HELPING ME, HELPING YOU
The volunteer program supporting teenage migrants and refugees

REMEMBERING TO FORGET
Exposing better ways to store and use your digital photos

REAL (IN)ACTION
Why gender equality in politics will build a ‘stronger Australia’
25 years ago I had ...
Just returned to Sydney and taken up a position at UNSW. I spent the first decade of my academic career outside Sydney, and mainly outside NSW. The previous six years had been at Griffith University and I still remember returning to the shock of Sydney house prices after the much more reasonable levels in Brisbane! Yet it was great to get back to Sydney – one of the best cities in the world.

What causes are you currently championing?
My current major project is updating the UTS Strategic Plan, which is easy in the sense that it is already well formulated and clear, but hard in the sense that people are highly engaged so the expectations of the update are higher. My biggest challenge is to oversee the growth of our Indigenous education initiatives. We have been making big strides in terms of staff profile, in having a ‘best practice’ strategy and governance framework, in improved success and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and recent significant outcomes in terms of Indigenous graduate attributes. The development of the latter in the Faculty of Health has set a benchmark for others to emulate. However, improving the participation rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continues to be a major task, and we have a long way to go to achieve our goal of population parity. Though I am heartened by the commitment to doing so around UTS.

How do you judge your own success?
Essentially, success is always for others to judge. However, I believe overall success in my role really comes down to whether or not UTS achieves its strategic goals and vision, and acts on its values. I focus on three key areas. First, having a clear strategic agenda that drives forward the UTS vision and makes explicit what the expectations are and what success would look like. Second, supporting and guiding the people I work with – it’s only through them that I can achieve what my role demands. Third, combining a strong outcomes orientation with honesty and integrity in how you approach the tasks and dealing with everyone. My experience has been that if you put these three elements together with a talented group of staff (and it is a pleasure to work with such dedicated and talented staff at UTS), then achieving success isn’t an issue. Certainly, over the last decade, we have already achieved remarkable progress.

What is your secret vice?
I am not talking about secret vices, far too revealing, that is why they are secret after all! But I do have a small obsession with golf – it’s a very relaxing way to spend Saturday morning and a total break from work. I enjoy spending time with my wife Alice, having a meal, going to a movie or going for a quiet walk. I also read a bit; nothing serious just something you can lose yourself in.

Photographer: Jesse Taylor
Remembering to forget
The new research that could help us better use digital media to capture, store and re-live personal experiences

Real (in)action
Why we need gender equality to build a ‘stronger Australia’

Helping me, helping you
The volunteer program bringing community and corporate engagement to a Western Sydney high school

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NEXT ISSUE:
The next issue will be released on 4 November 2013.

Send your story ideas, opinions, events to u@uts.edu.au. The deadline for submissions for the November issue is Friday 11 October 2013.

All U: articles are available to read online via newsroom.uts.edu.au.
“Ethical sex is good sex.” So says Equity and Diversity Manager Tracie Conroy.

She, together with UTS Counsellor Fiona Robertson, are the trainers behind the university’s new Sex and Ethics program.

The 12-hour training program, which was originally developed by a research team at the University of Western Sydney, was introduced to UTS’s Yura Madang residence in February. So far, Conroy and Robertson have delivered their sessions to 30 paid UTS Residential Networkers and have seen “real outcomes”.

Robertson says, “Some participants have approached us since the training to share their experiences of being ethical bystanders – how they intervened in situations which appeared concerning to them; how they checked in with the friend they were worried about and were able to make a real difference in keeping their friends safe.”

According to Conroy, part of the program’s success stems from the fact that students better understand what ethical behavior is. “It’s about creating a culture where people look out for each other and look after each other.

“If you expect the norm is binge drinking and sexual harassment, then that’s going to happen. But if you expect the norm is a place where everybody is going to be respected and looked after and looked out for, then any deviation from that is abnormal,” she says.

Robertson argues many university students are unprepared for the realities of sex. Often, she says, high school sex education is “anatomical”, whereas Sex and Ethics offers students a practical approach and real-world skills for safely and ethically navigating intimate relationships.

This includes being an ethical bystander and “the sunlight test”, which Conroy says, “is about when you wake up in the morning, how will you feel? Will you feel okay? Or are you going to feel regret?”

“It’s this idea of behaving ethically, and how does one behave ethically?” adds Robertson. “The program teaches us how to do that and that then gives us opportunities to create a culture of respect.”

Both Robertson and Conroy believe the initiative sets UTS apart from other local universities by proactively tackling some of the hard issues that can appear in student housing.

“We know young people can be particularly vulnerable,” says Conroy. “They’re the most likely age group to be socialising a lot, mixing with a whole bunch of people and there’s potentially going to be drugs and alcohol involved.”

“UTS being 25 years young has a unique opportunity to pave the way in terms of bringing students to live on campus in a way that is respectful,” says Robertson. “It creates not just a community of study, or a place of work, but a place where people live and manage their lives in a way that is respectful and safe.”

Jessica Wang
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)/ International Studies
Photographer: Joanne Saad
Sustainability Coordinator Seb Crawford, who is spearheading the ‘Flick Me Off’ campaign, says, “We have designed the posters and stickers in such a way that they can go on light switches, appliances, lab equipment or anything really. “It’s common sense – the stuff we automatically do at home but often at work or uni we don’t. We’re trying to change that. Sometimes it’s hard to know if the lights should be left on, but ‘Flick Me Off’ is about reminding people that it’s okay to turn off the lights.”

