YINDYAMARRA
The changing face of Indigenous education at UTS

HOW WILL YOU REMEMBER ME?
Saving modern-day victims of slavery and human trafficking

CRUDE AWAKENING
Combining real oil and catastrophic case studies to educate students
ISSUE 1

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UTS’s vision is to be a world-leading university of technology. How are we doing with that?

I doubt I will ever get tired of saying or typing ‘top young university in Australia’. To finish 2015 rated by the Times Higher Education and QS rankings as the top Australian university under 50 years old, as well as 21st and 14th (respectively) globally, was a great way to end the year.

As I’ve said before, rankings are not a definitive indicator of performance, but it is further evidence of our dramatic improvement across research, teaching, engagement and the other activities critical to a public university. We should all be very proud of our achievements.

One of the things I love about UTS is that we are ambitious and bold – our vision encapsulates that perfectly. But more importantly, we have a sense of purpose in our strategy (including our focus on social justice and equity) that is built around the benefits that being a truly world-leading university of technology can bring to society.

Last year, we started a dialogue about how we refine our definition of ‘university of technology’. Being a university of technology is one of our important differentiators and a strength that will allow us to achieve our vision. This conversation is something we’ll continue throughout 2016.

What’s the main focus for UTS in 2016?

2016 is all about people, people, people! We have an amazing campus and thriving precinct, and we have to use our infrastructure and partnerships to deliver the greatest teaching and research benefit possible. Our people – staff, students, alumni and partners – are the key drivers of our future success.

This will also be a year of growth – we will see the first wave of appointments as part of our commitment to increase academic staff to approximately 1800 by 2020. Our growth strategy will help us achieve a significant boost in the vibrancy and critical mass of our teaching and learning, our research performance, and establish new innovative partnerships with industry. Not only will this have a positive impact in Australia and beyond, but it’s central to enabling us to become a world-leading university of technology.

However, it’s also critical that we enable current staff to achieve excellence by providing an environment that supports career development in line with the university’s strategic objectives.

We must also protect and enhance key aspects of the UTS ethos – our commitment to excellence the UTS way – our commitment to social justice and our culture of collegiality. These go a long way to making UTS a special place to work and we all have a responsibility to foster and maintain these values.

What did you do over the summer break?

It already seems a long time ago! Christmas is always a family affair; I’m the oldest of seven siblings, so it’s always a busy, energetic and mirth-filled family time – including holidaying down the south coast as a group. It was lovely this year to also get the chance to head up to Lord Howe Island with Kate and the kids. It’s such a beautiful place; add in no cars, internet or mobile phone access and it really is bliss! It was great to be able to switch off completely, be entirely immersed in nature and then come back to the office recharged and ready for another exciting year!
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Last month, Home@UTS opened its doors, offering 58 Indigenous students the option of living rent-free and within a supportive community of their peers, right next door to campus. Photographer: Anna Zhu
“We’ve all heard the horror stories; now is the time to find some practical solutions.”

That, says Ellen Leabeater, is the mission behind 2SER 107.3FM’s newest radio program, Think: Sustainability.

The show, which first aired at 11 am on Sunday 6 March, is being produced and hosted by Leabeater and Jake Morcom.

Think: Sustainability is a partnership between 2SER 107.3FM and UTS. It draws stories from research across all faculties as well as the university’s corporate sustainability initiatives.

“We were very keen to do a sustainability program,” explains Leabeater, “because everyone is standing up and taking notice about how the world needs to change in order to be more sustainable.”

Morcom says, “A lot of people think of the environment first-off when they hear the word ‘sustainability’, but it’s more than that. And because it goes across all faculties, the story ideas are endless.”

Supervising Producer Catherine Zengerer agrees. “We were actually blown away by the number of stories around this issue. When we sat down with the team at UTS and they started showing us the ideas that were off the top of their head, the list was just amazing.

“Think: Sustainability is about tapping into the rich vein of research at UTS and being able to bring that to the public in a way that’s informing and entertaining.”

The program, says 2SER 107.3FM’s Acting Managing Director Steve Ahern, “has been an evolution of 2SER’s commitment to educational programming and its partnership with UTS. Think: Health was a really successful model last year and so this is the next evolution of that.

“Our slogan is ‘stories, ideas, music’, so getting people to think is a big mission for a community radio station with an educational target audience. Think: Sustainability fulfils our mission perfectly and it aligns with one of the university’s key priorities too.

“It also offers the audience a deeper, more thoughtful experience than most formats across the radio dial in Sydney these days.”

To do that, each show will feature three stories about UTS’s latest sustainability research and “from time to time we will do in-depth specials where we will focus one whole program on one particular area,” says Leabeater.

It’s not the first time the UTS journalism/law student has teamed up with Morcom (himself a recent graduate from Macquarie University). Regular listeners will recognise both from Think: Health as well as Morcom’s work on The Chat and The Wire.

For the duo, 2SER offers an unbeatable opportunity. “I love coming into work every day,” enthuses Leabeater.

“I’ve been here since the end of 2012 and I think I will be forever indebted to 2SER.

“You can get feedback from you lecturer, but when someone emails or calls or tweets and says, ‘I really enjoyed that story’. That is an unbeatable feeling!”

Ahern agrees. “In any course you get the theoretical overview and practically focussed assignments, but there’s nothing better than making regular programs – being on-air, regularly broadcasting, to make you very fit and work ready.”

And with the station having offices located at both the UTS and Macquarie campuses, it’s a readily available interning opportunity for all students. “We’re always looking for new students to volunteer, so if you’re interested in sustainability, come and help us make this program.”

Think: Sustainability airs at 11am Sunday on 2SER 107.3FM. The show is repeated at 6.30pm the following Wednesday and is also available on RewindRadio.com and iTunes. Podcasts can be downloaded at 2ser.com/thinksustainability.

