



UNIVERSITY OF

Otago

M A G A Z I N E

ISSUE 19: FEBRUARY 2008

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VICE-CHANCELLOR'S COMMENT

At the University Council meeting in November, I mentioned that during 2008 we will need to consider whether we should place further limits on student enrolments. My reason for raising this issue was the change in the Government's tertiary funding system, in which a cap is now placed on the number of students who will be funded at each institution in a particular year.

A few weeks later the University of Auckland announced a firm intention to limit enrolments from 2009. The authorities at Auckland have emphasised that the practical effect of this change is likely to be minimal; the number of domestic (as well as international) students at Auckland University actually declined between 2004 and 2006, but it increased in 2007. Auckland is one of two or three universities that expect to be carrying a significant number of unfunded students this year.

There have always been restrictions on enrolment into many programmes at the University of Otago. Some people may be surprised to learn that more than 50% of the first year students at Otago are heading for courses that have a cap on enrolments. Reasons for such caps include restricted facilities or Government edicts. Admission to the first year courses is limited for some programmes, such as Physical Education, Teacher Education, Medical Radiation Therapy, Oral Health, and Dental Technology. Selection occurs at the end of the first year for many other programmes, such as Dentistry, Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, and Surveying. Admission to honours programmes is also restricted. Should we now be extending such limits to all courses at the University of Otago?

There are arguments for and against this proposition. On the one hand, confining admission to the ablest students would appear to support the aim of the University to achieve excellence in all of its activities. Restricted entry is a common feature of the highest calibre universities internationally, although the reputation of universities depends largely on their research rather than their student selection.

On the other hand, there are philosophical and practical problems in limiting all enrolments. While universities should unashamedly be elite institutions (in the best sense of that

word), we also have an obligation to serve our community. Is there a danger that we would turn away students from groups that have been under-represented at New Zealand universities in the past? This University owes its genesis to the community of Otago and Southland. Are we to tell school-leavers in Otago and Southland that they may have to leave the region to study for a BA or BSc or BCom – even though they are academically qualified to undertake such a course? And what about the sons and daughters of Otago alumni? We treasure our special relationship with alumni, many of whom encourage their children (or grandchildren) to come to Otago from all over the world.

The challenge from a practical viewpoint would be in deciding how to select students in an appropriate way. As I have already mentioned, most of our professional schools select at the end of the first year – and students who do not gain entry commonly continue with other university courses. Selection of all students from school would be difficult if there is no universal examination. Moreover, this approach would disadvantage young people who have come from a deprived background or have had a troubled adolescence.

We have no need to make a knee-jerk decision, because student numbers do not fluctuate at Otago as wildly as at other universities. This is because effectively we already have a partial cap on enrolments, related to the number of beds in residential colleges. Only 20% of our first-year students come from Dunedin. There is vigorous competition from all over New Zealand for places in our 13 residential colleges: at the time of writing, the colleges still have a waiting list of about 700 prospective students. Of course this raises the question of whether the criteria used for selection into the residential colleges are optimal at present.

I am recommending to the University Senate that we should establish a working party to consider the whole question of limiting enrolments. I hope that there will be an opportunity for all members of the University community to make their views known, because the choices we make could have a major influence on our future. If any alumni or other friends of the University would like to express an opinion, I would be very pleased to hear from you.



David Skegg

*Professor David Skegg
Vice-Chancellor
University of Otago*



Photo: Alan Dove



Fighting for frogs

**PROMOTING THEIR ACADEMIC REPUTATIONS PALES INTO
INSIGNIFICANCE FOR TWO OTAGO SCIENTISTS WHOSE
DISCOVERY MAY SAVE THE WORLD'S FROGS FROM EXTINCTION.**

FROGS HAVE BEEN AROUND for 360 million years and yet many species could completely disappear in our lifetime.

Populations the world over are threatened. It's estimated nearly one third of the world's 6000 or so amphibian species has already gone – and this has happened in just the last 15 years. If they continue to be wiped out at the current rate, we will see the single largest extinction since the disappearance of the dinosaurs.

What is of particular concern is that all four of New Zealand's remaining native frog species are among the top 10 globally-endangered and evolutionarily-distinct amphibians in the world.

Why should we care? As one of the chief predators of insects, as well as prey to other animals, amphibians are

a vital link in the food chain. (Amphibians include frogs, toads, salamanders, newts and caecilians – worm-like creatures.)

Losing a whole group like this would have enormous ramifications.

For example, the insect population would swell to unprecedented proportions and, potentially, not only would we become vulnerable to insect-borne disease, but many of the crops we depend on might be destroyed.

Frogs also give excellent early warning signals if the health of the ecosystem is failing. The situation is so dire, herpetologists worldwide have declared this year as Global Year of the Frog.

The good news is that two of our own scientists are at the forefront of global efforts to save these threatened

species – and, what’s more, they’re prepared to sacrifice academic advancement to do so.

Molecular geneticist Associate Professor Russell Poulter and zoologist Dr Phil Bishop, from the University of Otago, have developed a protocol for treating captive frogs infected with the fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd), the organism causing the amphibian chytrid disease or chytridiomycosis.

Although there are a number of known causes for the current decline in amphibian populations, chytridiomycosis is thought to be the most immediate threat. “It was discovered just 10 years ago and, since then, dozens of species have been wiped out,” says Bishop.

Three of New Zealand’s seven native frogs have already disappeared and the remaining four are seriously threatened. Among them is the “guinea pig” at the centre of this exciting breakthrough – Archey’s frog, *Leiopelma archeyi*, our smallest indigenous species and thought to be the most archaic frog in the world.

The magic bullet causing a stir among frog enthusiasts around the world is chloramphenicol, an antibiotic once used widely in humans and still used as an eye ointment. “It kills the fungus that gives rise to chytrid disease,” says Poulter, who made the discovery, “which is surprising since it’s an antibacterial compound and we wouldn’t expect it to have any impact on a fungus.”

The protocol has already been released and is currently being tested on six more frog species at Taronga Zoo in Sydney, including the critically-endangered Southern Coroboree frog. At a recent meeting in Arizona, scientists from as far afield as Honduras, Panama, Puerto Rico and Spain went home armed with the protocol to test chloramphenicol on their own frog species.

While it is unusual to release details of the method before the results have been published in an academic journal, Bishop and Poulter are more driven to saving the world’s amphibians, than they are about upholding their academic reputations.

And that passion, for Bishop, has been there since he was four years old. He kept frogs and toads as pets, the numbers rocketing to 32 different species when he was at Cardiff University doing a master’s in parasitology – “and yet my thesis had nothing to do with frogs”. At the suggestion of a colleague, he changed direction and Bishop’s PhD thesis is dedicated to a toad who was his constant companion during the PhD fieldwork in Africa.

Although the decline in frog populations around the world began in the 1970s, it wasn’t until much later that chytridiomycosis was thought to play a major part. The oldest known occurrence of Bd, the fungus causing the

disease, is from museum specimens of the South African clawed frogs (*Xenopus*) preserved in 1938. Global trade in these frogs burgeoned in the 1950s after the development of pregnancy tests using female *Xenopus* tissue.

The disease itself was first described in 1998 by a postgraduate student of Professor Rick Speare, at James Cook University in Townsville (and now an honorary professor in zoology at Otago). Of the two populations of Archey’s frog in New Zealand, it was in the Coromandel six years ago that the fungus responsible for chytridiomycosis was first discovered. Records show that frog populations had been reduced by 88 per cent between 1996 and 2001. The need to eliminate Bd became urgent.

One hundred frogs were collected from the wild at Whareorino (where the other population of Archey’s frogs is found) and quarantined in Hamilton Zoo. After molecular screening, 12 were discovered to be infected with the deadly fungus and were flown to Otago. Upon arrival, eight were treated with topical chloramphenicol. The remaining four were immersed in water only.

After 63 days, the treated frogs were clear of infection and treatment began on the remaining four. “Not only did we eliminate the fungus, but the frogs showed no evidence of clinical disease,” says Bishop. “In advanced stages of chytrid disease, the frog has postural changes and is unable to right itself if turned over onto its back.” Bishop has led the native frog recovery group for the last two years and is lead author on the new Native Frog Recovery Plan.

“Archey’s frogs are unique to New Zealand and have remained unaltered for 70 million years,” says Bishop. “If we don’t do something now to protect these wild populations, we could lose them altogether.”

In the lab, Poulter and his team were already making their own discoveries. They were growing the fungus on agar plates, with and without antibiotics. “Once the effectiveness of chloramphenicol was identified,” says Poulter, “the next thing was to work out how much we needed to use to do the job.”

The growing cultures were exposed to different amounts of chloramphenicol. “With 20 parts per million, there was no further growth of the fungus,” he says.

To find out whether chloramphenicol is toxic to frogs, they added 20 ppm to 100 tadpoles and measured their growth rates and metabolism. “There was no difference between the treated group and the control group, so we know it’s a safe, as well as effective, treatment.”

Trials were carried out on the Southern Bell frog and the Brown Tree frog, both species introduced to New Zealand, first infecting the frogs and determining the level of infection present. The results confirmed that the frogs of

“Archey’s frogs are unique to New Zealand and have remained unaltered for 70 million years. If we don’t do something now to protect these wild populations, we could lose them altogether.”



Associate Professor Russell Poulter and Dr Phil Bishop search for the endangered Archey’s frog.

both species were cleared of their infections with 20 ppm chloramphenicol.

“The next thing we want to explore,” says Poulter, “is whether or not they are still vulnerable to infection after treatment. We’re not sure yet whether we can produce a frog that is immune to chytrid infection, but we should know soon.”

While chytrid has been identified as the primary cause, there are a number of other significant factors contributing to this global decline of amphibians

– habitat destruction, pollution, climatic changes, UVB radiation, predators, and over-exploitation of frogs for food and the pet trade.

Frogs lay their eggs in water, where they develop into tadpoles, and continue to live in the water until they metamorphose into tiny frogs. This aquatic habitat in the early stages of their life cycle, coupled with their semipermeable skin, makes them particularly vulnerable to pollutants and environmental stresses

Contributing factors vary in different parts of the world. For example, over-exploited species are more concentrated in East and South-East Asia, whereas reduced-habitat species occur more widely, but especially in South-East Asia, West Africa and the Caribbean.

And climate change and disease seem to be the main players in the decline of amphibians in South America, Meso America, Puerto Rico and Australia. For example, 67 per cent of the Harlequin frogs of tropical America have died out in the last 20 years, and this is directly attributed to changes in temperature and infection with pathogens. The shifting temperatures trigger the expansion of the chytrid fungus which is wiping out Harlequin frogs at an alarming rate. The Golden frog, one of the 110 Harlequin species and only found in Panama, is at the centre of a major conservation effort as biologists race against time to save their precious icon.

Worldwide concern for the plight of our amphibians led to the first World Congress of Herpetology being held

in the United Kingdom in 1989. It was at this meeting that a taskforce was set up to investigate the decline.

Although they don’t have as high a profile, there are more amphibians threatened with extinction than birds or mammals – 32.5 per cent of amphibians compared with 12 per cent of birds and 23 per cent of mammals are on the “red list”, either vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered. And this figure is probably a conservative estimate given that the biology and population estimates of many species are poorly known.

Since the Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA) data were released in 2004, there have been 179 new species identified, bringing the total number of amphibian species to 6240. Of these, 32 per cent are threatened with extinction and, although there is not enough data to be sure, 23 per cent are thought to be “in trouble”. It’s estimated there are 500 amphibian species whose threats cannot be mitigated quickly enough to stave off extinction.

Efforts to slow down the current decline globally will be stepped up this year with a global communications plan swinging into action. Its aim is to bring the plight of frogs to our attention and, hopefully, inspire us to do what we can to help.

With people like Bishop and Poulter championing the cause, there’s a good chance amphibian decline will decrease in the coming years. The pair’s long-term goal is to be able to extend the treatment to frog populations in the wild. Meanwhile, they and their colleagues around the world will continue to capture the most at-risk species and breed from them, in an attempt to save what’s left of these precious and highly vulnerable animals.

For more information on the plight of frogs and what you can do to help, visit www.nzfrogs.org

Dianne Pettis



Photo: Alan Dove

Voting with your feet

OTAGO RESEARCHERS ASK WHY FEWER NEW ZEALANDERS ARE BOTHERING WITH ELECTIONS.

TRYING TO WORK OUT why half the adult population made no input in deciding who their local mayors were is a bit like looking at a tunnel to see the hole.

They're the bit that's not there, says political studies lecturer Dr Chris Rudd.

"We know our communities are full of people who are not engaging with our democratic processes, but they are elusive. They're not at the meetings, they're not writing to the papers and we can guess they're probably not big on filling out mail surveys either. It's very difficult to know what they are thinking."

Nonetheless, shedding light on the mindset of non-voters is the latest project for the Otago Polling Research Centre, comprising Otago academics Rudd, Professor Phil Harris and Mathew Parackal (Marketing).

The group was formed in 2004 to better understand voting behaviour following a dismal participation of just 51.5 per cent of voters at the local body elections that year.

While New Zealand has shared the trend experienced by Western democracies of declining levels of voter participation over the past two decades, our turnout rates have tended to sit at the healthier end of the scale. Voter participation in New Zealand general elections

is in the top one third of countries worldwide, and is higher than in Britain, the United States and Canada. (In 2005, turnout was 77 per cent, a slight increase on the 2002 figure of 72.5 per cent.) However, when barely half of eligible Dunedinites bothered to register an opinion on the mayoralty of the city in 2004, jitters of disquiet were expressed about the health of the city's democratic institutions.

Since then, the team has also looked at the 2005 general election and the 2007 Dunedin mayoral race. Now, they're preparing for the nation – or around 75 per cent of its adults, give or take – to take to the polling booths for the 2008 general election.

The results from the centre's 2004 survey made disheartening reading for those trying to find ways to motivate citizens to vote. Voting behaviour was not linked to whether individuals followed and were informed about the election process. Nor was it linked to beliefs about what it meant to perform your duty as a good citizen. It wasn't even linked to interest in politics.

Chances are, if you're not voting, you're probably young. In the group's research, age was the only valid predictor of voting behaviour. Harris points to a UK study that found that voter engagement in those under 25 dropped 10 per cent between the last two elections.

Is not voting when you're young something one grows out of, cured by settling down and amassing possessions and liabilities? Or are we seeing the first wave of behaviours among a new generation that will stay with them the rest of their lives?