The campaign is also seeking 10 volunteers, or ‘energy champions’, to have software installed on their computers by the third member of the UTS: Green team, Sustainability Engineer Eric Liyanage. The software will enable them to turn off lights and equipment from their keyboard.

Crawford says, it works by “putting auto switches in certain areas, and linking them back to a desktop computer just like any other wireless system. A bit of software is loaded on the computer and from your keyboard you can turn everything off and on.”

While ‘flicking off’ is the current focus at UTS: Green, it’s only a small part of the university’s energy saving initiatives. As part of a $9 million energy saving program that has been rolled out over the last three years, UTS has upgraded air conditioning units and lights, and installed 400 smart meters to monitor energy and water consumption.

Super-efficient LED lights with motion sensors in the Tower stairwells have saved up to 70 per cent of energy alone.

Similarly, each of the new buildings in the City Campus Master Plan will have a five-star Certified Green Star rating, and have energy-efficient technology and equipment installed as well as prioritised access to natural light and strategic placement of stairwells to encourage people to choose the stairs over the lifts.

Crawford says, it’s all about “making it easier and obvious; putting the stairs in highly visible locations and making them look attractive so people are drawn towards them.”

He maintains, though, that only people-power will ensure the ambitious 2021 reduction target can be met. “We, as a society, get so nonchalant about the idea of flicking on a switch and everything coming to life. People and technology need to work together if we are to seriously cut greenhouse gas emissions.”

For your own ‘Flick Me Off’ stickers and posters, or to volunteer as an energy champion, email seb.crawford@uts.edu.au

Siobhan Kenna
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)/International Studies
Photographer: Joanne Saad

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/10/get-flicked
Digital devices may be making it easier to record life, but not to remember it. A new international research project, Materialising Memories, is set to transform the way we capture and store personal experiences and make it easier to re-live them.
"I think all of our mums created photo albums; at least mine did, but we don’t anymore," says Associate Professor in UTS’s Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, and the Netherlands’ Eindhoven University of Technology’s (TU/e) Department of Industrial Design, Elise van den Hoven.

The increasing use of digital technologies, including cameras on phones and tablets, not to mention ‘proper’ cameras, has meant printed photographs are fast becoming a thing of the past. Instead, individuals are storing thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of digital photos online or in these devices; then promptly forgetting to use them.

It’s a phenomenon van den Hoven is hoping to change. She is the Project Leader of Materialising Memories – a five-year, collaborative research project funded by The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. It includes a joint PhD program that was formalised in July with a Memorandum of Agreement between UTS and TU/e.

Van den Hoven says the memory and interaction design project will take into account photographs, video, sound and other "digital stuff you collect a lot of because you can; because it’s free."

"Despite that we have thousands and thousands of digital photographs people still cherish the physical ones more. I think that has to do with the physicality, but also with the selection process – you can’t put all your photographs in an album, you have to select some and you create your own narrative and story. You don’t do that with digital."

She says, with digital cameras "it’s so easy to just press the button. If you really want to make a nice photograph you take 20, 30 or hundreds, depending on how much time you have, how critical you are, how badly you want a really good picture. Then typically people delete only the three really blurry photos and keep 27 almost-similar ones.

Van den Hoven believes we need to delete more. "A lot of people seem to think forgetting is a bad thing that it’s a bug of human memory; it’s not. Forgetting is a side-product of a successful memory."

And that, she says, is one of the project’s aims. "We will be looking into how can we make it easier for people to accept that forgetting is a good thing and therefore make better selections of what they want to make and keep."

The other paradox the team is trying to tackle is "that people want to remember; they create all these digital things to help them remember, but they create so much and they don’t organise it that in the end they don’t use it at all." And that is where ‘materialising’ the memories begins.

As part of the project, van den Hoven has enlisted two Professors from TU/e – Berry Eggen and Panos Markopoulos – as well as four PhD students – Mendel Broekhuijsen and Ine Mols from TU/e and Doménique van Gennip and Annemarie Zijlema from UTS (all of the students will have the opportunity to graduate with a joint PhD from both institutions).

Exactly how the images will be curated and retrieved, van den Hoven says, “that’s the million dollar question”.

“You can’t put memories in a device; they can only stay in your head because they’re yours, they’re personal and they keep on changing. A lot of people still think if you take a photograph you ‘catch’ the memory, which is nonsense.

“I’m looking at how we can shape our environments to support remembering better.”

Central to remembering, says van den Hoven, are “memory cues” – things like colours, smells, sounds and images. "What they do is facilitate your reconstruction process.

“In your brain you store concepts and relations between concepts and when you reconstruct you assume if they have a strong relation that is what happened.”

For example, “I’m Dutch, and in the Netherlands, when you have breakfast you eat a sandwich with cheese. So for me ‘breakfast’, ‘sandwich’ and ‘cheese’ are very closely related.

“If you were to ask me what I had for breakfast on a random date then statistically chances are highest that I had a cheese sandwich, so I will probably tell you I had a sandwich with cheese. But I actually don’t know what happened on that day, and it doesn’t matter. That’s the fun thing of it.”

Though 256 different types of memories have been identified in literature, Materialising Memories is focused only on one – autobiographical memory. This type of memory is used to shape your identity and opinions, build and maintain relationships and solve problems. “But none of these require the absolute truth. I mean it doesn’t matter if I tell you I ate a cheese sandwich for breakfast.”

What does matter is helping people retrieve these memories in the first place. To do this, van den Hoven and her team will soon be calling for research participants to help them find out what people want to remember and how they want to remember it.