Fiona Livy
Marketing and Communication Unit
Photographer: Steve Ahern
As you walk up the brown-tiled stairs and through the aluminium-framed, glass double-doors at 622 Harris Street you’d be forgiven for thinking you’ve stepped back in time.

The foyer is lined with mirrors and vintage glass cabinets filled with hand-crafted signs. Crocodile Dundee, Barratt’s Sweets, a doctor, a dentist – all are seeking to sell their services. Or they were, once upon a time.

Constructed in 1952, the four-storey heritage building originally housed the National Cash Register Company. Later, it became building U – home to TAFE’s signwriting students. Today, it’s UTS Building 15 – HQ for the Hatchery, the Design Innovation Research Centre (DIRC), the Innovation and Creative Intelligence Unit (ICIU), and a new way of thinking.

"Just as the cash registers moved onto computers, and signwriters went to digital art, we’re an evolution in thinking,” affirms Professor of Design and Innovation and Co-director of DIRC Sam Bucolo.

"Innovation is going to be fundamental for Australia’s prosperity. We’re shifting to a post-mining economy and that means we need to change the way we think.

“We need different products and services we can actually leverage in a global marketplace. The thing that’s going to block us the most is our thinking. So, for the university, our role is to build the capability to actually see opportunities differently, to put teams together differently and therefore innovate.

“What we do here is give people the tools, the processes, the experience, the freedom, to come up with new ideas and challenge some of the status quo.”

And what better place than in the city’s new knowledge hub – ‘the’ place for innovation and entrepreneurship in Sydney.

It’s an environment that Facilities Management Operations (FMO) Manager of Projects Stewart Corner and Project Manager Tony Farrugia resolved to create during the building’s progressive upgrade.

“This is not one of our new, flashy, expensive buildings,” explains Corner. “The idea was to create a building that’s slightly different, that had a feeling of innovation, of freshness.

“Our job is to create a physical environment which enables people to collaborate and create new ideas.”

To do this, Farrugia and his team worked with ICIU Community Manager Tida Tipparapart to commission street art to adorn the Hatchery’s interior. The FMO team also kept the building’s original, large, framed windows, retained old paint splatters on the floor and accentuated decades of exposed paint layered on concrete columns. "It’s all part of the building’s patina,” enthuses Corner: “We don’t want to hide that”.  

The best part, adds Farrugia, is that “because it’s an existing building, it can accommodate units now; they don’t have to wait for the building to go up.”

Already Building 15 has welcomed DIRC and ICIU to level two and the Hatchery and a Microsoft sound studio to level one.

Currently, Farrugia is overseeing the installation of a new elevator on the building’s eastern side, which, with the recently-added accessible toilets and accessible entrance off Mary Ann Street, will help bring the 64-year-old structure up to meet the building code.

Likewise, a major refurbishment is planned for levels three and four, as well as the addition of more collaborative spaces on level one and the loading dock’s conversion into a sitting area (complete with large glass doors that will enable goods to come and go when needed).

“You couldn’t do this in many universities,” asserts Bucolo. “It’s the Ultimo region that allows us to do this.

“Any innovation needs a good ecosystem – that’s why Silicon Valley is thriving; you feel it’s part of the DNA. Ultimo is getting that feeling – people aren’t here to shoot you down; they aren’t here to be nay-sayers. You’ve got the right mindset for people to encourage you, to push you forward and the networks to connect you.

“Australia has some real problems we need to be solving, and this is somewhere we can do it.”

Fiona Livy  
Marketing and Communication Unit  
Photographer: Shane Lo
On 20 April 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded. For three months, over 3.5 million litres of oil gushed from the well decimating 25,000 kilometres of coastline and the animals who lived there. While the disaster undoubtedly spawned learnings for those directly involved, one enterprising UTS ecologist is using real-life simulations of the catastrophe to educate the next generation of environmental scientists.

“It’s so thick and foul, there’s nothing like it,” asserts Lecturer in the Faculty of Science Megan Phillips. The phytoremediation ecologist is referring to the crude oil her Environmental Remediation students use to simulate a coastal oil spill – a scenario they could well encounter in their careers as environmental scientists.

The task requires students to build a mini coastal ecosystem, replicate a catastrophic oil spill using real crude oil and then evaluate the best clean-up method. Phillips believes it’s a first for an Australian university.

“Environmental Remediation explores the practice and philosophies behind responsibly remediating degraded landscapes across the world,” says Phillips. “Contaminated land, in particular, is an extensive and deeply complex global problem and it has such huge implications for human and ecosystem health.

“My logic is if we're training students how to effectively manage oil spills in the real world, we need to get them working with the real material so they know exactly what to expect.”

It’s all part of Phillips’ goal to revamp the Environmental Remediation subject in a way that “earths it in as much real-world experience as I can realistically provide within one teaching period.

“I think one of the most important things we can consider at university is ‘what are the jobs of the future?’,” she says. “I wanted to design a modern subject that prepares our students for growing environmental challenges.”

While Phillips readily admits her love for the job gets her “going in the morning”, re-designing a program that aims to bring together the most cutting-edge remediation research into a coherent story was “a fascinating challenge”.

“In this field, it feels like we’re making new and important scientific discoveries every week. We have innovative applied research teams working at global scales, as well as successful site-specific local remediation projects documented in the Sydney region too. I combine these with classic historical case studies, like the Chernobyl Nuclear Reactor disaster and the Deepwater Horizon, so students get a good sense of perspective for this field.”

Enter Faculty of Science Technical Officer Rod Hungerford and his assortment of props – plastic boats, hammerhead sharks, ducks and more. Hungerford, a geologist with more than 25 years of technical support experience at UTS, is crucial to bringing the practical component of Environmental Remediation to life.

