12,000 students online. In the first six hours people had started the course, were writing comments on the discussion boards and were already starting to form connections with one another in Brazil, China, across the US, India, Lithuania, Paris, Sydney and even the Caribbean,” Peter says.

Over the next few days the number of students downloading the videos and participating in the course swelled to more than 26,000.

With more than 100,000 enrolments registered in January, before any of the University of Melbourne courses had even started, you didn’t have to be a rocket scientist to appreciate the power of MOOCs to build the University’s profile, change the way it delivers courses and potentially turn the traditional university operating model on its head.

As the first Australian university to embrace this new open source model, the University of Melbourne offered seven courses over the internet, via a secure site, to anyone, anywhere, for free.

The principle of open and online learning has been around for some time but this new model spruiked a philosophy of free education from the top ‘Ivy League’ universities, amongst the most prestigious in the world.

MELBOURNE JOINED THE ONLINE REVOLUTION

When Provost Professor Margaret Sheil started at the University of Melbourne in March 2012 she didn’t know two things. She didn’t know about Coursera and she didn’t know whether she could make much difference to Australia’s top university.

When hired by Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis to lead development and delivery of academic strategy, Margaret was the CEO of the Australian Research Council, a small organisation that determines which university academics get research funding, and before that a professor at the “very agile” University of Wollongong for 17 years.

“One of the underlying concerns for me was how quickly you could move the University of Melbourne because it is so big, it has so much history and it is so devolved,” she recalls.

Very soon after her arrival the wheels of change started to spin. A quiet revolution was underway in North America that was about to take the traditional university sector by storm.

Coursera, founded by Stanford computer science professors Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng, had raised US$22 million and was set to launch. Around the same time computer scientists at MIT and Harvard were establishing the rival model, edX.

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“Invest some time in an activity from which we learn a great deal and which would position us in partnership with the best universities in the world? There was no downside as far as we could tell.”

PROVOST PROFESSOR MARGARET SHEIL

On 19 April 2012, Coursera opened its virtual doors, which consisted of an online portal with four universities – Princeton, Stanford, the University of Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania – offering 38 courses. Students sign up using a secure logon and work through their course delivered to their inbox every week, at their own pace. Lectures are delivered via video and the learning is aided by online study resources, discussion forums, online quizzes, peer assessments and local ‘meetups’ where students doing the same course get together face-to-face.

Within three months Coursera had enrolled more than 1.5 million students and another 12 universities jumped on board.

Meanwhile the University of Melbourne’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Programs, Professor Pip Pattison (BSc(Hons)1973, PhD 1980, Ormond College) and Director of eLearning, Associate Professor Gregor Kennedy (BA(Hons) 1993, PhD 1998), had been working on an online strategy for the University throughout 2011. According to Pip: “We are leading the way now but we weren’t four years ago.

“Gregor had spent a year developing an e-learning strategy and one aspect was to engage in more experimental forms of online learning so the Coursera opportunity was perfect,” Pip says.

“They knew what we needed to do,” Margaret recalls. “So on 17 July 2012, when Coursera signed up Edinburgh University (in the second round of onboarding) they really came on my radar.”
“Pip and I talked and decided to contact (co-founder) Daphne to see if she was interested in us being involved. So I sent her an email and she came back saying of course she was interested in the University of Melbourne.

“I arranged a Skype conversation with Daphne on the following Saturday afternoon – I had Pip on her mobile phone, Daphne on my desktop and the Vice-Chancellor came into my office and joined the conversation as well.

“We couldn’t see a downside – invest some time in an activity from which we will learn a great deal and which would position us in partnership with the best universities in the world? There was no downside as far as we could tell.”

Within a week Pip and Gregor had pulled together a list of top academics who were great teachers or early adopters of technology and started the process of developing seven courses that could be added to the Coursera curriculum.

On 19 September 2012 the University of Melbourne announced it had signed up, making it the first Australian university to join Coursera. Ten months later on 31 July 2013 Coursera announced that the University of New South Wales and the University of Western Australia had also signed up.

“The Coursera example demonstrates two things,” says Margaret.

“One is you can move Melbourne very quickly when it is the clever, smart, leading edge thing to do. The second is the standing and the prestige of Melbourne meant that people wanted us to do it.”

“It has been a wild ride,” says e-learning designer Peter Mellow. Coursera project manager Deborah Jones agrees.

“We kept the project team really tight. To start with it was just Gregor and I sitting at his computer working out how to use the platform to set up the first few course pages,” Deborah says.

It was a challenge to get seven new courses developed in around four months but with the support of Margaret and Pip, when roadblocks cropped up, the team collaborated, developed a solution and moved on, fast.

Coursera provides the super-stable platform which hosts the content and users, and all of the partner universities work with a co-ordinator on a production pipeline to develop their coursework.

Academics adapt their ‘normal’ subject for the online environment and work with the University’s in-house media and production group, which has a studio setup to film the lectures and create annotated PowerPoint slides and other ‘infographics’ to visually convey concepts.

Video production manager Eileen Wall works with all of the lecturers producing Coursera courses, giving them advice and helping them feel relaxed in front of the camera, rather than a lecture hall.
Some academics are quite taken with the new approach. Nilss Olekalns led *Principles of Macroeconomics* and is now relaxed in front of the camera after recalibrating the course he has taught for more than 20 years into a format suitable for viewing online.

While Pascal Van Hentenryck, who leads Discrete Optimisation, the University’s third Coursera course, took on the Indiana Jones persona when he filmed his lectures in the iconic University of Melbourne quadrangle.

A team of about 30 people from around the University attend a monthly ‘Courserian’ meeting to share ideas and discuss progress – including the copyright office team, the lecturers, their assistants, the production crew, librarians and the e-learning team.

According to Coursera founder Daphne Koller, the University of Melbourne team’s course production pipeline is one of the best developed and organised. “It is clear that Melbourne believes in the model of open education and has come on board with some outstanding classes,” Daphne says.

With many recognised players in the open university space – the two big ones being the Stanford backed Coursera and the MIT and Harvard backed edX, which has signed up the University of Queensland – Margaret is sure the University of Melbourne has backed the right horse.

“It feels like an academic collaboration, it doesn’t feel like you are part of a commercial transaction,” Margaret says.

“We were quite happy to be the first Australian university on board but when you join a venture like this the most important factor is that the venture succeeds.”

**THE VALUE PROPOSITION**

The cost of the Coursera partnership has been minimal, with $35,000 allocated per subject to develop the online material, with a total cost of $245,000. But when it comes to making money Margaret says there was never any expectation that it was about revenue.

“Revenue wasn’t the reason we went into it – we did it because it positioned us with the finest universities in the world, we were on the inside of a rapidly changing dynamic in education and, by the sheer fact that hundreds of thousands of people visited our website, looked at what Melbourne has to offer and decided to enrol in a course, it provides some marketing gains,” Margaret says.

However in the US, revenue is generated by offering students a verified completion certificate for about $50, which has generated about $80,000 per session in revenue for a couple of the universities in the first quarter, covering the costs of creating the courses.

The certificate uses ID verification technology developed by the Coursera computer engineers and the University of Melbourne is going down the same route.

In a recent move toward further recognition for MOOCs the American Council on Education has agreed to credit five Coursera courses – subject to payment of about $100 to verify IDs and conduct exams via webcam. These can be credited towards degrees at hundreds of colleges and universities.
Who uses MOOCs?

Professionals with a degree who are extending their knowledge, mature age students and people who haven’t completed a university degree because of financial or geographic barriers to entry.

Principles of Macroeconomics – where students came from

88 countries in total, visited 17 pages per visit.

- 3.2% Russia
- 3.3% Serbia
- 3.4% Portugal
- 3.5% Germany
- 3.9% UK
- 4.4% Spain
- 6.4% Australia
- 9.2% India
- 20.4% USA
- 42.3% Other

KEY FACTS ABOUT PRINCIPLES OF MACROECONOMICS ON COURSERA

Students who enrolled – 61,852
Students who started – 26,158
Students who completed – 5,129 (19.6%)
Average time online – 22 minutes
Facebook members – 1,764
Tweets – 934 used Twitter to communicate
Video lectures downloaded – 356,327
Online video quizzes completed – 284,919

The exception is however that the credits don’t count at the partner universities themselves.

Clearly, if via ‘accredited’ MOOCs universities can share top quality courses, then there are potential cost savings to be found in the traditional education delivery model. Discussions are underway in California to legislate to make this happen.

In Australia this type of ‘accreditation’ is not likely to occur in the near future, with the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency flagging that it will not directly oversee MOOCs.

