Plant research is all talk

By Lindy Brophy

Talking to your plants or playing music to them might not be just a hippy pastime.

Postdoctoral research fellow Monica Gagliano is reviewing research from the 1960s that looked at the effects of music and sound, including the human voice, on plants.

“Some of that research was not particularly rigorous and it was easy to discredit it,” Dr Gagliano said. “It was labelled as hippy nonsense.”

Dr Gagliano is an adjunct lecturer in the School of Plant Biology as well as contributing to research as a UWA postdoctoral fellow in the Centre for Evolutionary Biology and the Centre for Microscopy, Characterisation and Analysis.

Outside her research domain of tropical marine ecology, Dr Gagliano’s personal interest in herbal medicine attracted her to the garden and the behaviour of plants.

“The physicists have it right,” she said. “There is energy associated with everything. Light is energy and plants respond to it. I believe they also respond to the energy produced by sound. We humans project our own energy and I believe that plants also respond to people being in the garden and tending their plants.”

Dr Gagliano said research over the past 10 years was more solid than that done in the last century.

“We know that plants recognise what is growing next to them. There is chemical communication between them. Plants can warn other plants of a predator by releasing a chemical, and the warned plants can release chemicals to make themselves unpalatable to the predator.

“It is very similar to plants reacting to the energy of light. If something is in the way of that energy, a plant will adapt by quickly growing taller to get more light.

“I think we might realise that plants are more sensitive than we think,” she said. “They can’t move to get away from predators or to take advantage of other situations, so their other senses adapt.”

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Dr Gagliano said Darwin suggested these sensitivities in plants. “But people didn’t pay much attention until recently. “Some of my colleagues have asked me if I think I am committing scientific suicide with these ideas, but I’ve gone out on a limb before and, as they say, fortune favours the bold.

“With the threat of climate change and our environment in crisis, it is time for courageous people to step up. This research could be integral to shift our perception of the environment and transform how we play within it.”

Dr Gagliano is hoping to collaborate with Aboriginal researchers. “They have been using plants for thousands of years so I’m sure we can help each other.”

She is running private weekend workshops combining the science and art of plants and has approached SymbioticA, UWA’s Centre of Excellence in Biological Art. Scitech is also interested in her work.

“I want to make a contribution,” she said. “I could just keep on doing my fish research and writing papers, but realistically this is not going to change the world!”
Most PhD students don’t have much time to spend in the kitchen, instead focusing on their research, and eating as a necessity.

But Regina Belski spent a lot of time there, baking new foods. Dr Belski, a dietitian, was not avoiding her studies but developing a range of lupin-enriched foods to help people lower blood pressure, and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Her study, supervised by UWA’s renowned medical nutrition trio, Research Professor Jonathan Hodgson, Professor Trevor Mori and Winthrop Professor Ian Puddey, also suggested that lupin flour might be good for those suffering from type 2 diabetes.

Dr Belski, who graduated with her PhD earlier this year, was recently one of 16 national winners of the annual Federal-Government-sponsored Fresh Science awards in Melbourne.

“As a dietitian, I had become so tired of telling people what they should not be eating,” Dr Belski said “It was refreshing to be able to tell people what they should be eating.

“A lot of research involves rats and test tubes, but I was lucky: mine involved food and people, the two things I love.”

We can lower our risk of heart disease significantly just by using flour containing 40 per cent lupin beans in the place of conventional wholemeal flour.

Over the course of a year, Dr Belski and her supervisors monitored more than 100 overweight, but otherwise healthy, Western Australian men and women to whom they provided everyday foods made either with wholemeal flour or incorporating lupin flour.

“Consuming lupin flour lowered blood pressure and reduced the risk of heart disease,” Dr Belski said.

About 80 per cent of the world’s commercial lupin crop is produced in Western Australia where it conditions the soil and is sold for livestock feed.

Dr Belski said there had been renewed interest in using lupin flour in regular foods, because of its unique high protein, high fibre composition and its ability to be incorporated easily into typical food products such as bread.

Those taking part in the study were put on a weight loss diet and split into two groups. For a year, one group ate food incorporating the 40 per cent lupin flour, and the other foods made solely with wholemeal flour. The food provided to participants during the study included bread, pasta and biscuits. The researchers found that while both the lupin group and the wholemeal group lost similar amounts of weight, the lupin group displayed bigger improvements in several heart disease risk factors.

“So simply consuming foods incorporating lupin flour can improve heart health in overweight people who are at higher risk of heart disease,” Dr Belski said.

Dr Belski was sought by Melbourne’s Victoria University where she is now developing and teaching a new Master of Science in dietetics course, and continuing her research into nutritional management of chronic health conditions.
Central in a world of scholars

If anyone wanted confirmation of our University’s central place in global scholarship, they need only look at a list of events for the first few days of this month organised or hosted by staff of the University.

Four major conferences attracted more than 1,000 delegates from around the world.

First was the World Planning Schools Conference, about advancing urban and regional planning scholarship, teaching and collaborations. From Australia, Asia, Europe, the Americas and Africa, 500 scholars and researchers delivered more than 400 papers that considered planning from social, environmental, political, physical and economic standpoints.