“Adding a few extra fun things for the students ensures they enjoy the prac, not just learn from it. Technical support working closely and collaboratively with the lecturer has always been a feature of environmental science teaching at UTS, but this simulation was especially fun and something different for me too – there were lots of things to think about and solve,” he says.

The students, working in teams of three to five, had fun too. One group managed
to turn their coastal marine microcosm, complete with sand and stones, into Stonehenge and another even more creatively re-created the death scene from *The Lion King*.

“Well that’s the ‘student factor’, someone always does something very unexpected,” deadpans Hungerford.

However, Phillips believes it’s this creative way of learning that will best equip graduates with the skills employers demand – project management, site assessment and analytical laboratory skills.

Says Phillips, “Everyone remembered how to perform a site assessment and design a tailored remediation plan vividly, because they did it all themselves based on the principles taught in the subject. They know that phytoremediation is an effective land management technique because they planted their own plants in polluted soil, and observed their plants decontaminate the soils over time. I’m sure they’ll remember this knowledge and experience and take it with them to their future careers.”

Students agree. “I enrolled in this subject as an elective, not really knowing what to expect, and honestly I enjoyed every component,” says third-year Bachelor of Science student Trent Haydon.

“One of the assignments that really stood out for me was the independent research project. I chose an environmentally degraded site – an apartment block rooftop covered in concrete – assessed the problems and developed a remediation plan. This included converting it into a green rooftop that was more energy efficient, attracted native wildlife and dealt with the issues of modern urbanisation.”

For Bachelor of Environmental Forensics student Ashley Douglas, the subject not only cultivated her theoretical skills but allowed her to “showcase my abilities in a practical environment, something I can take to future employers as a differentiator.

“The subject was really conducive to creating, developing and reinforcing your own solutions to problems,” she says. “The key difference for me was the subject eschewed rote-style learning and encouraged a deeper understanding of the subject matter.”

Phillips says she was blown away by the students’ enthusiasm for their projects. “There was extraordinary passion. Our students are hardworking people who want to make a positive difference to our environment.”

And with science increasingly contributing to Australia’s prosperity, Phillips believes, “there’s never been a better time to become an environmental scientist.”

Marea Martlew
Faculty of Science
Photographer (M Phillips): Shane Lo
Photographer (students in labs): Rebecca Gallegos
Photographer (students in glasshouse): Megan Phillips
Oil splash image: Thinkstock

“MY LOGIC IS IF WE’RE TRAINING STUDENTS HOW TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE OIL SPILLS IN THE REAL WORLD, WE NEED TO GET THEM WORKING WITH THE REAL MATERIAL SO THEY KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TO EXPECT.”
Today, 12,000 orphaned children in Sierra Leone are at risk of human trafficking. Hundreds of girls kidnapped by Boko Haram remain unaccounted for. Slavery is not a crime confined to the history books, nor to the third world. Jennifer Burn and Emma Christopher explain how Anti-Slavery Australia is fighting to put slavery and human trafficking back on the national agenda and provide better support for victims.

March 25 is the International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Slavery. This year, Anti-Slavery Australia (ASA), part of UTS’s Faculty of Law, will be teaming up with the United Nations to commemorate the day with a special screening of the new documentary Will You Remember Me?. The film centres on Queen Nanny, one of the Jamaican slave rebels known as ‘maroons’ and her struggle for freedom.

Why are stories like Nanny’s, which comes from the 18th century, still so important to hear?

In many parts of the world, including Australia, freedom is still far from guaranteed. One way to commemorate Nanny, and the millions of other past victims of slavery, is to work towards ensuring that such stories do not continue in our own times. It is the least we can do in her name.

For over 12 years ASA has battled human trafficking and slavery in our own time and our own nation. Our team of researchers and academics, lawyers, students and volunteers support survivors and develop policies consistent with human rights principles. To this end, our recent research has focused on the importance of effective remedies for trafficked and enslaved people and better visa protection and material support.

It has already made some changes to the law, contributed to better policies and assisted in the recovery from the immeasurable harm suffered. There is no better feeling than when we hear a trafficked person say, ‘Now I have freedom’, or witness the growth of a new business, a new university or vocational enrolment, or see joy on receipt of a job offer.

But ending human trafficking and slavery is more difficult than ever.

While our recently appointed patron, philanthropist Judith Neilson, has already made headway in raising the awareness of the reality of human trafficking and slavery in Australia on a national scale, we need to do more at a grassroots level. Commemorating days like International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Slavery can go a long way to raising awareness in the community.

Last year, the day was marked around the world with the screening of a documentary made by ASA’s Emma Christopher. They Are We tells the story of a reunification after a historical case of slavery in Sierra Leone, and was hailed as a ‘victory over slavery’. But, one year on, the victory is far from complete and things might be worsening.

Today, as the Ebola epidemic leaves behind 12,000 orphaned children and economic devastation, Sierra Leoneans are again fighting to keep their loved ones safe from traffickers and the most serious kinds of exploitation.

Similarly, across West Africa – the region once devastated by the transatlantic slave trade – the majority of the girls whose kidnap gave rise to the #bringbackourgirls campaign are still unaccounted for: Boko Haram remains a major threat. Further afield, ISIL have declared it their right (according to their own ideology) to enslave non-Muslims and Muslims who don’t agree with their particular
views. Jamaica, where Queen Nanny once fought for her freedom, remains a country fighting against the trafficking of its people into forced labour and sex work.

These issues might seem far away from Australia but they are not unrelated to us in our global world. And there are issues right here at home that we urgently need to put back on the agenda.

We urgently need to develop better support for victims of slavery and trafficking. Better visa support and the opportunity of 510 hours of government-funded English language lessons represent welcome progress. Yet support for trafficked people rests essentially on their participation in the criminal justice process, and involves helping the police or prosecutors. Some victims of slavery and trafficking are unable to do so.