Based on what they find, each of the PhD students will then undertake a separate line of inquiry into how remembering can be facilitated.

Next month, to kick start the project, Broekhuijsen and Mols will arrive at UTS for a month of study. As will Distinguished Visiting Scholar and Director of the Digital World Research Centre at the University of Surrey David Frohlich, who will be consulting on the project.

“He’s fantastic,” says van den Hoven. “I’ve been collaborating with him for a long time, currently we are co-supervising a PhD student funded by Microsoft Research Cambridge. David’s research is quite related to mine, since he has worked for Hewlett Packard Labs on the future of photography and still works in that area.”

Right now though, van den Hoven says, the way most people are storing digital media isn’t working.

“Digital photos aren’t supporting human memory the way people intended them to and the way physical photos do.

“People used to put their photo albums on display for a reason, because they wanted to share them with other people, but that’s very hard with black screens."

“We’re looking at how we can use these digital media to their full advantage and bring them back into the physical world again.”

To find out more, collaborate or volunteer as a research participant, visit materialisingmemories.com

Fiona Livy
Marketing and Communication Unit

Photographer (E van den Hoven): Iris Soute
Photographs (travel) supplied by: Elise van den Hoven
Photograph (photo album) supplied by: Thinkstock

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newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/10/remembering-to-forget
REAL (IN)ACTION
The 2013 federal election ushered in a new era in Australian politics. But, with only one woman in Cabinet, is it a change we can be proud of? Journalist and Senior Lecturer Jenna Price argues why massive structural changes in our political parties is a better way to achieve a ‘stronger Australia’.

On election night, I kept waiting for the shift. But the shift never happened. And at this point, I doubt it will happen in my lifetime.

Yes, there was one election outcome which barely shifted the make-up of parliament – and that’s the number of men and women elected to govern.

No matter how you feel about the policies and politics of the individual parties in this country, one thing is quite clear. Those who organise and influence political parties in this country have views on women – and about the suitability of women to run for political office.

As I write this, it looks as if any improvement in the number of women representatives will be marginal – we may hold up half the sky, but we can’t hold anything close to half the seats in parliament.

Even when women are elected to parliament, the road to positions of power is far from clear.

Now we have the announcement of the new Cabinet and Ministry, and the news for women could not be more dispiriting. Only one woman, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, has been appointed to Cabinet (the key decision-making body of the Australian Government); and a further five as junior ministers, assistant ministers or parliamentary secretaries.

Last September, retiring Queensland Liberal Senator Sue Boyce attacked her own party’s inability to preselect or promote women. She said the party must act to develop a plan, just as the Labor Party did in 1996.

“I’m shocked and embarrassed by the Liberal Party – and it’s had so damn long to fix the problem.

“It’s a systemic problem in the party – how embarrassing to be a government with only one woman at a senior level,” Senator Boyce said.

So, we’ve got three years to make significant change in these political parties. How can we do that?

The Greens, of course, are pretty good on the gender front; but not so good on the electorate front. Still, they have more women than men in the Senate – and in NSW, there were equal numbers of men and women standing.

Over 40 per cent of Greens candidates were women, compared, for instance, to the Australia First Party which couldn’t find a single woman candidate it considered good enough to put forward for election. One in three Labor candidates are women; nearly one in four Liberal candidates are women. But the Labor women must labour in marginal seats and the Liberal women don’t get elected.

Still, Australians prefer to choose from the major parties and dabble with one marginal party at a time. This leaves the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Liberal National Coalition which need to make massive structural change if we are to achieve gender equity.

The Rudd/Gillard Parliament (2010 to 2013) had 113 men and 37 women. According to Ben Raue, author of The Tally Room blog, the incoming Parliament will have a slight improvement in the number of women elected – 40 women and 110 men.

It’s a small proportional change and a key indicator of the lack of equality women have in public life – just a 10 per cent increase in the number of women sitting in the House of Representatives.

EMILY’s List, an organisation which seeks to promote and assist progressive women in the political sphere, has a mission statement: “We strongly believe in the right of every woman to enjoy equal rights and privileges before the law, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. This is because equality is a fundamental human right that should be enjoyed by all.”

It began in Australia in 1996 and has been successful in improving the percentage of women who are preselected and then elected as members of parliament. This election, every single sitting EMILY’s Lister was re-elected.

National Co-Convenor of EMILY’s List Tanja Kovac says it took 15 years to achieve significant change. During that period of time, one of its earliest members was elected Prime Minister of Australia.

“What we did was to create structural reform inside the Labor Party,” said Kovac.

That’s the challenge for the Liberals, who for ideological reasons will not accept the quota system similar to that which is in place in ALP pre-selections.

Senator Boyce says the Liberals need something a little like EMILY’s List, but more focused on getting the Party to set targets and on supporting women who are interested in walking the political path. Companies set targets, so why not political parties, she asks.

But senior women in the Liberal Party have, for years, made these suggestions and there has been no change.

Gender is not the only reason women’s lives play out the way they do, but there are damaging structural and social reasons why it’s hard to make the breakthrough in politics in Australia.

It’s not just the numbers which show women still have some way to go to achieve equality in Australia, it’s also the way Australians feel about the way women perform, particularly when those women are politicians. We are tougher on them.

Australian researchers say that we have moved on from being tougher on all women (when compared to the performance of men) to just being tougher on women who are perceived to have flaws. Not worse flaws than men. Just the same flaws.

What does that mean? It means we really do judge women more harshly according to researchers from the University of Queensland and the Australian National University who played political speeches to listeners.