“TEQSA strongly encourages initiatives within the sector to improve the quality of the student’s learning experience of higher education, whether these are through more diverse content or the creation of more effective and accessible modes of delivery,” says TEQSA Chief Commissioner, Dr Carol Nicoll.

TEQSA is co-hosting an e-learning forum in October 2013, which will allow a range of providers to showcase their online delivery and for TEQSA to share perspectives on implications for regulation.

Margaret notes, however, that any programs involving the University of Melbourne are subject to the same internal processes and scrutiny as the traditional modes of delivery.

In Australia, with the rapid emergence of MOOCs in 2013, it may be a case of policy and governments playing catch-up in the months and years ahead.

WHAT THE NEW MODEL MEANS

On 3 May 2012 New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote that the Coursera experiment was set to revolutionise the global education sector. “What happened to the newspaper and magazine business is about to happen to higher education: a rescrambling around the Web,” he wrote.

Margaret doesn’t necessarily agree: “Education is social. Coursera will change the mechanism for delivering content but it won’t change fundamentally how we educate students.”

Pip agrees and says the Coursera partnership has prompted robust discussion around the evolving role of the University.

“I have been asked why the University is giving away for free something that students normally pay for and what they are paying for is the on-campus experience and the credentialing that goes with that,” she says.

“Despite attendance levels in lectures dropping and students reporting external pressures like the need to work more than ever to support their studies, campus life is booming.

“The opportunity to be in a rich scholarly environment where you can interact with like-minded people and talk with experts from many disciplines means that the University becomes an environment that encourages both personal and disciplinary creativity. That’s really the value the University community adds.”

According to the University of Melbourne’s own higher education expert, Professor Simon Marginson (BA(Hons) 1974, PhD 1996), Coursera is “disruptive no doubt about it, but at a different level”.

“Universities are based on the process of selection which is driven by reputation. Students will choose the most prestigious university because it will provide access to a future based on its exclusive reputation,” he says.

“Therefore, this issue of exclusivity of a degree gained from an institution like the University of Melbourne is not going to be diluted by the existence of online models like Coursera, edX or others.”

The change is in the way it delivers learning. Says Simon: “Coursera is a game changer for the university sector and heralds a new economic model that will have an impact for all universities.”

— To find out more go to: www.coursera.org

88 countries in total, visited 17 pages per visit.
Asia — fully engaged

The University of Melbourne’s engagement with Asia is deepening. Professor Simon Evans shares his strategic approach.

In June 2013 the founding director of the Center for Chinese Economic Research at Peking University, Dr Justin Lin, delivered the annual Faculty of Business and Economics David Finch lecture on the topic of “Demystifying the Chinese Economy”.

Demand for the event well and truly exceeded supply and the 300-seat lecture theatre was booked out weeks beforehand. To pick up the overflow video screens were wheeled into adjoining rooms, which were also packed to capacity. A further 700 watched the lecture via a live webcast. The Faculty of Business and Economics had never seen anything like it.

Interest in the world’s second-largest economy was extraordinary. During the lecture Dr Lin spoke about China’s transformation, explaining that since 1978 its economy had grown 24 times – an annual growth rate of 9.8 per cent continuously for 33 years.

Impressive statistics, but the economic growth story for the region does not rest with China alone. According to OECD forecasts the key South East Asian nations – Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand – will experience growth of 5.5 per cent in the years ahead.

Indonesia is now a strong regional and global player, an active G20 member and on a trajectory to becoming one of the world’s 10 largest economies by 2020 and in the top six by 2030.

Professorial Fellow in Economics at the University of Melbourne, Professor Ross Garnaut AO, says Australia’s position within Asia is critical and shapes the mission of Australian universities.

“The majority of the human species lives on what we call the Asian continent and a majority of the history of humanity is on that continent,” he says. “You can’t profess to be first rate in any field of knowledge unless you have deep understanding of what’s going on in your field in Asia.”

Many countries in Asia, and in particular China, are making staggering investments in higher education.

Chair of the University’s Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Professor Simon Marginson, has observed that between 2005 and 2012 the number of top 500 ranked universities in mainland China jumped from eight to 23 and between 1995 and 2009 Asia’s annual output of science papers grew from 77,000 to almost 190,000.

According to Pro Vice-Chancellor (International), Professor Simon Evans, with nearly 300 academics and over 100 PhD students working in Asia-related fields, the University of Melbourne has considerable breadth and depth underpinning its engagement with the region at this critical time.

“The University is home to Asialink, Australia’s leading centre for the public understanding of Asia for more than 20 years, and the Australia India Institute, a leading centre for the study of India,” Evans says. “It was the first Australian university to teach Indonesian language and its many international students have gone on to play critical roles in Asian countries.”

The University has recently established a new Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies, appointed key academics with regional expertise (see opposite) and is sending more students and academics into the region.

Scratch the surface of any faculty and you will find deep collaborative research engagement – projects delivering real outcomes for people living across the region. These include research into tropical diseases in Vietnam led by the Nossal Institute for Global Health; mental health research in Indonesia carried out by the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health; development of the RV3 Rotavirus vaccine to prevent gastroenteritis in babies carried out by the University in collaboration with the Royal Children’s Hospital and the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute; the new Australia-China Joint Research Centre for River Basin Management focusing on water efficiency, food security and environmental sustainability; a global collaboration with a key Chinese partner that unlocked the genetic blueprint of a parasitic roundworm, Ascaris Suum, that causes a debilitating and often fatal disease; to name but a few examples.

With research spending of more than $844 million last year, the University is one of the largest and most productive research organisations in Australia.

Increasing numbers of University of Melbourne students are now travelling to Asia as part of their degree. In 2011 more than a third of the 2,500 University of Melbourne students who studied abroad studied in Asia.

This year it’s set to be higher. Teams of business and economics students will travel to China, Singapore and Malaysia to work with other students on real business problems.

Education students will work in village schools in Thailand and the Australia India Institute, a leading centre for the study of India, “Evans says. “It was the first Australian university to teach Indonesian language and its many international students have gone on to play critical roles in Asian countries.”

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Anthony D’Costa
Chair of Contemporary Indian Studies, Professor Anthony D’Costa, says the University is at the forefront of a renaissance in the field in Australia. “We intend to build and sustain a world class program on contemporary India, one in which India is studied in its wider Asian and global contexts,” says D’Costa, formerly of the Copenhagen Business School.

The Victorian state government, which has provided initial funding for the new Chair from May 2013, sees building a stronger base of India scholarship as more than just an academic pursuit. Connecting to India’s expanding economy will also support jobs growth in Victoria and Australia generally. The new program will be cutting edge. “We are working with India’s Nalanda University, mentored by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, to develop an online course on Contemporary India to be offered via Coursera,” D’Costa says.

“We already offer undergraduate and postgraduate subjects on India and will eventually offer a Masters Program. We will also offer customised executive education programs for corporates. Melbourne was once Australia’s intellectual hub of teaching and research on India. We believe it will win back that status in the not too distant future.”

Jane Lu
Recently appointed to the James Riady chair in the Faculty of Business and Economics, Professor Jane Lu has a strategic view on how the Faculty should create greater engagement with Asia. Recruited from the National University of Singapore, she is excited by her capacity to leverage connections from an individual level to an institutional level and create opportunities that embed connections across the entire Faculty. “In research, we can expand and potentially consolidate our activity,” Lu says. “We can have more regular faculty based exchange to facilitate research for the Asia Pacific region and research that has more relevance.”

The same philosophy would apply to teaching. “If we want to strengthen our connection with Asia, we need to think of faculty members with connections and expertise in the area. We can also revise the curriculum to reflect the Asia-Pacific context,” Lu says. “I am also thinking of strengthening our connection with Asia at the institutional level. We can collaborate with governments in Asia. There are also industry connections with specific companies. And we are a university, so we need to strengthen our connections with universities in Asia.”

Christine Wong
Appointed to lead the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies (CCCS), Professor Christine Wong will take a keen interest in issues facing contemporary China. “We will look at various facets of the country and its modern day relationship with Australia, be it political, economic, social or cultural,” Wong says.

A leading international authority on China’s public finance and public sector reform, Wong brings unrivalled knowledge and experience to the role. Wong was previously Professor of Chinese Public Finance at the University of Oxford and held the Henry M Jackson Professorship at the Henry M Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington.

Her goal is to develop a program of world-class research at the CCCS focusing on current policy interests in China including fiscal policies, social protection, migration, innovation and technological upgrading. “This effort will initially draw on expertise around the University and in Melbourne.”