Representatives of organisations such as the World Bank also took part in the conference, which had as its theme Planning’s Future – Future Planning: Planning in an Era of Global (Un)Certainty and Transformation.

Next was the biggest anthropology conference to be held in the southern hemisphere, attracting more than 500 delegates from 30 countries. Entitled Knowledge and Value in a Globalising World: Disentangling Dichotomies, Querying Unities, the four-day conference covered areas as diverse as globalisation, Indigenous knowledge and resource use, neoliberalism, migration, food, creativity, religion, medicine, climate change, education, and developments in psychological anthropology.

Third was the China’s Growth and the World Economy conference, hosted by the Business School and the Association for Chinese Economic Studies (Australia). With delegates from universities around Australia and China, the conference represented another instance of the deepening friendship between Australia and China and examined topics such as the behaviour of companies and industrial dynamics and energy and sustainability.

Finally there was the Australian Association for European History’s conference, War and Peace, Barbarism and Civilisation in Modern Europe and its Empires. It was hosted by UWA’s School of Humanities in collaboration with UWA’s Institute of Advanced Studies and the Faculty of Arts at Murdoch University.

There are countless advantages in encouraging international relationships such as those engendered at these conferences. In hosting scholars from other countries we gain significant geopolitical and cultural benefits. We also broaden our own experience.

The global research links initiated at such gatherings is vital. By enabling people from universities around the world to meet and interact, we enable new ways of thinking and collaborating. In this way, we effectively marshal the intellectual and logistical resources that are needed if we are to have any success in solving global problems.

That so many delegates travelled so far to be at our University for these four major events speaks volumes for the esteem in which UWA is held internationally.

Alan Robson
Vice-Chancellor

UWA author is PM’s choice

UWA doctoral student, former staff member and novelist Stephen Daisley has won a Prime Minister’s Literary Award for his first book.

His debut novel, Traitor, won the fiction prize for Stephen, who is completing his PhD in Creative Writing, supervised by Winthrop Professor Brenda Walker.

The judges described Traitor as "...a meditative, melancholy work that shows a rightful confidence in its power to command our attention.”

Stephen’s latest success follows his UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing at the 2011 New South Wales Premier’s Literary Awards.

UWA doctoral graduate Kim Scott, who recently won his second Miles Franklin award for That Deadman Dance, was also short-listed for the Prime Minister’s award.

“I was shocked to win,” Stephen said.

“I was confident that Kim would win.”

Oceans of experience

Oceans expert Professor Anya Waite has been appointed as a Member-at-Large of the Board of Directors of the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO).

Professor Waite, from the Oceans Institute and the School of Environmental Systems Engineering, is the second UWA staff member to be honoured by the prestigious international association.

Director of the Oceans Institute, Professor Carlos Duarte, is also on the board of ASLO, which means that two of the 15 places are held by UWA people.

“It’s exciting to be given the opportunity to help set priorities for one of the premier scientific organisations operating internationally,” Professor Waite said.

“I hope to bring a southern hemisphere and Indian Ocean focus to ASLO, highlighting the importance of the world’s least studied ocean fringed by some of the most rapidly developing global economies,” she said.

ASLO fosters a diverse, international scientific community that creates, integrates and communicates knowledge across the spectrum of aquatic sciences, and advances public awareness and education about aquatic resources.
The sawfish looks like an amusing children’s storybook creature but the sad reality is that this majestic animal is an endangered species.

Research in Cairns, co-supervised by UWA’s Winthrop Professor and Premier’s Fellow Shaun Collin, has contributed to our understanding of the sawfish, which could help the global efforts to save it from extinction.

Dr Barbara Wueringer, who graduated from UWA with her PhD earlier this year, discovered that sawfish actually used their saw to locate and dismember free-swimming fish. It was previously believed that sawfish used their saws solely to probe the seabed for food.

Dr Wueringer said the sawfish saw – an elongation of its head with teeth along its sides – provided a sixth sense. “It is packed with thousands of tiny pore-like organs which can detect the minute electric fields surrounding living organisms, and it can also be used to attack its prey,” she said.

“Northern Australia is considered to be the last stronghold in the world for four species of sawfish but if we do not understand these animals, we will not be able to save them.”

Sawfish are beautiful and mystic ancient predators, according to Dr Wueringer. They are regularly taken as by-catch in fisheries, and their fins and saws are traded as highly priced medicines, curios and culinary delicacies.

“They are now protected in all northern states of Australia, but the public needs to know that these animals are out there, and that they are endangered,” Dr Wueringer said.

The saws are packed with sensors known as ampullary pores or electro receptors which can detect electric fields, the distribution of which influences how the sawfish captures its prey. Dr Wueringer compared the distribution of these pores in four species of sawfish, which inhabit remote ecosystems in northern Australia. She found that sawfish had much more concentrated collections of pores on the upper side of the saw than their relatives, the shovel-nosed rays. This indicated that they used their saws to detect prey in the three-dimensional space above the saw.