What we need is a more flexible visa that recognises the experience of human trafficking and slavery and provides for protection in the small number of circumstances where it is impossible, or dangerous, for a person to engage with law enforcement.

We also need a national compensation scheme for trafficked people, something Australia has an international obligation to provide. Currently eight different schemes exist, one in each of the states and territories, each with different rules, criteria and amounts paid out to those successful in claiming compensation. A national scheme would ensure that victims of slavery and human trafficking are treated equally throughout Australia.

Likewise, we need independent monitoring and review. Since 2003, coordination of Australia’s anti-trafficking and anti-slavery response has been through the Australian Attorney-General’s Department. This should continue, but we need more, especially an independent Anti-Slavery and Trafficking Commissioner. A commissioner would spearhead inquiries into human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices and report to the Australian Parliament. Importantly, they would have different powers to government, including monitoring and reviewing the success of national initiatives, listening to complaints, and advocating for better systems.

Freedom from human trafficking and slavery is recognised as an expression of humanity and Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude”. Queen Nanny of the maroons fought for her freedom from enslavement in 18th century Jamaica. Unfortunately, there is still so much for which to fight.

To find out more, visit antislavery.org.au

Jennifer Burn
Director Anti-Slavery Australia

Emma Christopher
Researcher Anti-Slavery Australia

Photographer (J Burn, E Christopher): Hannah Jenkins
Hand image: Thinkstock

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Yindyamarra. Go on, say it out loud. Yindyamarra.

This beautiful, singsong word from the Wiradjuri Nation essentially means that you must move through the world carefully and mindfully because everything you say and do has impacts beyond which you will ever know.

It’s also a fitting way to explain the thoughtful and inclusive approach taken by UTS to encourage and support Indigenous people to succeed in their education and career ambitions.

The Indigenous Education and Employment Policy (IEEP) was instituted in 2011 and for the first time, articulated a comprehensive, whole-of-university approach to creating Indigenous jobs, boosting Indigenous student participation and essentially making the university’s Indigenous commitment ‘core business’.

In the five short years since, UTS has been in the express lane; but Michael McDaniel is convinced the story actually started when the university was founded.

“UTS is good soil,” says McDaniel, Director of Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning – a special space on campus that offers academic and cultural support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

“From its inception, UTS had its social justice identity written into its DNA. The progress we’ve made since is the result of attracting staff with a shared passion to grow this commitment.”

To give an idea of the scale of work that has been going on since the IEEP came into play, over 50 Indigenous initiatives have been progressed across the university. In McDaniel’s own words: “We are interested in every possible opportunity for Indigenous advancement across the entire agenda. It’s all hands on deck.”

Supported by significant investment from the university, the strategy includes new degree programs, free-of-charge tutors, social support, international experiences, strategic recruitment, outreach programs, referral services, improved facilities, fundraising, new scholarships, on-campus programs, career opportunities and rent-free accommodation.

Right up to the bold Indigenous Graduate Attribute program (more on this later) – making connections, building community and sewing the seeds of the future has been the focus. Yindyamarra.

One of the strategy’s most important focus areas is the provision of accommodation. According to the Behrendt Report of the Review into Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (commissioned by the Federal Government and chaired by top UTS Indigenous researcher Larissa Behrendt), the difficulty of finding affordable accommodation is a major barrier for Indigenous students who want to come to university.

“While we must keep working hard to inspire more Indigenous Australians to come to university, we must also make it possible for them to live affordably, safely and comfortably,” McDaniel says.

Home@UTS opened its doors in February 2016 offering 58 Indigenous students the option of living in rent-free accommodation within a supportive community of their peers, right next door to campus. This initiative, which McDaniel’s believes is an Australian first, will more than double the number of students UTS is currently able to support and has been made possible by a $1.5 million fund. Students also receive a weekly stipend to assist with living expenses.

“Residents will also be able to seek advice on practical, social and educational matters from a dedicated Indigenous Housing Officer to make their transition to uni easier,” says McDaniel.

With a host of pilot projects successfully hatched and itching to spread their wings, attention has also turned to fundraising. This was addressed in March 2015 when Brigette Sancho was appointed as the newly created, full-time Indigenous Advancement Manager.

She is off to a good start. In her first year in the job, Sancho doubled her fundraising target of $500 000 to nearly $1 million,
Her focus for this year is pursuing more accommodation scholarships and funds to extend outreach initiatives such as the burgeoning Galuwa program – a five-day, on-campus residential experience for Indigenous high school students.

Perhaps the most ambitious and all-encompassing idea, and one that has seen tremendous groundwork and planning, is the aforementioned Indigenous Graduate Attribute (IGA) program.

"We are coming from the standpoint that Indigenous education is not just for Indigenous people and is not just delivered by Indigenous people. It is for all people, and it is by all people. It’s about nation building. The IGA will see Indigenous knowledges embedded in the curriculum – university wide."

"What this means is that by 2018 every UTS student will graduate with a professional capacity to work with and for Indigenous Australians. That’s approximately 9000 people per year!" explains McDaniel.

The transformative IGA agenda is the main priority of the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK). The centre was established in February 2015 with the appointment of three first-class Indigenous Australian academics – Professor Michelle Trudgett as the inaugural Director and Professor Susan Page and Associate Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews shortly after.

Trudgett says they have hit the ground running. “I’m genuinely impressed by the community and culture that exists at UTS. We have met some highly talented people and are already hard at work developing a foundation subject, for students in all disciplines, called Aboriginal Sydney Now which will play a crucial role in ensuring that students meet the requirements of the IGA.”

What’s really impressive about how the whole-of-university strategy has unfurled so far, has been a thoughtful recognition of the vast number of interconnected factors, some of which are invisible, that prevent Indigenous students succeeding at university. But with careful and mindful planning today, and always keeping the big picture in mind, McDaniel is confident that the future will take care of itself.

