



OTAGO
POLYTECHNIC
Te Kura Matatini ki Otago

Rīpoata Rakahau-ā-Tau.

Otago Polytechnic Research Annual Report

088

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Introduction.

Robin Day

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Welcome to Otago Polytechnic's 2008 Rīpoata Rakahau-ā-Tau/Research Annual Report.

In this report we have highlighted 13 research projects and profiled three researchers as a snapshot of Otago Polytechnic's research activity in 2008.

We have featured a range of research areas from the applied to the cutting edge. We profile Michelle Beevor's controversial exhibition, 'Debbie Does Disney' along with collaborative work in rural nursing practice and a study of sustainability issues in software engineering. This diverse mix is representative of the applied nature of research undertaken at the Polytechnic.

The research focus of Otago Polytechnic in 2008 can be described as a time for fine tuning with evidence of further development of our research strategy. We had a 22 percent growth in the proportion of staff becoming involved in research and a 10 percent increase in the number of peer reviewed or quality assured publications, both positive indicators for the upcoming Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) round in 2012 which we have been planning toward since our initial entry in 2006.

“We had a 22 percent growth in the proportion of staff becoming involved in research...”

Although we did well in the 2006 round with 43 staff achieving PBRF scores and performing near the top of the sector in the funding outcomes we believe the 2012 round will give a better indication of the level of the quality and engagement in applied research at Otago Polytechnic and within the Polytechnic sector as a whole.

“This diverse mix is representative of the applied nature of research undertaken at the Polytechnic.”

I hope you enjoy reading the report and please don't hesitate to contact any of the researchers featured here if you would like to know more, we encourage collaboration. If you wish to see more of our researchers' achievements you can view a list of research publications in the staff profiles on our website.



Dr Robin Day
Director of Research



Caring for the country.

Jean Ross, Raeleen Thompson and Carolyn McIntosh

Four million people are dispersed across 115,000 square kilometres and several islands. And in every small town and remote outpost, babies are born, injuries happen, people get old.

It's little wonder, then, that the health care professionals who work the length and breadth of New Zealand are held in high and loving regard by the communities they serve.

It follows also that Otago Polytechnic, nationally recognised for its strength in nursing and midwifery education, would take a keen interest in the circumstances of rural health workers.

What is more surprising, remarks Jean Ross, who facilitates the rural learning with the Bachelor of Nursing programme at Otago Polytechnic, is the lack of texts that focus on rural nursing in New Zealand. Until 2008, she had relied on research from Australia and the United States to inform students exploring this specialist area of the Polytechnic's Bachelor of Nursing and Master of Nursing degrees. Happily, this was a situation she was perhaps uniquely positioned to address.

Through her Otago Polytechnic role, and her previous post at the University of Otago's Christchurch School of Medicine, Ross has overseen many of the country's masters' theses on rural nursing over the past decade, particularly those undertaken in the South Island. Further, she enjoys strong relationships with her North Island counterparts.

"We knew there was this vast body of quality, peer-reviewed research on rural nursing lingering as theses in institutions' libraries and on graduates' bookshelves. We had a great opportunity to create a resource that was fully grounded in New Zealand perspectives and experiences."

An advertisement in the New Zealand Nursing Journal Kai Tiaki yielded so many responses from students, Ross was required to go back to the Ministry of Health's Innovative Rural Funding scheme, which funded the work, and ask to make the book larger than first planned. "It was a thrilling response. It spoke volumes of the untapped knowledge and enthusiasm among our rural nurses."

The result is *Rural Nursing: Aspects of Practice*. Edited by Ross and with 17 contributors – all current or former nurses – from around New Zealand, it covers issues ranging from theoretical concerns such as how "rural" is defined, through to describing specific clinical experiences such as the impact of tourism on nursing. The textbook can be downloaded through Ministry of Health website: <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/nursing-resources-publications>

The picture it paints is of a network of independent, adaptable, resourceful practitioners. They step up when GPs move out, set up their own systems of support, and never quite switch off from a day's work.

"What perhaps sets the rural nursing experience apart from other kinds of nursing is the absolute embeddedness of a nurse within their community. They may have people talking to them about health issues in the supermarket. They are conscious of what it means to be seen at the pub. It can be at once a very privileged, and very demanding position," comments Ross.

It's a description Otago Polytechnic nursing lecturer Raeleen Thompson can relate to. In her 30 years as a rural nurse, Thompson became something of an honorary mother to her wider community. Quite apart from her day job in a variety of professional nursing roles, Thompson's evenings and weekends were often spent receiving bleeding neighbours, attending to rugby strains as a sports medic for the local rugby club and calling in on worried mothers.

She was also a key point of contact for St John's Ambulance, and later the Fire Service, who would request she attend medical emergencies and accidents in her area.

"It was a thrilling response. It spoke volumes of the untapped knowledge and enthusiasm among our rural nurses."

Her reflections on her role as a volunteer rural nurse comprised her Master's dissertation, and now the chapter, "On call but not rostered" in *Rural Nursing: Aspects of Practice*.

In her paper, Thompson discusses issues from challenges around maintaining personal and professional boundaries – "everyone



Jean Ross



Raeleen Thompson



Carolyn McIntosh

soon came to know I was very discreet" – to the extent that "duty of care" should extend to ad hoc, off-duty nursing services: "I believe very strongly that exactly the same standards should apply".

Thompson acknowledges that, as a young bride, the status of "nurse" gave her immediate value in the community. "Looking after the local rugby team had been the job of one of the other player's mothers. As soon as I became engaged to be married into the community, she eyed me up instantly as her successor."

