Translation tool
a good sign

by Lindy Brophy

A communication tool, now in its fifth year of development at UWA, will eventually bridge the gap between hearing-impaired people and others in our community.

A research team in the School of Computer Science and Software Engineering has been working on a computer-based translation project for making Auslan, the Australian sign language, accessible to hearing people who don’t understand it, and for translating spoken English into Auslan for deaf people.

Auslan is an individual recognised language, different from other English-based sign languages (in England and the United States for example) and also completely different in its grammar and patterns from Australian written and spoken English.

Some people who have signed all their lives could have trouble understanding written English, so the communication gap between the hearing and non-hearing encompasses even more than an inability to hear and speak.

Some simple examples: “Are you deaf?” in spoken or written English is “You deaf you?” in Auslan, and “How are you?” translates to “You well?”

Principal researcher, Professor Robyn Owens, said there were about 17,000 native Auslan signers in Australia and they used a combination of techniques to communicate, including hand and arm position and orientation, motion of the hands, and facial expression.

“For several years, our group has been working on solving various aspects of computer vision and graphics-based problems in building an English and Auslan translator,” Professor Owens said.

“Building an automatic translation from Auslan to English requires the robust recognition of hand and arm movement as well as facial expression, while the reverse translation requires speech recognition and a graphical sign display.

“Both translations require language mapping between Auslan and English grammars. This is a daunting challenge requiring development in many areas,” she said.

“In the area of computer vision, we have succeeded in building a hand shape recognition system that detects the Auslan basic hand shapes. We have developed a robust lip tracking system for automatic lipreading, built a three-dimensional tracker to accommodate head movement, and developed a technique that automatically detects facial features for lipreading and head tracking.

“We have also developed a graphical sign display system that animates 3D human upper body motion to display Auslan signs.”

Professor Owens said the hardest part would be the language translation, on which they have not done much work yet.

Continued on page 5
It’s that season again …

Not the coming of cooler mornings and nights to our autumnal campus, but rather the annual stoush over University enrolments at our 38 higher education institutions.

The ritual has the following features. The AVCC publishes its annual survey of enrolments, and points to an increasingly large gap between those who get into a university and those who did not secure a funded place. The Government then stresses the overall growth within universities (including however PELS, fee payers, overseas students and undergraduates enrolled at discounted HECS levels); the Opposition issues a highly critical press release, indicating that ‘Mums and Dads will be outraged’; the Democrats say nothing; and business is equally silent. The media takes up the issue as a one day news ‘crisis’ mainly trying to prove that their own city/state is worse affected (because of Iraqi news about Saddam’s liberated palaces, the media moved on after only half a day of coverage this year).

And then, we all go back to life as usual, until April 2004.

The real pity of it all is that an enduringly significant social issue is involved, which deserves sustained comment and action.

To start with, this being the year for the outcomes of the Nelson Review, here is one of the most demonstrated indicators of the need to invest in public higher education. No matter how we argue over the exact final figures, there is plainly a constraint on access to university education for about 20,000 Australians annually, and this at the time when the policy rhetoric is all about creating a knowledge based economy. The AVCC thus made the funding of new places a key feature of its submission to the Crossroads Review covering the period 2004-2007.

But beyond the sheer numbers of the places required, there is the less obvious issue of the allocation of the existing places. And without trying to stir the federal war of words, the reality is that some states and some institutions have an unequal demand from students. It is simply harder to get to university in ‘growth states’, such as WA and Queensland. Our own cut-off scores are now probably the highest of any Australian university, reflecting both student interest in a high quality education, to the ‘artificially’ low number of final places we have to offer.

Government policy also constrains universities in how they balance the funded load they are allocated, partly by program, more still in terms of the undergraduate/postgraduate split.

This all sounds like pretty dry ‘educational speak’ but it actually involves the very capacity and character of our universities, together with their social missions.

For underpinning this whole sorry story is actually an extraordinarily positive development in our society. The best aspect of the Dawkins’ revolution was access. Compared to the elite system of the 1970-80s, we now have an increasingly educated and skilled society: over 15 per cent of us now have a university qualification, with about one million bachelors degrees awarded since 1991, over 350,000 masters graduates by course work and about 35,000 higher degrees by research. HECS and PELS have facilitated a positive boom in citizen demand for higher education.

Yet it is now a constrained revolution for economic and social good. Micro reform has increasingly energised our economy and an enviable growth rate in GDP. But reform of education – involving both funding and policy flexibility – has simply not kept up with need or potential in society. And it will not currently ensure our competitiveness among developed economies.

We simply have to get serious about higher education. Piecemeal change – occasional policy modifications, limited new investment, ever more targeted masters programs and claims for efficiency dividends as funding tightens – will no longer do.

Expectations of the Crossroads Review are accordingly very high. The Minister has, hearteningly, recognised the issues of access with a pre-release which calls on all MPs to support the expansion of funded places that is apparently within the Cabinet and Budget submission.

In the end, however, it will all depend on the scale of that investment to fund an expanded access for Australians into their universities.

The seasons will roll on through our own campus in 2003. But will the Somerville see significantly larger first year classes in 2004 and beyond? Or should we see the annual enrolments report as being as changeless as our great Winthrop Tower?
Even the tiniest organisms in a vast and remote ocean can impact on global climate.

A team of biological oceanographers has just returned to the Centre for Water Research (CWR) from three months in the Antarctic, aboard the Australian ice-breaker RSV Aurora Australis, studying the role of diatoms (microscopic algae) in supporting fisheries and controlling global climate.

Marine diatoms, tiny though they are, play two important roles: first in supporting the Southern Ocean’s food webs and, second, in their capacity to draw atmospheric CO$_2$ into the ocean and to keep it out of the atmosphere for up to 1,000 years as they sink to depth, a process known as the marine biological CO$_2$ pump.