The researchers said that when women and men were assertive, audiences liked both genders equally. Which is great. When it comes to success, we now ignore gender; and that’s a change from the past where we punished women who succeeded.

But, say the researchers, women politicians who faltered were less liked and influential than equally tentative men. The audience punished the women more. So, men can be lousy politicians and get away with it – at least according to this research – but women can’t.

And nowhere is that more clearly played out than in the pre-selection process.

Jenna Price
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Photographer: Joanne Saad

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/10/real-in-action

U: SAID IT QUESTION
Tony Abbott recently announced only one female Minister, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, will be appointed to Cabinet. How will this impact the gender equity debate and Australia as a whole?
The UTS: SOUL Award has been facilitating volunteer opportunities for UTS students since its launch in February last year. It’s aim? To help students become more socially responsive. Their latest partnership is bringing community and corporate engagement to a high school in Western Sydney.

Master of Information Technology (IT) student Amir Jangodaz couldn’t pass up the opportunity to work alongside Microsoft staff. It was one of the reasons why he decided to sign up for SOUL – which is short for ‘social outcomes through university leadership’. The other was the chance to support a class of recently arrived migrants and refugees.

“This was my turn to help,” says Jangodaz. “I’m a Persian international student so I truly understand how hard it is for refugees or migrants to find a job here in Australia. Learning basic marketing skills stretches their mind and creates a way of thinking about things that will be helpful to them no matter what career they pursue.”

Jangodaz has been working with an English as a second language (ESL) class at Fairfield High since April this year. The i.settle.with.IT project is a collaboration between UTS: Shopfront, WorkVentures – a not-for-profit social enterprise – and Microsoft. Over eight sessions, the class looks at what a marketing plan is, the business’s goals and objectives, market research and other related topics. The students then come up with a marketing plan for the Microsoft Surface tablet, which they pitch to the software giant at the end of the course.

Shopfront Program Manager Pauline O’Loughlin says it’s a perfect example of how organisations can work together to provide leadership and development opportunities to students.

“We’d wanted to work more closely with WorkVentures for a really long time because of the fantastic social inclusion work they were doing in Western Sydney and elsewhere,” says O’Loughlin.

“It makes sense for an organisation focused on innovation and technology to partner with UTS. It’s also been a really great opportunity to combine Shopfront’s community-initiated and student-run work with SOUL’s program of training and volunteering.”

While Shopfront links postgraduate and final-year students (who gain course credit through the process) with community-initiated projects and research, SOUL is available to any student who wishes to develop leadership skills, build networks and apply knowledge learned in the classroom to the real world.

Since WorkVentures Operations Executive Emily Sparling first approached Shopfront earlier this year for support, the i.settle.with.IT project has gone from strength to strength.

“Working with the student volunteers through the collaboration with Shopfront has been an exciting and unique way to add value to what we do,” says Sparling. “It has allowed both organisations to create a distinct opportunity for volunteers and a program that directly supports refugee students.

“Part of the program is to stretch the ESL class but to also develop their employability skills – working as a team, negotiation, budgeting. It’s about developing those soft skills whilst working on something practical. We’ve had students try to sneak into some of the sessions, so word is spreading that it’s a fun way to learn.”
The SOUL Award program requires students to undertake a minimum of 90 hours of volunteering as well as complete four compulsory workshops.

The first workshop explores the ethics, rights and responsibilities of volunteering as well as effective communication skills such as active listening and pitching. The second – Skills 4 Leaders – encourages students to consider the value of their existing skills and develop them around leadership. The third workshop – Social Issues 101 – is an introduction to the social issues facing society today, where “students can really interrogate their own attitudes to things and where they came from,” says O’Loughlin.

The fourth workshop – How to Run a Project – is where students learn the how-tos of project management and teamwork; skills that are useful for community projects, class work, assignments and in social planning.

“We are getting a great response from students. The tools and frameworks they’re picking up in these workshops are helping them in their volunteering but also in coursework and in their social lives,” says O’Loughlin. “They’re being supported to be more active in the community while also increasing their self-awareness, capacity and skill levels, so they feel more confident in applying for different roles.

“It acts as a really good pathway for those students who want to learn a little bit more about how the community sector works and gain work experience.”

First-year Bachelor of Information Technology student Julia Wong has been working alongside Jangodaz at Fairfield High. Her decision to get involved with SOUL grew from her passion for technology and her desire to help others in need. “The opportunity to do both, in my own time, while working alongside great companies like WorkVentures and Microsoft definitely appealed to me. I’ve had some volunteering experience in the past but I’ve never had the opportunity to volunteer where my technology skills can really be used. WorkVentures comes up with the lesson plans and resources, along with our input, and we work with Microsoft to deliver the content to the class.

“Given their backgrounds, many of the students have had some interruption to their learning, but placing them in this program empowers them to work through current and future obstacles and equip them with the skills they need for the future.”

For Shopfront, the success of SOUL will be seen in the next generation of leaders who will, hopefully, demonstrate more social responsibility through compassionate and ethical actions in their professional practice.

“SOUL fits quite nicely within Shopfront and adds that missing piece,” says O’Loughlin. “It fits with the community engagement priorities of the university, and is a really great chance for students to interrogate their own privileges and passions.”

For more information about the UTS: SOUL Award, visit soul.uts.edu.au or contact Claire Pettigrew at soul.award@uts.edu.au.