Over three decades, the expectations and accountability of nurses shifted significantly. Yet nurses in her role still operate under minimal guidelines. When she attended an emergency involving a close friend, who subsequently died, Thompson came to realise just how exposed she was through her practice, emotionally as well as professionally.

"At an informal debriefing I was able to defend all the decisions I had made. But I was grieving too. It was a terrible time."

While Thompson never sought accolades for what she describes as her "invisible work", her community was not so unobservant. Shortly before she moved away from the area, she attended a Lions' International community event, and was stunned to realise that, on stage, the president was talking about her – and about to present her with a Community Service Award. "His comment was: 'the only person in this room who does not realise how valued you are is you.' I was very touched." Her contribution to rugby was recognised when she won the Otago Rugby Lady of the Year in 2001 and was awarded life membership to the rugby club prior to her leaving the district.

"But I saw it as just a part of living in a small community. People need to look after each other," continues Thompson. "And it was very hard to say 'no.'"

The challenges of working in isolation and fulfilling multiple roles are familiar to midwifery lecturer Carolyn McIntosh. Like their nursing colleagues, midwives routinely find themselves as the link between families and communities and the medical establishment.

"What perhaps sets the rural nursing experience apart from other kinds of nursing is the absolute embeddedness of a nurse within their community."

Yet, unlike nurses, rural midwives generally practice autonomously, as self-employed business people responsible for a caseload of expectant mothers and new babies.

Given their independence and remote locations – sometimes attending labours several hours drive from the nearest hospital – having confidence in their own skills and judgment is critical.

"How do rural midwives ensure they stay abreast of best practice?" McIntosh wanted to know. Her query developed into a study into knowledge-sharing among rural midwives, resulting in the conference paper: "Wise women's web: Rural midwives' communities of practice" presented at the International Confederation of Midwives' Congress in Scotland.

McIntosh conducted several focus groups with midwives throughout the South Island, and found a community of women who were "highly active in seeking information, sharing knowledge and taking up the opportunities available to them."

It may have been serendipity that the right to practice autonomously as a midwife in New Zealand coincided with the advent of the internet, but it's a match made in heaven: "Online journals and discussion forums are extremely well used, especially for those in the most remote locations," McIntosh reports. Otago Polytechnic has taken steps to facilitate this further, establishing www.midwiferyjunction.co.nz specifically as a knowledge sharing and discussion site for New Zealand midwives.

But frequency, intensity and variety of information-gathering opportunities all matter. "For those who are more easily able to attend workshops, serve on committees, and meet with other health professionals, there is a cumulative effect, with a huge amount of cross-fertilisation of information from one forum to another."

McIntosh says that rural midwives jump at the chances to attend workshops in their areas, and to liaise with obstetric specialists passing through their regions. She supports some moves by educators to "bring workshops to the midwives". However, she acknowledges the difficulty in delivering regular training opportunities in all corners of New Zealand.

"What would really help are means to support rural midwives to leave their areas to attend events in nearby centres. Efforts have been made to provide locum services, but it has not been easy to implement.

"It's quite a difficult issue. Midwives are very tied to their areas; pregnancies can be unpredictable, and no midwife wants to be several hours away when the pager goes off."

Weight: only a number?

Annemarie Jutel

Describing overweight as a disease comes from believing that numbers are more reliable than people.

Weight is only a number, but a very powerful one, according to medical sociologist Associate Professor Annemarie Jutel.

Jutel has analysed how weight is used to measure health and contributed a chapter – ‘Doctor’s Orders: Diagnosis, Medicalisation and the Exploitation of Anti-Fat Stigma’ – to the 2008 book, *Biopolitics and the ‘obesity epidemic’: Governing bodies*.

She says that considering “overweight” as a disease is a new approach. “I am not talking about obesity. I am talking about overweight, or simply being heavier than a statistical norm.”



“Describing overweight as a disease comes from believing that numbers are more reliable than people. We think that weight tells us about food intake and activity level. But, it doesn’t really. It just tells us how much people weigh, ignores important principles about populations and individuals, and marginalises people who are heavy.”

Jutel has a specific interest in how society goes about labelling things in the world, including disease.

“Naming diseases tells us a lot about what cultures value. For example, in the nineteenth century, there was a disease called ‘drapetomania’, which was the tendency of slaves to run away.”

History also tells us that definitions of “overweight” change with alarming regularity.

“In 1942, a person 1.7 metres tall weighing 73 kilograms had an ‘ideal’ weight; by 1959, the same weight was called ‘desirable’; in 1985, ‘acceptable’; and, in 2000 ‘overweight’.”

But Jutel says measuring weight has harmful effects, like making people scared of going to the doctor or being reluctant to stop smoking for fear of putting on weight. The fear of their own doctor’s judgment is, unfortunately, founded.

“We have medicalised and turned overweight into a disease, when it’s simply a statistic comparing us to some norm.”

A 2001 study of doctors’ automatic response to their obese patients found they thought these patients were “bad and lazy”. A separate study found health professionals thought heavy people were less reliable and trustworthy than thin.

And, because scales are prevalent in most households, they enable self-diagnosis and generate an exploitable condition, fruitful to the economic interest of a range of product and service providers.

“We have medicalised and turned overweight into a disease, when it’s simply a statistic comparing us to some norm,” says Jutel. “We’d do better to focus on healthy eating and exercise, without this reliance on the scales. It would likely result in better outcomes, and less marginalisation.”

Tip of the iceberg.

Brigid Casey

Intuitively people think there is a positive relationship between tipping and service quality. That’s not true. The evidence in the literature does not back that up at all.

Please don’t tip generously – or at all, for that matter – pleads School of Applied Business lecturer Brigid Casey.