The Antarctic expedition was the initiative of Dr Anya Waite, a lecturer at CWR, who obtained funding and the opportunity to join a scientific expedition to Antarctica by liaising with the Australian Antarctic Division. A UWA small grant to Canadian Dr Stéphane Pesant, a UWA postdoctoral fellow working with Dr Waite, enabled the team to build two drifting arrays of sediment traps. “It will allow us to validate our work by relating experimental results to field measurements,” Dr Waite said.

The Centre’s international team was led at sea by Dr Pesant, with CWR final year student Maya Whiteley and a PhD student, Christel Heemann, from the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research in Germany. “Stéphane has done a lot of similar work in the Arctic Ocean and we particularly wanted him to work with us on this research because of his expertise with sediment traps,” Dr Waite said.

Along with research scientists from several different countries, the CWR team conducted field measurements of the sedimentation of diatoms and laboratory experiments (on board the ship) to investigate the metabolic control of sinking diatoms.

The diatoms caught in the sediment traps at 80m and 180m below the surface will help Maya and Dr Pesant determine what proportion of the diatom community was grazed on by krill near the surface, becoming part of the food chain, and what proportion sank to the deep ocean and, in the big picture, could be responsible for helping to counter global warming.

In collaboration with the hydrochemists on board, the team also collected water samples at different depths, and cultured them under controlled temperature and light conditions in order to modify their metabolic activity. The sinking dynamics of the diatoms were then determined using traditional settling chambers and state of the art video techniques.

For Dr Pesant, who has worked previously in polar conditions, the weather was not an issue. But for Australian-born and raised Maya, days of zero degrees celsius, cooled by winds, made for a very different summer. “In our on-board lab, we were videoing the diatoms sinking but it had to be done in the same cold conditions as they experienced in the ocean, so even when we were inside, it was cold,” Maya said.

Dr Pesant said there was a lot of collaboration between the scientists on board. “Even though we were all working on different components of the Southern Ocean’s ecosystem – some observing whales and birds, some collecting krill, others involved in ocean’s chemistry and physics – you could often see where somebody else’s devices or techniques could suit your purposes,” he said. “Using our video equipment, we were able to help krill scientists by measuring the sinking rate of krill eggs and larvae.”

Dr Pesant explained that their final measurements and analyses can be used in bigger models of ocean-climate interactions and in the management of krill fisheries.
Remember when we were told that computers would create a paperless society?

“No chance,” says Leon McGlenchy, manager of UWA’s mail room. “They said that the fax machine would eliminate paper mail and it didn’t, and neither has e-mail.

“We handle between 50,000 and 60,000 articles of mail every month.”

The staff — and workload — of the mail room has doubled since Leon started work there about 12 years ago.

There is enough sorting, delivering and pick-ups from more than 175 mail delivery points across the campus to keep eight staff busy, spread over an 11-hour day.

Some of the staff start at 6.30am, picking up the overnight mail from the Australia Post exchange in Nedlands. On a typical day, there will be 16 tubs of big letters, two-and-half trays of small letters (about 1,300) and six to 10 bags of parcels.

The staff sort all this by about 7.45am, then begin cross-campus deliveries and pick-ups. They have an electric truck and a large van for on-campus work, a small van for driving around the perimeter of the campus, and a station wagon for deliveries to the teaching hospitals.

Sorting of internal mail and outgoing mail starts after the first round of deliveries, about 10.30am.

“The overseas courier service pick-up is between 11 and 11.30am and again at 4pm. Australia Post picks up the outgoing mail twice a day around 12.30pm and 4pm.” Leon said.

“Then it’s back to the faculties, schools and admin areas for the afternoon run.” That finishes by about 2.45pm and the bags are sorted ready for delivery the next morning or posting that night.

Thousands of items every year are sent interstate and overseas by couriers contracted by the University through the mail room.

“Since the beginning of the year, we have sent out 2,200 letters and packages through our overseas courier service, and about 2,000 within the country,” Leon said. “If any staff want something sent overseas, they should contact the mail room, because we already have the contracts in place with the courier...
services and we will be able to save you money,” he said.

Another way the mail room can save UWA money is with bulk mailing.

“Australia Post offers incentives for bulk mailing when we use our barcode system. So, if you can give some notice of a bulk mail-out, we can arrange a good deal,” he said.

Using a barcode enables Australia Post to do automated sorting, which saves them time and money and they are happy to pass on those benefits.

Leon explained that, to get a barcode, a business needs either a post box number or a street number.

“This is why it’s important that the University’s address is 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, not just Stirling Highway.

Numbers are important in the mail room. The new mail bag delivery point numbers are making everything a lot quicker and easier for the staff. “The only problems are that not everybody is using them yet, and some people use the wrong numbers, but that will sort itself out,” Leon said.

Director of Administrative Services, Peter Johnson, said the impetus for the delivery point numbers came from academic areas.

“The restructure meant bigger units with more people and multiple delivery points. The new system enables the mail to go to the most convenient locations for everybody,” he said.

Leon said the oddest thing to come through the mail room in recent years was a bongo drum, addressed simply to The University of WA.

“We tried all the obvious places like anthropology and music, but nobody claimed it. It sat there for five weeks until finally somebody from anatomy claimed it. He’d brought it home from a holiday in Africa and it had been in quarantine.

The mail room relocated from the administration building to the old Westpac bank building about five years ago. If you have any queries, you can pop in and see them there or visit their Web page: www.admin-services.uwa.edu.au

“For a lot of people on campus, mail marks the start and the end of each day. They don’t realise what’s involved in between,” said Leon. “But that’s OK. As long as the service operates smoothly, we know we’re doing a good job.”

Translation tool a good sign

The group’s key researcher is Dr Eun-Jung Holden, who has worked on the project through her Masters degree and her PhD and is now a research fellow. The project is funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery grant, now in its fifth year.

They have collaborated with Professor Michael Arbib, from the University of Southern California, who visits UWA annually to co-supervise research students working on the integration of gesture and visual speech recognition systems.

Professor Arbib said that while he was working with monkeys, to find out how to convert their hand movements to robotic hand movements, he realised that it was the same part of the brain that was used for hand movements in monkeys and language in humans.