“This research and knowledge-creation will make the CCCS an attractive platform for engaging with scholars and policymakers in China, Australia and elsewhere in Asia.” It will also raise the profile of Chinese Studies at the University of Melbourne.
WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Fresh research from the University’s Dookie campus in northern Victoria proves wastewater is as good as regular irrigated water for growing crops.

The important field experiment, conducted nearby in Shepparton, could lead the way for recycled water to irrigate some crops in Australia and around the world.

A research project which took place last summer on the world’s biggest crop, maize, and okra, a popular African vegetable, indicates that crops grown with wastewater had similar growth levels as crops watered with conventional irrigation water.

More maize is grown worldwide than even rice and wheat. Statistics from the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation show that more than 833.46 million tonnes of maize was grown worldwide in 2011, both for human consumption and as silage, for feeding animals.

Dr Andrew Hamilton, senior research fellow and Science Director at Dookie, set up the project in Shepparton over the summer, working with Goulburn Valley Water to compare the growth rates of maize and okra.

“The crops grow just as well with wastewater but not necessarily better,” Hamilton says. “It’s not a ho-hum result. We could have found that crops aren’t growing as well.”

While wastewater comes with fertilizing nutrients, it also carries potential problems from contaminants and salt.

“This is very challenging wastewater. It’s highly saline.” Shepparton proved to be a great place for a field experiment because the Shepparton Wastewater Management Facility had both irrigation and recycled water channels close to each other.

While existing recycled water schemes are mostly located on the fringes of large cities (Melbourne and Adelaide, in particular), the results from the research project should give regional areas the confidence to go ahead with new schemes.

“That quality water is permitted for use on crops like maize,” Hamilton says. “It could be particularly useful for growing silage for dairy cattle. With further treatment it could be used for vegetable production and even some household uses.”

According to MGSE’s Associate Professor Lea Waters, “when these five elements are present in our life we are likely to enjoy high levels of wellbeing.”

Research has found that positive psychology programs can boost hope, gratitude, serenity and resilience in young people. “The importance of a positive psychology approach in schools cannot be over-estimated, every student needs to learn the skills for wellbeing which are as critical as numeracy and literacy,” Waters says.
In pursuit of happiness

Positive psychology emerged from the United States 15 years ago and is now applied widely across education, sports, public health and corporate education. The Melbourne Graduate School of Education is taking the lead on local programs and research in this hugely popular area.

When Associate Professor Lea Waters of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne (MGSE) first came across ‘positive psychology’ 11 years ago, it was on a personal impulse.

Already practising as a psychologist, Lea was pregnant and “wanted to raise optimistic children”. So she picked up Authentic Happiness, the pioneering book by the University of Pennsylvania’s Professor Marty Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, which advocates the focus on a person’s character strengths and resilience for them to live the most fulfilling life possible.

“To me it was a very different approach – to think that I could practise as a psychologist by helping people ‘up-level’ their strengths and potential, rather than only helping them by fixing what was wrong in their lives.”

Lea Waters (BA(Hons) 1992) says she had “no idea it was going to radically alter my career – what I teach, how I teach, what I research and the processes I use in my role as an organisational psychologist”.

Fast forward 10 years and the University of Melbourne has become well-known globally for its innovative positive psychology research and MGSE has recently announced the creation of the Gerry Higgins Chair of Positive Psychology, a first in Australia.

Marshalled into prominence by pioneers such as Seligman, Professor Chris Peterson and Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, positive psychology has grown as a discipline more than any other field of psychology over the past two decades.

The work of these pioneers has focused on the study of what makes life worth living and its impact lies in the fact that researchers have been able to scientifically link the attributes of positive psychology – such as optimism, joy, courage, resilience and dignity – to wellbeing, such as health, academic and career success, and well-functioning social groups.

The appetite for knowledge about positive psychology is astonishing. Alongside her teaching role at MGSE Waters travels globally, speaking at more than 20 events in the past year and knocking back many others due to time constraints: “We are at a point in the evolution of our society where people want to have a message of hope and to see that some of our global problems may be solvable if we come from a strength-based perspective rather than a fear-based perspective.

“I think that people want to learn more about their ‘higher’ qualities and how to use these to help others.”

According to Dr Dianne Vella-Brodrick, Director of the MAPP, the new course is a two-year part-time or one-year full-time program with four subjects: Principles of Positive Psychology; Applications of Positive Psychology; Positive Leadership and Organisations; and a Positive Psychology Research Project. It incorporates face-to-face and online components.

Vella-Brodrick said there has been a high demand for the course, which started in 2nd Semester this year and provides formal training at an advanced level. The MAPP caters for working professionals and those who are geographically distant, offering online and in-house intensive classes (around three sessions per subject). The MAPP aims to attract students from a wide range of disciplines, including education, business, economics, counselling, policy and allied health.

For Waters, the principles of positive psychology are not just something she talks about. She practises the core tenets on a daily basis – mindfulness, utilising her character strengths, practising gratitude, consciously expanding positive emotions through a process called ‘savouring’, and journalling just before sleep about three experiences of the day that went well for her and why (see PERMA break-out box) – and she brings these insights to both her professional role and her role as a mother.

To read more about why positive psychology is a priority for John Higgins go to the Campaign website at:
Professor Fiona Stanley AC has spent a lifetime turning innovative ideas into reality. This makes her the perfect Director of this year’s Festival of Ideas which is devoted to generating concrete improvements in ‘Health, Science and Society’.

Professor Fiona Stanley is discussing seminal influences in a Sydney upbringing which seems to have been almost preternaturally suited to a child who was to become one of Australia’s most inspirational, accomplished and innovative doctors, researchers and educators.

Her father Neville Stanley, a researcher on polio in the 1940s and 1950s, introduced her as a child to two polio vaccine developers, Dr Jonas Salk and Dr Albert Sabin.

She incessantly read, or was “read to”, from books about modern scientists, including Marie Curie. Recalling a library book on pioneering African-American botanist, scientist and inventor, George Washington Carver, she was secretly pleased when the “family dog ate the cover so I could keep it”. One of Carver’s foundational experiences could also provide what might serve as her own motto, when he was told, “You must learn all you can, then go back out into the world and give your learning back to people.”

A lifetime as an epidemiologist, working mostly in public health and producing breakthrough research into the causes of major childhood illnesses such as birth defects, has seen Stanley honoured as Australian of the Year (2003) and a National Trust “National Living Treasure” (2004). She has published over 300 papers, is the UNICEF Australia Ambassador for Early Childhood Development, a member of the ABC board, and a former member of the Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council. She is also Chair of the newly-formed Alcohol Advertising Review Board and a patron of Believe – the Campaign for the University of Melbourne.

In the first years of her work as a doctor, at a Perth paediatrics clinic, Stanley was struck by the paradox of the expensive ‘miracles’ performed to heal children flown in from Western Australian communities, and then being returned to the environments responsible for their health issues.

The experience prompted her specialisation in epidemiology and defined her approach: prevention is better than cure, so discover the causes of illness or lack of wellbeing – whether of medical, cultural, political or social aspect or origin – and then innovate and implement the ideas that could resolve them.

Says Stanley: “All the major problems that are now facing us in society would be well served by a very good set of preventative strategies.

“Obesity is the classic one where there just isn’t any (reliably successful medical) treatment. Most of the interventions for kids, young people and adults fail. The message from that is, obesity is not a health problem. It is a complex societal problem where we are either going to have 50 per cent of the population overweight, or we have to desperately change the society so it is not obesogenic.”

The issue of climate change is similarly societally complex, she says.

Both issues will be discussed at this year’s third, biennial University of Melbourne Festival of Ideas, over which Stanley presides as Director. The Festival runs from 1 October to 6 October and coincides with the University’s 160th anniversary year.

This year’s Festival has a target to uncover and address society’s “wicked problems”, and their impact on health and wellbeing – both of an individual kind, and an overall cultural and social order. The Festival has been designed to attract younger attendees as well, many who are genuinely “anguished” about contemporary social problems, Stanley says.

The dazzling but depth-charged program, spurred by themes related to ‘The Art and Science of Wellbeing’, is organised across five days which are each devoted to an interconnected but discrete spoke in the wheel of what Stanley would call “the conflicts between civil and uncivil society”.

The program is designed around the key theme of what constitutes a ‘Healthy Society’, and each day’s stream, devoted to an independent issue such as ‘Food + Nutrition’ or ‘Environment’, has been curated by an Academic Producer or pair of Producers. (See program highlights right.)