Theories abound for the lack of youth participation in elections. They may be travelling and feel out of touch with the parties' policies. It may be, suggests Parackal, because "they have no property, no children, no job-security fears. They have nothing to protect, no reason to invest in the system."

Rudd ventures that the declining rates of young voters speaks of broader social issues.

"In the past there were groups, such as the Church and trade unions, which provided the links between the individual and the state.

"Now, the relationship between the individual and the state is much more of a one-to-one contract. And, if you're a young person, your main experiences of this contract are being told you're very much on your own – pay for your own education, get your own job, buy your own house, save for your own retirement – and getting speeding tickets.

"Generally speaking, politicians are not very good at talking to younger people. Their communications are really directed at the middle-aged, middle classes."

Harris points out that the power and authority of the Government as a social institution has also shifted. "The corporate sector has grown enormously in its social and economic influence. Young people may be expressing their influence in their consumption choices rather than in the polling booths." However, he notes that while engagement as voters may be declining, that's not to say young people are apolitical – they have been among the most vocal advocates of the environmental and fair-trade movements.

To this extent, the researchers suggest the concept of voter engagement needs to be examined more critically.

"Should engagement in political processes be judged by whether we turn out to the polling booths on election day or return our voting slips?" Rudd asks.

Indeed, it could be argued that those who dutifully vote for populist politicians without finding out about and examining their policies – or those who make wild stabs in the dark as to who would be most appropriate for their local health board – are no more engaged with the political system than those who don't vote at all.

Within the theories to explain young people's disinclination to tick the political boxes are some fundamental differences and the jury is still out on the larger implications of the trend.

Is not voting when you're young something one grows out of, cured by settling down and amassing possessions and liabilities? Or are we seeing the first wave of behaviours among a new generation that will stay with them the rest of their lives? "This is the question we really need to answer if we want to understand the long-term impact of not voting," says Parackal.

To get to the bottom of this, the next stage of the centre's research is to find and interview non-voters, and try to understand what prevents them from formally registering their opinion in the country's democratic processes. Meanwhile, other projects include looking at non-traditional ways of predicting election results – rather than relying on polls, they will examine ideas such as the brand equity of political parties.

The team believes there are things that could be done at the local-body level to increase voter turnout. Rudd advocates a single day at the polls as per the national elections. "It should be strongly supported by opportunities to vote online or by mail. But at least it would create a sense of occasion."

Harris would like to see New Zealand follow the trend of UK local elections in which people vote for representatives of political parties. "It would add some fire to the proceedings, and ensure good agenda setting and focused governance. You'd know what you were voting for."

Originally a proponent of the single transferable vote (STV) system for local body elections, Rudd has changed his mind. "I thought it would be fairer and more accurate. But, in every single case we've studied, the person who won the first-choice race won the election. Ranking your candidates hasn't changed any results, but it has added a layer of complication to the whole system."

He comments also that the various categories covered in the election – local, regional and health boards – adds to the noise and fatigue of the process.

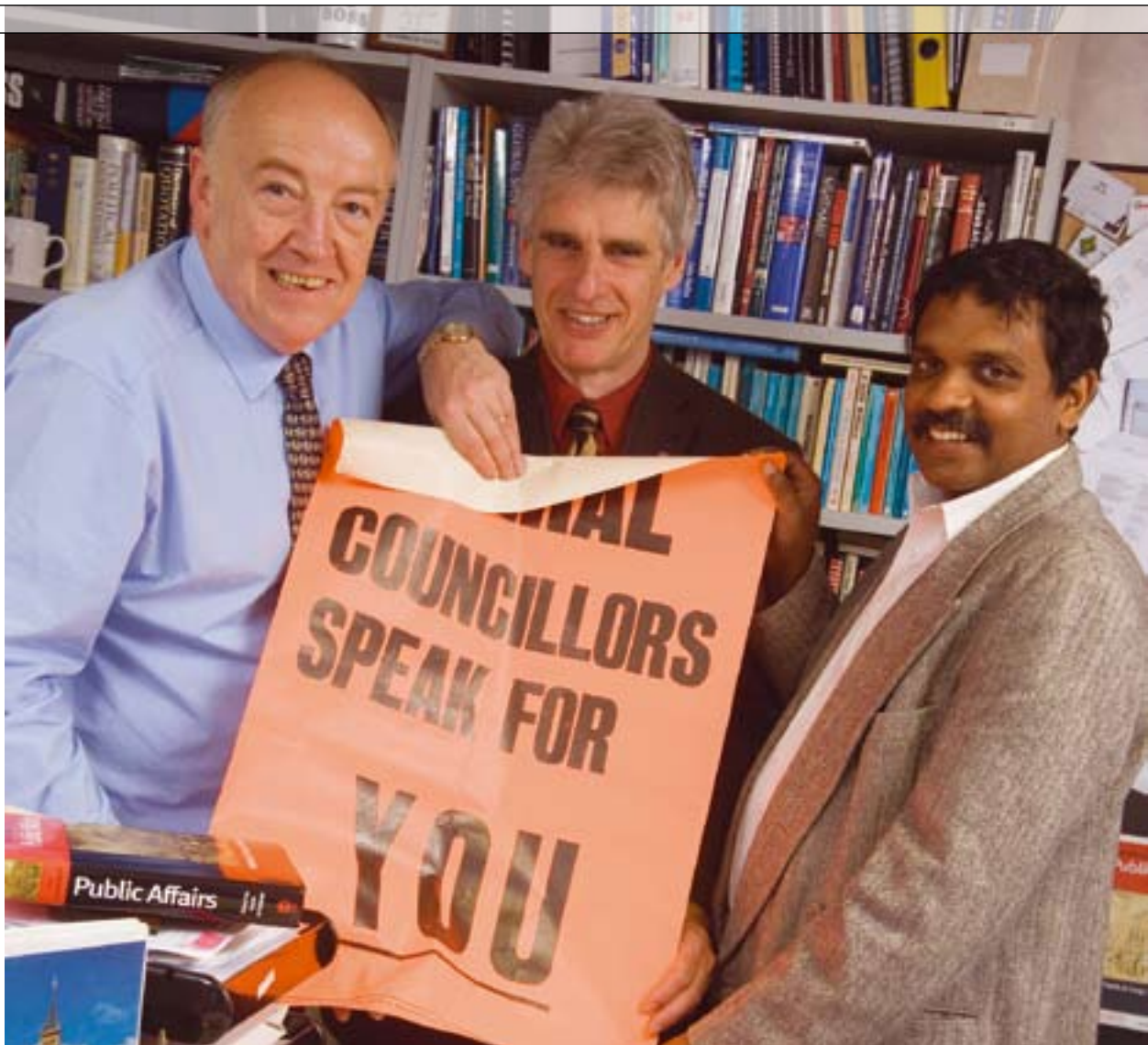


Photo: Bill Nichol

Professor Phil Harris, Dr Chris Rudd and Dr Mathew Parackal:

The Otago Polling Research Centre is now preparing for this year's general election.

“But fixing any of this is tinkering around the edges. It might lift voter turnout a couple of percentage points. It doesn't address the underlying trend.”

Maybe the best approach for politicians, researchers and anyone else worried about the health of our democratic processes is to do what Parackal has done – simply develop a philosophy to cope.

In the greater scheme of things, does it actually matter if people are not voting? Consider that in the 2007 local body elections in Dunedin, voter turnout rose slightly on the previous election to reach 54 per cent.

Parackal, whom his colleagues affectionately describe as “very numerical in his focus”, comments that from a statistical point of view, “54 per cent is a representative sample”.

“For other quantitative social sciences' studies, we would accept a 54 per cent response rate. It would be enough to produce statistically-valid findings to generalise across a population. Really, that's all we're asking for from an election. If the response is such that we can say that it is representative of the political views of the whole population, does it really matter if not everyone actually contributes to that result?”

Maybe. Maybe not. Parackal continues ruefully, “You could say Don Brash was the victim of a sampling error”.

Nicola Mutch

ALUMNI PROFILE



Joe Morrison: "I went to bed that night mulling it over, couldn't sleep, got up and wrote a draft business plan ... That was the beginning of Cymicon."

Joe Morrison: biomechanical entrepreneur

It's a long way from Feilding Agricultural High School to a position at the head of one of Dunedin's, and New Zealand's, most innovative hi-tech sports software companies, but Joe Morrison seems to have taken the journey in his stride. The 44-year-old physical education master's graduate, founder and director of Siliconcoach and CEO of Cymicon, also took in a few detours en route.

Straight out of school he fetched up at Canterbury University, by his own admission, not really knowing what he was doing there. He lasted three months and spent the rest of the year painting houses with his father. From there he joined the army, ending up as an infantry captain. Spells as a rifle platoon and reconnaissance platoon commander were followed by a desk job in Wellington.

But Morrison wasn't ready for that. "I was too young to be sitting at a desk. I wanted something that combined physical activity and people." He took a punt and applied to the University of Otago School of Physical Education and, initially, the Dunedin College of Education. "There was no great logical reason for it at all ... I'd just had enough of what I was doing.

"The idea was that I'd teach physical education, but after a year I decided teaching wasn't for me."

But he definitely took to the phys-ed side of the deal, in particular, biomechanics. At the end of the third year of his BPhEd, Morrison spoke to Dr Barry Wilson, head of the Biomechanics Department, about the possibility of doing a master's. And the basis of an idea that he has been developing ever since was born: "The Development of a Qualitative Video Analysis System" – the subject of his thesis.

"And that's what got me into computers," he says. "It was just a way to solve a problem."

That problem was building a video-capture software interface that allowed coaches and athletes to break down, study and correct or perfect biomechanical activity – a swimming stroke, the running stride, a cricket shot, a golf swing ...

But, as the quietly-spoken Morrison says, it is a long way from a piece of academic software to a commercially-viable application. Upon finishing University in 1995, he spent the next several years in a room in a Caversham villa, on and off, attempting to do just that.

"Having a dream and risking failure is one step, but then gathering world-class people around you to take that dream into a global market is the next."

The first challenge was to migrate the program from the Macintosh he'd based his master's program on, to a PC platform. And the next was to commit himself fully to the project.

"By the end of 1999 I had decided that I should be in business seriously or go out and get a proper job."

His involvement in a venture beginning in mid-1999, with his partner Dr Gill Thomas and Professor Derek Holton, made the decision easier. He provided technical assistance and computer back-up to their expertise in mathematics and maths education. Together, they formed a company called Maths Technology Limited, which was to provide online maths content and teacher resources on contract to the Ministry of Education.

Then, on his own account, he linked up with Stephen Goodlass – who had been at the School of Physical Education at a similar time – and another friend, Thor Besier, to form Siliconcoach.

"Steve rewrote a lot of the software; Thor, who was at the University of Western Australia, helped part-time with marketing, and I did everything else," says Morrison. Initially, they sold the software packages as a teaching aid to biomechanics and sports science departments in universities across Australasia.

Then there was a deal with the Hillary Commission through Ian Ansell, another Otago phys-ed graduate and former captain of the New Zealand water polo team. And, from there, the contracts snowballed.

"I had this chance meeting with a guy called John Doig, also an Otago phys-ed graduate – I think he had been president of the students' association in 1988 – who was with Sports Scotland.

"I told him what we were doing and he said he thought they could make use of it. So that became our first major overseas contract – providing the software-coaching package and some training to go with it."

By this time, Morrison's initial idea had developed into a suite of software products, designed to analyse motion and provide a basis for athletes, coaches, physical educators and sports scientists to discuss and improve athletic performance. The generic coaching tool provided by Siliconcoach is now used by the English Cricket Board, the Australian Institute of Sport, Nike and many other elite international sporting organisations.

Steve Stanley, ex-Otago School of Physical Education – no surprises there – joined up to become New Zealand salesman, developing the dialled-in-motion cycle-fit system that is now found in Avanti-Plus stores throughout New Zealand and Australia.

Other projects emerged, including, in collaboration with the New Zealand Rugby Union, Rugby Sportswizards – which uses the same sort of technology to model skills using All Blacks: goal-kicking with Dan Carter, for example.

But, like many entrepreneurs, Joe Morrison wasn't ready to rest on his laurels. He had in place around him a core of Otago alumni, a number of investors who were now working for the company and the basis for a pretty successful business. Graeme Burborough, who had initially come on board part-time, joined to become Siliconcoach's general manager in August 2006, leaving Morrison to pursue other related interests.

One of Morrison's first clients, way back when he was doing his master's, was New Zealand Golf, who bought software for coach Mal Tongue to use.

"I've known him for 15 years and soon after he split from New Zealand Golf, at the end of 2005, I was staying with him," recalls Morrison. "We sat down one night and asked ourselves whether the current video-analysis systems were the best approach for the golfing mass market. What was available and was it ideal?"

"I went to bed that night mulling it over, couldn't sleep, got up and wrote a draft business plan – how Mal and other coaches could structure a business out of the knowledge they had about golf. That was the beginning of Cymicon."

Cymicon's core product, explains Morrison, is a state-of-the-art self-directed coaching and analysis system designed for golf training and entertainment facilities worldwide. Golf driving ranges, which proliferate throughout Asia, will be a primary target and, by the end of 2007, having come through the product development stages, Morrison and Tongue had licensed the product to Singapore. Other Asian countries were set to follow with commercial operations due to begin in the autumn of 2008.

All of which keeps Morrison, former house painter, soldier, biomechanist, computer programmer and entrepreneur, a busy man. Not so busy that he can't make time to enjoy the company of his family and the odd game of golf. Nor to reflect on what it takes to stay ahead of the game.

"As an entrepreneur, you need to know when to step away and let other experts in to run the companies," he says. "Having a dream and risking failure is one step, but then gathering world-class people around you to take that dream into a global market is the next."

Simon Cunliffe

Behind the scenes ...

THE WORK AND THE FACILITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO OFFER PLENTY OF EXCITEMENT. HOWEVER, MAKING SURE EVERYONE STAYS SAFE CAN BE JUST AS EXCITING AND PRESENTS MANY INTERESTING CHALLENGES.

WHAT KIND OF PERSON would hang off high buildings, handle hazardous substances, crawl into cramped spaces and check bio-hazardous waste?

Ask the head of the University's new Health and Safety Compliance Unit. Andrea McMillan is as familiar with donning gloves, overalls and gumboots as she is with wading through reams of paperwork.

It's up to McMillan and her team to ensure systems are in place so that everyone – staff, students, contractors and visitors – stays safe and protected from harm. Safety has always been a priority on campus, but the unit has recently been reconfigured to streamline operations, create better synergies and clarify lines of communication.