“It’s not so surprising when you know that language started as hand gestures,” Professor Arbib said. Professor Owens added that we still use hand gestures as we speak and we actually use hand movements all the time, in our communications, typing emails and writing with pens. The connection makes sign language seem more closely related to spoken language.

The group hopes the translation tool will eventually be used in public places like hospitals and police stations, when there is no human interpreter available.

Dr Holden explained how it would work. “The person who is signing would do so in front of a camera and his or her communication would be automatically translated into English on the computer screen. In reverse, an English-speaker could type an answer into the computer and it would be displayed as Auslan on the screen for the deaf person.”

Professor Arbib said it was a very difficult project. “They have done a very good job so far on the Auslan tutorial system, which lets you ask the computer how to say things in Auslan. The hand and face recognition system is not yet at the point where you can carry out complicated conversations, but it will get there,” he said.

Other research students involved in the project over the past five years include Mark Barnard, Sam Yeates, Jason Wong, Nick Lowe, James Strauss and Gareth Loy. The researchers collaborate with the Deaf Society of WA for their expertise in Auslan.
Minority languages all over the world are disappearing but it is not the ubiquitous English language that is to blame.

Although it is now spoken by more people than any other language (including Chinese), it is not English, but politics and hierarchy that make the difference between retention or loss of a language, according to Professor Tove Bull.

Professor Bull, from Norway’s University of Tromso, has a passion for minority languages and is at UWA to take part in the Institute of Advanced Studies’ program, *The Europeans*.

Professor Bull is involved with the symposium on minority languages in multicultural Europe, which is bringing together leading European and Australian scholars, to compare and evaluate differing approaches to the issue of maintaining these languages.

Professor Bull grew up in northern Norway, among the indigenous Sami people. “We don’t know exactly how many Sami people there are, because our national census doesn’t ask about ethnicity! But, across Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia, there could be up to 40,000. Norway has the biggest population, so we would have probably about 20,000 Samis.

“How the Sami language came to be officially recognised by the Norwegian government is an interesting story. Last century, the government regulated a river for a hydro-electric project. This river ran through Sami land and the Sami people fought hard but eventually lost their river.

“The north, where the Samis live, had always been stricken by poverty and I think the government felt bad about taking their river, so they set up all sorts of commissions into the Sami people’s living conditions, education opportunities and so on.

“There had been an ethnic revival in Norway over the preceding 20 years and this official recognition of the Sami people was the breakthrough needed to get the Sami people on their feet and ensure their language was retained.”

Professor Bull said the University of Tromso (where she teaches) was established to ensure that people in the north had similar educational opportunities to people in the south, and to give the region an educated labour force.

“And it has worked. The University of Tromso now has 6,500 students. When I left my northern home to go to university in the south, I was one of only two to four per cent of people who pursued a tertiary education,” she said.

“So the people of the north became educated. Schooling in the Sami language became a right and parents were happy to see their children growing up speaking, reading and writing the traditional language.

“If you speak a language, and it’s looked down upon — as the Sami language used to be — then it is natural that you see to it your children are not treated as you were and you don’t encourage them to speak your native language.

“That happens all over the world. A language becomes endangered if it is not transmitted from one generation to the next. And it is not passed on if the language does not have some status.

“If it is used for official purposes and in schools, it helps the retention of that language enormously. It all comes down to hierarchy and politics.”

While she is here, Professor Bull is also gathering information on Australian Aboriginal languages.

“But the history of English-speaking Australians is so short, as are their relationships with Aboriginal Australians and migrants. It is nothing like the long and complicated relationships — and hence the languages — of, say, my part of the world, where hundreds and hundreds of years of travel and trade have developed multiple languages and multi-lingualism,” she said.

*Maintaining Minority Languages in a Transnational World* will be convened by the Dean of Arts, Professor Anne Pauwels, at UWA on June 5 and 6. For registration and information, email ias@admin.uwa.edu.au
Dark and black are words frequently used to describe the work of contemporary artist Susan Norrie.

But her preoccupation with that end of the spectrum is more than just society’s apparent current fear of colour. “When I use black, there is a reason for it,” says one of Australia’s most highly regarded contemporary artists, whose exhibition eddy opened at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery last month.

She was happy to explain carefully how and why she had created some of the works. The exhibition brings together three major works by the artist. Undertow, a story of environmental turmoil and the threat of man-made disaster, uses a combination of media, moving image, sound and sculptural installation. Inquisition is mainly paintings, some photographs and objects, mostly black or black and white, and, like its namesake, with a theme the artist calls treacherousness. Issue 141 is a huge wall text, displaying a quote from the screenplay of a film, Ice Storm, which documents destructive crises in two American families.

“The three projects are all different but they have a common thread of turmoil and treachery that echo today’s scenario of war,” Susan Norrie said. “The word eddy, meaning a whirling motion, seems to encompass those ideas, along with the theme of Undertow.”

One of the big black paintings in Inquisition is actually a recipe for an old-fashioned poison sticky fly paper, with a thick shiny sticky-looking black glaze over it, which seems to both trap and reflect the viewer. Susan Norrie says, as a woman, she is interested in home-made recipes and innovations. In another work, she has had a 19th century funeral ribbon photographed and she has manipulated the image to create something that is reminiscent of a confessional with the black textured fabric, the hints of treachery and the thread of women’s work.

Another digitally manipulated photograph is of a West German troop of anti-terrorists climbing like spiders over a building, echoing the sticky fly paper image, with both the men and the scenery behind them reflected in the windows.

“As with the viewers of the sticky fly paper work, their own images are reflected back to them, and the outside is drawn in, through the reflection of trees in the building’s windows.

“Another theme of my work is the tension between inside and outside, internal and external. It’s there is the wall text, that contrast between what’s private within the family and what’s being made public through external pressures on the family.”

This is the second time the wall text has been installed in a gallery. Susan Norrie says she chose the typeface and the colour of the letters to complement the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery.