Speakers (there are about 60) include UK-based, Australian author Kathy Lette and Professor Sir David King (see right), along with the ABC’s The Health Report host, Dr Norman Swan, Associate Professor Simran Sethi, Stephanie Alexander OAM (BA 1966, University College), Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott OAM, (GDip(Social Studies) 1973, BA(Hons) 1976, MSW 1987, PhD 1995, University College), Dr Richard Horton (Editor-in-Chief of The Lancet and Hon Professor) and political scientist Professor Robert Manne (BA(Hons) 1970).

The format is modelled after the popular internet-based Ted Talks, says Stanley: “We didn’t want to have keynote addresses, bringing in all the usual suspects – where everyone agrees with the speakers and then everyone goes away (and nothing else happens). Instead, each session is a set of talks that are 10-15 minutes each, with lots of audience engagement, both within the venues and online, including tweets.” There are also evening entertainments.

Another essential component is incorporating ideas about Aboriginal culture, and its positive values, she says. As part of this, a giant ‘Bunjil (Eagle) Nest’ will be created for the Opening ‘Welcome to Country’ Ceremony, on the University grounds, in which people are invited to place their ‘wishes’ during the Festival.
Stanley emphasises that the Festival’s aim is not only to debate ideas but also to determine definitive actions that can be taken by individuals or organisations. A good example will be the final day, she adds, where the sessions will question whether democracy can deliver for the complex issues facing society and where there will be debate on alternatives.

“While my research is on causal pathways around health in children and young people, providing environments that are conducive to positive pathways into health and wellbeing are also important for what is happening in our ‘environment’ as a nation,” says Stanley. “This affects how you manage the natural environment, our earth, our populations, and how you look at (social) things, like, for example, preventing kids doing crime rather than locking them up after it.”

Also critical to the Festival orientation is discussing how scientific and medical data and knowledge need to be transparently accessible, so that “the data we have can be used much more effectively”.

Cross-disciplinary data collection has been a long-term call by Stanley. “Data is very powerful but it isn’t powerful if politicians or political structures do not respond appropriately to deliver what a society needs,” she says.

— For more information on the 2013 Festival of Ideas & program:

W WWW. IDEAS. UNIMELB. EDU. AU
F FACEBOOK.COM/UOM. IDEAS
T TWITTER.COM/UOM. IDEAS

KATHY LETTE

After achieving succès de scandale as a teenage co-author of the novel Puberty Blues (with Gabrielle Carey), Australian-born, London-based author Kathy Lette has continued to contest the ground around important social issues. In 2012 she published The Boy Who Fell to Earth (Bantam Press), a novel inspired by her experiences with son Julius Robertson, now in his early 20s, who was diagnosed with autism at three years old, and then later, with Asperger syndrome (part of the autism disorder spectrum). She is an ambassador for Britain’s National Autistic Society and a highly-sought public speaker on the subject. At the Festival, she will be speaking on autism at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre – Families for a Healthy Society, Friday 4 October 2013. Alongside writing multiple international best-sellers, working as a writer on American sitcoms and being a prominent newspaper columnist, Lette is also an ambassador for Women and Children First, Plan International and the White Ribbon Alliance.

PROFESSOR SIR DAVID KING

Professor Sir David King, as the Founding Director (2008 to 2012) of the University of Oxford’s Smith School of Enterprise and Environment, was devoted to forging links between the academy, business and politics globally to assist in decisions being made which secure a sustainable, low carbon future. The UK Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser and Head of the Government Office of Science (2000 to 2007), he also co-authored The Hot Topic (Bloomsbury, 2008). He presents at the Festival on Day 1, in the session, ‘The Liveable City’; and on Day 2, ‘Feeding 10 Billion People and Sustaining the Planet’. 
Dr Samuel Pisar AO has travelled from the depths to the summits of the human condition. Born into a Jewish family in Poland, Samuel survived the Nazi death camps of Majdanek, Auschwitz and Dachau.

He was 10 years old when the Second World War began. By its conclusion, it had claimed the lives of his entire family and all the children of his school.

Samuel's nightmares continued, living as a forlorn youngster in the American occupation zone of Germany, until a Parisian aunt found him in the ruins and sent him off to live with relatives in Australia.

“They had to deal with a character who had emerged from the greatest furnaces of Europe,” Samuel recalls. “I had lost my loved ones and six years of my education.”

Returning to a peaceful and welcoming society was a huge relief and an enormous challenge, as Samuel had spent his adolescence dealing with the constant spectre of death.

“I was a wreck – but it wasn’t visible,” he says. “I was well mannered and well brought-up, but hadn’t had a book in my hands throughout this time.”

Samuel arrived in Melbourne aged 17, to live with his uncles, Lazar and Norman Wolski. They arranged with much difficulty for their non-English speaking nephew to attend George Taylor and Staff (now Taylors College) – at the time, a school for young people with learning problems.

The school provided Samuel with a rudimentary education not restricted to rote learning alone. “At first my integration was very problematic,” Samuel recollects. “At lunch one day, we were having our sandwiches and I put my hand into my pocket and found a banana peel.

“I saw in that an act of aggression, and so stood up and gave the boy who did it a punch.”

The perpetrator’s bemusement resulted in Samuel feeling deep remorse. He decided to apologise by buying the prankster a bag of bananas, which was accepted without resentment.

“It was a vital lesson for life,” he says. “In Australia, I grasped the meaning of friendship and fair play – it was such a contrast with what I had known, that I decided life was meant to be like this.

“I swallowed my classmates’ admirable code of ethics lock, stock and barrel.”

Samuel’s determination and intelligence enabled him to matriculate with high marks. However before he could progress further, there was another setback – tuberculosis, a sequel to his time in the camps.

Recovery consisted of isolation and reading, ultimately leading to what Samuel calls a “storm in the mind and the soul.” After a long convalescence, he enrolled in Arts and Law at the University of Melbourne and lived at Queen’s College in 1953.

“I decided that no matter what happened to me, I would return to a normal existence,” he recounts. “Then I had the immense luck to encounter Zelman Cowen, who inspired and dynamised me to become a scholar and more.”

Professor Cowen later became Sir Zelman Cowen, the Governor-General of Australia. In 1949, he was a young lecturer who had just returned from Oxford. His attention quickly fell upon the young immigrant in his charge.

“Zelman must have at first thought of me as a basket-case who needed compassion, then as an academic talent,” Samuel says.

Professor Cowen guided Samuel towards postgraduate studies and got him admitted to Harvard. It was there that his prize-winning doctoral thesis, Coexistence and Commerce, greatly impressed a young Massachusetts Senator called John F Kennedy.

Coexistence and Commerce became a major influence upon the soon-to-be President as well as other heads of state. It became a harbinger of the Nixon-Kissinger policy of diplomatic détente with China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

As an international lawyer at the American, British and French bars, his clients ranged from large corporations to movie stars. As permanent counsel to the International Olympic Committee, he reputedly helped Sydney land the 2000 Summer Olympics.

“I owe a tremendous debt to the University of Melbourne, Taylors College and all my relatives and friends in that blessed country.”

– Samuel Pisar, currently ambassador and special envoy to UNESCO, is a patron of Believe – the Campaign for the University of Melbourne.
Quietly spoken and looking younger than his 34 years, Nam Le, the Australian writer whose first book of short stories, *The Boat*, won an array of local and international awards when it was published in 2008, talks about his childhood with a reserved intellectual detachment.

Nam’s parents arrived in Melbourne in 1979, when his brother was three and Nam was a baby. The Le family travelled on a boat from South Vietnam for eight days and landed on a Malaysian island, where they stayed in a camp for about seven months before being accepted into Australia. Upon arrival the family stayed in immigrant hostels and public housing in North Melbourne before settling amongst the brick venners of suburban Doncaster.

At primary school Nam was often the lone Asian kid in class. “When you are a kid, you pick on anything that is different and being Asian was just one locus of difference,” he says. His parents schooled him long and hard, and with the help of text books handed down from brother Truong, young Nam received a scholarship to Melbourne Grammar.

“It was quite common for immigrant parents to prepare their children for those examinations, so they just made me study all the time,” Nam recalls. “My parents had high academic expectations with education regarded as the way to social mobility and opportunity.”

It was 1991 and there were quite a few Asian kids at Melbourne Grammar. “I really dug school. I had a good time there,” he says. It was an environment that valued academic achievement, so the privilege, “which is quite self-protective and insidious in certain ways,” nurtured the young Nam, who excelled.

In 1997 Nam achieved the elusive high VCE score and won a scholarship to the University of Melbourne. He resisted his parents’ urgings to study Medicine and studied Arts/Law. “It was where I wanted to be,” he recalls. Nam’s passion was the classics but he stuck with the Law degree.

“It was an important tool of empowerment – to understand the modes and mechanisms of power and the essence of the social contract,” he says. “But the arts was what I wanted to swim in.”