Since Casey undertook a master’s project exploring tipping behaviour in New Zealand a decade ago, “a huge amount of confusion” has grown up around the practice. Now, in light of an increasing tendency within the hospitality sector to cash in on this cultural and economic phenomenon, Casey was compelled to re-examine the international literature on tipping and service management.

The results, which Casey presented at the New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Conference, makes what she sees as a strong case against adding a few bucks to the bill.

“Intuitively people think there is a positive relationship between tipping and service quality. That’s not true. The evidence in the literature does not back that up at all.”

What the studies do show, however, is that tipping frequently causes problems in the workplace and has negative consequences for managing tourism and hospitality services.

“Managers may feel tipping is desirable because it relieves them of some of their responsibility to compensate and motivate staff,” says Casey. “However, this may result in staff feeling undervalued by the organisation. The hidden costs may be substantial when linked to dysfunctional behaviour such as cheating and pilferage, high staff turnover, absenteeism, tip solicitation and low employee effort.”

But if tipping is acknowledged as part of how workers are paid, then it’s a system that’s rife with inequities. “Employee effort and skill are not always matched by the reward,” she says.

Casey points out that the world’s poorest workers are those in tipping industries, and believes tipping actually becomes a barrier to professionalising those careers.

She notes that tipping is not normal in egalitarian societies such as Finland and Norway, and was not widely accepted in New Zealand until recently, “possibly because a servant class was not established and immigrants were happy to leave the class system behind. This makes us culturally unique in this respect. It’s not something we should give up lightly.”



Ironically, continues Casey, tipping is taking off in New Zealand when it is being argued elsewhere that services may be managed better without it. “Tipping is unlikely to disappear but service managers could benefit from a greater understanding of the complex issues around tipping, especially how it can affect their workplace and influence customer satisfaction.”

Compassion: caught not taught.

Colette Blockley and Maxine Alterio

I was surprised at how many negative experiences patients had. I've invested so much of my life in nursing and nursing education, it was upsetting to hear what patients had to say.

Seventeenth century French writer Jean de la Bruyere once wrote: "The most difficult part is to give. Then why not add a smile?"

Four centuries later, nursing lecturer Colette Blockley finds herself asking the same question.

Blockley's master's project considered how first-time adult patients – unexpectedly landed in hospital with an acute illness – found their experience.

"They often arrive at hospital without a toothbrush or a clean pair of knickers, it's that sudden. The unexpected nature of the experience has got to affect their recovery rates. It's got to be a more stressful experience."

"You can tickle someone's toes while you take their temperature. Or give them a wink while you tend to them."

She interviewed 12 patients – five male and seven female – aged 22 to 86 years old, including looking at the patient-nurse relationship. Her study was published in *Nursing Praxis* in New Zealand last year, as 'Patients' perspectives on the importance of relationships during first-time acute hospitalisation', co-authored by Staff Development Coordinator (Teaching and Learning) Maxine Alterio.

"I was surprised at how many negative experiences patients had. I've invested so much of my life in nursing and nursing education, it was upsetting to hear what patients had to say."

The two most striking quotes from the paper demonstrate the opposite ends of the spectrum. A 51-year-old male factory worker, admitted with acute chest pain, described a particular nurse as competent, but curt and bossy – "no smile, no anything". Meanwhile, a 58-year-old female clerical worker, in hospital with campylobacter, recalled a nurse who bought her a warmed blanket, without being asked. "With a wink, she pulled back the cover and said 'this will keep you warm'. And I thought, how lovely."

Blockley says that, although the health dollar is a finite dollar and there is undoubtedly a shortage of staff, nurses can do two things at once.



Colette Blockley and Maxine Alterio

"You can tickle someone's toes while you take their temperature. Or give them a wink while you tend to them."

However, she believes that compassion is "caught, not taught". That is to say, nurses who have experienced hospital firsthand or had a loved one in the hospital system are those who appreciate the big difference a small gesture can make.

Passing through.

Sharleen Howison

Poor pay is not an incentive to stay in the industry, or in Queenstown. It's a link that's not hard to make, but unfortunately, many businesses just don't want to make it.

Queenstown's hum and buzz and cosmopolitan flavour is thanks in no small part to the droves of young international travellers who decide to stay a while, working in the town's countless tourism and hospitality operations.

But while the town relies on the "transient workers" to supply a much-needed labour force, there's no doubt their temporary and whimsical nature creates some headaches for Queenstown business-owners who face constant recruitment, training, retention and quality management challenges. It's been an employee's market, with zero per cent

unemployment in recent years. One company experienced a 300 per cent turnover in staff in one year.

It was in this context that the Queenstown Lakes District Council asked School of Applied Business principal lecturer Sharleen Howison to conduct a study, seeking practical advice for Queenstown employers on how to better manage their temporary labour force.

Howison's approach involved in-depth interviews, survey data and workplace observations, exploring the experiences of both managers and temporary staff across a range of tourism and hospitality operations. Her results, presented at the New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference, reveal scope for improvement, innovation and the need to face some truths.

"There's a lot that could be done in terms of good business practices that just are not taking place," comments Howison. She's talking about good internal communication, employee reward schemes, and even going the extra mile to help staff meet uniform, dry cleaning and even travel and accommodation needs.

Howison also encourages businesses to think laterally about staff training, such as providing English language support, and making better use of internship

"There's a lot that could be done in terms of good business practices that just are not taking place."

schemes such as those enabled by Otago Polytechnic. She adds that employers with positive relationships with agencies such as the Immigration Service can also reduce significant stress faced by temporary staff.

And then there's the elephant in the room: pay. "It's without a doubt the biggest criticism both international and New Zealand workers have. Living costs in Queenstown are high. Staff put in big hours, they work weekends, they're the public face of the business – and you get what you pay for. Poor pay is not an incentive to stay in the industry, or in Queenstown."