It comprises 14 full- and part-time staff, backed by a vast network of hundreds of departmental health and safety officers, first-aiders, fire wardens and managers for specialist areas such as radiation and chemical safety, animal welfare and biological containment – the

University of Otago has the largest biological containment facility in New Zealand.

The team's brief is also to prevent the University from getting in a tangle with government guidelines. Staying on top of government regulations is a tall order; staying on top of what's happening around the University is probably harder.

"We try to know what people are up to, and they're usually pretty good at telling us," says McMillan. "You learn quite quickly not to be surprised by anything."

McMillan finds herself saying down the phone, "You're doing what? When? Have you already started?" – and she, or one of her team, is off on a new voyage of discovery into the myriad of exciting things that happen at the University every day.

"Most people think the University is all about libraries and sitting in front of computers all day – and that is right, up to a point – but there is so much more than that. What happens on a day-to-day basis is amazing."

Keeping up with the latest University research as well as new legislative changes is all part of the job. The compliance unit is there to guide people through a minefield of regulations, hopefully without too many detonations.

Twice a year the team collects dangerous chemicals, hazardous wastes that are no longer needed, or are past their use-by date. They gear up in protective clothing and spend a few days racing around campuses in a van, picking up pallet-loads of materials for disposal by a variety of means.

“You see some interesting sights on those days,” says McMillan. “Sometimes there’s weird stuff – old bottles, unknown things we have to try to identify. It all has to be sorted and repacked and redirected for safe disposal.”

Some has to go to Auckland to be dealt with, and some has to be sent abroad as there are no appropriate facilities in New Zealand. Much of it has to be tracked and certified as destroyed.

Members of the public also benefit from the University’s chemical clean-up.

“As laws have changed over the years, some people have been left with chemicals they shouldn’t have,” says McMillan. “They’re supposed to get rid of them, but they don’t know what to do with them – so they contact us.”

This gesture of community service has given rise to an informal competition for the most ancient item. Some containers arrive bearing labels in beautiful copperplate handwriting. So far, the oldest chemical brought in by a member of the public was dated 1948.

The bulk of hazardous material comes from the more than 900 laboratories scattered across the Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington campuses.

Some are mysteries to be solved. “You have to go back to the supplier to find out what to do with what you’ve got, but sometimes the supplier has closed down long ago. In these cases, we are very fortunate to have ready access to a range of experts both in the team and the wider University to help with identification and managing such mysteries.”

Radioactive materials require specialist help from the National Radiation Laboratory. “Legacy radiation sources may have a half-life of many years and be in old machines with technology that has long been superseded. It’s a great

relief to have the NRL come and take responsibility for them.”

Laboratories are only part of the work. The unit’s brief covers the whole University, which equates to a town with some 10,000 staff over a year. Statistics show about one serious accident a month – mainly slips and trips or sporting injuries – and about 12 reported mishaps for each week of the year, so the monitoring for trends is important to focus preventive actions.

Fieldwork is a complex area, often combining isolated locations, chemicals and vehicles. “We’ve been working with a team across campus to develop guidelines to assist with the identifying of hazards and managing the associated risk.”

McMillan knows from personal experience some of the challenges off-campus locations can present. Off the coast of Dunedin, she was monitoring a scientific diving course run by the University when she was stricken by a bout of unprecedented seasickness.

“I was stuck on the boat for the entire 10 hours – you can’t just get off – and I felt terrible.”

Diving is another potentially-hazardous activity strictly controlled by the University, which has its own standards to account for the mix of staff, students and science in a learning environment.

When that environment is the sea, more rules are necessary. The University owns a fleet of boats, 14 under six metres and the flagship, the new offshore research vessel. *Polaris II* is awash with regulations that address the multiple dangers it faces – long trips at sea, on-board laboratories with chemicals, machinery, accommodation, food safety, medical emergencies – the list goes on. Maritime New Zealand is called in to sign off how the University addresses all the multiple hazards of being on board a working sea-going vessel.

Back on land, old roofs and multi-storey buildings mean there’s plenty of height work, and it all needs to be inspected. McMillan has found herself hanging off ropes from roofs, clambering round scaffolding eight storeys up and crawling in confined roof spaces.

Heights do throw up the occasional challenge. One student stunt involved a large pumpkin doing a tiki-tour of

“We’ve been working with a team across campus to develop guidelines to assist with the identifying of hazards and managing the associated risk.”



*Head of the University's Health and Safety Compliance Unit Andrea McMillan:
"You learn quite quickly not to be surprised by anything."*

Otago, with a smashing finale – a death dive from the top of one of the taller buildings on campus.

Responsible students came to McMillan to work out how far away from the landing zone they should erect a safety barrier to protect passers-by and onlookers from being splattered.

Other days see McMillan or one of her team looking at leaks in basements, or putting gumboots to good use when there's a spill to be investigated.

And as for all those computers and libraries – the health and safety team help with those too, providing everything from ergonomic and workstation assessments to advice for staff on how to self-manage their computer time and related activities. The unit's occupational health services also include health monitoring in relation to the work place, such as hearing tests, lung function tests and advice on work-related vaccinations.

Before joining the University in 2001, McMillan worked with Occupational Safety and Health in Wellington and Dunedin, with stints as a health nurse inspector and a National Health Strategy team leader. During this time she has also completed a postgraduate

diploma of Occupational Health Practice, and went on to complete a Master of Health Sciences (OHS) and Master of Nursing. She's spent plenty of time both in the field and at a desk. "I'm very familiar with the legal processes, but I've inspected a lot of different workspaces as well.

"We meet with internal and external agencies, and develop our own codes of practice to include teaching situations where staff and students are involved. We have to meet all the government regulations and cover all other eventualities as well.

"Sometimes the letter of the law is not easily applicable to the University environment, but it's all about us taking responsibility for our students as well as our staff. That's what it's all about and why it's so unique and why it's such an exciting job."

Wherever she goes around the University, McMillan is constantly impressed.

"There are some wonderful things going on. One of the most amazing things about our job is how much people want to get it right and look after staff and students. It's good for us to be able to support them in that."

Nigel Zega

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Stamina for science

THE WORLD OF SCIENCE, IT SEEMS, IS FAR FROM BLACK AND WHITE. ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR VICKY CAMERON EXPLAINS HOW IT IS CHALLENGING AND TOUGH, YET ENORMOUSLY CREATIVE AND REWARDING.

SCIENCE, AT TIMES, can be like running a marathon according to Associate Professor Vicky Cameron, University of Otago, Christchurch. It requires training, dedication, determination and, above all, stamina.

Leading a laboratory as a key member of the Christchurch Cardioendocrine Research Group, serving on a number of international and national research and scientific committees, and being a mother of two teenagers is a demanding and, at times, exhausting business.

“Yes, you have got to have stamina to be a scientist and engage in health research,” she says. “The demands of this job develop a mental toughness, being well organised, particularly if you are managing a laboratory and supervising PhD students, and in charge of major long-running projects.”

Certainly Cameron looks the part. There is an urgency about her character and yet she is always

approachable, willing to share a joke while, at the same time, “getting things done”. There is no doubt she is what could be described as a Type A personality, working in her small, extremely-tidy office, just off her laboratory in Christchurch.

“I’m very competitive – yes, that’s fair enough,” she says with an apologetic smile. “But then science in the 21st century is a competitive world at the top level and you have to be psychologically very, very determined to be able to cope with rejection on a constant basis, with grant funding applications, cope with failure and then come back for more. It’s not for the faint-hearted.”

Ironically, she says these attributes are probably why she was also attracted to mountaineers and mountaineering, and why, at 50, she looks as though she could run a marathon – and still does.

Just recently, though, the pressure has lifted somewhat as she has been appointed to a tenured position after a



30-year career of continuous grant funding. In January she took up one of the newly-established confirmation path research associate professor positions at the University's Christchurch campus.

Her research focuses on the influence of genes on the underlying pathology of heart disease – how gene variants may affect survivability after heart attack and heart failure. She has also recently become involved in a major study into understanding the disparity in cardiovascular mortality between Māori and non-Māori. Together with Suzanne Pitama, of the Māori/Indigenous Health Institute, she has started the Community Heart Study with a five-year project grant from the Health Research Council.

She says that the grant application system in New Zealand is a real roller-coaster ride and can be extremely stressful. “Being grant-funded is a strange psychological situation. You spend weeks writing grant applications, worry about whether you and all the others in your team are going to be funded, then you get funded, you get accolades and then the whole cycle begins again because you have to deliver results.

“Of course, this is not just for yourself. You have to support all the other people in the lab – they have families and mortgages, and there is a huge amount riding on your leadership.”

It was a deep interest in the natural world that attracted Cameron to science in the first place. From as early as her years at school, she was fascinated with animal life and conservation, and completed an honours degree in Zoology at Otago in the 1970s. During that time she also made Antarctic history, albeit not so much in terms of science.

“I was the first woman to live at Scott Base,” she says. “One of my lecturers in the Department of Zoology, Professor Warren Featherston, asked for volunteers to go to Antarctica to study parasites in fish. I jumped at the chance and it was a formative experience for me personally. It was a stunning environment to work in, although life was sometimes difficult and often humorous for a young female student in a male-dominated Scott Base in the mid 1970s.”

Cameron was well aware that how things went that first season would have a significant impact on whether other women could live at the base in future. Nevertheless “the experiment” turned out well, her research was completed and she returned to Scott Base the following summer as a graduate research assistant.

Associate Professor Vicky Cameron: “Science in the 21st century is a competitive world at the top level and you have to be psychologically very, very determined ...”

“Students need teaching, looking after and training in practical science, and shouldn’t be left to their own devices as they don’t have a lot of lab experience. This is all part of the job of a good supervisor and being as accessible as possible.”

By the early 1980s marriage and children became part of the balancing act. This followed a stint in the renal lab at Otago, working with Professor Ailsa Goulding studying bones and kidneys, and then in London as a research assistant at Hammersmith Hospital. Both the renal lab and Hammersmith introduced her to medical research and the possibility of a future career.

Being appointed to the Christchurch research group under Professor Eric Espiner on her return was the first major step in this direction. “I was studying stress hormones under Professor Espiner and was fascinated by the connection between mind and body, in terms of the way that stress, whether psychological or physical, produces a physiological response.”

Three weeks before she had her first child, Cameron handed in her doctoral thesis and then had to face an examination in the new year. Looking back, it was a very demanding time as, not only did she have a new family, but when she came back from postdoctoral study and set up her lab, she had to fund everything – every pipette, every machine and piece of equipment – from grant applications; a kind of part-time science fundraiser.

The next big challenge was a two-year postdoctoral position in San Diego in the early 1990s at the prestigious Salk Institute under Professor Wylie Vale. With two young children, she juggled research and motherhood, but revelled in the large, superbly-equipped laboratory and the productive and co-operative atmosphere generated by Vale’s leadership.

“He was an inspiration in the way he cared for both scientists as people, as well as the research programme. Wylie was always going around the lab talking to staff about their ideas, never locking himself in his office, and that attitude provided many lessons about how the leader of a team of scientists, or any manager for that matter, can

get the best out of people. Social occasions, outside the lab, were also really important for morale.”

Creating a similar research environment, encouraging creative and co-operative thinking, is now very much part of the Cameron approach to science and supporting PhD students. In 2006 she won an OUSA supervisors’ award and has also mentored two postdoctoral fellows.

“I love students!” she says. “Students keep me young; they are so enthusiastic and the world’s their oyster. I also love teaching, talking to people and the intellectual excitement of sharing ideas, helping a young person develop as a scientist. I often forget I’m much older than they are – and older even than their parents!”

She feels strongly that students should not be just seen as a free pair of research hands. “Students need teaching, looking after and training in practical science, and shouldn’t be left to their own devices as they don’t have a lot of lab experience. This is all part of the job of a good supervisor and being as accessible as possible.”

Her days are full. “Being on four major science committees, I don’t watch much TV!” she says. “Most nights I’m working at home on science issues related to the research or committees and, recently, organising the MedSci Conference in Queenstown.

“It’s a science marathon all right, but still fascinating, challenging and a very enjoyable experience! Science is a wonderful life. It’s so creative and there are so many aspects to it. A lot of science and medical research is drawing together disparate lines of information from around the world and making new discoveries. Anyone who is good at medical research has that kind of brain. It’s not just using facts; it’s being able to use what you know creatively and independently to help people.”

Ainslie Talbot

Rugby and the future of New Zealand's national identity

SPORT IS AN INTRIGUING aspect of culture.

Yes, *culture*. We often forget that sport is a fundamental part of our culture and identity: a way human beings communicate who they are and what is important at a particular point in history. Yet, both those who are fanatics and those who despise sport fail to take it seriously. Both tend to see sport as something outside of “culture” – completely different from art, theatre, music and dance.

In actual fact, sport shares much with all of these, but does have some unique characteristics. Sport embodies a greater degree of “reality”; that is, it continually tests the limits of the human body, the pain endured is real and there is an uncertainty of outcome in each performance as opposed to a scripted ending. This might help explain why thousands, and sometimes millions, gather at stadiums, in pubs or around televisions for big events.

But there is one more key element that differentiates sport as an aspect of culture: nationalism and national identity. While there are certainly *national* art galleries, *national* symphonies and *national* ballet troupes, they pale in comparison to sport in terms of widespread visual and auditory public demonstrations of passion, emotion and commitment.

New Zealand, the self-described “great little sporting nation”, knows this very well. There is certainly reason to be proud and to celebrate a range of sporting achievements – though these are going to become increasingly difficult in the future.

We are even beginning to accept that this is true of the national game, rugby. While some deny it, rugby is a defining feature of the nation and its identity. It does not matter whether one ignores or abhors rugby, it is a part of every New Zealander's national identity, for national identities are constructed both *by* us and *for* us.

However, rugby's reified position has undergone considerable change since the 1981 Springbok tour, and lack of success at the 2007 Rugby World Cup, the fourth consecutive “loss”, signals further change. On the positive side, the public expectation was more cautious and the post-event reaction hinted at a new sense of maturity. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for New Zealand's tabloid media and its corral of “rugby experts”, few, if any, of whom predicted the final result yet are not held accountable.

But the real New Zealand rugby story may not be the 2007 Rugby World Cup, or even the 2011 Rugby World Cup, it may be the very survival of the game itself.