Katia Sanfilippo
Marketing and Communication Unit
Photographer (P O’Loughlin, E Sparling, A Jangodaz, J Wong): Katia Sanfilippo
Photographs (SOUL workshops) supplied by: UTS: Shopfront

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/10/helping-me-helping-you
Runa Pendon breezes through the carpeted maze of building five, stopping along the way to pow-wow with co-workers, academics and students – each one a friend. She knows these green atriums better than anyone, and she keeps them looking “bloody good” too.

“The damage was up to here!” she laughs, holding her palm flat just below the knee. Pendon stands next to the male and female toilets where major flooding occurred in October last year, disrupting regular operations to the library, its computer facilities and study area.

She was part of the team that worked tirelessly to reverse the water-damaged nightmare in the building and recalls the experience. “It started flooding from lunchtime and we finished cleaning up around 10 o’clock that night.

“Then it happened again. The first time it flooded was quite terrible, but my crew is all very helpful and they didn’t stop,” she smiles.

“Whatever work I needed to do, it was my responsibility and I needed to take action straight away. Also, it was something different; so much fun!” Pendon is approaching a decade’s tenure with the cleaning team in building five.

However, it hasn’t always been smooth sailing. Her role was originally outsourced to Swan Cleaning, but the company went bust earlier this year. At that point, UTS stepped in to help with the transition of employees like Pendon to the university’s new cleaning supplier – a move, she says, that has made her feel even more “a part of the family”.

When asked roughly how many people she worked alongside during the clean-up, Pendon’s effervescent response is unsurprising: “The whole university, of course!”

Pendon’s admiration for her team and the work they perform is apparent, as is her pride in building five.

“The working environment is very good. It would be very hard for me to give up my work because I love it here, especially the people who manage and the people around you. It inspires me to stay longer.”

Pendon comes from Manila in The Philippines. She owned several small businesses until over-development prompted her to find work abroad. “In my country, I had my own takeaway shop; I had a few businesses, until my last place was shut down by building back home,” she explains.

“I went overseas to cook for a Singaporean family. Then I went to Hong Kong to work as a nanny, as well as a part-time domestic cleaner to support my four children back home. And now I’m here,” she laughs. “I think I’ll be staying now.”

Pendon has been living in Kingsford since 2003 with her husband, a construction worker who literally builds bridges in foreign countries. She is a mother of four children, as well as a beaming grandmother to two little ones aged one and four.

As for the next decade with UTS, Pendon’s outlook is optimistic. “As long as I’m happy working here, I’m staying. Work is work, you earn your living,” she muses. “During my free time when my husband and I go fishing, he’s the one who cleans!”

Daniel Cunningham
Bachelor of Arts in Communication | Journalism
Photographer: Joanne Saad

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/10/where-everybody-knows-her-name
"The only thing I knew about Australia was Skippy the kangaroo," reveals Michael Ascharsobi when first asked about the land he now calls home.

The Bachelor of Science in Information Technology and Master of Science in Internetworking graduate now works at Google. He started at the company in 2011 as an apps strategist, before moving into operations managing workflow processes. It’s a far cry from Ahwaz, the small Iranian town that borders Iraq, from which he fled at age 16.

“I follow a religion, Sabian Mandaeans, which in Iran is different from the mainstream,” says Ascharsobi. “So growing up was a little difficult because I had to keep my religion in hiding.” He even had to lie about his religion to enter high school and was never sure if his secret would be discovered. It was.

In 2001, the Iranian Government offered the young mathematician the opportunity to attend a maths Olympiad in the United States. The catch was he first had to convert to Islam.

“They actually found out I lied during my school application, so I didn’t make it to the camp,” recalls Ascharsobi.

When he told his parents, they immediately got in touch with people smugglers to fly Ascharsobi to Indonesia on a forged passport. He still remembers the grueling seven-day journey across the open ocean, to a then-unknown destination.

“We had 200 milliliters of water everyday. They give you a cup of water, and that was it for 24 hours. It was pretty much survival – is the boat going to pieces? If there’s a storm what’s going to happen?”

Fortunately for Ascharsobi, his boat was picked up by the Australian Navy. From Darwin, he was flown to South Australia where he was told his asylum application would take three to six months to process. It was the beginning of a two-and-a-half year wait behind barbed wire.

Eventually, Ascharsobi was granted a temporary protection visa and, with the help of a friend, moved to Sydney to enroll in a Certificate III in IT (Technical Support) at TAFE. A year later, he found out UTS offered scholarships to refugees. He applied and was accepted.

“University felt really formal to me, but what I really liked was that I could make very good relationships with all the lecturers and tutors – they’re really easygoing, and they were very helpful.”

Ascharsobi credits UTS as providing him with the industry contacts needed to make a new start in his new country. “Before going to university, I couldn’t even get a job. After UTS, I had five job offers, and I didn’t know which one to take!”

Eventually Ascharsobi chose a network support position at Cisco. That was until he received a surprise email from Google asking him to come in for an interview. He did, and landed a prized role at the heart of the global company.

In addition to this nine-to-five role, Ascharsobi teaches a first-year foundation subject, Network Fundamentals, at UTS once a week. He is also featured in the Federal Government’s Bridges to Higher Education documentary series, Models of Achievement. He says it’s all part of being able to share his passion for IT with the next generation and to expand his own horizons in the computing world.

“Going to UTS gave me the confidence to say, ‘If I can finish a degree, if I can go get a job at Cisco and I can go work at Google, what’s next?’ We’ll just have to wait and see.”