Dr Wueringer’s work was being presented for the first time in public through Fresh Science, a communication camp for early-career scientists held at the Melbourne Museum. She was one of 16 winners from across Australia. Dr Wueringer is a research assistant with in Professor Collin’s laboratory at UWA, while she writes up her papers and publishes her research.

She said she had proof that sawfish had actually used their saws to dismember their prey but she had not yet published this part of her work.

“Regardless of that, the distribution of the pores gives a very good indication of how the animals use this sixth sense.”

She said it was quite remarkable that sawfish were one of the least-studied rays, as they lived in coastal areas and freshwater, where people liked to spend time. “I thought they would have received more attention before now,” she said.

Professor Collin said Dr Wueringer’s work was changing our understanding of how sawfish lived and hunted which would be valuable in working towards conserving these majestic creatures.
Honours is icing on the cake: Where the Honours year fits into New Courses 2012

Senior Academic Reviewer, Winthrop Professor Ian Reid, explains.

Uncertain what to do after her third year of studies at UWA, Natalie Mast (now a Senior Adviser in the Vice-Chancellorcy) flipped a coin to decide between graduate Law and Honours in Politics.

When she changed the coin toss rules from best of three to best of five, she knew she really did want to study at the honours level.

“My decision to undertake Honours was one of the best I’ve ever made,” she said. Her fourth-year cohort, “a fantastic group of enthusiastic students who worked well together”, helped her to determine the path she wanted to follow.

Countless other Honours graduates would echo Natalie’s verdict on the value of their research-intensive year.

“My undergraduate studies in economics provided an important grounding,” reflects Virginia Christie, an officer with the Reserve Bank. “But the Honours year helped crystallise and link the core principles together. It was the most challenging time of my studies.”

Terri Robertson especially appreciated the guidance towards future career options received during her Honours course in Psychology. “I spent a lot of time with my supervisor talking about different avenues I could take once I’d finished Honours, and I found that really helpful.”

Paul Hunt, now an Industrial Relations practitioner, rates his Honours year as “by far the most rewarding experience at University”, and acknowledges “the high level of research and writing towards the dissertation” as a strong basis for application in his work since then.

But with the move to New Courses 2012, will Honours still be so valuable? What is its place in this new framework?

During the Review of Course Structures in 2007-2008, a working party consulted staff and students across the University about the future place of Honours courses in a restructured curriculum.

Its report affirmed the value of Honours as an intensively supervised yet independently managed research experience for the best students, providing them with high-quality research training at a level at least sufficient for PhD entry or access to graduate-level professional education.

Accordingly the New Courses blueprint reinforced the importance of continuing to offer an Honours opportunity in all fields, building on the basic research skill development that should be a hallmark of any UWA undergraduate degree.

The University has also adopted a set of standards to ensure consistency for all Honours courses in admission criteria, course structure, student workload, and assessment procedures.

What relevance will Honours have for disciplines whose main focus is on direct progression from the pass degree to a master’s course with a professional focus?

In many cases, Honours should articulate into the professional master’s courses. Some of these will subsume Honours, leaving it as an exit option at the end of the first year, with most students continuing to complete the master’s qualification over two years. However, some content-intensive postgraduate courses (for example Master of Architecture, Master of Business Administration) may not fit this model comfortably.

In such courses, it may be more appropriate for students who exit with satisfactory performance at the end of the first year to be awarded a Graduate Diploma rather than an Honours degree.

To qualify a student for PhD entry, a master’s course must include a substantial research thesis.

And what about the new Honours degree?

In addition to end-on Honours for the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Design, and Bachelor of Science, the University decided to create a new research-oriented integrated four-year Honours course, available to students of exceptional ability in any discipline: the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) degree.

Beginning in 2012, the BPhil(Hons) will give its students the freedom to choose a major from any field of study within Arts, Commerce, Design or Science. This flagship course features an interdisciplinary research project, intensive communication skills development, an on-campus residential experience, and support for study overseas.
Andrea Gaynor is instilling sustainable behaviour into her little boy – and it’s the best fun he has all week.

Every Thursday morning, Associate Professor Gaynor cycles in to the Crawley campus from Highgate, towing three-year-old Otto behind her in his buggy.

She is one of the regulars who leave their cars at home in favour of riding bikes to work. And her colleague in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Associate Professor Martin Forsey, is hoping to encourage many more staff to opt for two wheels instead of four, starting with Ride to Work Day on 12 October.

Professor Gaynor cycles in on all her three working days each week, bringing Otto in his buggy once a week. It takes between 30 and 40 minutes, depending on the wind. Unlike her colleagues, she never has any problems with parking. “I don’t even have a parking permit,” she said.

Professor Forsey cycles in every day from Mount Lawley, and is UWA’s workplace coordinator of a campaign to get more of us in the saddle not only on the Ride to Work Day but most days.

The hiatus created on campus by student vacation was filled with the warmth of the UWA Cultural Precinct’s second annual WINTERarts festival.

The week-long festival brought together musical composition, drama, visual art, choral singing, a discussion on the spirituality of music and plenty of hands-on activities for budding artists and writers.