Since 1995 and the “strategic partnerships” with Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and global sportswear company, Adidas, the entire context of rugby has changed. The All Blacks have been redefined from a national team to a corporate brand. The haka is now, more than ever, an entertainment commodity and marketing vehicle.

The All Blacks are highly visible media celebrities who are now further distanced from the average Kiwi in terms of annual income and lifestyle. Larger, wealthier nations are able to recruit our top players in the same way New Zealand has been luring away Pacific Islands players for decades. True, player migration is not new, but it is fundamentally different today. It is no longer just older All Blacks hoping to extend their careers and set themselves up financially for the future: now top young players (and coaches) are looking to leave.

But there are even bigger problems for rugby: the commercial sustainability of the NPC is in serious doubt and it is unlikely the Super 14 will survive. On top of that, there are real discrepancies between the revenue generated by Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere test

It does not matter whether one ignores or abhors rugby, it is a part of every New Zealander's national identity, for national identities are constructed both *by* us and *for* us.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Professor Steven Jackson: What is needed is a national strategic plan, not only for rugby, but for every New Zealand “public good”.

matches, to the benefit of the north. Curiously, despite declining attendance and TV viewing numbers, the New Zealand Rugby Union continues to effectively blackmail New Zealand’s “major” rugby cities into constructing ever-greater new stadiums in order to secure test matches.

Something needs to change and change quickly. What is needed is a national strategic plan, not only for rugby, but for every New Zealand “public good”. We need a vision about the organisation of the national game, about how to build sustainable stadiums that are truly multipurpose and used every day by the public that pays for them. Moreover, we need an integrated plan that links issues related to rugby (sport in general), health, education, trade etc.

How can we do this? To start, let’s use the 2011 Rugby World Cup as an opportunity and platform to view the national game as something more than just “sport”. Let’s invite the world to an extraordinary, but Kiwi-flavoured sporting-cultural festival that unites the country by:

- including art, music and related cultural events to coincide with the Rugby World Cup
- hosting an international scientific conference that examines sport: not just high performance athletes, but how smaller nations like New Zealand can adapt in a globalising world
- using the Rugby World Cup as part of a school education programme, ranging from history to geography to social science
- using the Rugby World Cup as a platform to raise awareness about physical activity and health.

In combination, this type of approach might help both those who are fanatics and those who despise rugby to gain a greater appreciation of its power and significance as a part of culture and national identity.

Professor Steven J Jackson

School of Physical Education, University of Otago

Professor Peter Anstey: "The important thing about the discipline of philosophy is that it is symbiotic with other disciplines."

Naming right

A CONVERSATION WITH OTAGO'S PROFESSOR OF
EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY, PETER ANSTEY.

WORDS ARE TRICKY BLIGHTERS. They shape our thinking and influence our perception of the world, merely by giving it structure.

Trickier still, as well as flexing all this semiotic muscle, words change their meanings. They shed old meanings like old coats. And new words come along to dress the old meanings, or give nomenclature to new concepts which have arisen over time.

One of the consequences of this slow migration of meaning is the way it alters our thinking. Our view of the past is inevitably filtered through the prism of contemporary thinking. Such is the direction of my conversation with Professor Peter Anstey who, on the day we meet, ironically, is seated on a chair neatly labelled with his name, as if his place, at least, in this world of inconstant meaning is firmly fixed. As the Chair in Early Modern Philosophy, it suggests, he's here to stay.

Anstey is a world authority on Robert Boyle, who is best known as a 17th century scientist, but whom, Anstey points out, is more correctly called a natural philosopher. Hence the reflection on the trickery of words: the term "scientist" was not used until the mid-19th century, when science as we understand it today was only in its infancy.

"Natural philosophy was a kind of precursor to modern science and was not distinguished from philosophy," explains Anstey. "The science/philosophy distinction was not clear-cut and, what are today regarded as purely scientific questions, were then in the province of philosophy."

The classification of Boyle as an early chemist (or, more correctly, chymist, since the nature of much of his experimentation was more closely allied to the art of

alchemy) for a long time deflected attention from his importance as a natural philosopher – someone who was concerned with explaining all the phenomena of nature – who had strong influence on the likes of Isaac Newton and John Locke.

"When we think of philosophy today we think of it in terms of metaphysics, epistemology, moral and political philosophy, and logic," says Anstey. "The content of all those disciplines existed in the early modern period [17th and 18th centuries], but philosophy was divided up in a different way. The term 'epistemology' was never used, for example, while the term 'metaphysics' had a much wider range.

"So our modern categories are sometimes unhelpful when looking at the past. This reflects the way that language changes, the way that knowledge advances and also the way dominant paradigms are used for understanding the past."

Australian-born Anstey was introduced to philosophy in his undergraduate degree at the University of Sydney where he was attracted to "the power of ideas" and saw the potential to use contemporary analytical tools on historic texts to uncover the origins of the ideas articulated in them. He then went on to complete a PhD on Boyle's "corpuscular philosophy", a term Boyle coined to describe his now-famous theory of matter. Subsequently Anstey has published books on both Boyle and John Locke, as well as numerous articles and chapters on these two figures and other aspects of early modern philosophy.

Among Anstey's current research projects is the development of the case for replacing the distinction between rationalism and empiricism, when referring to the early modern period, with that of speculative and experimental philosophy.

“My claim is that this actual historical distinction, which was almost ubiquitous in the period, is far more helpful in terms of understanding the philosophy and natural philosophy of that time.”

Since taking up his position in June 2006, Anstey has been instrumental in introducing a minor which enables students interested in science, philosophy or history to pursue a minor in the history and philosophy of science. This will include new papers, as well as papers which have always been taught in the Department of Philosophy by colleagues such as Professor Alan Musgrave, a distinguished philosopher of science. The new minor gives Otago science students the opportunity to gain a broader perspective on their chosen field of specialisation.

“Serious scientists tend to know very little about the history of their subjects,” says Musgrave. “Modern scientists probably do not think they have anything to learn from the history of science, but whether they do have anything to learn is another question.”

As Anstey and Musgrave both point out, learning about the development of knowledge helps to inform and improve our present-day understanding, particularly with today’s exponential knowledge proliferation and increasing specialisation. So the role of philosophy, which is concerned with exploring the nature of knowledge itself, remains as valuable as ever.

“The important thing about the discipline of philosophy,” says Anstey, “is that it is symbiotic with other disciplines. It needs other disciplines to live on and other disciplines benefit by its co-existence. As knowledge explodes, there is more work for philosophers, new concepts, new ethical issues, new philosophical problems. It’s an exciting time to be a philosopher, both in terms of contemporary philosophy and in terms of the history of philosophy.”

Anstey points to rapidly evolving fields such as ethics and international law to illustrate the continuing demand for philosophers now and into the future.

“We live in an era in which macro-ethical issues are very important: environmentalism, animal ethics, international relations, notions of nationalism, also politics and international politics. Philosophy can look at the way great philosophers have reflected on, say, the nature of war in the past and ask what constituted a just war in the past? What is the idea of something being just? What are the conditions of a war being just? Then they can look at actual political situations like the war in Iraq and ask, is this particular war a just war?”

Anstey also sees the increasing availability of philosophy through popular books, the media and the

internet as satisfying a drive among people living in an increasingly complex and issues-crowded world to become philosophically literate. And he argues that, in spite of the general lack of appreciation for intellectual heritage which New Zealand seems to share with his native Australia, we “punch above our weight” in producing world-class philosophers such as Otago graduates Emeritus Professor Annette Baier; Graham Oddie, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Colorado at Boulder; and Tim Mulgan, Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy at the University of St Andrews in Scotland.

It’s no surprise, perhaps, that Otago is spawning such philosophical talent. Anstey describes the department he joined as “very cohesive” and, shortly after he arrived, it was assessed the country’s top-rating tertiary research department in the Performance-Based Research Fund evaluation. Anstey has added to the department’s research efforts with another initiative, the Early Modern Thought Cluster, an interdisciplinary research forum which in addition to meeting regularly on campus also holds the annual Otago/Sydney Early Modern Seminar, the inaugural one of which took place in October 2007.

Anstey believes the supportive environment at Otago contributes to his department’s success, support which has been given concrete expression in the establishment of the Chair in Early Modern Philosophy, the only chair of its kind in this region and one of only a few in the world.

The chair is an outcome of the University’s Leading Thinkers initiative, in which funding from the Government’s Partnerships for Excellence framework was matched with endowments from private sector donors to enable the establishment of 27 new projects within the University, including 20 new chairs. By attracting internationally high-calibre scholars, these are in part intended to enrich the University’s overall academic environment. Anstey cites this as tangible evidence of the University’s commitment to investment in intellectual capital, rather than infrastructure.

“It’s exciting to find an institution that really values your field, is prepared to invest in it and sees it as a priority in terms of both teaching and research,” says Anstey. “As a recipient of one of these chairs, it makes you feel as if you are in a team and able to contribute to a programme that’s well-conceived, well-directed and well-resourced. As an academic you can’t ask for much more than that.”

Rebecca Tansley

Just what the doctor ordered



*Dr Kim Chilman-Blair: "I inadvertently stumbled across this huge hole in the market ...
Medicine, as we know it as doctors, is not explained to children."*

**A FICTIONAL PLANET POPULATED BY CARTOON SUPERHEROES
HAS BECOME THE MEANS BY WHICH DR KIM CHILMAN-BLAIR
COMMUNICATES MEDICAL ISSUES TO CHILDREN.**

SOMETIMES SMALL IDEAS with humble beginnings can have far-reaching effects.

Otago graduate Dr Kim Chilman-Blair's simple idea to help sick children has the makings of a business that could help change the world for the better.

As a medical student working at Starship children's hospital in Auckland, Chilman-Blair realised that some kids were terrified of hospitals and everything in them.

Their fears may have been unfounded, but they were genuine, based on ignorance of what happened in hospitals, and little understanding of what was wrong with them and what kind of treatment they might receive.

It didn't matter how successful a doctor's diagnosis might be – if patients didn't understand what was wrong with them and how treatments were supposed to work, then they were at a disadvantage.

Chilman-Blair saw that this could soon translate into failing to comply with follow-up instructions after hospital visits, subsequent poor results from treatments and poorer health all round.

She knew that many medical conditions were hard enough to explain to adults, let alone youngsters, and that many doctors were simply too busy to discuss them in detail. A quick search didn't find any material about medicine designed to appeal to kids in New Zealand or worldwide.

"I inadvertently stumbled across this huge hole in the market," says Chilman-Blair. "There's little enough information for adults and nothing for children. Medicine, as we know it as doctors, is not explained to children."

Chilman-Blair had been helping to fund her studies by working as a medical writer. So she decided to create a series of children's books explaining common conditions and diseases, treatments and medicines in ways that kids could identify with.

If children could understand what was happening, they were far more likely to take more responsibility for getting better – taking the drugs, doing the exercises, following the rules – with benefits for themselves, their families and the health system in general.

Working for a better world is always a challenge, so Chilman-Blair decided to create her own – Mediland, a planet that resembles the human body.

Its population includes five cartoon superheroes, who know different things about different parts of the body, and supporting characters with medical specialities.

The cartoon format is designed for eight- to 12-year-olds, but the information should also appeal to older children and even adults.

"We aim to educate parents too – teaching them through their children."

Different books focus on specific diseases or ailments, describe what is wrong, what can be done to treat them, how that is done and how patients can help in their own recovery.

With input from teams of friends and professionals over the years, Chilman-Blair got the idea off the ground and her Medikidz started to gain momentum. When she won the 2006 NBR Audacious Business Challenge in Dunedin she was on her way.

"Winning gave me a huge boost of confidence and the drive to turn the Medikidz project into a successful business," she says.

It also attracted some philanthropic players such as the Warehouse's Stephen Tindall and Hawkes Bay businessman Andy Lowe, providing contacts, advice and seed funding.

Chilman-Blair is now a doctor at Starship as well as the founder and director of her own company. In 2008 she plans trial releases of a few of her titles in Auckland and in the United Kingdom. She is negotiating with the British

“If the business can, fingers crossed, take off and make enough money, the proceeds can go towards Third World medicine and start up Medikidz clinics. It could take me back to where I started and would complete a whole circle for me.”

National Health Service, but understands she needs to walk before she can run.

“Before any government buys in we have to prove ourselves in the market. Until then I’m just this little girl from New Zealand who’s got a great idea about how to explain medicine to children.”

Even when Chilman-Blair really was a little girl, she had big dreams. On a trip to India with her father when she was 15 they met an Indian doctor who had devoted her life to helping the very poor in the slums, providing medical care for those whom the system had failed.

Chilman-Blair was so inspired that she promised herself that one day she would return to do the same.

“That was when I decided that I wanted to be a doctor because I saw the amazing work that she did and I thought that’s what I really want to do with my life,” she says. “I thought – this is it, I’ve found my calling.”

Things didn’t go quite according to plan. She missed out on entering a medical degree course by the slightest of margins, but she didn’t let that stop her. She took science instead, planning to reapply for medicine as a graduate.

After a healthy Otago student detour into political studies and a brush with feminism, Chilman-Blair emerged with a degree and a postgraduate diploma in pharmacology, attracted by being at the cutting edge of drug design.

She started a PhD on women’s health, harking back to her early Otago women’s studies, but that went on hold when she was accepted into medical school. Now she was back on track to become a doctor in the Third World.

As a doctor, her aim is to specialise as a surgeon. As a businesswoman, she’s studying part-time at Otago for a Masters in Entrepreneurship – “it’s a whole new language and much harder than anything I ever did studying to be a doctor” – and planning to launch the first of 42 currently-written Medikidz titles.

The fledgling business venture has the potential to go worldwide, expanding into CDs, DVDs, the internet, animated films and television.

“If all goes well, once the brand is established you can use it to explain anything that is medically related – not just disease, but in general health – anything that helps the spread of useful information.”

The returns for patients and health systems could be substantial, and that might translate into a handy earner for Chilman-Blair and her team.

Again, the doctor has applied her business brain to the possibilities. She’s aware of the danger of money overshadowing medicine and has planned ahead.

“If the business can, fingers crossed, take off and make enough money, the proceeds can go towards Third World medicine and start up Medikidz clinics. It could take me back to where I started and would complete a whole circle for me.

“I’m at this end at the moment, but my investors know I have an exit strategy. We have agreed that a percentage of the profits will go to the Third World and allow me to go and work there.”