“At the other gallery, in Sydney, it looked quite different, because it was a very different gallery, so I chose a completely different style and colour.”

eddy is a challenging exhibition, and this is where the Gallery’s accompanying literature, including an essay by director and curator of this exhibition, John Barrett-Lennard, come into their own.

eddy is at the LWAG until June 1.

Susan Norrie in front of the wall text, Issue 141
Students embark on an odyssey

A thens 2004 is the destination for the fittest bodies in the world. But some of the best brains are meeting just south-west of Athens, later this year.

Xylokastra 2003 is the destination for the second annual summer school for postgraduate students of neuropsychology.

The Vivian Smith Advanced Studies Institute of the International Neuropsychological Society selects up to 75 graduate student fellows and up to 20 outstanding internationally recognised scientists for a month of intensive teaching and learning in the coastal town, south-west of Athens.

Three UWA students, Kate Frencham, Dana Wong and Mark Woodman have been selected (and had their expenses paid) for the summer school, which concentrates this year on memory and the amnesias.

“In terms of clinical work, memory and the amnesias is central to everything we do,” said Mark. Dana added that the summer school would be a month of real, in-depth teaching. “It won’t be like attending a conference where you just get a taste,” she said. “And the teaching staff are the best in their field in the world.”

Kate explained that the three, who are all in the final stages of their MPsysPhD, found information about the summer school on the Internet. “It required a very rigorous application, but it was worth it. There are only seven students going to Xylokastra from Australia, four from Melbourne, and we three.”

Their field of neuropsychology concentrates on brain-behaviour relationships. As professionals they will deal with patients with neurological illnesses, assess head injuries and brain damage, help diagnose dementia, and (as part of a hospital team) design rehabilitation programs.

They said there were only five qualified neuropsychologists in WA, only two working in the field. “We’ve all done some of our placement work in Melbourne, where it is a much more established discipline,” Dana said.

The summer school is designed to promote knowledge in the fields of cognitive neuroscience and clinical neuropsychology, and to promote formation of professional bonds among future and current leaders in these fields.

Along with their daily workshops, the students will all be taught the basics of the Greek language — the original language of their discipline.

Language teachers look forward

Sometimes you deliver a lecture or make up a set of class notes that are so good you wish they could have another life.

The Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT) offers academics that opportunity. They are putting together a bridging course for overseas students and they desperately need texts.

“We need a vast range of printed matter, ranging from lectures to bibliographies, from laboratory set-ups to lists of recommended reading,” said Annette Cook. “Our students need to become familiar with the traditions and practices of western universities. They need to experience academic writing in the English language. They need to learn how to communicate appropriately.

“And to do all this effectively, they need to be able to immerse themselves in university texts of all sorts, whether it’s technical writing, lists of instructions, class summaries, memos, absolutely anything.” Ms Cook said.

She would like all staff to send her notes, essays, minutes, any text that can be emailed to CELT. “I don’t care if I’m inundated. In fact, I’d be delighted. I don’t mind if it’s a 500-page thesis or a half-page letter. I’m even interested in audio tapes of lectures.”
Are fruit and veg the key?

Nutrition-based cancer research

The life of former asbestos workers has become a deadly waiting game, as they wonder if they will contract mesothelioma.

Not everybody who has been in contact with asbestos will end up with the cancer and a research nutritionist with the School of Population Health is studying eating habits of potential mesothelioma sufferers to see if they can make a difference.

“It’s generally well-accepted that a diet rich in fruit and vegetables is a good one,” says Gina Ambrosini. There is actually a lot of evidence to support this.

“What people eat affects their risk for all sorts of diseases. What we are looking at is whether or not a person’s chances of developing mesothelioma after exposure to asbestos might partly depend on the foods they eat.”

Ms Ambrosini said people who had been exposed to asbestos often felt helpless as they waited to see if they would contract cancer. “Like everyone, they should try to maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to reduce their cancer risk, that is, by not smoking, getting some exercise, and eating a varied and healthy diet. But for these high risk people, it would be nice to be able to give them some more specific dietary advice if the evidence supports that.”

She is finalising the results of her study on the diets of people who have had asbestos exposure and says they are generally positive, especially for vegetables rich in carotene, the orange and yellow vegetables.

“Beta carotene is a precursor to Vitamin A, which is important for correct cell division. Vitamin A keeps cells dividing normally – the opposite of what happens to cells during cancer. Carotenoids are also good anti-oxidants that can mop up the so-called ‘bad’ oxidising agents which come from external sources such as smoking or pollution, and which we also produce naturally as a byproduct of our metabolism.”

Ms Ambrosini said beta carotene acquired a bad name in the 1990s when trials in Finland and the United States gave beta carotene to smokers to see if this would prevent lung cancer. “Unfortunately, the participants taking beta carotene ended up with an increased incidence of lung cancer, which made some people wonder whether the moderately high doses of beta carotene used in the trial were actually cancer-inducing.

“But all the participants were smokers, so perhaps the beta carotene just came too late, and the damage was already done.”

She hopes to have the mesothelioma study results completed by the end of the year. Meanwhile, Ms Ambrosini is also looking at the nutritional risk factors for prostate cancer and benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) — a common prostate condition, associated with ageing, that affects quality of life and often leads to high-risk surgery being required.

While colleagues in the School are looking at other risk factors in this study, Ms Ambrosini is studying the diet of 500 men diagnosed with prostate cancer in the past five years, 300 men with BPH and 500 who don’t have either condition.

“There is little consensus on the dietary risk factors for prostate cancer, but probably the strongest one so far is a high-fat intake. Very little research has been conducted on diet and BPH risk. I am interested at looking at dietary patterns, for example, a high fat low fibre diet, Mediterranean-style diet, or vegetarian-type diet and if any of these are particularly related to prostate cancer or BPH risk.”
NEW CENTRE UNLOCKS THE POTENTIAL OF IDEAS

Diversity in industry, spurred by innovation, is the key to economic growth in Western Australia.