Nam had no intention of doing articles and the pressure to secure legal cadetships was ignored in favour of poetry, theatre and a stint editing *Farrago*.

“With the application dates for articles rolling around I held my nerve and didn’t apply.” At the last minute, however, he “totally panicked” and with two firms left on the list Nam applied and got articles at a big city law firm Baker & McKenzie.

He took the job offer letter to the bank, got a loan and spent the next nine months travelling. It was on this trip that Nam started to write. Back home he duly completed his articles: “I was doing the best I could, while really knowing it wasn’t for me.”

Nam applied for and was accepted into the prestigious Iowa creative writing program. He was awarded a Truman Capote fellowship and a lifetime of academic success afforded him the luxury “to just write”.

Two years at Iowa, a New York agent, a book deal and various ‘writer-in-residence’ grants saw him enjoy years of writing and teaching at universities across North America, the UK and Europe.

It’s the sort of career trajectory usually reserved for Hollywood stars or rap artists. “I have had a lot of luck,” he admits. But it is not just luck. “Part of it is desire.”

“When I went to Iowa I understood how huge the opportunity was. To have the time and space to write was a gift. So I valued it and wanted to account for it.” He also had the in-built resilience to endure.

“Coming from the Law into the Iowa workshop environment you learned to deal with criticism, remonstration, disappointment and failure – in a sense that’s what writing is all about,” he says.

“There are people who go to that workshop and never write again. It is full on. You have to put out something that is as intimate and meaningful as you possibly can and it is torn to shreds. It’s not easy.

“The way I was brought up left me with no scope to wallow in failure and life is a never-ending series of failures, so you just have to pick yourself up and keep on going.”

Nam’s been back home in Melbourne for two years. “I’m still working on the second novel, it’s kicking my arse, but I love it.” He supports himself “with great difficulty” but has no regrets.

Asked about the second book and how it is progressing Nam can’t be specific.

“I’m not sure what it is about. I have culled so much of it. There are so many ways to cut corners and short change the material and I don’t want to do that. I want to find a way that comes as close to what the material demands.” Many in the literary world look forward to the result. One suspects it is Nam’s biggest challenge yet.

**Nam Le**

*By Angela Martinkus*

*Nam Le (BA(Hons) 2003, LLB (Hons) 2003).*

*Photo: Dave Tacon / Polaris*
Who would have thought Jehan Ratnatunga’s hobby, making funny videos about growing up Sri Lankan, would land him a job at the Google-owned YouTube?

It was a catalogue of videos on his ‘Jehan YouTube Channel’ that gave this 30-year-old Mechatronics and Computer Science graduate the edge when he applied for a strategy role at YouTube in Los Angeles (LA).

“A friend and I had a radio show during university days so I had uploaded a lot of comedy and music parody videos,” says Jehan. After an internship with GM Holden, a stint consulting and a 12-month “career break” writing and pitching film scripts, Jehan settled into a strategy role with pay TV provider Foxtel.

“When I saw the job at YouTube I thought, ‘why not?’ I had my covering letter and resume and was about to hit send but I thought it was lame to send a cover letter to YouTube,” he says. “So I filmed a video on my phone – it was like ‘hey guys, I’m Jehan, I’ve worked for BCG and Foxtel, check out my YouTube videos, check out my resume’…” The ‘lame’ video seemed to work!

“It was a strategy role and you have to understand the business and what makes YouTube work – so all those years of making dumb videos was coming into use,” recalls Jehan.

“The first couple of months I learned the business and it was like wow, whatever chart, whatever metric it was straight up. Jehan’s role in Partnerships Strategy looks at how YouTube can work with content creators to grow viewership on YouTube.

“How do we help them grow their business? What sort of content is working? Who makes that content and where is that watched? How do they make money? It is pretty cutting edge – there is no formula yet – we are learning from them as much as they are learning from us,” Jehan says. “YouTube is at an inflection point now and I want to be a part of that.”

So while the job was great, the hard bit was missing friends and family. “I had a lot of free time so I just focused on my hobby, making YouTube videos, and that’s a great way to meet people.” While he’s been in LA, Channel Jehan has continued to grow and now he’s a hit in Sri Lanka. “The stuff I make is in English, so it’s geared to the younger crowd who live in the cities, or have moved abroad. That’s what YouTube does – it fills niche gaps.”

— www.youtube.com/user/jehanr/

Melbourne emergency registrar Jenny Jamieson spent much of 2012 in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz, where she worked with international aid agency Médecin Sans Frontières. Jenny worked in an emergency department and small intensive care unit, in a city afflicted by war and the vicissitudes of everyday life.

“The trauma hospital in Kunduz was initially set up to provide trauma care and assistance to war-wounded patients, those affected by violence and the consequences of the conflict,” Jenny says.

“But it also provides standard trauma care to patients who have been injured in road traffic accidents, domestic violence and falls.” Jenny was not a stranger to working in low-resource settings, having spent time in Nigeria in 2004, South African townships in 2008 and Shenzhen in 2009. Yet the hospital’s demands were physically and emotionally exhausting.

“One of the hardest things for me was seeing the mass casualties. Whilst I was there, we had two suicide attacks in the town of Kunduz, with up to 50 casualties turning up to the Médecin Sans Frontières hospital all at one time.”

Afghanistan provided a hands-on experience that combined well with Jenny’s existing work for Global Health Gateway – an online resource she helped found soon after leaving university.

The Gateway allows members – largely health workers – to share work and education opportunities, and discuss current health issues, ideas and events.

The group replaces active fieldwork for junior doctors, whose work demands leave little room for involvement in volunteer health initiatives.

“Those previously engaged in global health activities started to drop off the radar after university, consumed by the medical intern’s busy lifestyle,” Jenny says.

“So within a couple of months, my colleagues and I had started talking about founding the Gateway.”

While her own focus is currently on continuing her specialty training in emergency medicine at Melbourne’s Alfred Hospital, Jenny doesn’t rule out future work overseas.

“Naturally I look forward to going back to the field with MSF,” she says. “Where that will be? I’m not sure…watch this space!”
Fashion leader
JULIE ANNE QUAY (BA 1986)

It's not surprising that Julie Anne Quay looks at life through the lens of fashion. At 21 she was the advertising and marketing coordinator of Esprit Australia, then took up similar positions at Country Road and later Australian Vogue. By the 1990s she had moved to New York, working alongside such luminaries as Steven Meisel and Richard Avedon. Now, she says, “I really believe that every decision in life can in some way be referred to as a fashion decision – fashion being the manner [in which] you live your life, not just what you wear.”

Julie Anne started at Esprit when the company opened its first store in Lygon Street, Carlton. She was living at Queen's College studying Arts, majoring in English and Music. “I had always been interested in pop culture, shopping, marketing and advertising and thought my career would be in an advertising field, but my family convinced me to go to Melbourne Uni instead.”

Today Julie Anne’s current enterprises include VFILES, a shop and online platform that combines originally produced fashion content, archived materials from fashion publishing’s past, and user-generated, social media-style applications. The concept emerged from Julie Anne’s experiences behind the scenes of the fashion world – most recently as executive editor of V magazine – and “all the fashion conversations I’ve had where we use pictures to describe what we mean rather than words. I hope that VFILES becomes a global fashion community, the voice of the next generation of fashion and pop culture enthusiasts.”

Quay says success in one of the fashion capitals of the world has resulted from taking risks at the right moments and learning from those around her. What she has learnt that has proven most indispensable, however, is that “if you put your head down and work hard good things come. Sometimes we work so hard that when the good things come we get surprised.”

Another of Quay’s projects in development is a film adaptation of Lee Tulloch’s book, Fabulous Nobodies, a story that in many ways mirrors her own. Tulloch was an editor at Harper's Bazaar Australia who moved to New York, and Fabulous Nobodies chronicles the heady fashion world of the Big Apple in the 1980s. The film, to be directed by The September Issue’s R J Cutler, “champions all of us in the fashion world, the little people, who make it go around,” Julie Anne says.
— www.vfiles.com

Animal queen
SKYE FRUEAN (BVSC(HONS) 2004)

Growing up on a sheep and cattle farm and avidly devouring episodes of All Creatures Great and Small, Skye Fruean nurtured romantic dreams of a future traipsing around the countryside “fixing up sick animals and delivering calves”. Her first stop after graduating with a BVSc was in mixed dairy practice, but she soon discovered that the James Herriot-style focus on the individual animal she had imagined was giving way to an emphasis on herd health. After battling through three Warrnambool winters she found herself heading into very different pastures.