If all goes well, Chilman-Blair’s simple idea could improve children’s health around the world, save national health systems money and time, and help to alleviate suffering among some of the poorest people in Third World countries.

That’s a big dream for anyone, but so far Chilman-Blair and her team seem to be on track.

Nigel Zega

Photo: Bill Nichol



David Scott: "Providing the New Zealand cultural experience is all about people."

A return to hospitality

WHY ARE TOURISTS forsaking international-style hotels in favour of the bed-and-breakfast and boutique lodge?

David Scott (Department of Tourism) believes the new breed of educated traveller wants to engage with the real New Zealand, not a series of plastic experiences pre-ordered from a brochure. A B&B host will not sell his guests a pre-packaged tour; he may mention instead that the Browns are shearing today, or relate his family history over dinner.

"We need to understand and return to the original meaning of hospitality," Scott says. "The traditional roles of guest and host have been transformed into a commercial transaction between buyer and seller. That can preclude opportunities for socialisation into the local culture."

Also, it challenges the idea of *manaakitanga*, a Māori cultural concept incorporating hospitality seen as a cornerstone of sustainable international tourism in New Zealand.

Some travellers prefer the security and standardisation of a large hotel. Real cultural experiences can still occur if both staff and tourists understand the "rules" of hospitality, including the roles of host and guest.

"Providing the New Zealand cultural experience is all about people. We need to give staff a voice, to employ and value them as story-tellers. In essence, they become cultural brokers."

Scott's current research links these aspects of hospitality to *manaakitanga* and the space of the hotel as "home and away". His summer was spent observing English tourists in their role as hotel guests/consumers. During the second stage he will visit them at home to observe their role as hosts.

Photo: Ross Coombes



Professor Doug Sellman: "What we're doing is putting alcohol into perspective ... and raising issues about evidence-based criteria for assessment."

Alcohol a high-risk drug?

FOR THOUSANDS of years ethanol, or alcohol as it is more commonly known, has been used as a recreational drug in most cultures. In New Zealand it is legal, it is advertised and it can be purchased from the age of 18.

Now researchers from the National Addiction Centre (NAC), Christchurch, and the Medical Research Institute, Wellington, have carried out an analysis which suggests ethanol would probably be classified as a B1 (high risk) drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1975) if the same standards were applied to it as other drugs.

"We're not suggesting that alcohol should be prohibited," says the director of the NAC, Professor Doug Sellman. "What we're doing is putting alcohol into perspective, in relation to prohibited recreational drugs, and raising issues about evidence-based criteria for assessment."

Sellman and his Wellington colleagues compared ethanol with another liquid sedative drug, gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB), commonly called Fantasy, which has previously been scheduled as a class B1 (high risk) drug under the Act.

Using the six criteria for classification under the Misuse of Drugs Act, they found that the danger and risk to public health of alcohol is at least at the level of GHB and, in fact, could be argued to be a somewhat more dangerous drug than GHB, or Fantasy, in an overall perspective.

Sellman says the results of this research highlight the limitations of the drug classification undertaken in New Zealand and other Western countries when alcohol and tobacco, the drugs we know most about, are excluded from consideration.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Dr Claudine Stirling: "Based on the current uranium-lead chronometer, it appears the solar system evolved very rapidly, but this research may change that view ..."

Supernova explosion or colliding cosmic clouds?

SCIENTISTS GENERALLY agree that our solar system's origins go back 4.5672 billion years – give or take a few million years – when the gravitational collapse of a giant molecular cloud of dust and gas began to form the first objects.

But the big debate orbits around what triggered the collapse. Was it shock waves from a nearby exploding supernova? Or was it the collision of two giant molecular clouds?

Dr Claudine Stirling (Chemistry) says the key to this mystery may lie in uranium isotopes found in meteorites spawned during that time.

A grant from the Marsden Fund will allow her to examine the uranium's isotopic signatures for important clues to their origin and the timeline of events.

One of the most widely utilised measurement systems for unravelling the origin of the solar system has been the uranium-lead chronometer which measures the changing ratio between the two elements over time.

Stirling's work will also test the accuracy of that system. "Based on the current uranium-lead chronometer, it appears the solar system evolved very rapidly, but this research may change that view if the chronometer is found to be inaccurate for some key samples."

Stirling says this sort of work has only become possible fairly recently because of a new, more sophisticated type of mass spectrometer that allows researchers to measure uranium with far higher levels of precision.

"I used one in Switzerland before coming to Otago two years ago, but we now have the same instrumentation here. There are only two of them in New Zealand."

Photo: Bill Nichol



Professor Richie Poulton: Breastfed children with the "C" version of the FADS2 gene had higher IQ scores than those who were not breastfed.

Nature AND nurture

GROUND-BREAKING RESEARCH from the long-running Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study has shown that breastfeeding, together with the right combination of genes, can have a positive effect on IQ.

Study director Professor Richie Poulton says previous research has shown that some, but not all, breastfed children have higher IQ scores than non-breastfed children. New research undertaken with international collaborators now shows this anomaly appears to be caused by the gene FADS2.

This gene is inherited from both the mother and father, and has two versions: "C" and "G". Children inherit either two "C" versions, one each of "C" and "G", or two "G" versions.

The "C" version of the FADS2 gene is associated with more efficient processing of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids in breast milk. This may help brain development and function, although the exact link is not yet known.

Researchers followed two groups of people: the 1000 Dunedin-born study members and 2200 British children born in 1994 – 95, and ruled out other possible explanations such as socio-economic status and birth weight. They found that children with the "C" version of the gene averaged slightly higher IQ scores (about six to seven points) when breastfed as babies than those who were not breastfed.

Breastfeeding had no effect on children with two "G" versions of the gene and their IQ was still in the normal range.

Poulton says this shows that the argument is not nature versus nurture anymore. "We're finding that nature and nurture actually work together to produce health outcomes."



Photo: Bill Nichol

Associate Professor Julian Eaton-Rye: His research focuses on photosystem II, a protein complex which uses sunlight to provide the energy to split water into hydrogen ions, electrons and oxygen.

Making H while the sun shines

FINDING A WAY to use solar energy to extract hydrogen from water may seem fanciful, but a group of Otago biochemists are doing their bit to fulfil Jules Verne's prediction that "water will be the coal of the future".

Associate Professor Julian Eaton-Rye is particularly interested in photosystem II – a protein complex found in plants, algae and cyanobacteria – which uses sunlight to provide the energy to split water into hydrogen ions, electrons and oxygen.

But one of the problems that has to be overcome with most solar-converting devices is the damage they suffer from light energy, which means they are not very long-lasting or economic.

"The biological system has the same problem," says Eaton-Rye. "It is handling high-energy sunlight and the molecules do get damaged in the process, but it is a biological system that has developed to repair the damage."

He says they have been focusing, in particular, on how the photosystem II protein complex is disassembled and reassembled when damaged protein is removed and replaced.

"If you can understand the biological repair system, you may have the ability to incorporate this knowledge into synthetic systems and the molecules might have the ability to repair themselves based on the biological model, prolonging the lifetime of the energy-converting device."

Eaton-Rye says understanding these processes will also have wider applications in other areas of biochemistry as well as biomedical research because comparatively little is known about assembly of cell-membrane proteins.



Photo: Alan Dove

Professor Amanda Barusch: The elderly appear to be just as susceptible to romantic infatuations as teenagers.

Never too old for romance

ROMANCE IN later life remains one of few social taboos left in our liberated world, even more than sex between consenting elderly partners.

That was just one of many striking revelations gerontologist Professor Amanda Barusch uncovered in five years of research into her seventh book, *Love Stories of Later Life*, to be released this year.

The book is based on 110 in-depth interviews of Americans from a diverse range of backgrounds, followed up by an internet survey of more than 1000 participants.

Romance in later life is a neglected area of research, Barusch says, because gerontologists tend not to study love and love researchers tend not to study the elderly. One of the biggest surprises of her work is that the elderly appear to be just as susceptible to romantic infatuations as teenagers.

"But infatuation doesn't last," says Barusch, who was recently appointed head of the Department of Social Work and Community Development at the University of Otago. Infatuations are common, widespread and can enrich our lives, but they can also be very destructive, breaking hearts and ruining committed relationships.

Computer dating is another minefield for the old and young alike, she says. The internet creates its own illusions that people and relationships are replaceable. Lonely hearts may get to know potential partners cognitively through the internet before any physical relationship, which can lead to huge disappointment.

People are also living longer, which places greater pressures on relationships, and the elderly are now looking for more creative alternatives to marriage.

Photo: Bill Nichol



Associate Professor Juergen Gnoth: His research showed very few tourism operators had a marketing plan or engaged in industry networking during the America's Cup.

Better effort required ...

AUCKLAND'S TOURISM operators need to lift their game before the 2011 Rugby World Cup according to Associate Professor Juergen Gnoth (Marketing).

Gnoth makes this claim after researching operators' activities during the America's Cup held in Auckland in 2003. A survey of 100 randomly-chosen tourism businesses showed that only about one fifth of the sample had a marketing plan for the cup, disappointingly few engaged in industry networking, and even fewer entered into strategic alliances, designed special packages or offered joint promotions.

Gnoth explains that networking provides small- and medium-sized businesses with added resources. Industry associations can be of particular value, functioning as the "neutral" mediator between competing firms, but also supplying services and research which individual businesses cannot otherwise afford.

"There appeared to be a lack of understanding of the true opportunities these associations can offer, as well as a lack of initiative and marketing skills. Those who made better use of their industry organisations and networking did better financially than those who didn't."

He says this raises a number of issues. Firstly, industry organisations need to be more active, advocating networking and other marketing strategies, providing information and education.

Secondly, the taxpayer deserves a better deal. "Businesses are doing just enough to get by on their own terms, so the taxpayer may well ask why he or she should put up with contributing to events such as yachting or rugby cups – events that bring customers to the tourism industry – if the most directly implicated beneficiaries do not do more to increase the return for everybody."

Photo: Bill Nichol



Professor Charlotte Paul: "It [citizens' jury] seems a really good way of engaging the public, particularly in issues where experts and advocacy groups disagree."

Citizens have a say

CITIZENS' JURIES could be used to guide health-policy makers, according to a trial by the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine.

Professor Charlotte Paul says they were interested in the controversial issue of whether mammography screening should be made available to women aged 40 – 49. Screening is currently funded for women aged 45 – 69 years. Its effectiveness in reducing deaths from breast cancer is established for women aged 50 or older.

"We chose this issue because the benefits are not as clear as they appear on the surface, and the benefits and risks are not easy to explain."

The study was conducted with Master of Public Health student Rachel Nicholls and colleagues Rob McGee and Patricia Priest. A randomly-selected jury of 11 women was presented with evidence from expert witnesses with differing views and debated it over two days.

"We asked the women beforehand whether they felt mammography screening for women under 50 should be publicly funded and they all said yes. By the end, all but one had changed their mind.

"They said that beforehand the benefits seemed more clear-cut with fewer harms. At the end of it they could see the benefits were small, and possibly uncertain, and there were very real harms."

Paul says the trial suggests a deliberative citizens' jury approach is a feasible way of eliciting a well-informed, considered, community view about screening, or other population health initiatives.

"It seems a really good way of engaging the public, particularly in issues where experts and advocacy groups disagree."



Photo: Bill Nichol

Dr Rachel Zajac: "... the rate of false identifications was dramatically reduced, but, importantly, the rate of accurate identification stayed the same."

Wild Card

WHEN A WITNESS to a crime points to a photo in a police line-up and cries, "That's him!" he, or she, may be wrong, with tragic consequences. Mistaken identification is the leading cause of all wrongful convictions identified to date.

Dr Rachel Zajac, of the Department of Psychology, has devised an astoundingly simple tool which reduces false identification by child witnesses, who are particularly prone to it. The Wild Card, a photo depicting a silhouetted figure with a question mark superimposed, can be inserted into photographic line-ups to help children to indicate that the perpetrator isn't there.

Children are often reluctant to verbally reject a line-up. "Just presenting them with a group of photos implies that one of those photos is the right one," Zajac says. "They want to choose someone, so we gave them something to choose. Suddenly, the rate of false identifications was dramatically reduced, but, importantly, the rate of accurate identification stayed the same."

Zajac has found the police very receptive to ideas that would improve their practice. "This research straddles the boundary between science and real life. The Wild Card has the potential to prevent wrongful convictions and you can't really put a price on that. It's an amazing thing to play a part in."

A Marsden Fund Fast Start grant will allow further investigation. How does the Wild Card work? Is it effective with adult witnesses, with identification targets other than people – cars, for instance – and after long delays?



Photo: Ken George

Dr George Thomson and Dr Nick Wilson: "We analysed 514 car advertisements ... over a five-year period and found that safety information was relatively uncommon."

Car ads ignore safety

A STUDY by public health researchers at the University of Otago, Wellington, led by Dr Nick Wilson, has shown that car safety information loses out to an emphasis on speed and power in car advertisements in New Zealand. The research has been published in the international journal *Injury Prevention*.

"We analysed 514 car advertisements in *Metro* and *North and South* magazines over a five-year period and found that safety information was relatively uncommon," says Wilson.

"Only 27 per cent of the ads mentioned one or more of nine key safety features and, even in that 27 per cent, on average less than two safety features were mentioned. Manufacturers' websites, however, do include more safety data."

In contrast, the researchers found 39 per cent of the car advertisements included potentially-hazardous information which breached the spirit, if not the letter, of the voluntary New Zealand code for motor vehicle advertising. Hazardous speed imagery featured in 29 per cent of advertisements and power references in 14 per cent.

The study raises serious questions, from a safety perspective, about the control of vehicle advertising in New Zealand. Researchers say the public needs more detailed information about safety and safety features, which the industry is failing to supply through advertising.

They conclude there is a case for government regulation of vehicle advertising to improve public health, to ensure a greater emphasis on vehicle safety features. Regulations also need to control potentially-hazardous content of advertisements, such as speed imagery.

Photo: Alan Dove



Dr Angela Wanhalla: She has received a Marsden Fund grant to study inter-racial marriage and intimacy in New Zealand.

Research a personal journey

HISTORICAL RESEARCH becomes a lot more meaningful when the researcher has a personal connection to that history.

That is a strong motivator for University of Otago history lecturer Dr Angela Wanhalla, a descendant of a famous Otago whaler, Captain Edwin Palmer, who married into an important Ngai Tāhu family to secure strategic land and kinship ties to Māori in the early European settlement of the southern coast.