UWA’s Graduate School of Management has created the Centre for Entrepreneurial Management and Innovation (CEMI) to undertake research and education programs linked to industry, to achieve enhanced innovation and business development.

In the 21st century, good managers will have to know how to unlock the potential of ideas and embrace innovation to help their organisations gain a sustainable competitive advantage within a knowledge-based economy.

And the CEMI is there to help managers in industry and government to direct change and growth through courage, enterprise and strategic vision.

It has undertaken research into the structure of the venture capital sector in WA and the State Government has used this work in setting policy.

It has also completed a study for the CSIRO and WA Department of Agriculture into the commercial feasibility of applying satellite imaging data to precision wool production.

Another project, for the Forest Products Commission and the Waters and Rivers Commission, assessed the investment potential for the creation of a new agro-forestry industry in the Warren, Collie and Kent River catchments.

More recently, it completed a study of the information technology sector in WA in conjunction with the Department of Industry and Resources. This study found insufficient links between the research community and industry, insufficient local production networks, and problems for small firms in securing access to government contracts.

Director Dr Tim Mazzarol said the CEMI would focus its activities on seven key themes: innovation in services management; managing people for innovation and enterprise; regional innovation and enterprise; financing entrepreneurial ventures; strategic management of entrepreneurial ventures; commercialisation pathways for emerging technologies; and strategic networking for innovation and enterprise.

The new Centre was launched at University House last month. About 100 industry representatives attended and they all agreed that CEMI would meet a need which to date was unmet.

The language of poets and saints for twilight sailors

A twilight regatta at Royal Perth Yacht Club was the perfect opportunity for Professor John Kinder to thank the supporters of European languages and studies at UWA.

The Italian Consul’s Cup Regatta, a recently revived annual event for Perth’s Italian business community, needed a Master of Ceremonies fluent in both English and Italian.

Professor Kinder was asked to do the honours and he did so with flair, expressing the University’s appreciation of the support from the Italian Consulate, the Italian Government and the Italian community in general.

“...and the first Consul’s Cup in 1991, then again in 1995, without success. Maybe that’s why I was asked to be MC this time!” Professor Kinder said.

The regatta was revived this year by a group of energetic sponsors, the Consulate and the Italian Chamber of Commerce.

As MC, Professor Kinder pointed out that there had been an Italian crew member on the Endeavour with Captain James Cook on the voyage in which he discovered Australia in 1778.

“It’s a neat link with Italy, a nation of poets, saints and sailors – poeti, santi e navigatori,” he said.
The issue of performance management for University staff is under review.

While UWA had introduced a staff development review process several years ago, and a three yearly appraisal process for academic staff more recently, anecdotal evidence was suggesting that the process was 'hit and miss'. Many staff and their supervisors found the annual development interview a useful exercise but others found the process either intimidating, unproductive or, in some cases, non-existent.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Margaret Seares is chairing the review with a very clear premise that a successful performance management system will need to be 'owned' by everyone at the University. To that end the Steering Group has been looking at the experiences and preferences of staff around the University. During February and March five focus groups (two academic and three general staff) were held. The comments emerging from these discussions were remarkably consistent and will underpin the development of a new approach.

• People want the process to be positive and focussed on improvement. They highlighted the importance of openness, transparency, equity and fairness.

• People were almost unanimous in their view that if a staff member and a supervisor had a good working relationship based on trust then the performance management process had the best chance of success. And that person would likely have good knowledge of the other person's work. But because these relationships can sometimes break down an alternative was required.

• People want clarity. They want to be assessed on criteria that both sides have agreed to — whether those are called goals, expectations or tasks. They also want to be clear about the review process— what will happen, before, during and after. In general they agree clarity is most likely to require putting things in writing. This doesn’t need to be a book but it should provide points for discussion.

• Everyone agreed that the formal performance management discussion should be the outcome of an ongoing process. Nothing surprising should emerge in the interview because a good supervisor is providing informal feedback every day, every week, every month. Therefore the interview can and should be as much about talking about the future as about assessing the past. It is a formal opportunity to review, reflect and plan.

• Things at the University are changing and changing quickly. In order to do the best job possible, staff recognise the need to keep developing their skills. A very important function of the performance management interview is to make sure that development needs are identified and plans are put in place to make sure that staff get the training or other support they need.

• While many UWA staff are happy to stay in the same job and location for lengthy periods of time others are seeking career challenges, either within UWA or elsewhere. The focus groups agreed that the performance management process should be supporting staff to develop the skills and gain the experiences they needed to be competitive in seeking other opportunities.

• UWA is a big and varied organisation. It is important that any performance management system can be customised to address the particular needs of a work area. Generally, that should be done in a collaborative way. Changes in the environment can change the direction of a work area. Therefore plans need to be flexible enough to be changed.

• People are very busy. They want to make sure that any documentation they gather can be used for more than a once per year interview. The University should consider linking performance management to other human resource processes such as tenure, promotion, and salary progression.

The Steering Group will continue to meet over the next three months and is still hoping to receive input from staff. All its agendas, minutes and working documents can be found on the web at Tell the group what you think by sending an email.

“One thing that is increasingly clear is that the first thing to change will be the terminology. While the steering group hasn’t finalised their recommendations, it is highly likely that ‘performance management’ will be replaced by something more reflective of a forward-looking, partnership approach to staff development,” Professor Seares said.

Once a draft structure is agreed there will be opportunities to come along to a lunch time forum or morning tea in your School to discuss it with committee members.

It is hoped a proposal will be ready for considered by the University Executive about mid-year. Resulting new arrangements would be introduced in 2004.
It’s not compulsory it just makes sense

On December 19 last year, the Acts Amendment (Student Guilds And Associations) Bill 2002 was passed in the Parliament of Western Australia.

It replaced the previous Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) legislation introduced in 1994, but in a form very different to the previous system of universal Guild membership. It determines that all enrolled students at all four public Western Australian Universities are charged an ‘amenities and services fee’.