This year the Cultural Precinct commissioned the creation and performance of a unique musical composition to celebrate NAIDOC week.

Education expert becomes historical Fellow

Education professor Tom O’Donoghue has become the third UWA academic to be elected to the Royal Historical Society.

Winthrop Professor O’Donoghue from the Graduate School of Education, joins Fellows Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education, Winthrop Professor Jane Long and Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, Winthrop Professor Philippa Maddern.

The Royal Historical Society was founded in 1868 and remains the foremost association in Great Britain promoting and defending the scholarly study of the past.

Professor O’Donoghue said being elected a Fellow was particularly gratifying as it meant his research was recognised at the highest level by historians as well as educationalists.

“It complements my Fellowship of the Academy of the Social Sciences,” he said. “All of the leading professors of history in Australia are Fellows of the Society.”

He said he appreciated the support of the Dean of Education, Winthrop Professor Helen Wildy, which allowed him to do the work which led to such recognition.
The School of Music’s new harpsichord looks more like a work of art than a musical instrument.

The intricately carved and decorated treasure was carefully unpacked after its journey from the US, under the watchful – and joyful – eye of UWA benefactor David Cook.

Dr Cook, a philanthropic surgeon, is a patron of the arts, and both a music and visual art lover, so his gift to the University perfectly reflects his passions.

Originally from England, Dr Cook made his home in Fremantle 10 years ago and very soon after made a donation to the School of Music for the construction of a harpsichord.

After some false starts, the mission was finally accomplished last month, with the $60,000 instrument arriving from Minnesota and being installed in the Eileen Joyce studio, along with other early instruments.

The harpsichord is a forerunner of the piano and was widely used in the 17th and 18th centuries, until it gradually disappeared in favour of its more modern descendant. The School of Music has an original 18th century harpsichord, but this newest addition was recently created by Keith Hill, one of the best harpsichord builders in the world.

After falling from favour, the harpsichord has had somewhat of a revival in recent years for the authentic performance of baroque music, one of the hallmarks of the School of Music.

Winthrop Professor Paul Wright and the Office of Development’s Bianca Galipo guided the donation and the acquisition.

Dr Cook has commissioned a harpsichord concerto for UWA from Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe.

“But that will be a while coming,” Dr Cook said. “Peter Sculthorpe is 82 and had said he was not taking any more commissions, but that he would do this one as he had always wanted to write a harpsichord concerto.”

The maker’s brother, Robert Hill, described by Professor Wright as the finest harpsichord player in the world, will come to UWA on 24 September to launch his brother’s beautiful creation.

Dr Cook supports young musicians and local artists as well as his passion for baroque music. He often hosts musical events in the courtyard of his Fremantle property, Fothergill’s. But he doesn’t play a musical instrument himself.

“I play the gramophone,” he joked, as he sat down at the newly-installed harpsichord and fiddling about. But it’s still not complete. I’m not very handy with tools – it’s lucky I’m not an orthopaedic surgeon!” he said.

Professor Wright said that one of the most important aesthetics of music in the 18th century and earlier, related to the concept of beauty and soul.

“Harpsichord builder Keith Hill has achieved this in the sound-world of his instruments during his 35 year association with the craft,” he said. “In his own words, ‘the cardinal signs of a Hill instrument are: powerful tone, gorgeously vocal trebles, solid and resonant basses, beauty of tone color, intensely musical behavior of sound, flexibility of touch and a singing and effectively loaded tone’.

“The School of Music is indeed fortunate to now own one of Keith’s highly prized instruments thanks to the generosity and understanding of philanthropist David Cook.

“We already own a much sought after original English harpsichord by Kirkman from the 18th century and my prediction is that 250 years from now the Keith Hill will still be around (hopefully in a purpose-built UWA concert hall) in a similar place of honour.”
Some of the most important equipment in the new $112 million medical research facility at QEII will be in the corridors and the cafeteria.

WAIMR director Professor Peter Klinken is a firm believer in communication between colleagues – and that takes place at the water coolers and over morning tea.

“The new building will bring together researchers from WAIMR, the Lions Eye Institute and the Telethon Institute for Child Research, as well as hospital researchers, patients, medical students and the community, including high school students,” he said.

“Cross-fertilisation of ideas takes place in the chat between colleagues. The design of the new facility is all about integration so that people will bump into each other and talk to each other more.”

One of Professor Klinken’s new ‘neighbours’ will be the director of the Lions Eye Institute, Winthrop Professor David Mackey.

He too is keen on the integration of researchers.

“It’s like a neighbour needing a cup of sugar,” he said. “We can all help and support each other. We can share expensive equipment, which is especially practical if each group only needs it for a day or so a year. The critical mass will mean cost savings and easy access to things like equipment and reagents but, even more valuable, informal unplanned collaboration with colleagues that doesn’t happen unless you’re all in the same building.”

Professor Klinken and Professor Mackey have already been drawn together, across institutional lines, by the medical conundrum they both study.

Both of them have fallen victim to cancer – and beaten it, giving them renewed enthusiasm for their research.