Her doctorate reconstructed an inter-racial community of 150 – 170 people around the little-known Taieri Native Reserve between the 1830s and 1940s, with a particular focus on inter-racial marriage between the two cultures.

Wanhalla has received a two-year Marsden Fund grant to study inter-racial marriage and intimacy spanning two centuries of New Zealand's history. One outcome of this funding will be to expand her PhD thesis into a book exploring the broader impact of inter-racial relationships between a number of ethnic groups.

Her research will contribute to scholarship on family and community, race relations and Māori history during the colonial period. Having her thesis published is her way of “giving something back” to helpful contacts she met who were excited about her work.

The book, due to be published early in 2009, is dedicated to her late father, who died two years ago and was intimately involved in her studies.

“He became much more confident about his Māori identity through the process of me doing my PhD, so I'm doing it for him as a way of celebrating his memory.”

Photo: Alan Dove



Professor Tony Binns: He and his team are investigating urban agriculture and the role it is playing in Sierra Leone's economic revival.

UK grant for work in Africa

MEMBERS OF Otago's Poverty, Inequality and Development research cluster have been awarded a British research grant to help in the reconstruction of Sierra Leone. Ranked as the second poorest country in the world, Sierra Leone is struggling to recover from the disintegration of democracy and war that forced a massive dislocation of people during the 1990s.

Before the war ended in 2000, thousands of people fled armed rebels and sought the safety of United Nations' refugee camps around Freetown, the capital city.

Refugees are gradually returning to rural areas, but a new phenomenon has emerged in Freetown, which now has a population of more than one million people. Urban agriculture is flourishing, with desperate farmers growing crops to feed their families and selling surpluses in the markets in a spontaneous act of survival.

Professor Tony Binns (Geography) has an international reputation for his expertise in Third World development and has close links with academic contacts in Sierra Leone, where he undertook his PhD research on the relationship between diamond mining and rural development.

The British Government has awarded Binns and his team a \$NZ240,000 grant for a three-year international project to shed some light on urban agriculture and the role it is playing in the country's economic revival.

“There's been virtually nothing done on this so far and the first thing we have to do is produce maps showing where people are growing crops,” Binns says. Postdoctoral fellow Dr Alec Thornton will take the lead in the mapping process.

Otago honours Irish President

OTAGO CONFERRED an honorary doctorate on the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, during her visit to the University in October.

The Honorary Doctor of Laws was conferred at a special ceremony in Marama Hall, which included a performance by an Irish bagpipe player.

Vice-Chancellor Professor David Skegg says President McAleese's visit was a tangible symbol of the strong relationship that the University of Otago aims to build with Irish universities in the years ahead, and her achievements as a legal academic and as a national and international leader made her a thoroughly deserving recipient of the degree.

These achievements include holding a chair in Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology at Trinity College Dublin and the directorship of the Institute of Professional Legal Studies at the Queen's University of Belfast, where she went on to become Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the first woman to hold this position.

In 1997 she was the first person born in Northern Ireland to become President of Ireland and, as a mark of her performance, she was re-elected unopposed for a second term in 2004.

In her graduation address, President McAleese praised the University of Otago's establishment of the Eamon Cleary Chair of Irish Studies. She said it would add a vital new layer of scholarly access, research and curiosity which will be yet another bridge between Ireland and New Zealand.

She noted that the University's Irish Studies programme was the only such undergraduate programme in New Zealand, and said it offered students a marvellous opportunity to explore the Irish heritage of New Zealand and to learn more about Ireland.



Irish President Mary McAleese shares a light-hearted moment with Vice-Chancellor Professor David Skegg (left) and Chancellor Lindsay Brown.



Photographed at the launch of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies were: back row (from left) Chris Barfoot (trustee), the Prime Minister Helen Clark, Professor Margaret Bedgood (trustee), Professor David Skegg; front row (from left) Dorothy Brown (trustee), Maui Solomon (trustee, Hokotehi Moriori Trust).

National Peace Studies Centre launched

A NATIONAL CENTRE for Peace and Conflict Studies, based at the University, was launched by the Prime Minister, the Right Honorable Helen Clark, in October.

The centre will initially consist of a Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies, several associates drawn from academic departments and an international advisory board comprising experts in the field.

The professorial chair is being established through a \$1.25 million donation by the Aotearoa New Zealand Peace and Conflict Studies Centre Trust. As a Leading Thinkers initiative, the gift is being matched under the Government's Partnerships for Excellence programme.

The centre will provide advanced-level short courses and training for government and non-government organisations engaged in peace-keeping, peace-building, development activities, humanitarian intervention and work in conflict situations. It will work to enhance individual and collective capacities to understand and manage disputes, work against violence and build sustainable peace at local, national and international levels.

Trust member Chris Barfoot says that the endowment of the professorship is just the beginning. "The University and the Trust are committed to expansion of the centre and, for this purpose, will be seeking significant donations for the endowment of further research and teaching positions."

It will be based at the Dunedin campus, but be national in its focus, with a significant presence in Auckland.

Lifecourse research centre

THE UNIVERSITY has established a new nationwide research centre that will put New Zealanders' lives, from cradle to grave, under the microscope.

The National Centre for Lifecourse Research (NCLR) was officially launched at a function at Parliament in November.

Centre co-director Professor Richie Poulton says that lifecourse research is an excellent way of studying how and why people turn out the way they do, and their impacts on society.

Poulton says it essentially entails following groups of people throughout their lives and looking at physical health, mental health, development, relationships, family and a range of social outcomes.

The data gathered from lifecourse research is second to none in terms of its breadth and depth, he says.

The centre will have two main aims:

- translating academic research into accessible forms
- producing new research that is directly relevant to New Zealand people and policy.

While the new centre is based within the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit, it is very much a national collaborative venture.

A key partner is the University's Christchurch Health and Development Study. Other partners include researchers from AUT, Auckland, Victoria and Waikato universities and the Crown Research Institute ESR.

Future research initiatives include projects focusing on national identity and ageing in New Zealand.

New paediatric research chair

THE UNIVERSITY has now established a professorial chair in paediatric research at the Christchurch campus, thanks to a donation from the charity Cure Kids.

Cure Kids' \$1 million gift has been made through the University's Leading Thinkers programme, and is being matched under the Government's Partnerships for Excellence scheme.

Head of the Christchurch Department of Paediatrics Professor Brian Darlow is the first holder of the Cure Kids Chair in Paediatric Research.

Vice-Chancellor Professor David Skegg says the establishment of the chair endorses the outstanding work undertaken by Otago's Christchurch-based paediatric researchers. "Professor Darlow and his colleagues are doing world-class research in child health. Cure Kids has recognised this excellence and its generosity will enhance the team's capability."

Darlow's primary research interest is in neonatology – the medical field concerned with the care of newborn, sick and premature babies – but specifically free-radical disease in the newborn and the longer-term outcomes of premature births.

Cure Kids Chairman Roy Austin says the charity wants to build long-term research capacity and excellence in New Zealand for the sake of our children.

Accordingly, the chair will be funded in perpetuity and has the flexibility to be based at either the Christchurch or Wellington campuses, Austin says.

2008 Arts Fellows

OTAGO'S ARTS FELLOWS for 2008 are Sue Wootton, Heather Straka, Christopher Watson and Barbara Snook.

Sue Wootton, a Dunedin poet and fiction writer, is the Robert Burns Fellow. She will use her tenure to produce a third collection of her poetry and her first collection of short stories. Her works will be influenced by several themes, including place and landscape.

Auckland painter Heather Straka is the Frances Hodgkins Fellow. Straka plans to work with the University's Dunedin School of Medicine on a project looking at the history of dissection and the human body in the Renaissance.

The Mozart Fellow is Christopher Watson. Watson intends to use the Fellowship to compose several works, including a duo for percussion and violin that will premiere in the Netherlands next year, a chamber opera based on the Wairau Affray, a major new work for orchestra and a duo for flute and piano.

The Caroline Plummer Fellow is former Dunedin resident Barbara Snook. Snook is currently chair of the Brisbane North Dance Panel. She plans to work on a project focused on the community around cancer sufferers. It will encompass cancer sufferers, carers, medical practitioners, family members, cancer societies and friends.

Lotteries funding boosts research

UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS have gained around \$3.5 million in grants from the Lottery Grants Board to pursue research which will improve the health status of New Zealanders.

More than 40 grants for new or ongoing health research projects and shared research equipment have been won by staff at the University's campuses in Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington.

The researchers gained more than half of the \$6.17 million available nationally for projects and equipment. Health and biomedical science topics being investigated range from

drug use in the elderly, to the genetics of gout in Māori, to reversing the effects of diabetes on the kidney.

A PhD student in the University's Department of Microbiology and Immunology also gained a scholarship through the round.

University and Ngai Tāhu re-sign MoU

THE UNIVERSITY and Ngai Tāhu have reaffirmed their relationship by resigning an updated Memorandum of Understanding in November.

The original memorandum was signed in 2000.

Te Runanga o Ngai Tāhu Kaiwhakahaere (Chairman) Mark Solomon says Ngai Tāhu recognised the critical role education played in the future of its people and he is pleased to be building on the positive relationship.

University Chancellor Lindsay Brown said, at a ceremony to honour the occasion, that the signing was significant to the University, which last year approved its Māori Strategic Framework.

"The framework has been received with enthusiasm by the University community. And our relationships with Ngai Tāhu are a cornerstone aspect of it."

Protein technology grant

OTAGO RESEARCHERS have gained major funding to develop technology that could significantly boost efforts to discover new drugs to treat disease.

The Foundation for Research, Science and Technology's International Investment Opportunity Fund has granted the researchers \$1.75 million over three years to develop a new membrane protein expression technology platform.

The work builds on world-leading fungal protein research led by Professor Richard Cannon. Group members include Department of Oral Sciences colleagues Dr Kyoko Niimi, Dr Erwin Lamping and Dr Brian Monk.

Cannon's team will use the funding to generate fundamental knowledge of membrane proteins, and a Pacific Rim partnership with researchers in Japan and the United States. It will also underpin the spin-out of a biotechnology company.

Court of Benefactors

THE UNIVERSITY held the inaugural meeting of its Court of Benefactors on 17 December 2007. The University Council decided in 2006 to establish this body, following the example of several overseas universities – including Oxford, in particular.

This initiative will bring together the most significant benefactors of the University. The purposes of the court are to ensure that major donors are kept abreast of developments in the University and to seek their advice about strategic issues.

At its meeting in the Council Chamber, the group enjoyed brief presentations from two professors holding Leading Thinkers chairs. There then followed a lively discussion about a number of issues faced by the University, including the question of whether or not to place further limits on student numbers. Members of the Court and their partners later attended a dinner at the University Lodge.

Vice-Chancellor David Skegg said that the meeting was a most enjoyable occasion, and that several valuable ideas and suggestions emerged from the discussions. It is expected that the Court of Benefactors will meet annually.

Appointments

Professor **Majella Franzmann** as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Humanities).

Professor **Peter Crampton** as Dean and Head of Campus at the University of Otago, Wellington.

Professor **Douglas Booth** as Dean of the School of Physical Education.

Professor **Brent Hall** as Dean of the School of Surveying.

Professor **Neil Gemmell** to the AgResearch Chair in Reproduction and Genomics.

Professor **Jean Fleming** as a Professor in the University's new Centre for Science Communication.

Associate Professor **Judy Bennett** (History) has been elected as the new academic staff representative on the University Council.

Professorial promotions

The following staff have been promoted to professor: **Dave Crow** (Geology); **Kevin Dawkins** (Faculty of Law); **Henry Johnson** (Music) and **Kelvin Lynn** (Medicine, University of Otago, Christchurch) who becomes a clinical professor.

Obituaries

Emeritus Professor **James (Jim) Hood** (BSc 1962, BDS 1965, MDS 1968) (69). Former Deputy Dean, School of Dentistry (1994 – 2006) and noted dental tissues and materials researcher.

Thomas Kay Stuart Sidey (LLB 1931, LLM (Hons) 1932, HonLLD 1978) (99). Former University Chancellor (1970 – 76), Pro-Chancellor (1959 – 70) and member of the University Council from 1947 – 83.

Dr Hone Tuwhare (85), Poet, University of Otago Burns Fellow in 1969 and 1974, awarded an Honorary Doctor of Literature by the University of Otago in 1998.

Achievements

Professor **Philippa Howden-Chapman** (University of Otago, Wellington) won the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority's EnergySmart Outstanding Contribution to Sustainable Energy Award for her research into the health benefits of house insulation.

Professor **Ailsa Goulding** (Medical and Surgical Sciences) received the New Zealand Association of Scientists' Marsden Medal for her outstanding contributions to health research.

Associate Professor **Philip Bagshaw** (University of Otago, Christchurch) was named the 2007 New Zealander of the Year by *North and South* Magazine for his work in establishing Canterbury's Charity Hospital.

Professor **Brett Delahunt** (University of Otago, Wellington) has become the first New Zealander to be elected President of the Australasian Division of the International Academy of Pathology.

At the recent Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education (LIME) awards in Sydney, Associate Professor **John Broughton** (Ngai Tāhu Māori Health Research Unit) received a LIMELight Leadership Award for outstanding leadership by an individual, while co-director of the University's Māori/Indigenous Health Institute **Suzanne Pitama** won an award for Leading Innovation and Curriculum Implementation.

Dr **Mike Boyes** (Physical Education) won the Sport and Recreation New Zealand Supreme Award at the annual Outdoor Excellence Awards for his contribution to outdoor recreation and education in New Zealand.

Dr **Peter Dearden** (Biochemistry) received the University's 2007 Rowheath Trust Award and Carl Smith Medal for outstanding research performance by an early-career staff member.

Tony Zaharic (Biochemistry) was named OUSA Teacher of the Year, while Dr **Jamin Halberstadt** (Psychology) was named OUSA Supervisor of the Year.

Fellowships/Scholarships

Four eminent Otago academics achieved the distinction of being elected Fellows of the Royal Society of New Zealand: Professor **Sally Brooker** (Chemistry), Emeritus Professor **James Flynn** (Political Studies), Professor **Allan Herbison** (Physiology) and Professor **Clive Ronson** (Microbiology and Immunology).

Four new honorary Fellows of the Hocken Library were named as part of its centenary celebrations. They

are University historians Dr **Dorothy Page**, Emeritus Professor **Erik Olssen** and Dr **Roger Collins**, and Dunedin businessman **Ian Farquhar**.