This fee is now administered by the University and distributed to the Guild and the Sports Association. The income used by the Guild and the Sports Association to provide services and amenities to all students, such as representation, social, sporting and cultural activities, welfare and commercial services. Although all students must pay the fee, Guild Membership is not compulsory.

Often I’m told that the Guild must be ‘rolling in cash’. This isn’t the case. The Guild has held funds from the University’s investment pool for several years. The return has been negligible since a decline in world markets following September 11 2001. In fact, the income budgeted for this year is almost the same as the year before, with an extra $500,000 from membership income, and income from investments down about $500,000 from last year.

In recent years the Guild has relied heavily on income derived from non-student sources as a way of keeping membership prices low. For example, we seek a wide range of sponsorship for publications and social events, and our catering operations have expanded their function catering service.

Catering is a good source of income as the catering market is profitable and it is revenue from a non-student source. If ever the Amenities and Services Legislation is repealed due to change of Government, the Guild will have little control over changes. But our catering profits will always be there as something to fall back on. With unpredictable income sources, it can also be very difficult for the Guild to make any long-term goals and strategic plans.

My own position on VSU/CSU is not a political ideology. I have never been a member of any political party. I believe in the concept that all students should pay some form of fee to the Guild because I believe the Guild is there to support and represent all students, not just those who choose to pay.

Guilds need to stop being treated like a ‘political football’. The issue of compulsory fees / voluntary fees needs to cease being politicised and I hope that the new system of Guild funding remains in place. The current form of fees ensures that control mechanisms are in place to keep student organisations accountable and ensure the fee is used appropriately. The arguments used by VSU supporters about sky-rocketing fees and wasting money on political campaigns are no longer substantiated.

Even so, under VSU, accountability was maintained through annual elections. If the elected Guild Council is using the money inappropriately, they won’t be supported at the next elections. Similarly, candidates who prove that they can provide benefits for students and value for money will get elected to Guild Council. If students genuinely supported VSU, they had a chance in Guild elections last year to voice that opinion. I made it clear in election material that I supported the Amenities and Services fee, and I received about 70 per cent of votes cast. Election candidates supporting VSU received about 8 per cent of votes cast. All students, not just Guild members, are eligible to vote in Guild elections. The vast majority of student representatives elected in the past few years have also opposed VSU. When state politicians supporting VSU claim that students don’t want Guild fees, they are not speaking for the majority of university students.

In the case of the UWA Student Guild, we have been lucky to survive VSU because of a good relationship with the University and sensible financial management.

A compulsory services and amenities fee doesn’t just mean money for the Guild; more importantly it means a potential revitalisation of campus life and renewed interest in the Guild.

The Guild has played a vital role in University life for the past 90 years. I hope the financial security of the A & S fee will ensure that the Guild can last for another 90.
Academic women together on one site

The national Register of Senior University Women aims to alleviate under-representation of women in higher education.

It has recently been updated and everybody in the tertiary education industry is encouraged to use the Register to identify university women who could be appointed to senior positions, nominated to be part of pivotal committees or called upon to provide expert advice on a wide range of topics and issues.

The Register was established in 1995, as an initiative of the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee. It contains current contact information, classification/position, areas of expertise/special interests and committee memberships for 3700 senior university women.

The facility of online browsing or downloading the recently updated Register is via the AVCC website http://www.avcc.edu.au/news.public_statements/publications/rsuw.htm

Options to download the entire Register in pre-selected orders (for example, in order of university or academic organisation) is made possible via the same web page.

For online searching only, it is via: http://www.avcc.edu.au/database/search/snrmw.asp by entering a selection criteria (for example, the name, university, expertise or committee) to retrieve an individual or sub-group of senior university women.

I 17th Australian International Education Conference

CONFERENCE THEME

Securing the Future for International Education: Managing Growth and Diversity

STREAMS

1. Competition and Marketing
2. Technology
3. Managing International Education: Student and Institution Perspectives
4. Curriculum, Learning and Products
5. Policy and Strategy
6. Business and International Education
7. International Development

For more information visit http://www.idp.com/17aiec or contact the Conference Manager, IDP Education Australia at conference@idp.com

Compiled by Joanna Thompson
Telephone: 9380 3029
Facsimile: 9380 1162
Email: joanna.thompson@uwa.edu.au
Change of Date

Please note:

CHEMISTRY SEMINAR
‘Characterisation of alkaliphilic micro-organisms in industrial waste streams’, Amanda Tilbury. 5.15pm, Simmonds Lecture Theatre. The event will be held on 12 May (previously advertised as 29 April).

WEEKDAY MASS
5.15pm, Mon to Fri: St Thomas More College chapel. Catholic chaplain (ext. 2405).

Tuesday 6 May

SOIL SCIENCE AND PLANT NUTRITION SEMINAR

AFUW(WA) MORNING MEETING
‘The highlands of New Guinea in the 1940s’, Eve Akerman. 10am, M. E. Wood Room, St Catherine’s College. Members and all interested friends are invited to attend this talk. Morning tea will be served. Gold coin donation for the refreshments.

MARINE SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING SEMINAR
‘Seabed mobility and sandbank stability’, Professor Michael Collins, School of Ocean and Earth Science (Southampton Oceanography Centre), University of Southampton. 4pm, Room 119, Second Floor, School of Water Research Building.

ANATOMY AND HUMAN BIOLOGY SEMINAR
‘Autologous chondrocyte implantation: clinically approved cell therapy in orthopaedics’, A/Prof Ming-Hao Zheng, Orthopaedic Surgery. 1pm, Room 1.81, First Floor, ANHB.

Wednesday 7 May

GEOGRAPHY SEMINAR
‘Under a regent moon: conservation and eco-education in the Prince Regent River region of the Kimberley’, Kevin Kenneally, Department of Conservation and Land Management. 1.10pm, Geography Lecture Theatre I, Floor Ground.

INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
‘You are invited to attend a presentation by David Marr as part of the Perth launch of his new book Dark Victory. The Military Campaign to re-elect the Prime Minister. This book is a genre-breaking inside account of the Tampa, Australia’s refugee crisis and the political campaigning that powered it, from two of the country’s pre-eminent investigative journalists. The event is free but bookings are essential (ext. 2020). Books will be available for purchase and signing on the night. Enquiries to Institute of Advanced Studies on ext. 1340 or Colin Penter, WA Refugee Alliance at cpmatrix@eon.net.au. 6pm, Windthrop Hall.’

CHEMISTRY SEMINAR

Thursday 8 May

FREE LUNCHEON CONCERT
Youthful Strings. The Julinka String Quartet (all UWA Music string students) makes its Lunchtime Concert Series debut with a program featuring Mendelssohn’s E minor quartet. 1.10pm, Octagon Theatre.

LUNCH WITH JOAN KIRNER
The EMILY’S List Student Organising Committee invites you to bring your lunch and chat with the Honourable Joan Kirner, Former Premier of Victoria and co-founder of EMILY’s List Australia, a committee that provides financial, mentoring and other campaign support for progressive Labour women in Parliaments across Australia who fight for our pro-choice, pro-equity, pro-childcare agenda. 1pm, May Tannock Room (above the Refectory), Guild Village. RSVP to Amy Bachrach at emilyslistwa@hotmail.com.

Friday 9 May

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING SEMINAR
‘An extension of the Mehrabian-Russell Environmental Psychology Model to an Internet retail setting: an exploratory study’, A/Prof Jill Sweeney, IMM. 11am, Seminar Room (SS2233), Second Floor, Social Sciences South Building.

BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY SEMINAR
‘Liver progenitor cell lines as snapshots of stages of hepatocyte differentiation’, A/Prof George Yeoh; ‘Investigation of agents that influence hepatic stem cell proliferation and differentiation’, Richard Davies. 1pm, Simmonds Lecture Theatre.

MICROBIOLOGY SEMINAR
‘Mouse cytomegalovirus can rapidly mutate to evade host NK cell responses’, Dr Tony Scalzo. 1pm, Room 1.11, Microbiology.

Saturday 10 May

HUMANITIES LECTURE SERIES
Hosted by German Studies, this is the first lecture in a series of lectures given by eminent South African Muslim scholar Professor Farid Esack. He will speak on the topic: ‘To be young, Australian and Muslim’. 7pm, Alexander Lecture Theatre, Arts Building.

Monday 12 May

PLANT BIOLOGY SEMINAR
‘Controlling persistently aphid-borne virus diseases of broadacre crops: prediction and control with insecticides’, Dr Roger Jones. 4pm, Agriculture Lecture Theatre.

Sunday 11 May

HUMANITIES LECTURE SERIES
‘Hosted by German Studies, this is the second lecture in a series of lectures given by eminent South African Muslim scholar Professor Farid Esack. He will speak on the topic: ‘Concept of equality in Islam’. 7pm, Alexander Lecture Theatre, Arts Building.

Monday 12 May

PLANT BIOLOGY SEMINAR
‘Hosted by German Studies, this is the third lecture in a series of lectures given by eminent South African Muslim scholar Professor Farid Esack. He will speak on the topic: ‘The clash of twin fundamentalisms: a progressive Muslim analysis of September 11’. 6.30pm, Alexander Lecture Theatre, Arts Building.

Tuesday 13 May

SOIL SCIENCE AND PLANT NUTRITION SEMINAR
‘Spontaneous soil development and plant growth on disturbed sites’, Dwi Setyawan, Mineralogy. 4pm, Agriculture Lecture Theatre.
UWA CHAPLAINCY SERVICE OFFERS YOU—
Frank Brennan, sj, a Jesuit lawyer well-versed in international law and refugees issues, lecturing and available for questions on “War and Refugees”, 12.45 to 1.45pm, Fox Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, Arts Building. Info: ang.chaplain@admin.uwa.edu.au or gbrennan@admin.uwa.edu.au.

Wednesday 14 May
MUSIC SPECIAL EVENT
The Periodical Pianists. Enjoy a unique evening with the Periodical Pianists as they perform works from the Baroque and Classical eras on an array of period keyboard instruments including harpsichords, fortepianos and clavichords. Tickets: $10 adults and $5 concession, available from UWA Music on ext. 7835. A light supper will be served after the concert. 7.30pm, Eileen Joyce Studio. All proceeds benefit the Historic Instrument Collection fund.

GEOGRAPHY SEMINAR
‘Managing ethnicity: understanding Singapore’s social geography’, Dr Brian Shaw. 12noon, Geography Lecture Theatre 1, Ground Floor.

FRIENDS OF THE UWA LIBRARY MEETING
‘Understanding spiders’, Adj/Prof Barbara York Main, Animal Biology. 7.30pm, Library Training Room, Ground Floor, Reid Library.

CHEMISTRY SEMINAR
‘The organic chemist in biological chemistry: structure, synthesis and biosynthesis’, Bill Kitching, University of Queensland. 5.15pm, Simmonds Lecture Theatre.

ENVIRONMENTAL DYNAMICS SEMINAR
‘Dynamic turbulence models in large eddy simulations of cloud-topped atmospheric boundary layers’, Dr Michael Kirkpatrick, Centre for Turbulence Research, Stanford University. 4pm, Blakers Lecture Room, Ground Floor, Mathematics. All welcome.

Thursday 15 May
FREE LUNCHTIME CONCERT
Cubana Bop. Join the Defying Gravity Percussion Ensemble for an exhilarating concert of contemporary percussion works from around the world including Paul Tanner’s Gobo and The Whole Toy Laid Down by Dave Hollinden. 1.10pm, Octagon Theatre.

Friday 16 May
MICROBIOLOGY SEMINAR
‘Deltex 1 redirects lymphoid progenitors to the B Cell Lineage by antagonising Notch 1’, Dr David Izon. 1pm, Room 1.1, Microbiology.