Rachel Worsley
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)/ Bachelor of Laws
Photographer (M Ascharsobi): Joanne Saad
Infographic: Thinkstock

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/10/a-place-to-call-home
Bachelor of Business and Jumbunna students Heath Oudenryn and Samuel Leak shared a “life changing” trip to Vietnam as volunteers in BUI LD’s Changemakers program. They were so inspired by what they saw and did, they’ve come home to Australia and started working on a way to help Indigenous kids get better access to education.

HEATH OUDENRYN

The Changemakers program is a life experience I won’t forget. I get satisfaction from helping people, so I just knew straight away it was for me. There were about 13 of us, including me and Sam, who went to Vietnam. It was really beneficial to us as business students because we did things like microfinance in small communities and donated money to families so they could buy a pig and live off that and form an income. We also did social enterprise stuff like helping restaurants hire and train up street kids. It was intimate and everyone got along and we had loads of fun. You really learn a lot from your fellow students, peers and colleagues.

The experience inspired me to bring the things we learned back to make a difference here. It opens your mind and it gets you thinking. I do a bit of volunteering in the Indigenous community already, like mentoring as a rugby league coach and working at UTS doing outreach programs with high school kids, but I wanted to do more.

My motto is strength through education. There’s some really poor statistics out in remote Indigenous communities - one in every five children in very remote areas can’t read at an acceptable minimal standard. And by Year 7, they’re 74 per cent behind non-Indigenous kids, so it’s not good at all. Sam and I want to change that. We’re putting a pitch together for BUI LD about training from the bottom up; going into Aboriginal communities and doing workshops to help improve nutrition, numeracy and literacy. The idea is we’d actually go into schools and work with teachers to do workshops with the kids.

Focusing on children is very important because their education is their stepping stone. It’s also important to be culturally aware. UTS students going in and trying to teach elders is not culturally accepted in Aboriginal communities, so focusing on interacting with the kids is a better way to go. There’s limited access to these communities from outside so just getting in and creating a rapport is good for both sides; there’s a mutual benefit.

I believe that with determination anyone can graduate from university. That’s a really important message; it’s not out of reach for anyone. I’ve gone through a few different avenues in life. Before coming to uni, I did four years in the Air Force where I got my Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery). Then I got out and worked at a couple of places in Sydney, including as Head Chef at Kazbah in Darling Harbour. I had experience out in the workforce, but wanted to further my education, so I thought about doing business because you can apply it to a lot of things.
Sam’s also a Jumbunna student and doing business too, but I’m a couple of semesters ahead of him. All the subjects he’s doing are fresh in my mind, so it was like, ‘Alright, here’s what I know, here are my notes’. The great thing about Jumbunna is we all talk to each other, and if anyone’s having trouble you don’t hesitate to tell them how you overcame the same problems.

**SAMUEL LEAK**

I did four months volunteering in Kenya and Tanzania last year before coming to uni and going on the Changemakers trip to Vietnam. I just thought I’d jump right into the deep end and go to Africa and it was very rewarding. I’d do it again in a heartbeat! So when they talked about BUILD in my Integrating Business Perspectives class, I thought ‘Yeah, this is something for me’.

It was good to see a little bit of Asia, but Vietnam was a very confronting country. We landed in Hanoi and spent six days there, then flew down to Ho Chi Minh City – the traffic is crazy. We focused on microfinance ventures and social enterprises. We met with a company called Bloom Microventures and helped them purchase a cow for a local farming family. We also visited a large textiles company and looked at how they’re trying to tackle corporate social responsibility: it’s so important but it’s still a reasonably new concept for companies.

The trip inspired me to focus on what we can do right here in Australia. Heath and I identified a gap – there’s no opportunity for students to work with Indigenous Australians, so we want to improve that. I want a focus on developing an education and local construction program. So it might be things like fixing toilet facilities at schools and also teaching the kids basic English, basic maths; anything that’s going to help them overcome their disadvantage.

**I’ve worked out the ‘hot spots’ in Australia that need volunteers.** They’re areas like Queensland, the Northern Territory and New South Wales. Areas like Wagga Wagga, even though they’re not really remote, have still got big problems with their Indigenous communities, problems including education and health. There are a few volunteer programs like Indigenous Volunteers Australia and Red Dust, but for some reason, there’s been limited partnering with universities. So that’s my ultimate aim, to create a program for uni students.

You’ve got to start out with something small and build it up. Heath and I have been looking at other organisations that are doing things with Indigenous communities. Heath met with the guy who runs Red Dust, which is a not-for-profit doing health promotion in rural communities, and we might work with them to get some workshops happening. I would also like to set up an NGO and approach larger companies like ANZ and Westpac to help with the funding – they could help with distributing grants and we could help them fulfil their corporate social responsibility.

Sustainability, poor health, education, life expectancy and employment are all big issues for Indigenous Australians that need solving. You could spend a year listing all the areas that need attention, and a lot of them are extremely obvious, but you’ve got to start somewhere, so why not start with something as important as education?

**IZANDA FORD**

Marketing and Communication Unit
Photographer: Joanne Saad

Comment on this article at
**How often have you connected to a temperamental Wi-Fi network?**

It’s an all-too-common problem says Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology PhD student Brett Hagelstein. It’s also one he’s been working to solve. For four years Hagelstein’s been developing an algorithm that creates alternative Wi-Fi pathways that could put an end to wireless traffic jams.

“I’m working on co-operative Wi-Fi where devices help each other by forwarding messages,” explains Hagelstein.

For example, ”If your laptop has a weak connection to the Wi-Fi access point, then it might have to repeat messages several times before one succeeds. Instead, your phone might overhear the first attempt, repeat it once and it’s received.”