Professor **David Fergusson** (University of Otago, Christchurch) was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians for his work with the Christchurch Health and Development Study.

Professor **John Smillie** (Law) has been elected as an Inaugural Fellow of the New Zealand Academy of the Humanities.

Dr **Rebecca Roberts** (University of Otago, Christchurch) gained a Sir Charles Hercus Health Research Fellowship to investigate the genetics of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

Deidre Cleland and **Reed Roberts**, currently studying towards BSc (Hons) in Chemistry, were awarded 2008 Woolf Fisher Scholarships to undertake PhD study at Cambridge University.

Honorary doctorates

Opera singer **Patricia Payne**, historian and surgeon Dr **John Hall-Jones**, pathologist Emeritus Professor **John Gavin** and virologist Dr **Robert Webster** were awarded honorary doctorates at the University's December graduation ceremonies. Her Excellency **Mary McAleese**, President of Ireland, was also awarded an HonLLD at an earlier ceremony (see page 38).

New Year Honours

Appointment to Distinguished Companion to the New Zealand Order of Merit (DCNZM): Professor **Peter Gluckman** (MB ChB 1971) for services to medicine.

Appointment to Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM): Dr **Sun Chau** (MB ChB 1961) for services to medicine and the community; **Louise Croot** (DipTchg Dunedin College of Education 1961, BA 1962, DipGrad 1998) for services to health and the community; **Arthur Klap** (BSc 1973) for services to sport and recreation; **Trevor Scott** (BCom 1963) for services to business and the community; Dr **Heather Thomson** (MB ChB 1955) for services to medicine and the community.

Appointment to Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM): Dr **Murray McDonald** (MB ChB 1952) for services to medicine; **Shimrath Paul** (MBA 1990) for services to museum administration.

Awarded the Queen's Service Medal: Dr **Jill Calveley** (MB ChB 1966) for services to people with disabilities; **John Eagles** (LLB 1968) for services to the community; **Murray Moore** (BA 1963) for services to education and the community; Dr **Antonio Noblejas** (DPM 1977) for services to the Filipino community.



Facing the Music: Charles Baeyeretz and *The Triad*

Joanna Woods, March 2008

A BIOGRAPHY of the founder and editor of the *Triad*, New Zealand's first longstanding cultural magazine. Founded in 1893 and running into the late 1920s, the magazine offered well-informed coverage of cultural activities in New Zealand, Australia and internationally in a broad mix of critical and original writing. Notoriously outspoken, Baeyeretz was feared and respected as a critic. His music criticism was particularly intelligent and rigorous, making no concessions to personality or amateur or professional status. His later co-editor, the self-styled "decadent" Frank Morton, was equally candid. This engaging biography throws new light on a long-neglected period of New Zealand's cultural past.

Joanna Woods has a PhD from Moscow State University and is the author of *Katerina: The Russian World of Katherine Mansfield* (Penguin 2001). In 2005, she was the National Library Fellow, when most of the research for this book was done. She lives in Wellington.



Understanding Health Inequalities in Aotearoa New Zealand

Kevin Dew and Anna Matheson (editors), March 2008

QUICK-FIX SOLUTIONS to health inequalities are unlikely to be found in complex modern societies. Class or socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity and physical location all play their part in determining our chances of maintaining good health and securing good health care. This wide-ranging discussion by community leaders and workers, policy-makers and implementers, epidemiologists, public health researchers, economists, sociologists, an historian and medical professionals addresses how health inequalities arise, and provides ways of understanding and resolving them.

Kevin Dew is an associate professor in the Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington. Anna Matheson is a PhD student in the Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington.



Tarara: The Cultural Politics of Croat and Māori Identity in New Zealand

Senka Bozic-Vrbancic, February 2008

DRAWING ON a range of sources, from official historical narratives on the kauri gum industry, to Croatian and Māori oral histories, novels, letters, photos, newspaper articles, marriage certificates and more, Bozic-Vrbancic examines Māori-Croatian relationships on the gumfields and beyond. This is an important discussion of the impact of different social models – such as colonialism, assimilation, biculturalism and multiculturalism – on Māori and Croatian memories and identities, and a significant contribution to theories of migration and displacement. The book is heavily illustrated with historical photographs from the Māori/Croat communities.

Senka Bozic-Vrbancic is the McArthur Research Fellow in the School of Social and Environmental Enquiry at the University of Melbourne.



Ants of New Zealand

Warwick Don, December 2007

WRITTEN OVER many years by the acknowledged expert on the subject, this is the first book on New Zealand ants. Identifying and describing both native and exotic species, it is illustrated throughout with diagrams and photographs, in colour and black and white. Notes on the identification and collection of ants are included. This publication will be welcomed by anyone interested in the natural history of New Zealand and entomologists, and myrmecologists in particular.

Warwick Don is an honorary curator at the Otago Museum, having retired from the Department of Zoology, University of Otago.

Recent Otago University Press titles

A Southern Architecture: The Work of Ted McCoy, by Ted McCoy with an introduction by Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins.

Working on the Edge: A Portrait of Business in Dunedin, edited by Kerr Inkson, Victoria Browning, Jodyanne Kirkwood.

Landfall 214 Open House, edited by Jack Ross.

Kā Taoka Hākena: Treasures from the Hocken Collections, edited by Stuart Strachan and Linda Tyler.

Indian Settlers: The Story of a New Zealand South Asian Community, by Jacqueline Leckie.

For further information
email university.press@otago.ac.nz
or visit www.otago.ac.nz/press

Recently published books of Otago alumni

The Wild Green Yonder: Ten Seasons Volunteering on New Zealand's Organic Farms, by Philippa Jamieson, New Holland Publishers, Auckland, 2007.

Ribbons of Grace, by Maxine Alterio, Penguin Books, NZ.

Association Mapping in Plants, edited by Nnadozie C Oraguzie, Erik H A Rikkerink, Susan E Gardiner and H Nihal de Silva, Springer, New York, 2007.

New Ireland: Art of the South Pacific, edited by Michael Gunn and Philippe Peltier, 5 Continents Editions (Milan).

Johannes Brahms und Klaus Groth: Die Biographie einer Freundschaft, by Peter Russell, Boyens (Heide, Germany), 2007.

Once Were Warriors: The Aftermath. The Controversy of OWW in Aotearoa New Zealand, by Emiel Martens, Aksant Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, 2007.

On the Wings of Mercury: The Lorraine Moller Story, by Lorraine Moller, Longacre Press, 2007.

Racing: A History of Motorsport in New Zealand, by Ross MacKay, Whitcoulls, Random House, 2007.

Archie's Adventures, by Leonie Thorpe, HarperCollins, 2007.

Jack Lovelock: Athlete and Doctor, by Dr Graeme Woodfield, Trio Books, Wellington, 2007.

Chemistry, by Allan Blackman, Bottle, Schmid, Mocerino and Wille, John Wiley and Sons.

Mr Allbones' Ferrets, by Fiona Farrell, Random House, 2007.

The Pop-Up Book of Invasions, by Fiona Farrell, AUP, 2007.

Edwin + Matilda, by Lawrence Fearnley, Penguin, 2007.

Speak English, by Susan Cameron and Hilary Lemaitre, Siloe Editions (France), 2007.

Why Lawyers Love Golf: Golf and the Law, by Craig Brown, Scribblers Publishing, Australia, 2007.

Alumni: If you have written a book lately email the editor at mag.editor@otago.ac.nz



The indefatigable life of ladies' periodicals

NOT QUITE AS LOFTY as a McCahon painting or a rare old photograph, perhaps, but the back issues of what some term “ladies’ periodicals” are valuable items nonetheless. The Hocken’s holdings of that indefatigable magazine, *The New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, stretch back to 1933 – a treasure trove for the social historian.

In the 12 January 1933 issue, there’s an item on “How to make your table look attractive”. (“Every young homemaker wants to entertain friends in the new home while the sheen is yet fresh upon her linen and the lustre bright upon her silver.”)

One letter to an advice column titled “Strictly in confidence by Winifred Wise” is from “Tired” of Napier. It details the woes of a woman whose husband neglects heavy household tasks. The letter states: “In marriage, a man becomes slack and selfish, and undergoes a fatty degeneration of his moral being ... the air of the fireside withers out of all the fine wildings of the husband’s heart. He is so comfortable and happy that he begins to prefer comfort and happiness to everything else on earth, his wife included.”

Winifred counsels the aggrieved wife to ask her husband to do one or two things for her and to be generous in her thanks. However, she warns “the meek-voiced, servile wife who hews wood and cleans her husband’s boots is as obsolete as hats that were worn in 1910”.

There’s an article written by “A Girl of To-day” titled “What I want to know about the man I marry”. (“To-day’s Girl” mainly wants her future mate to be free from disease and not transmit to their prospective children “some hereditary taint that will ultimately prove a curse”.) There’s also an advertisement detailing the importance of choosing the most figure-enhancing/silencing undergarment. “With the right Berlei beneath your tight-fitting frocks, you’ll look at yourself in the mirror with pleasure. Not a curve missing where a curve should be, not a curve showing where one shouldn’t be ... which is very delightful in a season when graceful curves are the key to the mode.”

Claire Finlayson

Hocken Collections Gallery Exhibitions

Until 1 March 2008

Facing an Era: Postcard Portraits from a Century Ago
Curated by Wellington-based photography historian William Main.

Until 1 March 2008

Ana Terry: terra_data
Ana Terry’s installation splices and rearranges digital

reproductions of a selection of landscape paintings from the Hocken Collections to form one continuous panorama around the gallery walls.

9 March – 26 April 2008

Photographs by Ben Cauchi, 2007 University of Otago Frances Hodgkins Fellow.

3 May – 26 July 2008

Dr Hocken: Collector of Māori Artefacts
A joint venture with the Otago Museum.

A word from the Head

APRIL 2008 marks the completion of my first year in the Alumni and Development Office, and what a year it has been: always busy, often challenging, but rich with the pleasures of meeting so many interesting alumni. I am very much looking forward to meeting many more of you in the coming year, perhaps at one of the Alumni functions listed on page 47.

2008 will be a busy year for reunions. The 60th anniversary of the School of Physical Education is shaping up to be the biggest of these, with a series of functions planned around the country throughout the year. Taking the celebrations to alumni rather than the other way around is a novel way of ensuring maximum participation, and will keep the good times rolling for ex Phys Ed-ers for several months in 2008! Another milestone to be celebrated in 2008 is the 50th anniversary of the Burns Fellowship, a unique institution in New Zealand of which Otago can be justly proud.



A list of other reunions scheduled for this year appears on these pages, and can also be found on the Alumni & Friends website. And if none of these relates to your class or year, why not organise one yourself? We can provide assistance to help make your get-together, whether large or small, a great success. (www.otago.ac.nz/alumni.reunions)

The beginning of the semester sees a new crop of eager first-year students coming to Otago to begin their studies. This year twelve of these students will be helped considerably by the generosity of alumni who have supported the Annual Appeal Scholarships. Just as the scholars for 2008 were being chosen in December, the first University of Otago Annual Appeal Scholar to graduate crossed the stage at the Town Hall to be

awarded a BSc/BCom. Sok Phou now joins the ranks of Otago Alumni, a unique community of people united in all their splendid diversity by the common experience of having studied at this wonderful university.

Welcome Sok!

Alison Finigan

A Streetcar Named Desire

Free tickets for Otago Graduates

THANKS TO the generosity of our sponsor, the Perpetual Trust, the University of Otago is delighted to be able to offer to alumni a special performance of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. There will be 200 free tickets available to Otago graduates for a performance to be staged at Dunedin's Fortune Theatre on Friday 30 May 2008 at 8pm.

As this is still some months away, alumni are encouraged to register their interest with the Alumni and Development Office now and we will be in contact closer to the date with details on how to apply for complimentary tickets (maximum of two per applicant). You can register your interest online (preferred) at www.otago.ac.nz/alumni in the "What's On" section, or phone the Alumni and Development Office.

The Otago performance is supported by the Perpetual Trust to promote their links with the University of Otago as sponsors of the Director's Cancer Research Fund. In 2005, the Perpetual Trust sponsored a special performance of *The Graduate* for Otago alumni, which was booked out well in advance. We envisage the same enthusiasm for *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Annual Appeal

THE 2007 Annual Appeal was launched in November. Thank you to all those alumni who have generously supported the appeal to date. Your support helps the University to maintain its proud reputation and strengths in higher learning, teaching and research.

Donations over the past year have been allocated to support the Chair in Science Communication, to enhance the University's library resources and to fund scholarships for 12 students beginning their first year of study at Otago.

If you wish to make a contribution to the Annual Appeal you can do so by visiting the Alumni and Friends web page www.otago.ac.nz/alumni

New Tax Regulations Benefit Donors

FROM APRIL 2008, new regulations introduced in New Zealand will allow donations from individuals and companies to charitable organisations to be eligible for a much more generous tax rebate. The new regulations remove current limits and are intended to encourage giving to registered charitable organisations such as the University of Otago Foundation Trust. We hope this will encourage you to support the University of Otago.

Alumni Events 2007

London, House of Commons, September



Christchurch, Christchurch Art Gallery, September



Apia, Maota o Samoa, October



Auckland, Auckland Events Centre, November



Wellington, Te Papa, November



Queenstown, Mount Soho Winery, November



First Annual Appeal scholar graduates

CONGRATULATIONS TO Sok Phou, the first University of Otago Annual Appeal Scholar to complete a degree. Sok received a BCom majoring in finance and economics and a BSc majoring in chemistry at one of the five ceremonies held in December 2007. He was one of the first two students to receive an Annual Appeal Scholarship and began his studies at Otago in 2004. Sarah Day also received an inaugural Annual Appeal Scholarship and is working towards the completion of an LLB and a BSc(Hons) in geography. We look forward to congratulating many more Annual Appeal scholarship holders as they graduate, and welcoming them to the Otago alumni community.



Alumni events 2008

ALUMNI EVENTS offer a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends or make new ones who share your passion for Otago. The events also enable you to network with other alumni in your community, and receive updates on new initiatives happening on campus.

Events scheduled for 2008:

Blenheim	Friday 29 February
New Plymouth	Thursday 13 March
Taupo	Friday 14 March
Melbourne	Thursday 17 April
Dunedin (Fortune Theatre)	Friday 30 May
Los Angeles	Tuesday 3 June
London	Thursday 12 June
Hong Kong	Tuesday 24 June
Auckland	Thursday 24 July
Sydney	Friday 8 August
Kuala Lumpur	Tuesday 2 September
Kuching	Thursday 4 September
Toronto	Tuesday 30 September
New York	Thursday 2 October
Wellington	Thursday 6 November
Christchurch	Friday 21 November
London	Friday 5 December

Closer to the time, invitations will be sent to those known to be within travelling distance of each event. Please keep us up to date as you move or, if you think you might be in the area at the time, please let us know.