Yindyamarra.
By the time he left the Herald, in 2012, Fray was editor-in-chief and publisher. Along the way he covered politics, religion and gossip; he was foreign correspondent and features editor; and he edited sister papers The Canberra Times and The Sunday Age. In 2013, he launched the fact-checking website PolitiFact Australia, and later became deputy editor of The Australian.

Now the old Herald digs – refashioned into Building 10 – are his new workplace as UTS Professor of Journalism Practice and Head of Journalism.

Students starting their degrees under Fray’s stewardship must confront challenges that didn’t trouble him at the outset of his career.

“The internet changed every relationship in journalism,” says Fray. “As well as blowing up distribution, and blowing up the revenue model, the net has blown up – or at least brought into sharper focus – the relationship between the journalist and the audience. And that’s a great thing.”

As the 2016 academic year begins, Fray is himself a student. As the first Australian accepted into the Tow-Knight fellowship program, he is partway through a four-month course in digital entrepreneurial journalism at the City University of New York (CUNY).

“Jeff Jarvis, Director of the Tow-Knight Centre, argues that journalism needs to be redefined: yes, it is all the things we think it is but it is also a service industry … providing information that helps people make more informed decisions,” says Fray.

“If you give people information that can make a material difference to their lives, maybe they’ll want to pay for it.”

There’s one journalistic requirement the internet hasn’t affected: curiosity. “If you’re curious, if you want to ask questions and you want to know how things work and why things don’t work, you’re halfway to being a journalist,” says Fray.

Away from journalism, Fray is a sometime theatre producer – his wife is a playwright; an occasional painter; and proud Nippers and soccer dad.

He also studies the media habits of Generation Z – his daughter is 12 and his son 10. “They’re engaged with news through Instagram and the like, but they would never read a newspaper.”

And perhaps that sums up Fray’s challenge in making journalism at UTS exciting and relevant. “Journalism has a bright future – though it has changed considerably and is still changing – and it’s going to be in places like UTS where it will be found.”

Fiona McGill
Marketing and Communication Unit
Photographer: Fiona Livy
Icons: Thinkstock

Peter Fray is back where the fun began, almost three decades ago. Mugging for the camera in the building that once housed The Sydney Morning Herald, the journalist turned academic is on a roll. Ideas, opinions, anecdotes and jokes tumble out, much as they might once have done at morning news conferences.

Now, they’re mostly about journalism – what it is and what it might become – and why he’s one “really lucky bastard” to have ended up in this profession.

“There are lots of easier ways of making money, but not many I know of that are as much fun,” says Fray.

Recalling his start at the Herald in 1987, Fray says he was given a notebook and pencil and told “you’re the rural reporter, go and do your thing”.

He had a degree in rural journalism, which helped, and experience covering tropical fruits, sugar and beef cattle for a farming magazine. All were the result of a “kind of epiphany” he had one hot, dusty day in the West Australian wheat belt.

Recently arrived from England, he nursed a vague idea of becoming a farmer. “But here I was, this slightly plump, cherubic Pom and I had this realisation that I wasn’t going to be much of a farmer and what else could I do?”

Memories of his time as a 15-year-old newspaper copy kid in a “crazy hot-metal, swearing, smoking, drinking, seen-it-in-the-movies newsroom” set the fire.
It sounds like a start-up fairy tale: Three students hatch a revolutionary tech concept from their dorm room. They launch an office in Silicon Valley, and take out the title of Best New Product at the American Business Awards (ABA).

But for Sheng Yeo, CEO of cloud platform provider OrionVM, hard work supersedes the fairy tale. “I can’t think of a definitive point where we went from being a scruffy start-up to a successful multinational company,” says the affably modest Yeo.

“It doesn’t happen overnight. It really takes years to get somewhere. The only thing we have over our competitors is perseverance.”

Yeo, a UTS Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Science in Information Technology alumni, founded OrionVM with a group of IT students in 2010.

Since then, their revolutionary wholesale cloud infrastructure company has disrupted a market previously dominated by giants like Google and Amazon.

OrionVM’s success has been signposted by a string of accolades, including the ABA, a Rising Star award in the Deloitte Technology Fast 50 and a mention on CRN magazine’s Coolest Cloud Computing Vendors. Not to mention the fact their first backers included high-profile Microsoft luminary Gordon Bell and Steve Baxter of Shark Tank and Pipe Networks fame.

“We didn’t expect the success we’ve achieved,” admits Yeo. “When we started the company in 2010 the concept of a start-up was in its infancy in Australia. It was a different time and place so we weren’t sold this grand vision.”

Today Yeo and his co-founder Alex Sharp, a former University of Sydney student, operate their cloud infrastructure company from Silicon Valley.

The pair spent two years hopping between Sydney and San Francisco, before being lured into a permanent move by the prospect of big-name clients and risk-taking investors.

“When you’re young and you’re in a start-up you always want to end up in Silicon Valley, says Yeo. “There are a lot of start-ups that believe all your problems will go away once you end up here.”

The reality for OrionVM was fierce competition and high living costs, not to mention culture shock. “The biggest problem Australians have over here is tall poppy syndrome,” Yeo reveals.

“An Australian will never tell you their product is great, while an American will tell you their product is the best thing ever invented. You need to adopt that attitude or people will instantly look down on your product.”

But with global clients like America’s largest telco AT&T and computer networking giant D-Link, OrionVM’s product speaks louder than words.

“Going out to market and talking to people who say, ‘That’s exactly what we are looking for, nobody’s done it like that before’ is a pretty big success in our regards.

“When we first started the company I was worried about committing to a thousand dollars’ worth of costs per month. When I look at the numbers today we’re talking about millions of dollars a year. I do sit back and think, ‘how did I get myself into this?’ It’s all pretty cool really.”