By chance she stumbled on an advertisement by the Animal Protection Society of Samoa seeking volunteer vets. She didn’t exactly know where Samoa was but a few weeks later she was working in a small clinic on the outskirts of Apia. “I had a fantastic time, getting exposure to more small animal work than I’d had in the years in mixed practice,” she says. Her daily work stretched from the typical – nutrition advice, parasite control – to things she’d never faced in Australia, like machete wounds and Paraquat poisoning. The lack of resources called for plenty of improvisation, and a nappy change table in someone’s home might quickly be repurposed as a surgery table, with a breadfruit tree her shade.

A six week stint ended up as a three year career that included advocating to improve animal welfare and stray animal management. She met with ministers to discuss legislative reform, penned editorials for newspapers and did the hands-on work herself, manning stands at local fundraisers.

“So I got exposure to staff management and training, budgeting, advocacy work, media, public speaking, grant writing,” she says. “And of course, working overseas I have also been rewarded with some fantastic lifelong friends, as well as a great network of like-minded individuals who work in similar fields in the region.”

Now she works in Canberra with the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), focusing on biosecurity. “From a DAFF perspective, biosecurity involves trying to prevent the entry of diseases/pests into Australia,” says Skye. Her team collaborates with government agencies, such as in PNG, Timor-Leste and Indonesia, to improve their own biosecurity systems. “This is where we get to go out into the more remote districts and meet people eking out a living off the land. It can be quite an eye-opener but is such a refreshing change from office work. It’s nice to get your hands dirty every now and then!”
Building for Indigenous communities

The work of the Bower Studio brings architecture students and Indigenous communities together to deliver amazing results.

Education, research and impact in the world come together in the Bower Studio, a subject offered as part of the Masters of Architecture, which Dr David O’Brien and colleagues at the Melbourne School of Design have run since 2008 with considerable success.

The Bower Studio expands the conventional studio model of teaching, a cornerstone of architectural design education, in inventive ways. Students learn about design and construction, but ‘Bower’ also gets them working with complex client groups and in the process they make a material contribution to disadvantaged communities.

Bower undertakes one or two projects a year, in Australia and overseas. To date these have included a simple health clinic in Thailand; shelters and toilet facilities in Papua New Guinea; shelters, housing and a ‘media box’ in the Northern Territory; and an early childhood learning centre and a community centre in the Pilbara.

The serial nature of the studio means that students learn to build and get to know the community and client group before they design.

“You can’t have students designing without having undertaken a rigorous and targeted research process. Books and research papers can only offer so much,” says O’Brien (BPD 1988, BArch(Hons) 1991, PhD 2006).

“Students need to understand the construction materials, the tools and the procurement process. It is most important that they work alongside the partner community on its home turf.

“Everyone needs to get their hands dirty and sweat it out together.”

This build/consult/design/build process is vital. Timeframes for building are limited and the social, cultural and environmental contexts are usually far outside the students’ previous experiences – they rarely have the knowledge to leap straight in.

So, in each studio the team of about 15 students begin with a design done by others – often a design prepared during the previous year’s studio with some refinement by O’Brien and colleagues.

“Students start by building prototypes on the University’s regional Creswick campus, where they become familiar with tools, technologies and building processes,” O’Brien says.

“They also get to know each other, which is critical when they are working together on-site, in a remote location. Building a strong team is invaluable.”

The team then goes out on-site. This is an intensive period. It is about building, but it is also about getting to know the community. Time spent kicking a football with the kids is as important as that spent with the impact driver.

Students then return to the University and develop their own design proposals, one of which may be used by the subsequent studio.

This iterative process means that the studio design and approach is continually refined and is also flexible enough to accommodate changes that result from different briefs, locations, client groups and funding systems.

Bower works with communities that many University of Melbourne students have little knowledge of or access to. These communities, in turn, ordinarily have no access to architectural expertise. The immediate gain is obvious – communities get a much-needed facility and students complete another section of their degree while having experiences that are far outside their daily lives. But long-term benefits are just as important.

“It is most important that they work alongside the partner community on their home turf. Everyone needs to get their hands dirty and sweat it out together.”

DR DAVID O’BRIEN

Left to right: Bower project student Fabian Prideaux with Otto Phillips and Dominique Bishop on-site at the Knuckeys Lagoon project.
“We build ongoing relationships between communities and the studio – and by extension with the Faculty and University. We are not so interested in ‘one-off’ projects. We want to do the follow-up, refine our contributions and follow up with the academic research,” O’Brien says.

Bower facilitates long-term engagement in a range of ways. It might be a matter of returning to a community another year with another project. For example, Bower has now done three projects with the Gudorrka community in the Northern Territory and two with the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation.

Or it could be about giving the students the tools to continue working with communities. For example, in 2008 three students gained funding from the University’s Student Knowledge Transfer Awards, which allowed them to work as student mentors on the Gudorrka housing. Bower hopes that another group of students will obtain similar funding to do further work with the Sipaia community in Papua New Guinea on the toilet facilities built last year.

Bower also sets students on a different kind of career path than they might otherwise have followed. Some who show a particular affinity for the studio and the process are brought back as ‘student mentors’, while others have gone on to careers in related areas – one alumnus is now working with Noel Pearson at the Cape York Institute, another is now at the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation and others are in Broome and Africa. Other influences may not be quite so direct, but students’ architectural careers are shaped over time in unexpected ways by the broadening of horizons that the Bower Studio offers.

As well as assisting communities and exposing students to other forms of learning, Bower fosters interdisciplinary collaboration within the University, and with other tertiary institutions. For example, when the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation, which represents three communities in the Pilbara, approached Bower about developing an Early Learning Centre, the studio formed a collaboration with the Graduate School of Education.

Dr Collette Tayler led the educational component, which trains teachers in the Abecedarian program – a suite of teaching and learning strategies that underpin early childhood education programs. As Tayler points out, “the project builds cultural competence – of both the students and the wider university.”

Relationships have also been developed with other tertiary institutions. Bower worked closely with the University of Technology Lae in Papua New Guinea on the sanitation project for the Sipaia community, Thammasat University was co-contributor in Thailand and staff from Holmesglen TAFE were involved on the Bellary Springs Community Centre. These relationships reflect the collaborative relationships that architects work in day-to-day, but which can be difficult to replicate within the university teaching context.

Bower Studio draws directly on O’Brien’s research interests in developing sustainable housing for disadvantaged communities. It underlines the social and community basis to architecture and connects teaching and scholarship to action in the world. In doing so it opens up new opportunities for students, the University of Melbourne and disadvantaged communities.

— For more information go to www.bowerstudio.com.au
Dental students became international pioneers when they visited the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne to examine some of the works on display. “They were puzzled by a painting of a woman’s naked back, with her hair pulled forward covering her face,” says Associate Professor in Special Needs Dentistry Mina Borromeo. “But the longer they looked at it the more they saw – she could be sad or abused and depressed, they concluded. By the end they were loving the experience, despite their obvious doubts in the beginning.”

Last year’s gallery excursions by the special needs dental students were part of a program using art as a tool to build empathy in medical and dental students. They were so successful that Borromeo (BDSc 1991) has now made them compulsory in her second-year course to enhance empathy during the students’ studies.

“We are the first dentistry students in the world to take part in such a humanities program,” she says. “It is a landmark for the study of special needs and replaces some lecture-based teaching.” The program’s aim is to enable the students to become more engaged with patients and she says it works brilliantly.

“It is well-recognised that medical and dental students can lose their ability to empathise by the end of their course, as they cope with its many academic and professional demands. This program is about providing them with the ability to deal with problems that arise in treating patients with challenging needs.”

Borromeo was inspired by a visit to Quebec City earlier this year with the organiser of the Potter program, Dr Heather Gaunt (BMus 1990, BA(Hons) 1991, PGDipArts 1992), where they took part in a medical humanities conference far more advanced than anything in Melbourne.

“What we are doing is embryonic compared to what is happening in the US and Canada – we are not in the same universe. But it was reassuring to see we are heading in the right direction,” she adds.

Conference speakers included a professor of English literature and poetry, a poet in residence and an actor. Medical students and doctors have mounted their own art exhibition in Quebec for the past 11 years, asking students to express what medicine means to them. Borromeo wants to start a similar show, although she concedes it might take time to find enough contributors. “It took two years to get going in Canada,” she says, adding she would like to include practising dentists in the Potter program to “get them out of their comfort zones”.

The program, which has been operating for two years, is the only one of its kind in Australia. Gaunt, who is the Potter’s Curator of Academic Programs (Research), says it marks a striking change by emphasising the gallery’s role as a university museum.

“What we are doing is much needed because medical training has become more scientific as it has moved away from its traditional involvement with the humanities,” she says.