Colleagues Peter Klinken and David Mackie have personal experiences in common

Professor Mackey studies diseases of the eye caused by sun damage: Professor Klinken contracted a malignant melanoma as a result of sun damage (UWAnews 23 August 2010). Professor Mackey fought leukaemia, one of the areas of cancer to which Professor Klinken is dedicated.

It has formed a bond between the two research leaders that is likely to encourage strong bonds between their respective colleagues when they are all housed together in the new building in 2013.

“If you want evidence of the benefit of medical research, you can see it in leukaemia,” Professor Klinken said.

“Thirty years ago, 85 per cent of children with leukaemia died. Now, 85 per cent survive, because of improvements in chemotherapy.

“People who have been affected strongly support medical research. I often hear powerful statements such as: ‘Without medical research, I’d be dead’; and ‘Medical research gives us hope’.”

Professor Mackey said researchers needed to explain to the public how their ‘blue skies’ research was going to end up making a difference. “Things take a long time and we need people to understand this,” he said.

“The bone marrow transplant that saved my life nearly 20 years ago took decades to develop. One of the major eye-related diseases, rubella, was discovered in 1942 but the vaccine was not developed until the 1960s. The rubella epidemic cost the community hundreds of millions of dollars.

“We need people – researchers, Governments, the public – to have 20-year vision, not a ‘before the next election’ mentality.”

He said that, while everybody looked for the big breakthrough in medical research, it was the often the hundreds of little things that were achieved over the years that improved treatments and made a difference.

Both Professor Klinken and Professor Mackey agree that the new facility will attract leading researchers from around the world and help to lure back Western Australians who have gone overseas, which will further enhance the mix that predicts a boom in medical research in WA.
Last year 40 per cent of the burn patients admitted to the Bir Hospital Burns Unit in Kathmandu did not survive their injuries.

This contrasts sharply with the remarkable recovery rate of WA burn patients at Royal Perth Hospital. With limited resources, poor conditions and the absence of a plastic surgeon in the Nepali hospital, even the outlook for patients with less severe burns is bleak.

Too often open cooking fires, exploding stoves and unsafe electrical wiring cause domestic accidents. Without proper treatment, these calamities lead to life-long disfigurement or permanent disability.

The opposite is true for burn injury patients in WA. Here, widely respected burn specialist Winthrop Professor Fiona Wood and her team have made major advances in the clinical care and outcomes of their patients.

Research Assistant Professor Hilary Wallace is part of this group. With an academic background in inflammation and wound healing and an interest in the genetic determinants of excessive scarring, she conducts her basic and clinical studies at the Burn Injury Unit at UWA.

The aims are unambiguous. All efforts are geared towards support for and development of evidence-based innovative clinical solutions, which shape the high quality of burns care we have in WA.

In 2010, an unexpected opportunity came up to do voluntary work in burns education in Nepal. There, Dr Wallace learned about the Bir Hospital Burns Unit in Kathmandu. She discovered a link already existed between the Burns Services at the Bir Hospital and Royal Perth Hospital.

“After years of political instability in Nepal affecting the relationship, it only needed to be rekindled,” she said.

Now she calls herself ‘a facilitator of knowledge transfer’ in burns care between Perth and Kathmandu. “It is wonderful to share with a unit at the other end of the spectrum.”

The options for improvement of burns care at the Bir Hospital are limited. With currently no possibilities for skin graft surgery, treatment is restricted to wound care and infection control. Enhancement of clinical care comes mostly from Dr Dale Edgar, physiotherapist, and Joy Fong, clinical nurse consultant, at the WA Burns Service.

Their essential idea is to encourage body movement during the healing process. This relatively inexpensive approach keeps the affected areas active to reduce the degree of scarring and stiffness. Other feasible objectives of the program are better pain control and palliative care for those with no hope under the deprived conditions at Bir Hospital.

A return to Kathmandu in March this year followed Dr Wallace’s earlier visit and allowed a relationship built on trust to develop with local key player, head nurse of the Nepali Burns Unit, Sister Nara Devi Bariya.

This unique one-way traffic of knowledge to help those in need is financially supported by the Rotary Club of Crawley and encouraged by UWA. According to Dr Wallace, it is rewarding to become aware of the difference that even small changes, can make to burns care.

“As a basic scientist, so often you get precluded from being involved in such human activities,” she said.

Anke van Eekelen is a neuroscientist, an honorary research fellow at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and an adjunct lecturer at UWA. She is studying for a postgraduate diploma in Science Communication.
Europe signifies, for many Australians, the very epicentre of culture.

But the dark history of war, hatred and destruction that coloured much of the 20th century has created a paradox that continues to engage historians.

The 22nd conference of the Australasian Association for European History at UWA this month contemplated the contradictory nature of Europe in modern times.

The theme of the conference, which attracted academics, historians and authors from around the world, was War and Peace, Barbarism and Civilisation in Modem Europe and its Empires.

The four-day conference was hosted by the School of Humanities, UWA’s Institute of Advanced Studies and Murdoch University’s Faculty of Arts.