"It's a link that's not hard to make," says Howison. "But unfortunately, many businesses just don't want to make it."



Modern mythmaker.

Anita DeSoto

All of my work explores human frailty, our vulnerability. I like to play around with paradox, so I like my artworks to be beautiful, but they can sometimes be affronting and unpleasant at the same time.



Anita DeSoto's fascination with the myths, dreams and outright lies that people live and die by is evident in the titles of both her recent exhibitions: 'Cross my Heart' at Milford Galleries, and 'Pie in the Sky' at Oedipus Rex Gallery.

The Otago Polytechnic School of Art drawing lecturer's emotionally charged and finely detailed paintings are populated by a cast of religious martyrs, tortured lovers and souls in limbo who seem to exist in two worlds at

once – one a mythical realm in which the laws of physics don't apply, and the other the world of flesh, pain, pleasure, sex and death.

"Disappointment with love" is one of the major themes of her recent works, DeSoto says. "All of my work explores human frailty, our vulnerability. I like to play around with paradox, so I like my artworks to be beautiful, but they can sometimes be affronting and unpleasant at the same time."

The paintings *Holy Smoke I and II* delve into this conflict, depicting a male and a female nude, respectively. Together they are archetypal lovers, and their idealized, muscular bodies seem poised between ecstasy and agony. The female figure clutches at a chest wound and the male's hand is punctured by the stem of a rose.

In *Holy Water*, the relationship between the beautiful and the affronting is playfully presented in the form of an angelic cherub who urinates over the edge of his celestial pedestal.

De Soto draws a great deal of inspiration from the iconography of the past. "My technique is very much based on a renaissance way of painting," she says. "I'm a bit lonely in the modern world in that sense.

"I like to draw on religion and on old myths, and this ties in with that, referencing the history of art where these myths are recorded."

There aren't many of us out there doing it – especially figurative painting. I like to draw on religion and on old myths, and this ties in with that, referencing the history of art where these myths are recorded."

It is perhaps another paradox of her work that with their focus on the fantastical and surreal, DeSoto's paintings also work to draw attention to issues, ideas and emotions that are very real indeed.

Artwork: Neither here nor there



Programming solutions to puzzling problems.

Dale Parsons

I just wanted to give students an opportunity to get away from the really frustrating, syntactical problems that beginner programmers often have.



Practice makes perfect. It is true of learning a musical instrument or a foreign language, and it is no less true of learning to program computers, says Dale Parsons, Principal Information Technology Lecturer at Otago Polytechnic.

"Unfortunately," she says, "practice exercises for programming basics can be very tedious, making it difficult to motivate students."

This was a problem that Parsons had experienced for years in her role as a teacher, and 'Parsons' Programming Puzzles', the solution she devised, has become a runaway success, now known by IT educators around the globe.

Essentially, Parsons' Programming Puzzles is an automated tool that attempts to provide the benefits of rote learning without the tedium. Rather than writing a code from scratch, students create simple programs by dragging and dropping whole lines of code from an array of possible choices and placing them in the correct order.

"I just wanted to give students an opportunity to get away from the really frustrating, syntactical problems that beginner programmers often have," Parsons says. "I was trying to get them to see the big picture, hoping that the little problems would fall into place once they could see the forest for the trees."

The learning tool went down well in the classroom, she says, and she has spent the last two years modifying and refining it.

What she didn't expect was that Parsons' Programming Puzzles would be picked up by overseas IT examiners and transformed into a means of evaluating students. She saw her name unexpectedly referenced in the program notes for an international conference and realized that the idea was becoming influential around the world.

Now Parsons is playing a research role in a major international study aimed at measuring the effectiveness of Parsons' puzzles as exam questions.

"I was trying to get them to see the big picture, hoping that the little problems would fall into place once they could see the forest for the trees."

"It's sort of embarrassing," she says, "because I never intended my puzzles to be called 'Parsons' puzzles' – it just worked well for the first paper I produced, with the alliteration and all. Then when other people took up the idea, they started calling it a 'Parsons'." But as her learning tool continues to take on a life of its own, she cheerfully concedes that it's probably a bit late for a name change now.

Students making valuable contribution.

Sian Griffiths

This research demonstrates what is possible if you harness the energy of a committed student and combine it with the practical and theoretical experience of a supervisor.

Quality postgraduate and honours students can make an important contribution to New Zealand-specific research, says occupational therapy senior lecturer Sian Griffiths.

Griffiths was herself an occupational therapist in the United Kingdom, before moving to New Zealand ten years ago to take up a lecturing position. She says that while many of the issues raised in New Zealand are similar to those raised in international literature, it is important to consider the local context. And, when it comes to contributing to locally-focused research, quality students can play a significant role.

This belief was recently reinforced for Griffiths, by the work of an honours student she supervised. The resulting paper, 'Sensory strategies: Practical support to empower families' by Elizabeth Dunstan, was published in the *New Zealand Journal of Occupational Therapy* last year. It investigated the experiences of an autistic child's family, which was using a home-based treatment of sensory integration strategies – a form of occupational therapy where exercises are used to strengthen the child's sense of touch, balance and body-related spatial awareness. It is useful for children who are anxious in sensory overload situations, such as new places, among crowds and in classrooms.

Dunstan's qualitative research involved a family of four children – aged 15, 11, 5 and 4 – where the two youngest were autistic. The study focused on the treatment of the youngest and aimed to address two questions: what the family thought about using sensory strategies at home and the consequent impact on them as a family unit.