“Studying art increases visual observation skills that can then be applied to clinical scenarios. It demands close observation so students do not leap to conclusions.”

About 4,000 students took part in the program last year from such disciplines as commerce, computing, and management and marketing, as well as about 100 from medicine and dentistry.

“I want to continue connecting students with the Potter because it means there are swarms of people moving through the gallery,” Gaunt says. “It is a fantastically rich research environment.”

She acknowledges a secondary benefit of the program is that it increases the number of people interested in the humanities. “I want to get students from as many disciplines as possible through the door and expose them to the arts.”

Gaunt selects different paintings to meet the needs of the various disciplines but she says the program’s application to medicine is backed by more than 15 years’ research in the US, where such programs began in Yale and Harvard and have now spread to more than 30 other academies.
Emeritus Professor of Dermatology, Dr Irwin M Braverman, who helped develop the use of art in medical courses at Yale, has written that observational skills using vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste were well developed in most doctors for much of the 20th century. But they declined as scientific scans and tests developed from the late 1970s.

“Clinical medical decision-making became unduly influenced by the tyranny of the tests, even though for many medical conditions...the use of the eye and ear was sufficient to make the correct diagnosis or arrive at a limited group of diagnoses more rapidly and at much less cost,” he writes.

“Studying art increases visual observation skills that can then be applied to clinical scenarios. It demands close observation so students do not leap to conclusions.”

Dr Heather Gaunt

Gaunt’s US visit earlier this year on a Bronwyn Jane Adams Memorial Award travel grant enabled her to meet academics from Yale and Harvard where the programs originated. “I took part in the Yale course and was able to see first hand how art institutions have become thoroughly involved in teaching medical courses,” she says.

“The Yale University Art Gallery reopened after renovations last December and has become much more focused on tertiary teaching and research connections. It is a striking change.”

The art program is obligatory in the first year of medical studies at Yale, while it is an elective at Harvard. “I hope it can become an elective at Melbourne,” she says.

Evaluations of the Potter program have shown its value for students. “At the beginning there is a certain amount of cynicism because they are not certain about why they are in the gallery,” she says. “But by the end of the program about 80 per cent are really excited and the rest acknowledge its impact.”

A senior palliative care consultant at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Dr Natasha Michael, introduced her students to the program because she was concerned that the ‘soft skills’ of bedside techniques were diminishing in the high-pressure hospital environment. “It is easier just to order a scan or blood test,” she says.

“But many students have a strong history in the humanities and just need to learn ways of applying the skills this brings. Using art, literature and poetry in teaching is useful in getting them to think outside the box.”

She says visiting the Potter is reinvigorating for the students because it is such a different, calming space compared to the hospital. “Studying an art work can lead to improved clinical observation skills because both rely on noticing small details. We try to teach empathy by using our eyes, ears and hands.”

She says the students find that spending time in front of a painting to determine what it is about is the same as being at the bedside of a patient, listening and observing. “That is important in building the patient’s trust,” Michael says. “The Potter program is so useful because it restores medicine’s long-standing interest in the humanities. It is brilliant.”
There are few parts of the University’s Parkville campus that have provided as many happy memories as the Main Oval Pavilion.

Known to many as ‘The Pavvy’, the Pavilion has been the headquarters to Melbourne University Cricket Club and University Blues and Blacks football teams since its establishment in 1906 and – more recently – Melbourne University Women’s football team.

A fire in 1950 damaged much of the structure, necessitating emergency rebuilding the following year. Thankfully, three unique features – the ‘candle snuffer’ turret, social room and the wide veranda – were saved from the blaze.

Today, the Pavvy is in need of refurbishment. Its facilities reek of history and tradition, but also of mould and mud. A century of sporting battles has taken its toll on the changing rooms, while many post-mortems have occurred at the bar.

A new renovation is underway, with the 1950s portions having been demolished. The Pavvy’s heritage overlay features will, however, be retained.

The Oval Pavilion Development provides much-needed modern conveniences for the evocative Pavvy.

Upgraded change rooms and match-day facilities will benefit the Main Oval’s resident football and cricket clubs, alongside revamped spaces for visiting sporting teams.

The Pavvy will also cater for meetings, conferences and larger club functions, with the heritage ‘social room’ retained and a ground level function room constructed.

Cox Architecture’s Andrew Hayes is the development’s principal consultant. He explains the Pavvy’s important practical and sentimental role.

“The redevelopment represents the ideal of the best environment for scholars – a place of sport and recreation, and of learning and engagement,” he says.

“The project recognises the critical role sport plays in the development of healthy and connected communities.”

“The redevelopment represents the ideal of the best environment for scholars – a place of sport and recreation, and of learning and engagement.”

ANDREW HAYES

The projected changes will integrate with the existing historic features of the Pavvy. Cox worked with heritage architects Lovell Chen to ensure the building’s fabric was respected.

“The continuity of the Pavilion’s use for over 100 years reinforces the sense of belonging to an established sporting tradition and playing in the footsteps of many previous generations,” Hayes says.

“The approach has been to honour the old, and renew the pavilion for future generations.”

The Pavvy will soon witness a new century of sporting triumphs and tragedies.
**Alumni Voices**

Artistic outpourings from the University of Melbourne

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**Sculptor and painter Katherine Taylor** (MFineArt 2005) recently created two separate exhibitions in New York City. Taylor’s sculptures at the Skoto Gallery were inspired by Basque culture, while Egyptian-themed chess sets featured in her National Arts Club exhibition.

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**Illustrator and artist Tai Snaith’s latest exhibition** – *Sweet Obsolete* – featured at Melbourne’s Helen Gory Galerie in early 2013. Snaith’s (BFineArt[Hons] 2002) illustrations consisted of works on paper and small sculptures that documented obsolete everyday objects.

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**Melbourne gallery Daine Singer hosted Minna Gilligan’s latest collection of large-scale paintings** in June 2013. Gilligan’s work consisted of salvaged bed-sheets and fabric, designed to resonate with the emotions of lust and longing present in the Beach Boys song, *Feel Flows*.

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**Eminent psychiatrist Dr Sidney Bloch** (GDipPsychMed 1970, PhD 1972) received high praise for his book, *Understanding Troubled Minds*. Bloch’s latest work was named the 2012 SANE Book of the Year and has been endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners. *Understanding Troubled Minds* will be distributed to all of the College’s 23,000 fellows. Published by Melbourne University Press (June 2011).

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An Australian émigré in Prague called René is the protagonist in Libor Mikeska’s debut novel, *Allegro Agitato or Neurotically Yours*. The novel is the latest artistic venture for Mikeska (BA[Hons] 1991), who has spent two decades in Germany as a musician, teacher and freelance photographer. Published by Silverwood Books (June 2012).

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Asperger syndrome is explored in Gail Watts’ (BEd(Prim) 2010) *Kevin Thinks*, a children’s picture book named as a Notable Book by the Children’s Book Council of Australia. *Kevin Thinks* provides an accessible mainstream resource for teachers and parents wishing to explain the disorder to children. Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (2012).

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Melbourne Conservatorium of Music alumna Ruth Nye’s music career has taken her to London and New York. Her ascent is celebrated in *A Life in Music: Ruth Nye and the Arrau Heritage*. Roma Randles’ (GDipMus 1970, BMus 1973) biography concentrates on Ms Nye’s close professional and personal relationship with Claudio Arrau, with whom she collaborated for 30 years. Published by Grosvenor House Publishing Limited (September 2012).

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Landscape comparisons inspired Reg Egan’s *Of Rivers, Baguettes and Billabongs*. Egan’s (LLB 1958) book details the history and lives of those living next to two great rivers – the Darling (Australia) and Dordogne (France). His book questions the effect landscape has on a nation’s culture. Published by Pan Macmillan (November 2012).

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Michelle de Kretser (BA[Hons] 1979) won the 2013 Miles Franklin Literary Award for her novel *Questions of Travel*. Two narratives intertwine in de Kretser’s story, which explores questions of home, travel, tourism and migration. It is her fourth novel. Published by Allen & Unwin (October 2012).
Try something new

Seven novel ways to get more from your University

HELP WITH RESEARCH

Participate in groundbreaking research studies that could find new ways to slow down, prevent or find a cure for brain disorders like dementia, Parkinson’s disease and motor neurone disease. Volunteers prepared to give up a little of their time for a painless PET scan play a vital role in helping to track disease development, with the aim of developing early interventions to slow or stop disease.

Register your interest at http://brainpet.org or contact Rob Williams, Centre for Neuroscience Research on +61 3 9035 8217.