Six leading scholars from overseas presented their latest work on the Holocaust, detention, the mafia, German army war crimes, Nazism and Stalinist genocide.

While the overriding feeling from these fields of research can be one of destruction and evil, some light relief was provided with the launch of Winthrop Professor Richard Bosworth’s new book on Rome, Whispering City: Rome and its Histories.

It has already been received all over the world with the highest acclaim, including a four-page review from Mary Beard in the National Interest (Washington) and a magnificent review by Professor Mia Fuller from Berkeley University, published in the Times Higher Education Supplement.

“Many books explain different facets … but few have attempted to integrate the multiple aspects of how today’s Rome was produced over the past 200 years,” Professor Fuller wrote. “None that I know of is more thorough or engaging than this one.”

“RJB Bosworth has outdone himself … Bosworth is a virtuoso at dismantling self-serving claims, no matter which side they come from … It is recommended reading for the armchair flâneurs and hard-working tourists alike: don’t leave for Rome without it.”

Whispering City is published by Yale University Press. Professor Bosworth’s colleague, Associate Professor Mark Edele’s book Stalinist Society 1928 – 1953 (Oxford University Press) was also launched at the conference.

Both books were launched by Dr Frances Flanagan, a historian and lawyer from Birkbeck College, University of London. Her research interests include the memory of war and political violence in the 20th century, and the uses of law as a response to historic wrongs.

Other eminent academics who featured at the conference included Omer Bartov, Professor of European History and Professor of German Studies at Brown University (US), who is the best-regarded authority in the world on the history of the Holocaust; David Marples, Professor of History and Classics, and Director of the Stasiuk Program for the study of contemporary Ukraine at the University of Alberta, who is a specialist in Stalinist genocide; and Jürgen Förster, an expert in German army war crimes, who is based at the Military History Research Institute in Berlin and has taught all over the world.

Early attention adds up to Olympics

Brilliant young mathematicians need nurturing long before they reach university.

So mathematicians at UWA set up the UWA Academy for Young Mathematicians 16 years ago.

The Academy has just had a major success, with Angel Yu, a student from Perth Modern School, being selected in the Australian team for the International Mathematics Olympiad this year.

Winthrop Professor Cheryl Praeger said it was 11 years since the national team had a West Australian member.

She congratulated her colleague, honorary research associate Dr Greg Gamble, WA state director of the Mathematics Olympiad and Angel’s mentor.

“WA is also represented on the Australian team for the International Informatics Olympiad with Courtney Eliot from Como Secondary College,” Professor Praeger said. “And the reserve for the maths team is another local student, Alexander Chua from Christ Church Grammar School.”
Hope for children with the devastating muscle disease Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy is kept alive at the Australian Neuro-Muscular Research Institute (ANRI).

The latest clinical trials of research by Professors Steve Wilton and Sue Fletcher has been published in *The Lancet*, the most prestigious of medical journals.

Trials were conducted in the UK at University College London, using a compound designed in UWA and ANRI laboratories, that restores dystrophin expression. Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) is a result of the protein dystrophin missing in one in 3,500 boys.

At least three boys born in Perth each year will have DMD, which is currently incurable.

Boys in the clinical trial who received the compound began to produce the missing dystrophin, which is essential for muscle strength and stability.

The team at ANRI have high hopes for this compound. “Our success so far is the result of an amazing collaboration of researchers and clinicians coming together to prove our concept,” Professor Wilton said. “There is still a long way to go, but this shows we can treat the whole body.”

More trials will be run locally by the WA Department of Health, over the next three years, supported by a $700,000 grant from the State Government.

UWAnews has followed the research by Professors Wilton and Fletcher, with our most recent story, two years ago, about a grant of $1.2 million from the National Institutes of Health in the US.

Medical research can seem slow to the people who most want a cure, but the rate of work at the ANRI has been described by Professor Wilton as spectacular.

“We went from proof of concept to clinical trials in less than a decade, which is essentially unheard of in the context of drug development,” he said.

Celebrating Perth’s French Connection

A hundred years of Francophiles in Perth have been brought together in a book to celebrate the centenary of Alliance Française.

Former lecturers in European Languages and Studies at UWA, Noelene Bloomfield and Beverley Noakes, have written *Alliance Française de Perth: The First 100 Years*.

Despite the lack of archives at the Alliance, the authors succeeded in tracing and interviewing many previous Committee members, as well as former Alliance students, who had proudly retained their Examination Certificates and medals, some dating from the 1940s. A fragile book of Minutes provided valuable information about the first few decades, and other records were gleaned from the Battye Library and old newspapers, now stored online.

During its early years, the Perth Alliance Française was a high-profile social club, whose first patrons were the then Governor of Western Australia and his wife. There were strong links with Perth Modern School and with UWA, both dating from the same era.

The Alliance is now a linguistic and socio-cultural centre. It continues to offer exams every year for more than 1,400 high-school students, as well as the French Film Festival and other cultural events.
**Squads and squats**

Water and land-based exercise programs are being combined for the first time at the School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health.