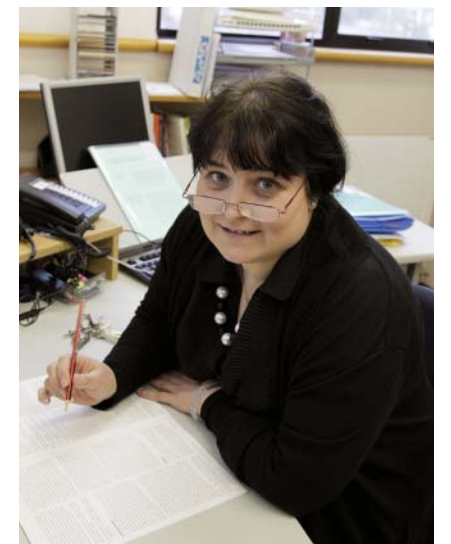
"By presenting a family's retrospective account, the paper could contribute to a greater understanding among occupational therapists about how to best meet the needs of children and their families."

Griffiths says students are willing to look at things with broad and open minds.

"The subject matter required that the student had to work with the parents, siblings and the child, including gaining consent. In this instance, as well as the parents consenting to the children being involved in the study, the student wanted to develop age-appropriate letters of consent and information sheets for the children, which is actually quite novel.

"The research demonstrates what is possible if you harness the energy of a committed student and combine it with the practical and theoretical experience of a supervisor."

"Students are willing to look at things with broad and open minds."



Michele Beevors does Disney.

Michele Beevors

I wanted the works to be aggressive, rather than just active. I wanted them to be angry. I wanted them to be about the realities of life on the planet for women, rather than some fantasy.

Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy are decked out in camouflage gear and they are baying for blood. The little mermaid is mutilating herself, with a cleaver, no less. Bashful is not a name one would give to any of the seven dwarfs, and Beauty has become the Beast.

If you guessed that Michele Beevors, Head of Sculpture at the Otago Polytechnic School of Art, was unlikely to have been auditioning for a position in the Disney design team with her recent 'Debbie Does Disney' exhibition, you would be right.

The larger-than-life painted fibreglass sculptures that formed the Dunedin Public Art Gallery show are a pointed critique of what Beevors describes as the yawning gap between the company's popular fictions and the lives of actual women.

"There was a big revival in the 1980s with films like *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast*," says Beevors, "and it got me thinking about the passive nature of the heroines, how those stereotypes are still being promoted by Disney, and how irrelevant that seemed to little girls alive today."

"I wanted the works to be aggressive, rather than just active. I wanted them to be angry. I wanted them to be about the realities of life on the planet for women, rather than some fantasy. So they have motherhood issues and they have self-loathing issues."

Of course, these sculptures are also very funny. It is no doubt difficult for audiences to suppress either their laughter or their shock as they first gaze upon 'How the West Was Won', in which Jasmine (from

"You get the joke and then you realise why you've got the joke, and you're sort of horrified at yourself for getting it."

the film *Aladdin*) proudly holds up the decapitated head of former US President George W Bush.

Beevors believes that humour is an important weapon in an artist's arsenal. "Humour, for me, provides a way of talking about really difficult, problematic subjects easily," she says. "You get the joke and then you realise why you've got the joke, and you're sort of horrified at yourself for getting it."

Another clear theme in Beevors' work is the corporate ownership of popular culture referents, but 'Debbie Does Disney' appears to have escaped the attentions of the notoriously litigious company. She slyly expresses a certain regret over this: "Disney doesn't know about my work, despite my best efforts..."

Artwork to right: *someday my prince will come*
Artwork to left: *cinderella annorexia*





Dr Khyla Russell and Justine Camp

Researcher profiles.

Khyla Russell and Justine Camp

The relationship between Kaitohutohu Dr Khyla Russell and lecturer Justine Camp is twofold. Not only are they academics who respect each other's research, they are also mother and daughter.

As Otago Polytechnic Kaitohutohu, Russell oversees the embedding of the Treaty of Waitangi across the Polytechnic, including the incorporation of its Memorandum of Understanding with the Ara-i-Te-uru Papatipu Rūnaka into day-to-day operations.

In addition, she advises researchers on Māori research within the Polytechnic and also plays a research and consultancy role herself outside of the organisation.

Russell came to academia relatively late in life, realising that she missed "the piece of paper" when it came to recognising her years of teaching te reo and tikaka. Her first degree was a Bachelor of Arts, studied extramurally through Massey University. It was followed soon after by a postgraduate diploma and then a PhD from the University of Otago.

Her research is based on reclaiming the true Māori meaning of words, which have been redefined by others over previous decades.

"For Māori, landscape is us – we are of it, not just something that sits on it."

"Nearly everything we read about ourselves was written by someone else and it got redefined. In doing so – deliberately or inadvertently – their versions removed intended meanings of our words. A striking moment came when my granddaughter, Takiwai, went to kindy and pointed out a tī kouka, only to be told 'No it wasn't, it was a cabbage tree'."

That incident decided Russell on her PhD topic – Landscape; Perspectives of Kai Tahu, I mua, Aiane, A muri Ake – articulating her understanding of indigenous epistemology.

"I take a term that others have made theirs, and make it ours again. One example of that is 'landscape'. The interviewees in Britain held England's traditional definition of landscape's artistic representations. For Māori, landscape is us – we are of it, not just something that sits on it."

Russell presented her research at Oxford last year, as a paper titled 'Two cultures: Balances, choices and effects between traditional and mainstream education'.

Also at Otago Polytechnic, Camp works for both the School of Occupational Therapy and the Treaty and Education Training Unit, where she teaches te reo and tikaka Māori.

Inspired by her mother's focus and ability, she considered academia as a logical path for herself. "Mum changed our expectations. It became 'expected' that we would go to University. That wasn't the case before."