Alex McAlpin
Bachelor of Global Studies
Photographer: Sydney Commercial Photography
Background graphics: Thinkstock
Angelica Syed and Lachlan Burnham

CARE TO MAKE A CHANGE
ANGELICA SYED
I love people! I first came to work in the Student Enquiry Team over a year ago after completing my education degree. I’d had some previous experience in dealing with frontline enquiries from working in a call centre. This position amalgamated both my teaching and customer service skills in one beautiful role.

I’m on the SAU vision working group, and we often discuss what constitutes a remarkable experience. We’ve all come to the conclusion that it’s a friendly, personal experience. However, there’s never going to be a secret recipe because it’s about the journey that you go on with the student, and the way you make them feel.

From the beginning of my time here at UTS, I established a rapport with a particular student. In the past, he’d always felt uncomfortable speaking to anyone but our manager. I’m not sure why he chose me on one particular day, but he came into the student centre and proceeded to ask some questions. From then on, he was comfortable speaking to me. I think it’s because I gave him time. It doesn’t sound like much, but giving the gift of time is really important.

Many of us on the team would feel lost without Lachlan’s ‘Start Your Day’ emails. There’s a real poetic flair to them! The emails were actually started by Student Enquiry Coordinator Mark Tremble, but Lachlan has inherited the task of putting them together, and he’s doing a great job! I love them so much that last year, when I was on leave, I would log into my emails everyday so I could read the emails.

Perhaps I’m a workaholic, but I find them relaxing and they help me to keep my knowledge up to date. So much of what we do is driven by policy and correct process, and having ‘Start Your Day’ to remind us of the essentials is great because it allows us to save our energy and our smiles for our students. It’s about aligning personality and professionalism together.

LACHLAN BURNHAM
I really like that you said combining personality and professionalism, that’s nailed it! From my very first day of work on the frontline for SAU, I’ve been challenged by the fast pace of what we do.

We often juggle our responsibilities trying to help each other out. A daily occurrence is three people in line waiting to speak to you, typing an email that should have been sent two hours ago, a meeting that started 15 minutes ago, and the phone is ringing! But you do it with a smile on your face because it’s important to look after each other. So it’s not just about creating remarkable experiences for our students, but it’s about creating them for each other.

Angelica was recently awarded the SAU ‘One Wonder Woman Award’ by her peers. She’s been described as ‘every customer’s dream’, and has done an amazing job gaining the trust and respect of a special needs student. This is just one great example of the work she does, but I think she’d have at least 20 more!

We’re like a big family here with everyone willing to help out. It’s so refreshing to get to the student centre counter at 9am and find a number of new faces from the wider Student Administration Unit, including our director, supporting us. It means the whole team sees the administration eco-system, and this understanding in turn motivates us to keep providing amazing experiences to our students.

Mark Tremble invented the ‘Start Your Day’ emails as a way to overcome the inability for the Student Enquiry Team to have a regular morning huddle to inform us of what was going on. So ‘Start Your Day’ was created to inform us of common questions from students, important dates and more. Eventually, other staff around the university heard about this and the distribution list continues to grow. For a period of time, I have been writing these emails in lieu of Mark, and I love it!

Humans more often remember bad experiences rather than the good ones. We have about 20 hormones to help us recall a bad experience, whereas we only have one for positive experiences. I believe a remarkable experience is one that you will remember because it gave you such a good feeling that you’re going to go away and tell the story to someone else! At the end of the day, we always try to do what we do with a smile on our face, aiming to have some fun. We wouldn’t be here if we didn’t love it; we love the chaos!

Avalon Dennis
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Writing and Cultural Studies)/International Studies
Photographer: Shane Lo
"The issue is that solar energy is only produced during the day, and wind energy only on windy days. It’s not always in sync with consumers’ demands of electricity and unused energy has nowhere to go."

That, says Katja Kretschmer, “is where my batteries would jump in.”

Kretschmer, an Industry Doctoral candidate with the Automotive Australia Cooperative Research Centre (AutoCRC) in UTS’s Centre for Clean Energy Technology, explains: “The problem, at the moment, with those energy sources is that we can’t store them efficiently and economically. The batteries I’m developing would store energy as it’s produced at a wind or solar farm and release that energy into the power grid as it’s needed.”

The process is similar to our water supply where rain water is collected at Warragamba Dam and then distributed across a large, populated area.

“Rechargeable batteries today are not yet suitable to do that,” says Kretschmer. “They are too expensive, too heavy, not long lasting enough and too small in capacity.”

Kretschmer’s research, which is sponsored by AutoCRC, is trying to address these issues. Her aim is to create advanced lithium ion batteries that can assist in utilising wind and solar energy more efficiently.

“We are making our materials from scratch using a number of different chemical, thermal and mechanical synthesis procedures to create super-efficient electrode materials, which will hopefully power our everyday lives in the future.

Kretschmer believes that in 10 to 20 years, “There will be enough wind and solar farms connected to smart grids and smart homes to power our cars, buses, motorbikes, trains, bicycles, and even household items like computers, TVs and fridges. “Large battery storage systems will create a buffer for those times when solar and wind energy aren’t being produced, so that it can be fed into smart grids and homes as needed.

“And I’m making sure the technology is ready when that happens.”

Kretschmer’s doing this by, “improving existing and discovering new rechargeable battery systems to promote electromobility and the transition to renewable energy.”

Electromobility is the same kind of electric powertrain technology used in electric or hybrid cars. It negates the need for fossil fuels and eliminates carbon gas emissions. While Kretschmer says electromobility is becoming more affordable and practical, the materials and designs of batteries need to be improved to compete with the conventional combustion engine.