The UWA-trained exercise physiologists who run the Health and Rehabilitation Clinic and Uniswim at the south end of campus have joined together to offer staff and the local community the best of both forms of exercise.

Clinic supervisor Bonnie Furzer said patrons could now buy a 15-class pass and use it for adult swimming lessons and squads in the pool, and indoor Pilates and ‘Range of Motion’ classes. It also includes AQUA, a strength and mobility class in a heated pool.

“Staff and others can choose mostly water-based, mostly land-based or a mix of the two,” Bonnie said. “We offer a different service from the gym and classes at Sport and Recreation at the northern end of campus. But many people don’t even know we’re here.”

She said the Pilates classes could be tailored for individual rehabilitation needs and these could be accommodated in regular classes.

“Our services are particularly good for somebody who has had an injury and needs a bit more individual attention to regain fitness and strength,” Bonnie said.

Classes are offered from Monday to Saturday, between 5.30am and 8pm. A 15-class pass costs $150 or $135 for seniors.

For more details and a timetable, contact the UWA Health and Rehabilitation Clinic at uwahealth-sseh@uwa.edu.au or on 6488 3333.

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**Book sale is just around the corner**

**Buy some books, support a worthy charity AND get your gardening questions answered.**

All this in one place on one day:

Saturday 20 August, at the Save the Children (SC) annual book sale in the Undercroft. The ABC will be broadcasting from the sale and gardener of the airwaves Sabrina Hahn will be happy to help book-shoppers with their queries between 9am and 10am.

The 720 morning show will start broadcasting from beside the Reflection Pond at 6am, so the SC volunteers will open their doors at the same time.

If you would like to help at the sale, please contact Euro at gerbazep@iinet.net.au or on 9387 6215.

Otherwise, save your dollars for one of the best loved book sales of the year.

It starts on Friday 19 August at 5pm, then runs from 6am to 6pm on Saturday, 8am to 6pm on Sunday and from 9.30am to 6.30pm on Monday.

Tuesday 23 August is half-price day, from 9.30am to 6.30pm and on the final day, Wednesday, a whole box of books will cost just $15 between 9.30am and 4pm.

There is still time to donate books, CDs, DVDs and sheet music. You can drop them in collection boxes in the Octagon Theatre, the reception foyer of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and the Reid Library.

Or take them to the sorting base on the corner of Brookway Road and Underwood Avenue, Shenton Park, at any time.

All proceeds from the sale go to help disadvantaged children in Australia and overseas.
Research Grants
Grants Awarded between 13/08/2011 and 8/07/2011

ARCH FUTURE FELLOWSHIP
Dr Hilda Tubex, Crime Research Centre, WA Department of Corrective Services: ‘Reducing Imprisonment Rates in Australia’— (2011-14)

PROFESSOR FARIDA FOSDOR, NESP
Dr Archie Clements, Professor David Patterson, Professor Thomas Riley, Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences (School of), University of Queensland: ‘Cotriostid Difficile – Assessing the Risks to Australia of an Emerging Healthcare Related Pathogen’— $295,688 (2011-13)

UNIVERSITY POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS
Dr Etienne Laliberte, Plant Biology (School of) — (2011-13)
John Leskiu, Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences (School of), Anatomy and Human Biology (School of), Max Planck Institut fuer Ornithologie: ‘The Evolution and Function of Rapid Eye Movement Sleep’— (2012-14)
Peter Munro, Surgery (School of), Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering (School of), Macquarie University College London: ‘Understanding the Interaction of Light in Biological Tissue – Seeing Disease into Tissue with Greater Detail’— (2012-14)
A/Professor Stefan Danilishin, Physics (School of), Moscow State University: ‘Macroscopic Quantum Mechanics and Quantum Measurements with Opto and Electro Mechanical Systems’— (2012-14)

WESCORP AGARWOOD PTY LTD
Associate Professor Julie Plummer, Associate Professor Emilio Ghisalberti, Professor Joerg Bohlmann, Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences (School of), Plant Biology (School of), University of British Columbia, Wescorp Agarwood Pty Ltd: ‘Characterising Induced Resin Development in Aquilaria Agallocha Fragrant Agarwood’— $1,833,000 (2011)

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION
Professor Fiona Bull, Population Health (School of): ‘Rapid review of current evidence for health promotion actions on physical activity’— $9,183 (2011)

Promotion Briefs
Provided by Elizabeth Hutchinson, Executive Officer, Academic Promotions Committee, Human Resources

Winthrop Professor Lee Yong Lim Pharmacy Program, School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences Winthrop Professor Lee Yong Lim’s area of expertise focuses on understanding the mechanisms and constraints of drug delivery across biological barriers, and in developing methodologies to overcome these barriers. The ultimate aim is to deliver the right amount of the drug to the right tissue at the right time. Nano-technology is the main enabling technology for the development of drug delivery systems in her laboratory. She also evaluates the modulation of intestinal drug delivery by dietary components, focusing on spices and citrus fruits in Asian cuisines. Winthrop Professor Lee Yong Lim has played an important role in shaping the Master of Pharmacy program.