Camp was 20 years old with a four-month-old child, when she embarked on her undergraduate degree at the University of Otago. Her initial goal was to eventually become a teacher, but she soon found it was Community and Family Studies that attracted her.

When it came to her master's thesis, the whānau's overwhelming susceptibility to type 2 diabetes prompted her to use the opportunity to make a real and practical difference.

"Our family is riddled with it. Of my grandfather's generation of 15, all but one died of type 2 diabetes."

Camp's theory was that the information was out there – that the chances of suffering type 2 diabetes are reduced significantly if you make sensible lifestyle choices – yet people still don't make the changes.

She believes that introducing whānau into what was previously a doctor-patient relationship increases the chances of an individual making meaningful changes.

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"I'm at a point where I believe I can impact some change. I'm about to finalise my PhD topic, which continues on from the work of my master's."

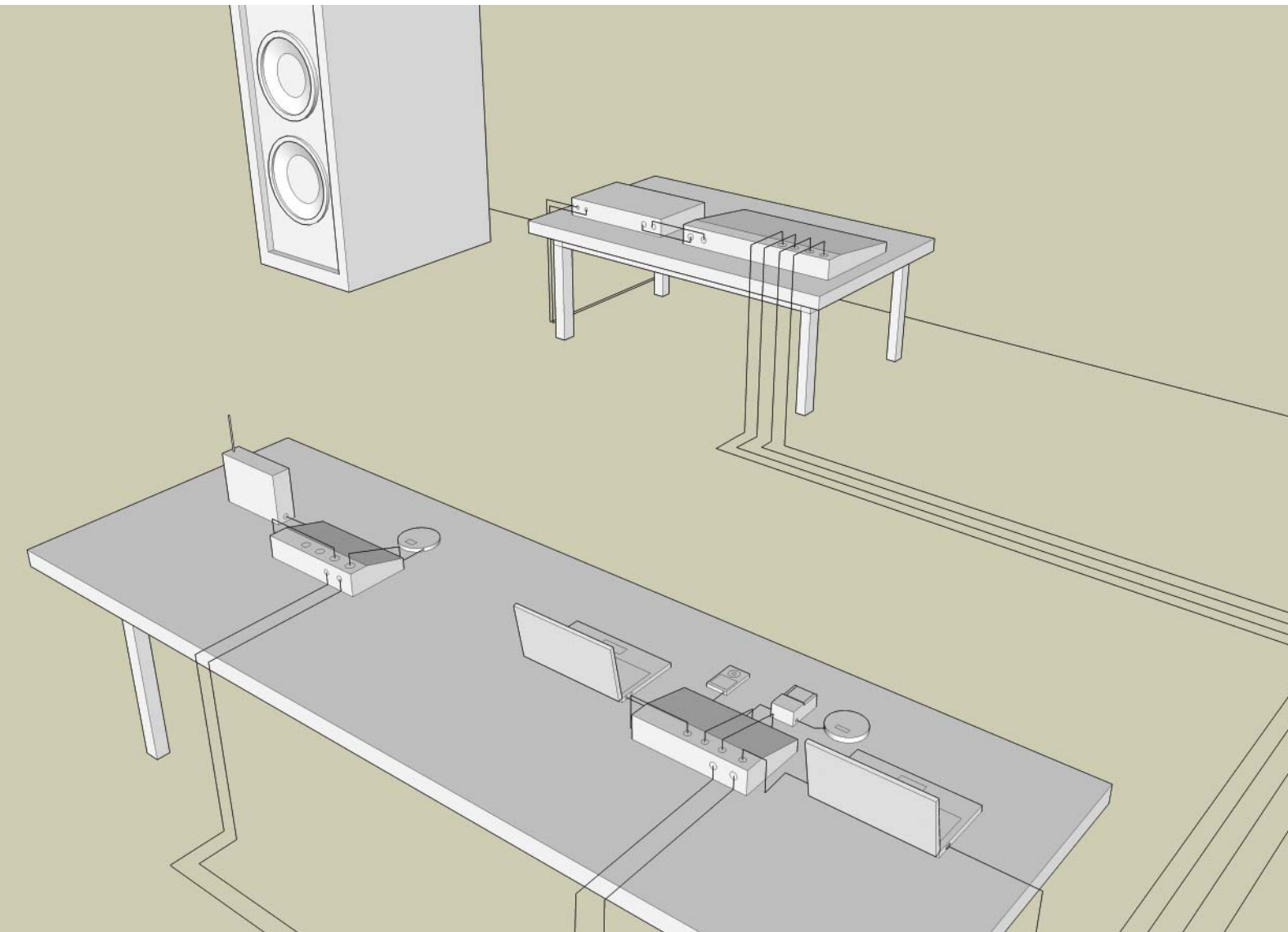
While the mother and daughter's research topics appear to share little in common, they have both been involved in a project called "SimPā" – a technology-based means of telling Māori stories. The project, carried out in partnership with Ara-i-Te-uru Papatipu Rūnaka, is designed to create learning environments and Māori narratives relevant to the 21st century.

The pair's approach to research is also similar. Neither are confined by the boundaries of their specified research area – they are prepared to let their research take them to places they did not anticipate.

Ultimately, Camp is steadily working towards a career as a full-time researcher and therefore concentrating on her PhD in the immediate future. Dr Russell, meanwhile, is looking forward to the near prospect of a research-rich "retirement".

Moving paintings.

Nathan Thompson



psn PA setup 4

I wanted to make videos that were more like the process of remembering films rather than actual movies.

Nathan Thompson could be described as somewhat of a renaissance man. The Otago Polytechnic communication design lecturer has practised as a painter, animator, commercial designer, musician and filmmaker.