Originally, says Hagelstein, ”I set out to improve performance in heavily loaded networks like the common areas at UTS. I found cooperation also improves the network efficacy such that all devices, including those using their own energy to help, actually use less energy than they would in a regular network.

“You could be working on your laptop, or just carrying your phone around, and it will act as a Wi-Fi relay to improve the network quality for those around you. Not only are you being a helpful citizen, but you’re actually using less power at the same time.”

And, because it works at the software driver level, you can simply update the software on your current (or future) Wi-Fi devices, rather than having to buy new ones.

Recently, Hagelstein took part in and took out the UTS Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition final. The annual event saw 11 PhD students take to the stage to explain their work in three minutes, with the help of only one PowerPoint slide. It wasn’t an easy task.

“The audience is intelligent, but they’re not specialists in the field, so the presentations are very different to a regular technical conference.”

Instead, Hagelstein says, ”I drew a parallel with a story that everyone can relate to – when friends and family ask you for help and sometimes you wonder why you should. Just like the energy reductions in helping the Wi-Fi transmission, sometimes it’s easier just to help someone than listen to them whine.”

Hailing from Coffs Harbour, Hagelstein’s interest in engineering was spawned from his love of pulling things apart in order to enhance the way they function.

“My dad is quite the handyman and encouraged me to experiment. When I was about nine, LEGO kits started coming out with motors, but they were really expensive. Instead I pulled apart a remote control car and adapted it for a LEGO robot. After that I started getting into electronics, building circuit boards, and eventually programming computers.”

These experiences drove Hagelstein to complete a Bachelor of Engineering at the University of Wollongong in conjunction with a cadetship program at BlueScope Steel. In 2010, after receiving first-class honours in his undergraduate degree and capstone project, he moved to UTS to study his PhD under his old supervisor Mehran Abolhasan.

While the young engineer, who is confident of finishing this year, hopes to soon secure a postdoctoral research position, he knows there will be many students vying for similar jobs.

Right now, he’s focused on the 3MT Trans-Tasman final on Friday 18 October. ”I’ll give it my best shot, but I’m under no illusions. There were some fantastic presentations at the UTS final and the next round will be even better.”

Chantell Baslack
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Media Arts and Production)/International Studies
Photographer: Joanne Saad

Comment on this article at [UTS: NEWSROOM](http://newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/10/all-clear-on-the-super-highway)
UtS in PrinT

Lucy Lady Bird
By: Sharon King-Chai
Publisher: Templar Publishing

This book is fascinating. If there was ever an argument for the pervasiveness of fashion as a modern phenomenon stretching from Lady Gaga’s pop-cultural branding escapades to 18th century writer and philosopher Voltaire’s advocacy of luxury as a social good, this is it. Taking a fine-grained view of recent fashion scholarship, Fashion in Popular Culture traverses historical and contemporary settings including film, photography, comics, magazines and television. It extends to include such diverse material as Enlightenment debates in 18th century France, pulp fiction of the 1950s, Australian Goth comics and the television soap opera Days of our Lives. While such a breadth of material might initially appear unruly, the authors skilfully structure the book into three sections – Fashion in Contemporary Culture, Fashion in Media and Literature and Fashion in Historical Context. These sections serve to provide three distinct lenses that unify the material and broaden the argument about the significance of fashion and dress as an emblem of modernity and continuing focus in the field of fashion studies. The book, with its interdisciplinary approach to the study of fashion and popular culture, will be of great value to undergraduate students beginning to engage with the field of fashion studies, as well as postgraduate students and researchers with scholarly interests in this area.

Todd Robinson
Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building

Fashion in Popular Culture
Edited by: Joseph Hancock, Toni Johnson-Woods, Vicki Karaminas
Publisher: Intellect Books

Indigo Morning
By: Rachael Munro
Publisher: Grand Parade Poets

At the heart of this book are messages of individualism, self-acceptance and sharing. While these worldly lessons will undoubtedly appeal to parents, it is children – toddlers or those just learning to read – who will most enjoy Lucy Lady Bird. And I’m not just talking about girls either. My male two-year-old was captivated by the story. At a somewhat superficial level, the illustrations in Lucy Lady Bird, which are artistic in their own right, are large, bright and easy for children to identify. Straight off the bat my little one could see “lady bird sad”. Then, as we moved through the story and the seasons, meeting new animals and adding spots to a once spot-less Lucy, his artistic in their own right, are large, bright and easy for children to identify. Straight off the bat my little one could see “lady bird sad”. Then, as we moved through the story and the seasons, meeting new animals and adding spots to a once spot-less Lucy, his favourite characters quickly became “big froggy” and “blue fishy”. For those adults who find some children’s stories naff or boring (let’s face it, not all are written with heart of this book are messages of individualism, self-acceptance and sharing. While these worldly lessons will undoubtedly appeal to parents, it is children – toddlers or those just learning to read – who will most enjoy Lucy Lady Bird. And I’m not just talking about girls either. My male two-year-old was captivated by the story. At a somewhat superficial level, the illustrations in Lucy Lady Bird, which are artistic in their own right, are large, bright and easy for children to identify. Straight off the bat my little one could see “lady bird sad”. Then, as we moved through the story and the seasons, meeting new animals and adding spots to a once spot-less Lucy, his favourite characters quickly became “big froggy” and “blue fishy”. For those adults who find some children’s stories naff or boring (let’s face it, not all are written with heart of this book are messages of individualism, self-acceptance and sharing. While these worldly lessons will undoubtedly appeal to parents, it is children – toddlers or those just learning to read – who will most enjoy Lucy Lady Bird. And I’m not just talking about girls either. My male two-year-old was captivated by the story. At a somewhat superficial level, the illustrations in Lucy Lady Bird, which are artistic in their own right, are large, bright and easy for children to identify. Straight off the bat my little one could see “lady bird sad”. Then, as we moved through the story and the seasons, meeting new animals and adding spots to a once spot-less Lucy, his favourite characters quickly became “big froggy” and “blue fishy”. For those adults who find some children’s stories naff or boring (let’s face it, not all are written with heart of this book are messages of individualism, self-acceptance and sharing. While these worldly lessons will undoubtedly appeal to parents, it is children – toddlers or those just learning to read – who will most enjoy Lucy Lady Bird. And I’m not just talking about girls either. My male two-year-old was captivated by the story. At a somewhat superficial level, the illustrations in Lucy Lady Bird, which are artistic in their own right, are large, bright and easy for children to identify. Straight off the bat my little one could see “lady bird sad”. Then, as we moved through the story and the seasons, meeting new animals and adding spots to a once spot-less Lucy, his favourite characters quickly became “big froggy” and “blue fishy”. For those adults who find some children’s stories naff or boring (let’s face it, not all are written with
The workshops will suit those who are thinking about publishing open access and want to know what their options are, where they can find an appropriate journal to publish in, that kind of thing,” says Tiffen. “They’re particularly important for research students – they’re the researchers of the future – so we need to get them thinking about what they’re going to do even before they start publishing.”

