



Editor's Introduction

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*T***This issue of Humanities Australia** again aims to present a small sample of the outstanding research and writing being carried out by humanities scholars and arts practitioners in Australia and internationally. There is a particular focus here on material originally presented at the Academy's annual symposium in November 2014 and on essays about the First World War, to mark the centenary of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli in 1915.

The issue begins with the Academy Address given by our retiring President, Lesley Johnson, on the topic of 'Generosity and the Institutions of the Humanities'. In this warmly received lecture, she examined some of the changes and challenges to three of the institutions that have nurtured work in the humanities over the centuries: the library, the university and the academy. She concluded by urging us to act not only to sustain such generosity but to ensure that it is 'refreshed and reinvigorated to take historical forms appropriate for our times.' During her three years as President, Lesley Johnson provided a model of such generosity, devoting much time and thought to reinvigorating the Academy's international programs and refreshing its links with government bodies, as well as planning some major new initiatives.

A report on one of these, 'Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences: Data for the Future', was also delivered during the Symposium and is included here. As Graeme

Turner explains, this detailed examination of the current health of teaching and research in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences area was inspired by the 2012 report *Health of Australian Science* by the Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb. Undertaken by Graeme Turner and Kylie Brass, the Academy's Policy and Projects Manager, this report provides for the first time, 'comprehensive empirical evidence' of what the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences do, 'the value they bring to the nation, and the conditions in which they do it.'

We are also delighted to include an edited transcript of the public lecture delivered at the Symposium by one of our international speakers, the distinguished author Simon Winchester. The large audience was enthralled and entertained by this account of the genesis of his books, particularly the more recent ones. In 'The Atlantic, the United States and the Pacific: How to Structure Books on Big Things' he emphasised the importance of structure in making this type of non-fiction readable: 'You can write lyrically about a brilliant idea but if the structure is all to breakfast time, people will go to sleep.'

As Simon Winchester noted at the beginning of his address, the 2014 Symposium was entitled 'Look it Up: Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, Atlases'. A comprehensive survey of the histories of these three essential works of reference, 'Transcending their Format: Dictionaries, Encyclopedias and

(above)
Academy
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Atlases', was delivered by Pam Peters, who also helped organise the Symposium. As she demonstrates, the digital age has allowed all three to break out of the constraints of print publication, with 'maps that are scalable and multidimensional, an encyclopedia that is open-ended and open-authored, and dictionaries that are multimodal and multilingual.'

At the 2014 Fellows' Dinner held at the end of the Symposium, the Max Crawford Medal was presented to Dr Tom Murray from Macquarie University. This prestigious award is given biennially to an early-career humanities researcher 'whose publications contribute towards an understanding of their discipline by the general public.' Tom Murray's publications include three feature-length documentaries, the first two of which focused on Indigenous communities. In 'Screen Rites: Getting Close to Death and Dying', he discusses the filming of his third, *Love in Our Own Time* (2013). This was inspired by the very different attitudes to death and dying Murray had observed in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Dying would of course have been very much on the minds of those who kept diaries while serving overseas from 1914–18. In "Diamonds of the Dustheap": Diaries from the First World War', Peter Cochrane discusses some which have been collected by the State Library of New South Wales. These were often begun on the voyage from Australia, and initially recorded the exotic scenes and experiences of foreign travel. Once the soldiers were immersed in battle, however, 'Assumptions changed and with them language. The quaint imperial conviction that war was manly and glorious gave way to the grim certainty that it was "butchery" or "murder" in a vast slaughterhouse.'

Some very different material remains of the War are the subject of Antonio Sagona's 'An Archaeology of the Anzac Battlefield'. He describes the evolution of the JHAS, which he led, where researchers from Australia, New Zealand and Turkey worked together from 2010–14 to study 'the tangle and tactile expressions of the Anzac Battlefield, which is without a doubt the best-preserved First World War battleground.' Among their fascinating findings were remains of the very different types of food consumed by the soldiers. The Anzacs had to

make do with tinned food such as corned beef and jam, while the Turkish soldiers were served a much healthier diet of fresh food, including bread baked on the battlefield in brick ovens.

We are also delighted to include in this issue Mabel Lee's essay on the work of a leading contemporary artist: 'Ah Xian: Challenging the Spatial Limitations of Sculptural Art'. As readers will see from the photographs of some of his artworks, kindly provided by Ah Xian, one of his aims has been to celebrate both the human body and traditional Chinese arts and crafts by bringing them together in highly original combinations. As Mabel Lee notes, 'As a self-taught artist who had grown up during the Cultural Revolution, Ah Xian staunchly defends his own sensibilities and perceptions as an artist who responds to art as a calling: he is the sole arbiter of his aesthetics and art practice.'

This issue also features work by two Honorary Fellows of the Academy, whose poems and novels have won wide recognition and many national and international awards. Les Murray has just published a new collection of poetry, bringing to well over forty the number that have appeared in Australia and overseas. His two poems take us close to the beginnings and ending of a life. In 'When Two Per Cent Were Students', Murray recalls his student days during the 1950s, with their 'Gorgeous expansion of life'. 'The Care', however, movingly confronts the realities of old age, while also celebrating the carers.

Kate Grenville's 'Hospitality' originally was part of her celebrated novel *The Secret River*, now adapted for an ABC TV series, after an earlier very successful stage adaptation. Grenville is known for the dozens of drafts she writes of each of her books; somewhere along the way she decided to cut out this section. We are grateful to her for allowing it to be included here, giving us another glimpse of convict turned settler William Thornhill as he negotiates his new life in Australia.



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