So with his recent series of short experimental films, exhibited in collaboration with fellow Dunedin artist Kim Pieters at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Thompson was able to bring many different talents to bear on a single project. He describes the finished works as "moving paintings" or "audio-visual objects".

One of the inspirations for these short films was the idea of viewing cinema through the distorted lens of human memory, Thompson says. "I became interested in the way that I

"One of the inspirations for these short films was the idea of viewing cinema through the distorted lens of human memory."

was remembering films that I hadn't seen for years, which had become boiled down to a few fragmented scenes in my mind. I wanted to make films that were more like that process of remembering than like the actual movies themselves."

"The shots talk to one another in a very dreamlike way."

In one of these films, an enormous bunch of balloons floats slowly down a hallway, seemingly of its own accord. There is a person carrying the balloons, of course, but they are obscured from the camera's line of sight. The scene is inter-cut with other images, a set of outdoor speakers, a car and a trailer, a building illuminated by mysterious lights.

"The shots talk to one another in a very dreamlike way," Thompson says. "Because they are not really telling a story, the viewer is forced to concoct a story of their own."

Thompson is also a guitarist and electronic music producer, and he and Pieters have worked together in the past as musicians. His experimental films began as backdrops for live musical performances and only recently evolved into stand-alone art-works.



And true to his ambidextrous nature, it is music, rather than film, that is currently the main focus of Thompson's creative energies. As well as creating the audio soundtracks for his short films, he performed with a group of musicians at the International Symposium on Electronic Art in Singapore last year called 'PSN Electronic' and continues to perform in Dunedin and elsewhere under the pseudonym 'Expansion Bay'.

Researcher profile.

Sally Pairman

Dr Sally Pairman is a woman who has the vision to see what is possible and the energy to make it happen.

And as Otago Polytechnic's Group Manager Health and Community, Head of the School of Midwifery and Chair of the Midwifery Council of New Zealand, the pairing of vision and energy is a well-utilised combination. Her significant contributions were recognised in 2008, when she was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

Pairman's first degree was a Bachelor of Arts, immediately followed by nursing training. It was during her final year she discovered midwifery, attracted by its professional autonomy and the strength of the midwives themselves. So it was off to London to combine OE with 18 months study at St Thomas's Hospital.

"I also got into the midwifery politics and I've never got away from it. It's exciting and there's always more to be done."

"It included placement in the community and I loved that idea. I would actually ride my bike to visit women in their homes."

Upon returning to Dunedin, she practised for two years, before being shoulder-tapped for a teaching position at the then-fledgling School of Midwifery. For the next 10 years, she continued to practise midwifery alongside her teaching responsibilities. "I also got into the midwifery politics and I've never got away from it. It's exciting and there's always more to be done."

Pairman was instrumental in the development of midwifery as a profession separate from nursing. Otago Polytechnic delivered one of the first separate midwifery courses for nurses and then, after the 1990 Nurses' Amendment Act which reinstated midwifery autonomy, it offered the first direct-entry midwifery degree programme.

A history of the New Zealand College of Midwives, co-written by Pairman, will be released later this year and she is one of four editors of the successful Australasian midwifery textbook, *Midwifery: Preparation for Practice*, currently being updated for a second edition.

Internationally, she is Co-Chair of the Regulatory Standing Committee for International Confederation of Midwives. "It's all about ensuring there are well-educated midwives practising to their full scope, and there are systems enabling them to do that – so women get good service."

"It's all about ensuring there are well-educated midwives practising to their full scope, and there are systems enabling them to do that – so women get good service."



Of dogs and men.

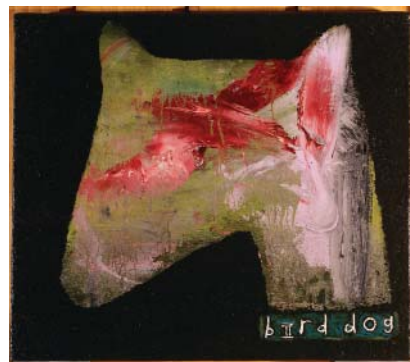
Peter Cleverley

I want to remind people of what I will term as 'all animal equality', that every species has an important place in this world and that the human is no more superior and has indeed lost touch with nature comparatively.

Peter Cleverley recalls a conversation he once had with a veterinarian friend who told him, "One can tell a lot about the human animal by the way we treat other animals."

Cleverley, who lectures in painting at the Otago Polytechnic School of Art, is discussing the genesis of the evocative, symbolic, semi-figurative paintings he exhibited in 2008 at his 'Sea Dogs' show in Christchurch and his 'Transitions' show in Auckland.

The paintings that featured in these shows reference landscape, language, symbols and architectural forms, but the only figure that appears is the dog, often in facial profile at the centre of the canvas, staring directly at the viewer.



"My work has always been about the human condition," Cleverley says, "and recently I've taken to including dogs in the composition of my paintings; they do not represent us exactly, but they represent some of our politics and some of the things that we are about."

"I want to remind people of what I will term as 'all animal equality', that every species has an important place in this world and that the human is no more superior and has indeed lost touch with nature comparatively."

A continuing interest for Cleverley has been finding ways to subvert or revitalise portraiture and shift away from what he calls "the ubiquitous nature of figurative painting." He cites as influences Georg Baselitz, who painted the heads of his subjects upside down, and Jorg Immendorff, who included himself in his paintings, but in the form of a monkey.

His works evoke a tension between belonging and homelessness, identity and alienation. In *Navigator*, for instance, a dog's head floats in a sea of black at the centre of the painting, circled by a wrought iron fence. It seems both protected and trapped within this boundary. The universalising symbols of an anchor, crucifix and coffin remind the viewer that the painting is also about them.