For information on any of these alumni receptions, please email functions.alumni@otago.ac.nz or call Alix Cassidy 64 3 479 5649.

Further information can also be found on the Alumni & Friends web pages, at www.otago.ac.nz/alumni/functions

Reunions



2007 was not only the centenary of the founding of the Faculty of Dentistry, but also the 50th anniversary of the graduating class of 1957. Twenty-five members of the class gathered in Dunedin last October along with their wives and the surviving partners of three others to celebrate the event.

MB ChB Class of 1958

24 - 27 October 2008, Dunedin.

Contact: Martin Pollock martin.pollock@otago.ac.nz

MB ChB Class of 1959 and 1960

22 - 24 February 2008, Wairakei Resort.

Contact: GraemeWoodfield@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1963

March 2009, Auckland.

Contact: Lynda Leng at lrlleng@xtra.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1967

1 - 4 April 2008, Bay of Islands.

Contact: peter@honeyfield.co.nz

BDS Class of 1968

Planning underway for 2008.

Contact: hanoger@netspace.net.au

Home Science 1968 - 1970

24 - 26 September 2008, Wellington.

Contact: Jane Girdlestone (nee Borrie) at girdlestone@iconz.co.nz or Sue Velvin (nee Blakely) at sue@kelburnsurgery.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1973

October 2008, Queenstown. For further information visit www.conference.co.nz/index.cfm/Classof73/index.cfm/classof73

MB ChB Class of 1977

October 2008, Queenstown.

Contact: Dr Gail Williams at gail.williams@otago.ac.nz or the Alumni and Development Office.

MB ChB Class of 1978

6 - 7 September 2008, Dunedin

Contact: paul@drpaul.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1983

15 – 17 Feb 2008, Dunedin

Contact: AlanWr@healthcareotago.co.nz

MB ChB Class of 1988

October 2008, Dunedin. Contact: mebrooker@yahoo.com

School of Physical Education 60th Anniversary, 2008

The School will celebrate 60 years of excellence with a series of reunion functions held at various locations around New Zealand, beginning in Wellington on 28 March. A Dunedin function, on Friday 2 May, will be hosted in conjunction with Wall of Fame inductions and the inaugural Smithells Scholarship presentation. Other events are planned for Auckland (31 July) and Christchurch (7 November). For further details visit www.physed.otago.ac.nz

Alumni in other regions interested in holding reunion functions are encouraged to make early contact with reunion organisers at pe60reunion@otago.ac.nz

**Aquinas College/Dalmore House Reunion, 2008**

A reunion for all past College residents is being organised for later this year to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the University's ownership of the College. For more information contact alison.finigan@otago.ac.nz

Department of Home Science and Consumer and Applied Sciences Centenary, 2011

If you graduated with a Home Science or Consumer and Applied Sciences degree, a BSc or BA degree majoring in one

of our CapSc disciplines – Clothing and Textile Sciences, Community and Family Studies, Design Studies, Food Science, Human Nutrition, Dietetics – we want to hear from you. In February 2011 Home Science/Consumer and Applied Sciences will commemorate 100 years at Otago. Please visit www.otago.ac.nz/capsc/centenary or send your contact details to us at Consumer and Applied Sciences Centenary, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, and we will send you information about the centenary as it becomes available.

The Alumni and Development Office is happy to help Otago alumni organise reunions. For further information contact Lizzy Lukeman on 64 3 479 8487 or email lizzy.lukeman@otago.ac.nz

Regional alumni groups

THERE ARE a number of alumni groups around the world who get together for a wide variety of activities and social pursuits. Each of these groups is co-ordinated by a local volunteer or committee who work with the Alumni and Development Office in Dunedin.

University of Otago Alumni – Melbourne Chapter

Trevor Moyle, chairman/secretary
melbourne.alumni@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni – Sydney Chapter

Alister Robinson
sydney.alumni@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni – Canberra Chapter

Marie Carroll, convenor
canberra.alumni@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni – Perth Chapter

Helen Skellet, convenor
perth.alumni@otago.ac.nz

University of Otago Alumni Association of Malaysia

Ms Siew Yoon Serene Chong
chongsy@myjaring.net

University of Otago Alumni UK and Europe Chapter

Sir Paul Beresford, Chairman
beresfordp@parliament.co.uk

For further information about regional alumni groups, or to register your interest in becoming a regional contact or co-ordinator, please contact Alix Cassidy, Alumni Relations Officer, Events, alix.cassidy@otago.ac.nz

Alumni in the news

Emeritus Professor **Annette Baier** (BA 1951, MA 1952, HonLittD 1999) was ranked 72nd equal and the only New Zealander among a list of the top 100 living geniuses in a list compiled by global consultancy company Creators Synectics.

Dr **Neville Bain** (BCom 1965, MCom 1967, HonLLD 1994), visiting from London, presented the School of Business 2007 Distinguished Speaker lecture entitled Reputation Is All.

Associate Professor **Pauline Barnett** (PhD 2001) was appointed to the New Zealand National Health Committee.

Mat Blair (BPhEd 1991, BSc 1992, DipGrad 1993) was appointed by the International Rugby Board as conditioning advisor for test referees, a first for a New Zealander.

Graham Crombie (BCom 1984) was appointed president of the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants.

David Crum (BDS 1983), the current New Zealand Dental Association (NZDA) executive director, was elected to lead the FDI Education Committee, a top job within the FDI World Dental Federation.

Professor **Richard Faull** ONZM FRSNZ (BMedSc 1967, MB ChB 1970) was awarded the 2007 Rutherford Medal, New Zealand's top science honour.

Hamish Forsyth (BA 2002, LLB (Hons) 2002) and **David Coutts** (BSc (Hons) 2004) were awarded Gates Cambridge Scholarships for study at Cambridge University.

Dr **Stephen Goldson** FRSNZ (BSc 1972, DipSci 1973) was awarded the Jubilee Medal by the New Zealand Institute of Agriculture and Horticultural Science to recognise an outstanding contribution to primary resource science.

Dr **Dave Jenkins** (MB ChB 1982), founded SurfAid International in 2000. This organisation won the 2007 Humanitarian Award at the World Association of Non-Governmental Organisations.

Graeme Marsh CBE (BCom 1963) stepped down as chairman of listed company Scott Technology following 32 years as its chairman, a term believed to be one of the longest in New Zealand.

Dr **Julia Matheson** (MB ChB 2006) was awarded a 2008 Rhodes Scholarship, allowing her to continue her studies at Oxford University.

Jesse Wall was awarded a 2008 Rhodes Scholarship, allowing him to undertake study at Oxford University.

Robin Mitchell (BSc (Hons) 1965) was awarded the Shorland Medal for his lifetime of research into the biochemistry of plant diseases.

Wynton Moore (BSc (Hons) 2006) was awarded an International Fulbright Science and Technology Award to undertake PhD study in the United States.

Sheila Natusch MNZM: With the nomination of the Science Communication programme as a recipient of the 2007 Alumni Annual Appeal donations, it is timely to note the contribution in this field of Sheila Natusch, MNZM, (née Traill, MA 1948). For almost half a century, Sheila has been writing books for children and adults on aspects of New Zealand's natural history, as well as biographies of naturalists and others who pioneered the study of plants and their habitats in the early days of exploration in this country.

Her writings offer a wealth of information on New Zealand flora, expressed in a style that, while firmly rooted in the language of science, manages to be clear, direct and interesting to members of the general public. The books are enlivened by the author's drawings which, like her prose, illustrate the science in a pleasing and readily accessible format. This is science communication at its best, acknowledged by the fact that Sheila's books have for many years been used as texts for science classes in schools throughout New Zealand.

Sheila's contribution to science education was recognised by the award of the MNZM for services as a writer and illustrator in the New Year Honours list in 2007.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Address for correspondence:

Alumni and Development Office
University of Otago
PO Box 56
Dunedin 9054, New Zealand

Street address: Alumni House
103 St David Street
Dunedin

Web www.otago.ac.nz/alumni

Email alumni@otago.ac.nz

The Alumni and Development Office website carries information on what's happening in the office and around the globe. Via the website you can:

- receive updates about what's on for alumni
- RSVP to alumni functions
- update your contact details so you continue to receive publications from Otago
- post a message on the alumni notice board
- view information on how to contact other Otago alumni
- find out how you can support the University.

The duffle coat?

“The new year is beginning ... For one or two weeks the University is filled with an excess of young men with brand-new duffle coats, scarves and shiny drinking mugs. And with a wonderful collection of extraordinarily pretty girls ... The brand new duffle coats, used for carrying grog in, collecting mushrooms and paua, picnicking or sitting on, going out in, or sleeping under or shining shoes with, or collecting grass cutting or hedge clippings, soon become shapeless and uniformly scruffy. Dirty is a more honest word. Scarves are lost or stretched to double as clothes lines. But mainly lost ...”

SO WROTE *Critic’s Very Special Reporter* in 1966, capturing at once the uniformity and the idiosyncrasy encapsulated in the duffle coat and scarf combo – perhaps student fashion’s most defining moment.

It was the look that lives on in the name “scarfies” (although the term did not come into common usage until after the fashion had passed). But it was not the only time Otago students have added their character to trends of the times.

To a large extent, Otago student dress has reflected the fashions of society. But generation upon generation have added their own stylistic takes, often by finding new ways to upset the generations that came before.

Dunedin’s unique sense of style has been referenced in the rise of the city’s fashion scene, with Nom D’s Margi Robertson once commenting: “There’s definitely a gothic thing going on with us which I think comes from being based in Dunedin – that sense of being part of a subculture and coming from the place where the ‘Dunedin Sound’ happened. Our clothes have never been about being flash. They’re more about looking cool.”²

As far back as 1909, when men dressed in three-piece suits, watch-chains and stiff collars, and women in long black skirts, starched shirts and pulled-back hair, a brief scandal erupted when some women began wearing their hair out. University authorities swiftly clamped down on the practice. However, it wasn’t long before the stirrings of a more rebellious student consciousness was noted around the beginning of World War I. Along with ditching the label “ladies”, women began wearing shapeless dresses, stockings and lipstick. By World War II, they had donned slacks and shorts. And, in the 1950s, both men and women began, almost without exception, to wear long University scarves of Cambridge blue and gold draped around their necks.³

Cold and cost were perhaps the defining pragmatic issues that would influence generations. Lorraine Isaacs remembers the tiny miniskirts of the ’60s, each requiring less than a yard of fabric on a suitably lithe figure. “We discovered curtain fabric was fabulous, especially for ball gowns!”

Maybe it was the Protestant heritage, or maybe it was the cold, but Dunedin fashions have never involved a great deal of flashing cleavages and midriffs. For all their rebellion and political activism, Otago students were more interested in breaking boundaries with the brains rather than their bodies (save for a naked protest outside Smithell’s gym in 1971).

On the heels of the first wave of ’70s feminism, Karen Hogg recollects a staunchly buttoned-up style when she attended Otago in the late ’70s. “The styles were pretty much unisex and we dressed very much like the boys – except our hair may have been shorter! We wore jeans and Nomads [shoes].”

And cost, cost, cost was a constant. “I knew a boy who wore jandals all year because he couldn’t afford shoes.”

Home science and commerce students are remembered as having been rather more conservative in their dress than their humanities’ friends, while medical students were often quite formal. “In the ’60s, they always wore white shirts and formal pants, out of respect for the dead bodies they were dissecting,” recalls Lorraine.

As for the ’80s, as the students squished into bars like the Empire to witness the lo-fi rise of the “Dunedin sound”, Ruth Mackenzie-White looks back to the time of the goth. She was big on black, fingerless gloves and Docs.

In the ’90s, you could hang out in the smokers’ lounge and imagine it was Seattle. Dunedin took to grunge like dandruff to dreadlocks. This marked the emergence of the T-shirt-over-the-thermals look, but the fun with

layering didn't stop there. Petticoats went over jeans, paisley over stripes, thermals with holes over thermals with holes in different places. Boots under everything. Much enthusing was made over op-shopping, although great finds were rare and usually overpriced.

The skaters wore their jeans improbably low with, frankly, nowhere near enough respect for the parts of one's anatomy generally considered helpful for keeping clothing up – you knew if the waistband sat below the pelvic bone they were likely not to withstand a vigorous game of hacky sack. I recall seeing at least two boys lose their pants in such circumstances; taking such risks, you really would have thought they'd have made more effort with their undies.

What of today's student style is distinctly Dunedin? Catherine Smith of Otago's Department of Clothing and Textile Sciences, who teaches social aspects of dress, comments that, generally speaking, the look is "incredibly casual" compared with, say, Auckland.

"In Dunedin, people seem to prefer not to stand out." In general, she sees clothing as having become very sexualised, with far more of the body on display, especially come evening. Even those whose figures don't conform to cultural ideals seem to experience less compulsion to cover everything up or adapt their fashion choices. But while the clothes may be more physically daring, Catherine says the dress sense is often "politically very conservative".

"Students seem far more content with a generic, mainstream look. There doesn't seem to be as much op-shop creativity or desire to express oneself individualistically."

Ponders Catherine, "When was the last time you saw a goth?"

*"The disappearance of brand new scarves, mugs and duffle coats is an easily understood annual phenomenon. Much more perplexing is the way the pretty young fresherettes disappear after a brief week or two in bloom ... My own theory is [they] may yet be found in winter, though heavily and uniformly disguised in shapeless duffle coats and unflattering tights."*¹

Nicola Mutch

1 "Yet Another University Year" by Critic's Very Special Reporter, *Critic*, 1966, www.critic.co.nz/archive?page=22&archive_id=2415&type_code=a

2 Stacey Gregg, "Nom D: Heart of Darkness" in *Undressed: Interviews with New Zealand Fashion Designers*, www.runwayreporter.co.nz/pdfs/nomd.pdf

3 Sam Elworthy, *Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago*. John McIndoe Press, 1990



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⁽¹⁾ Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, Research and Development in New Zealand. (Wellington, 2006).

⁽²⁾ Tertiary Education Commission, PBRF Quality Evaluation 2006. (Wellington, 2007).