“Most of the materials I use in my research are considered ‘green,’ she says. “I use common food additives as my starting materials and if I can, I always choose the least hazardous chemicals.”

In a recent publication in Green Chemistry, Kretschmer writes about a microcrystalline cellulose derived hybrid electrode. “It sounds fancy”, she says, “but it’s really only cheap paper towel combined with relatively harmless chemicals and converted to a very efficient electrode material. If my materials eventually make their way into commercialisation the facilities are already widely available.”

Kretschmer believes it’s only a matter of time before Australia shifts from fossil fuels towards renewable energy. “I’m trying to help us get there a bit faster”.

Belinda Lee
Graduate Research School
Photographer: Shane Lo

This research is funded by: Automotive Australia Cooperative Research Centre and UTS
Ranging from short, stark vignettes to 20-page narratives, The Last Wilkie’s and Other Stories is a collection of stories that subvert expectations. The tales are by turns whimsical, poignant, banal and brutal, vividly realised set of characters: from a weary and jaded couple at the point of compromising their ethics in a cut-throat housing market, to corporatised kidnappers with a comprehensive business plan, and a tantruming child who “cannot abide injustice”. In any one story, Steiner switches expertly from poignancy to tedium, humour to heartbreak. Quotidian events take remarkable and even menacing turns, while profound possibilities are thwarted by the apathy or indifference of protagonists. Littered between the stories, Zoë Sadokierski’s quirky illustrations offer opportunities to pause and reflect on events, and occasionally foreshadow what is to happen. Steiner is at his most engaging in his longer form narratives, with his final story being the stand out. Steeped in his surroundings, particularly the Milk Bar. This rustic, maligned and dishevelled building is anthropomorphised as the protagonist, and the birth mother she never knew, she begins to understand the power that comes from having the creative licence to write characters in and out of her own story. Reading The Women’s Pages, we are given an unusual insight into the writing process, through the eyes of the protagonist, while also feeling the weight and influence of Steiner’s own creative process. While The Women’s Pages is a book that won’t let you go, it’s also one you shouldn’t let pass you by.

Avalon Dennis
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Writing and Cultural Studies)/International Studies
Debra Adelaide is an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at UTS, and the author and editor of 12 books. The Women’s Pages is her most recent novel.

As a child who loved to read, I came up with the term ’book depression’ to describe the feeling you get having read an amazing novel that just won’t let you go. Thanks to both the subject of Debra Adelaide’s masterfully crafted narrative, and the way the reader becomes attached to the characters that people its pages, this is how I feel having read The Women’s Pages. At its core, the novel explores the strength of women in the face of all of life’s challenges. Dove is an amateur writer coping with the impending death of her adoptive mother, who insists on being read to from the book she could never let go of – Wuthering Heights. As Dove grieves for her lost adoptive mother, and the birth mother she never knew, she begins to understand the power that comes from having the creative licence to write characters in and out of her own story. Reading The Women’s Pages, we are given an unusual insight into the writing process, through the eyes of the protagonist, while also feeling the weight and influence of Adelaide’s own creative process. While The Women’s Pages is a book that won’t let you go, it’s also one you shouldn’t let pass you by.

Jon Steiner completed a Graduate Diploma in Writing at UTS, and has been published in the UTS Writers’ Anthology. Zoë Sadokierski is a visual communication designer and a Lecturer in the UTS School of Design.

Debra Adelaide
The Women’s Pages
Publisher: Picador

The Uncanny Love of Jimmy Panagakos draws you in with a compelling image of the central characters – Jimmy (of the title fame) and the unnamed, unfeeling, unfaithful, yet flirty Milk Bar. Yes, Milk Bar. This rustic, maligned and dishevelled building is anthropomorphised as the story progresses and is the obsessive object of Jimmy’s affections. It quickly becomes apparent that Jimmy has a fetish-type relationship with a few inanimate objects; his first love being ‘Broomie’. If you’re looking for themes of redemption, comeuppance or ‘poor-kid-does-good’, this is not your cup of tea. Jimmy’s is a story of obsession and the inability to detach himself from this strange engagement with his surroundings, particularly the Milk Bar – a shop passed onto him by his family. Hill holds her readers in a suspension made from milkshake, tears, semen, and the gritty, grimy life in the suburbs lining Parramatta Road; though some light relief can be found in the characters of Ella and Aunty Fi who epitomise a desire to move on. Overall, I enjoyed the read. The chapters are short, flicking between distant past, recent past and almost present, making The Uncanny Love of Jimmy Panagakos ideal for when life doesn’t allow you to indulge in a read-fest.

Jeremy Simpson
Human Resources Unit

The Uncanny Love of Jimmy Panagakos is the first book by 2009 Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Social Inquiry)/International Studies graduate Beth Hill. Her writing has also appeared in the 2006 UTS Writers’ Anthology Making Tracks and the magazine Secure.

The Women’s Pages
By: Debra Adelaide
Publisher: Picador

The Uncanny Love of Jimmy Panagakos
By: Beth Hill
Publisher: Busybird Publishing

The Last Wilkie’s and Other Stories
By: Jon Steiner
Publisher: Spineless Wonders

During March, the Co-op Bookshop on Broadway is offering Co-op members a 20 per cent discount on The Women’s Pages and The Last Wilkie’s and Other Stories reviewed in this issue. Mention U: magazine when you purchase any of these books in store.
Take a tour through the history of UTS’s Kuring-gai campus – from its beginnings as a teachers’ college, to near-destruction in a catastrophic bushfire and the unforgettable green carpet – in UTS Art Collection: A Kuring-gai story.

UTS may have said goodbye to the leafy Lindfield campus but a treasure trove of archival photos, scrapbooks and art spanning more than 40 years of the Kuring-gai site remains.