Monday 19 May
PERTH MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE GROUP QUIZ NIGHT
‘In the Guild Tavern (Student Social Club at the Guild Village). Questions start at 7.30pm. Drinks available at the bar. Tables of 6 persons, $10 per head. Bookings to Talia Marsh, English, or Charles Acland on 9423 9428.

WAYNE’S WINDSCREENS and GLASS
We come to you!
• CHIPS • CRACKS • REPLACEMENTS
• TINTING • WE BILL YOUR INSURANCE DIRECT
SPECIALISTS IN ALL ASPECTS OF GLASS AND TINTING
Cnr Welshpool Road & Leach Hwy, Welshpool
Phone: 9356 1100
www.wayneswindscreens.com.au

workskillsprofessionals
temporary & permanent personnel

Need temporary, contract or permanent staff!
Workskills Professionals are proud to be a wholly owned and operated WA Company and are preferred suppliers to State and Federal Government agencies. Supplying staff in the areas of:
• Administration/Clerical • IT/Computing • Professional/Technical • Skilled/Unskilled Labour

We have been supplying candidates with previous tertiary (University) experience to UWA since 1993. We have developed a Star Education Performers list to capture these experienced people, enabling us to deliver a fast quality service.

Try us — we are sure you will notice the difference
Give our friendly staff a call on
Ph: (08) 9201 7777  Fax: (08) 9201 7778
requestwa@workskillsprofessionals.com.au
www.WorkskillsProfessionals.com.au
continued from front page

Dr Peter McMinn, Mr Robert Hurrelbrink and Dr D. R. Shafren, Biomedical and Chemical Sciences: ‘A study of the molecular epidemiology and virulence determinants of enteroovirus 71 strains from the Asia-Pacific region’ — $315,000 (2003-05).

Prof Geoffrey Shellam, Dr Malcolm Lawson, Dr Anthony Scalzo and Dr Valentina Voigt, Biomedical and Chemical Sciences: ‘Long-lived CDB T-cell responses induced by a recombinant cytomegalovirus vector’ — $225,000 (2003-05).

Dr Geoffery Stewart and Dr Nithiananthan Asokananthan, Biomedical and Chemical Sciences: ‘The role of proteases and protease-activated receptors in respiratory and chemical sciences’ — $13,500 (2003).

A/Prof George Yeoh and A/Prof Lawrence Abraham, Biomedical and Chemical Sciences: ‘The role of TNF and its receptor family in liver progenitor cell proliferation and differentiation’ — $240,000 (2003-05).

Dr David Lloyd, Prof Gwion Stachowiak, Dr M. Kuster and Dr K. F. Maguire, Human Movement and Exercise Science, Mechanical Engineering, Surgery and Pathology: ‘Prospective study to identify the mechanical causes and methods for early detection of knee osteoarthritis’ — $410,000 (2003-05).

Professor Geoffrey Stewart and Dr Leslie Mathaba, Biomedical and Chemical Sciences: ‘Mites, endosymbiotic bacteria and escherichial enzymes: a physicochemical analysis of a novel member of the P60 superfamily’ — $10,000 (2003).

Dr Robert Tuckley, Biomedical and Chemical Sciences: ‘Identification of the slow steps in cytotoxic P450scc catalysis: towards engineering a faster enzyme’ — $10,000 (2003).

Dr Daniela Ugliati, Biomedical and Chemical Sciences: ‘Identification of transcription factors binding the complement receptor 2 (CR2) proximal promoter and intrinsic silencer’ — $17,500 (2003).


Dr Gregory Pooley, Centre for Microscopy and Microanalysis: ‘Alteration of chromian spinel in near surface and surface environments: structural and chemical relationships of the replacement of these minerals during weathering’ — $15,800 (2003).


Research Grants & Contracts will feature in each issue of the UWA News. Any queries about the research grants published in this issue should be directed to the Research Grants Office, ext. 3792.


Dr Li Ju and Dr C. Zhao, Physics: ‘The spring action of radiation pressure in a short optical cavity’ — $90,000 (2003).

Dr Sergei Kuzenko, Physics: ‘Quantum dynamics from quantum symmetries’ — $17,433 (2003).

Dr Clayton Locke, ‘Novel difference frequency technique to achieve frequency-temperature compensation in a dual mode resonator oscillator’ — $18,000 (2003).

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Prof Geoffrey Stewart, A/Prof Howard Mitchell, Prof Roy Goldie, Dr Paul Rigby, Dr Annette McWilliams, Dr G. Harnett, Dr Nithiananthan Asokananthan, Dr Peter Henry and Dr Lynette Gray, UWA Centre for Medical Research, Biomedical and Chemical Sciences, Surgery and Pathology, Medicine and Pharmacology: ‘Viral infection, airway epithelial protease-activated receptors (PARs), cytokines, endothelin and inflammation’ — $285,000 (2003-04).

Classifieds

FOR SALE


WANTED TO RENT

FURNISHED HOME CLOSE TO UWA needed by academic family for short term, arriving Perth in early July. Budget approx. $250 p/w, but flexible. Email gjiglet@giglet@cyllene.uwa.edu.au.

VISITING PROFESSOR IN LAW SCHOOL seeks for first semester 2004, fully furnished and equipped 3 or 4 bedroom house, well situated for public transport and ideally within easy reach of UWA. Please contact Terence Daintith on ext. 2947 (Law School) or at tdaintith@law.uwa.edu.au.

FOR RENT

CRAWLEY. Furnished accommodation, available from early April 2003. Ideal for visiting academics, short and long term. Two-bedroom self-contained apartment in Fairway, near UWA. Fully furnished and fitted out (including linen). Air-conditioning, heating, TV, telephone; undercover parking. Short walk to shopping centre, transport, restaurants, tavern, cinema, Swan River and Kings Park (bushland and recreational facilities). Email: crawleyapartment@iinet.net.au, web address: www.goodstvy.com/parthapartment. Telephone: 9386 2367; Mobile: 0418 914 204. $375 per week; lower rates for long duration (6 months or more); telephone charges extra.