With the library being the biggest publisher of open access journals in Australia (15 in total are published under the UTS ePress banner), UTS is currently revising its own processes and open access policy.

“University libraries pay millions of dollars each year in subscription fees to access research information behind pay walls. The Australian Research Council, the National Health and Medical Research Council and various other funding boards now stipulate that researchers who are supported by those bodies and publish using government funds must make their material open.”

“Statistics show there is a wider reach and more impact if they publish in these open sources rather than keeping it behind the pay wall. The researchers are thinking about the traditional publishing patterns that keep their work within the academic community, and that mindset needs to change.”

Teaching staff will also benefit from Open Access Week. The Open Education Resources (OER) workshop will highlight open resources world-wide that can be used for teaching purposes as opposed to research.

“We’ve already run one session as part of the Learning2014 program on OERs, explaining how to find them and make use of them in your teaching, as well as the critical copyright aspect. You can’t go out there and take what you will without crediting it properly,” explains Tiffen.

While it has taken time to build momentum and awareness, Scholfield believes open access is now on a roll.

“In the last 12 months we’ve seen more and more funding bodies, governments and universities across the world creating policies and introducing mandates around open access. And that’s a great thing.”

Katia Sanfilippo
Marketing and Communication Unit
Photographer: Joanne Saad

In January this year, American digital activist Aaron Swartz committed suicide just as prosecutors were assembling a case against him for downloading millions of academic articles from an online academic repository. While his methods were questionable, his belief in making research universally accessible highlights a growing movement in the academic world.

Now in its seventh year, Open Access Week is held internationally from 21 to 27 October. Rather than limiting publication to commercial and expensive-to-access journals, it promotes the free sharing of academic publications over the internet amongst the academic and research community.

“We’ve been supporters of open access for a few years now; most academic libraries are,” says Director of the UTS Library Resources Unit Belinda Tiffen. “We want to start ramping it up this year and make a little bit more of a splash.”

As part of this year’s events, the library will hold a panel discussion with researchers, open access journal editors and copyright experts. Each will offer their opinions and perspectives on what the benefits of open access are, along with the impact it’s had on their own research and work. More practical hands-on workshops will also supplement the panel discussion.
In the 1980s, the spectre of AIDS had a defining impact on Australia’s perception of sex and sexuality. The impact of the imminent mortality depicted in the national ‘Grim Reaper’ campaign touched many in inner-Sydney’s artistic community. Artist, writer and critic Arthur McIntyre (1945-2003) was one of the first to explicitly explore the themes of AIDS, sex and death in his work.

McIntyre saw a strong relationship between these concepts and the medium he used. Collage offered the possibility of exploring decay, survival and resilience through discarded yet surviving ephemera. He exposed ways in which their rawness and fragility could be used to depict the sense of vulnerability surrounding the human body.

Among the found materials McIntyre used in his collages were clippings from medical journals depicting venereal disease, advertising magazines and erotica, as well as textured papers, lace, anatomical drawings, stamps, envelopes and found photographs. In particular, he credited a portion of time spent in Paris in the 70s as inspiring a fascination with the texture and layering of paper materials including old posters and advertising that had fatefuly survived the perpetual forward motion of time to somehow land in his stockpile of paper bits and pieces.

Despite their graphic and confronting nature, McIntyre believed many of his works were actually celebrations. Though Red Poppy, which is not currently on display, contains references to loss and mourning it is also quite playful with its repeated motifs of roasted mixed nuts and torn up coffee filters. The colours and texture are vibrant and dynamic, perhaps suggesting life, vitality and optimism in an uncertain age.
Wheelchair basketball, behind-the-scenes tours and live music were just some of the fun to be had during August’s 25th Anniversary events. And, with six months of celebrations to come, you can rest assured the fun’s not over yet!

Keep up-to-date with UTS’s 2014 quarter century celebrations – which will include the opening of the new Broadway, Thomas Street and Dr Chau Chak Wing buildings – by bookmarking 25.uts.edu.au.

Photographer: Anshuman Bose