Aside from the iconically bold architectural and interior design choices, the Kuring-gai campus also featured vibrant artworks from the likes of Ken Unsworth, Margaret Preston and Sidney Nolan (to name only a few). The colourful sculptures and striking canvases held their own within the hard concrete and ‘New Brutalism’ design of the campus, and are remembered by many as an integral part of the Kuring-gai experience.

Today, these artworks have found a new home in Ultimo, and a small selection are proudly exhibited in the Tower foyer for staff, students, alumni and the community.

Exhibition Curator Janet Ollevou says, "It’s been brilliant watching the City campus evolve, and how beautifully the artworks from Kuring-gai sit in the new buildings and spaces here."

“The history of a collection doesn’t end when the artworks move; it continues on as new stories and experiences accumulate. I love being able to see artworks from our Collection in a new space as they circulate across campus. It’s like seeing an old friend but with a new perspective.”

Along with these artworks, the exhibition celebrates the stunning bushland oasis of Kuring-gai and architect David Turner’s purpose-built campus for teaching and learning. Turner’s vision to create a campus that worked with the natural landscape is perfectly realised in the cluster of buildings that appear to spill down the hill, incorporating a number of internal courtyards to bring the bush inside.

Kuring-gai alumni will recognise stories and images from the former campus, and others may even find memories in a timeline display encompassing the original Teachers’ College in Balmain, Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) and other annexes (including Orange Grove and North Sydney), the Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education and its transfer to UTS.

Nestled in one corner of the exhibition space is a testament to the campus’ community spirit – a ceramic vase made by Margery Hourihan. Ollevou explains, “Hourihan was a staff member who was quite active as a representative on the council at Kuring-gai – but it just happens that she was also a very talented potter!

“This vase was her gift to the university when she retired. It’s a beautiful piece because it represents her memory of the 1994 bushfire and shows how the event impacted her and the Kuring-gai community.”

Along with the vase, visitors will discover a diverse collection of unexpected pieces such as an exquisite textile work by Finnish artist Uhra Simberg-Ehrström and a historically significant Albert Namatjira print which were often used as aides for training student teachers at the campus. It’s a fitting way to acknowledge the rich legacy of Kuring-gai and welcome staff and students to the new City campus.

UTS Art Collection: A Kuring-gai story is on display in the Tower foyer until 25 May.

Hannah Jenkins
Marketing and Communication Unit
Photographer: Shane Lo
(Bush landscapes) by: Gloria Allport; Erika Beck; Janine Bravery; Judith Daniel; Yvonne Langshaw; Daphne O’Brien; Marjorie Parker; Marian Purvis; Denise Shaw

View this article at UTS:NEWSROOM or share it @utsnewsroom
WHAT'S ON

MARCH

Email your April events to u@uts.edu.au by Friday 11 March.

EXHIBITION
Take a tour through the history of UTS’s Kuring-gai campus at UTS Art Collection: A Kuring-gai story. This public exhibition will feature archival photos, scrapbooks and art spanning more than 40 years, as well as guided tours and special events.

UTS exhibition space, building 1, level 4
Until 25 May

PLAY DAY
If you’re reading this, you’ve been selected (as an elite operative) to go undercover at UTS Library. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to infiltrate the Library’s Play Day. Blend in with the games, prizes and free pizza.

UTS Library
11am-3pm
ashley.england@uts.edu.au

EXHIBITION
Architectural research has today reframed the city as a living laboratory. Fieldwork, curated by UTS Lecturer Sarah Hearne, will illuminate the diverse ways that contemporary architects collect and manage information to produce new formats of observation, description and evidence.

UTS Gallery, building 6, level 4
Until 29 April
Mon-Fri 12pm-6pm
art.uts.edu.au

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ART & U

After da Vinci installation view.
Photographer: Jessica Maurer

If you’ve not had a chance to look inside our magnificent new building on Broadway, a major installation of models based on the inventive drawings of Leonardo da Vinci may be just the excuse you need.

After da Vinci is spread across four levels in the central ‘crevasse’ of Building 11 and connected by the building’s Escher-like stairways. The exhibition features a special collection of working scientific and engineering models that is on permanent loan to UTS from the IBM (Australia).

Da Vinci’s machines imagined human flight, mechanised war, and all manner of solutions to problems of measurement and transport – and many seem very familiar to us today.

Many of da Vinci’s drawings are held in major collections across the world and have been collated into ‘codices’ for study. These were the starting point for the models that were originally commissioned by IBM in the early 1950s.

While the majority of da Vinci’s ideas were not realised as actual machines during his lifetime, the models on display in Building 11 are a wonderful celebration of his creativity and curiosity.

After da Vinci has re-visioned the collection with additional material provided by our exhibition design partners Bannyon Wood, and is located on levels 00, 01, 02, and 12 of the building.

For more information, visit the website afterdavinci.uts.edu.au

Janet Ollevou
UTS Art

From

1

From

8

Janet Ollevou
UTS Art
Summer 2015/16: 362 UTS students travelled overseas as part of UTS:BUiLD (Beyond UTS International Leadership Development Program). #UTSbuild and #buildinspires catalogue an amazing collection of photographs, blog posts and videos showcasing the students’ experiences and leadership achievements. Here is just a snapshot of the programs, countries and inspiration they discovered. For more information, visit build.uts.edu.au

Photographers: 1 – Maddison Reynolds (40K India); 2 – Fadi Faraj (KMUTT Thailand); 3 – James Fleetwood (UTM Malaysia); 4 – Kulsoom Hussain (Bloom Microventures Vietnam); 5 – Chau Au (ATYAP Thailand); 6 – Rianna Darby (International Internships Indonesia); 7 – Muhammad Waqas Ayub (KMUTT Thailand); 8 – Nathan Wiltshire regrammed by Sophie Weston (Drishtee India); 9 – Daniel Wasilewsky (Project Everest Fiji)