CHEER ON THE BOATS

The University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney will be renewing their fierce (but friendly) sporting rivalry on the Yarra River again in the Australian Boat Race on Sunday 27 October. Racing is planned to start around 9.30am in Hawthorn with presentations around 11am and there will be many great vantage points along the Yarra on the day. Spectators can expect to see many of the sport’s top athletes in action.

For details visit: www.australianboatrace.com

DISCOVER EMERGING ARTS TALENT

Visit the VCA School of Art Graduate Exhibition from 26 November to 1 December at the Margaret Lawrence Gallery, 40 Dodds St, Southbank, where graduating students from the VCA School of Art present the highlights from their year of study. This annual show is a feast of drawing, prints, photography, sculpture, painting, screen-based and digital media and is a fantastic opportunity to access the School’s amazing creative energy and talent.

www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/gallery

Did you know?

Our experience at the Mesopotamia exhibition was wonderful. What an excellent opportunity you negotiated. My family really appreciated the opportunity and would not have been able to go if not for your generosity.

Thank you.

BELINDA PEARSON (BSC 1964, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE)

For more fantastic alumni events, visit > http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/allevents
For all benefits visit > http://alumni.unimelb.edu.au/benefits-services/alumni-benefits
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www.coursesearch.unimelb.edu.au

GET THE INSIDE STORY

Sign up to hear Katherine Viner, Editor-in-Chief of The Guardian Australian Edition and Deputy Editor of The Guardian worldwide, deliver the 2013 AN Smith Lecture in Journalism on Wednesday 9 October. Viner joined the paper in 1997 and has been features editor, weekend magazine editor and Saturday editor. The lecture starts at 6:30pm in the Basement Theatre, The Spot, Business and Economics Building, 198 Berkeley Street, Carlton.

www.events.unimelb.edu.au

WEAR YOUR UoM COLOURS

Wear your University of Melbourne team colours with pride when you take part in community sporting events around the city, including the Melbourne Marathon on Sunday 13 October, and Around the Bay in a Day on Sunday 20 October. Register with Team Melbourne to receive a free singlet and get access to exclusive services on the day of your event at the University Hub.

For more details visit:
www.sport.unimelb.edu.au/TeamMelbourne

MENTOR CURRENT STUDENTS

For many students meeting an experienced graduate can provide a window into the practical realities of the workplace and the possibilities before them. Melbourne Law School has a successful mentor program for Juris Doctor and International Masters students. Each mentoring pair puts their own stamp on the relationship, ranging from exchanging advice over a cup of coffee to attending court together or discussing career goals.

Register your interest at:
www.law.unimelb.edu.au/mentors

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Enjoy premium networking – alumni networks are an invaluable resource, whether it be finding your feet in a new city, making business contacts, securing a job or enjoying common interests.

Benefit from discounted health care. 25% off eye care and up to 35% off dental services at Melbourne’s world class facilities.

Getting married? The University will waive the fee for alumni having wedding photography taken on campus.
In September last year I boarded a San Francisco-bound plane in Sydney. As I was about to get into my seat, the stranger in front of me quite excitedly blurted out “Simon! I recognise you from the toilet!” The oddity of this comment in such a public place ensured everyone in the surrounding seats turned and looked at us. The stranger and I both burst out laughing at the awkwardness of his faux pas.

That was the first time this happened to me, but since then I’ve had to get used to meeting someone for the first time and them having the realisation that I’m “the toilet guy”. After sitting on a toilet on a live web feed and eventually ending up on television, newspapers and blogs around the world, I guess I was asking for it. For most people who studied electrical engineering and economics, becoming “the toilet guy” is not the typical career path. Looking back, I realise that my degrees taught me to solve problems. It was just that solving traditional engineering and business problems didn’t appeal to me that much. I wanted to solve problems in the developing world, but by selling products in Australia to achieve this goal.

It was for this reason that I co-founded a non-profit bar here in Melbourne, called Shebeen. The basic idea is that Shebeen sells exotic beers and wines from the developing world. The profit from each sale goes back to a development project in that drink’s country of origin. So buying an Ethiopian beer helps to provide agricultural equipment to farmers in Ethiopia, and drinking a glass of South African wine helps to provide local language books to school kids in KwaZulu-Natal province.

After about four years of planning Shebeen opened in February, and it’s going amazingly well – it is, after all, the only place where you can grab a drink and still feel good the next day. It was Shebeen that took me closer to becoming “the toilet guy”. A couple of years ago Shebeen shifted in my mind from being a harebrained scheme to something that was actually going to happen. I started thinking about how to improve on Shebeen’s business model and realised that the problem is that not everyone drinks, and you simply can’t fit that many into a single bar! I became fascinated with mass-market products that had the potential to reach every single Australian. One day I walked into the bathroom and it hit me – toilet paper… I realised I could sell an environmentally friendly toilet paper product, use 50 per cent of the profits to build toilets in the developing world, and call it Who Gives A Crap.

Unfortunately starting a toilet paper company is not as easy as it sounds. Setting up a toilet paper factory costs millions of dollars, and outsourcing production requires a minimum order of around 50,000 rolls. So before getting too invested in the idea I had to find enough people who would want to buy Who Gives A Crap. Pre-selling packs of Who Gives A Crap using a crowdfunding platform – where an all-or-nothing pre-sales target figure is set and we put a call out to friends, family and the universe to pre-order online – became the most logical market entry strategy. So on July 10 last year, my co-founders and I launched a crowdfunding campaign to pre-sell $50,000 of product. To help things along, I agreed to sit on a toilet on a live web feed until the $50,000 target was reached. Fifty sleepless hours and one sore bum later, after Who Gives A Crap had spread virally across Australia, the USA, Brazil and half of Western Europe, $50,000 was in the bank and I got off the loo.

We now sell thousands of rolls of toilet paper each week, and have just launched the world’s first toilet paper subscription service (so you’ll never run out again!). You can buy some of our life-changing toilet paper from www.whogivesacrap.org.

Despite working in two very different industries, I really do love what I do. I’m probably the only joint toilet paper and bar mogul in the world. Now, when people say “you’re the toilet guy”, I simply reply “and the non-profit barman too… bottoms up!”
Choose to be part of something bigger

There’s more than one important election in Australia this year! Voting is now open in the University of Melbourne Alumni Council election for three positions that will become vacant from the end of 2013.

The Council plays an important role in furthering connections between alumni and the University. It works to find ways in which alumni can help the University to further its goals and remain one of the world’s best higher education institutions, and also ensures alumni are represented in University matters.

Council President Dr Roz Otzen, who was the Principal of Korowa Anglican Girls’ School and is also on the board of Melbourne City Mission, says that the Alumni Council enables the voices of alumni to be heard.

“Wherever you may be, in Australia and around the world,” says Roz (BA(Hons) 1967, GDipEd 1969, PhD 1987).

“Our University is moving into a period of unparalleled success in the world and has the vision to be an even greater presence in Australian policy-making and direction. You can contribute to the University and its ongoing success by joining in the Council election process.”

VOTING CLOSES ON 27 SEPTEMBER.

TO CAST YOUR VOTE, VISIT:
HTTP://ALUMNI.UNIMELB.EDU.AU/GET-INVOLVED/ALUMNI-COUNCIL

Meet Dr Misty Jenkins
(BSc(Hons) 2001, PhD 2007)
Alumni Council Member since 2007

WHAT DOES THE ALUMNI COUNCIL DO?
We’re here to strengthen the links between alumni and the University. We work on many different initiatives – for example, this year we have been focused on expanding opportunities for students to participate in mentoring programs. We also represent the alumni community in discussions on University issues.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST PART OF BEING INVOLVED IN THE ALUMNI COMMUNITY AND THE ALUMNI COUNCIL?
It’s great to still feel like part of the University community after finishing study. As an alumnus you will always be a part of the University’s global network. It’s been a great opportunity to give back to the University, which helped shaped my career and build long lasting friendships. It’s also been a great opportunity to meet some very clever and passionate people.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OTHERS WHO WANT TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED WITH THE UNIVERSITY?
Just get involved! Make sure when you finish study you keep your details up-to-date with the University. There are many opportunities for alumni to come back and give career advice or get involved in mentoring programs. There are also many different activities including seminars, exclusive alumni events and networking opportunities – either in person or via LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter.

The InTouch website (http://alumni.unimelb.edu.au/) is a great place to find out what’s new. There are alumni associations and groups to join, Facebook pages and LinkedIn groups to follow, and the ‘Welcome to Melbourne’ program where alumni can be paired with an international student and invite them over for a home-cooked meal.

And vote in the Alumni Council elections. It’s a great opportunity to have your say.