Professor Jane Heyworth
Public Health and Environmental Epidemiology, School of Population Health

Professor Heyworth is currently Sub-Dean and Professor, Health Services, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. Her area of research is environmental health and in particular, environmental epidemiology, investigating environmental exposures as risk factors for ill-health, improving the methods by which environmental exposure is assessed and investigating ways in which exposure to harmful pollutants in the environment may be reduced. She has several active and significant international research collaborations with the Centre for Research in Environmental Epidemiology in Barcelona, with air pollution risk-assessment issues in Europe, fresh water supplies and health in Nepal, and maternal and child health research in South East Asia.

To Let
PARIS: Interested in staying in a lovely apartment on an island in the Seine? Choose between seven apartments in inner city Paris for holiday or longer term accommodation – île de la Cité, Île St Louis, Montmartre, Le Marais, Nation, Unesco-Pasteur. Contact Carlotta for arrangements: carlotta@beeparis.com

France – South West: Holiday accommodation. Self-contained apartment in one of the most beautiful Medieval Villages of the Périgord Noir, Belves. Train and all amenities. For more details see website www.belves.info or contact Susana Melo de Howard on 9246 5042 or email: susana@belves.info

Dunsborough: Very comfortable modern, self-contained, fully furnished and equipped apartment set in 3 hectares of natural bush only 2km from Dunsborough town centre. This apartment is ideal at any time of year to unwind next to nature. Enjoy the warmth of the wood heater in winter and the nearby beaches in summer. For further information please phone 0408 485 972 or email jkpurse@westnet.com.au

classified

WANTED
HOUSE SIT OR RENTAL: Margaret and Jim Craig are retired American academics wanting to spend a couple of months in Perth from January 2012. They spent a sabbatical year in Perth in the early 80s and are keen to return for a visit. They would love to house sit, pet sit or garden sit. They would be happy to rent a small apartment/home in the metro area. Please email Jim at jec2272@comcast.net

Classifieds

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The University of Western Australia
A life of experience becomes a career

I used to think that I just liked lots of holidays and a life-style made up of enjoyable activities! But in my role as a career development practitioner, I can see that I was really following some of the current concepts in Career Management theory.

Instead of owning up to being a hedonist, I can rightfully claim that I’ve followed a career journey based on planned happenstance, serendipity and the blurring of boundaries between work and life.

I’ve loved being a part-time Careers Adviser at UWA for the past eight years, working in a team of dedicated and stimulating colleagues. My role incorporates a variety of service delivery and coordination activities from running workshops, seeing individual students, designing promotional materials, maintaining online services and planning new programs. I also work elsewhere as a psychotherapist and enjoy having what is termed a ‘modular career’ which provides a good fit for my interests and personality.

As a child growing up in overcast, drizzly London, I always liked holidays especially if they were in the sunshine. When I left school I had a gap year and lived in Greece, starting off as a nanny and then spending three months with a sleeping bag, staying on a variety of island beaches. Having to be creative with finding food, showers and shelter in the occasional storms helped me develop the resourcefulness needed for future job roles in the not-for-profit community sector.

I enjoyed completing my degree at Bristol University but wasn’t ready for a ‘proper’ career so spent the next six years backpacking across Asia in the winters and spending summers in Australia working as a waitress and selling artefacts and clothes that I’d bought on my travels.

After buying a house in Perth, I was at a new stage of life and wondered what on earth I was going to do as a longer term career. I did a computer course at a community centre and found both the centre and its staff really appealing and decided I’d like to work somewhere similar. I was fortunate to be given work experience and temporary work contracts before getting a Manager’s position at Scarborough SkillShare, an employment and training centre.

That role taught me a lot about being flexible – on any one day I could be meeting with a Ministerial representative, writing a funding submission, developing a program of short courses, cleaning the kitchen or organising tradesmen to prepare premises for new projects.

After leaving this job to go travelling for a couple of years, I had my son and wanted to work on a part-time basis. I continued working in the not-for-profit sector in a variety of contract positions, often with work colleagues who’d become good friends.

At one stage I was asked to work with an organisation which said they would write a contract up whereby I could take two months off (unpaid) every winter. This was an offer too good to refuse and for each year my son was in primary school I took him out for a couple of months and travelled ‘on the cheap’ to undeveloped locations either overseas or in the North West of WA. To this day my son, now 18, complains about his so called ‘holidays’ where there were no shops, no electricity and no other kids to play with!

In the past 15 years, I’ve pursued my interest in psychotherapy and currently work in the fields of drug abuse and childhood trauma.

Looking back I can see that my career path has been based on luck, self-management and taking learning opportunities when they’ve arisen. The common themes throughout all my positions have been that I feel I am doing work that makes a difference to people, allows me to have variety and flexibility on a day-to-day basis and sees me working with colleagues who are interesting, loyal and fun.

It’s true that the closer the match between your values and interests and the work that you do, the more satisfaction you have in both career and life.

Susy Vaughan
Careers Adviser, Careers Centre, Student Services

UWA NEWS

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Designed and printed by UniPrint, UWA
UWA News online: http://uwanews.publishing.uwa.edu.au/