"... they do not represent us exactly, but they represent some of our politics and some of the things that we are about."

Cleverley says that whatever specific imagery he uses, he hopes to draw attention to universal questions. "These paintings are about life and sex and death," he says. "These are such huge subjects that you have to limit yourself in what you show, but I don't think an artist can ever talk about too much in their lifetime."

Artwork to right: *Navigator* 2008
Artwork to left: *bird dog*



Learning from nature.

Samuel Mann and Lesley Smith

With the term 'software ecosystem' suddenly gaining prominence along with the recognition of green computing, we suspect people are putting two and two together and getting five.

Neural networks, genetic algorithms, computers "infected" by viruses – biological metaphors are often used by computer scientists to explain their models and to inspire new designs and developments. And recently a new metaphor has begun to gain traction: the 'software ecosystem'. It's used to describe a group of software businesses operating within a single, interconnected system.

The increasing ubiquity of environmental metaphors in computing literature is of great interest to Samuel Mann, Associate Professor in Information Technology and Lesley Smith, Head of the School of Information Technology at Otago Polytechnic, both



Lesley Smith and Associate Professor Samuel Mann

of whom have been engaged in various research projects looking at ways to make computing a more sustainable practice.

Their paper 'Metaphors for Sustainability in Software Engineering', which they presented at the National Advisory Committee on Computing Qualifications Conference in 2008, explores the question of what ecology might have to teach software developers about designing more efficient, sustainable products.

"In the engineering fields there is quite a lot of bio-mimicry," Mann points out. "People design spacecraft that have wings that open like a butterfly's wing unfurling, for instance. The idea is to see whether we can find useful models for software engineering in nature, and if we find them, to ask 'Is it likely to lead to more sustainable outcomes?'"

"People are using this language, which indicates that they are thinking about the environment and about ecosystems," says Smith, "but they are not always following through with their processes. Our paper is a push to move to the next stage and start incorporating this information."

Mann and Smith say that one of the key aims of their paper is to encourage further dialogue about the connections between the worlds of environmental and computer science. They are both excited about software's potential to help businesses reduce their ecological

footprints by creating greater efficiencies in the way they use resources. "The bigger question is whether biomimicry could provide a metaphor to transform software development – a super-system metaphor."

They also share a concern about the negative consequences of wasteful software development. Mann points to the iPod as an example of a product in need of a paradigm shift. "It would be great to be able to say here's my iPod, it's got all the latest software on it, but the actual thing that I'm holding – this was my grandfather's iPod. We need to start moving towards that sort of thinking."

"The idea is to see whether we can find useful models for software engineering in nature, and if we find them, to ask 'Is it likely to lead to more sustainable outcomes?'"

Calling home.

Liz Bryce

When we formed Activelayers, one of our provocations was the question; 'what can we do to subvert this technology right now?'

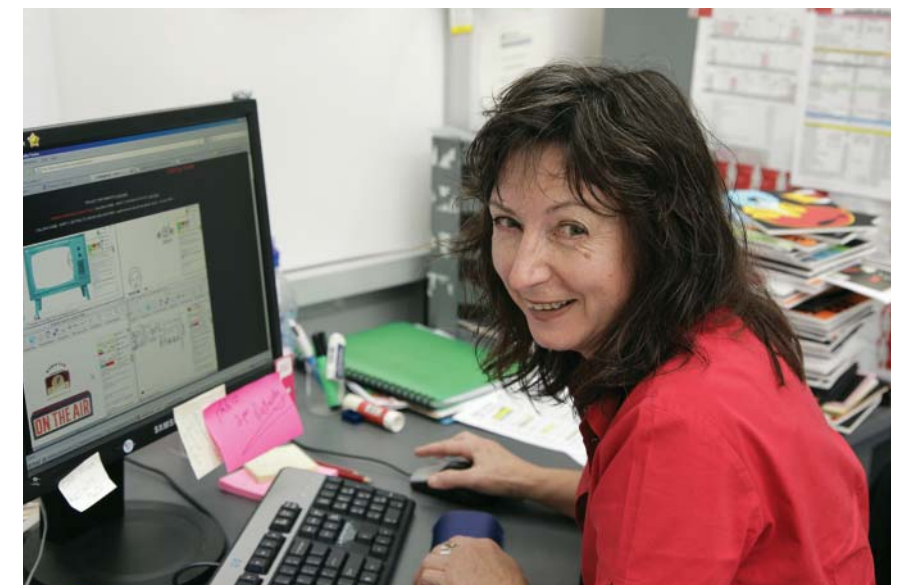
What happens when you take four different artists, working from four corners of the globe, with backgrounds in sculpture, design, theatre, film and dance, collaborating on a project that is devised and performed on the internet and broadcast live on four virtual 'stages' simultaneously?

You get the quintessentially twenty-first century artwork and interactive experiment that is 'Calling Home'. It was the work of 'Activelayers', an art collective Liz Bryce, Creative Studies lecturer at Otago Polytechnic, formed with three other artists that she had met online, with the aim of "discovering a mode of cyber performance that satisfies our need for the 'real' – the interactive".

'Calling Home' is the name given to three separate shows that were performed live by the group in 2008. During these performances, each of their creators controlled a separate 'stage' from their various locations around the world. The show featured a script, virtual actors, sound, text and live animation.

"When we formed Activelayers, one of our provocations was the question; 'what can we do to subvert this technology right now?'" says Bryce. "We got particularly good feedback from people who understood how much we had actually challenged the software and challenged the medium of working online."

She also points out that it was not only technological boundaries that the group was trying to push, but also the boundaries of the artists themselves. The final project was shaped by an unusually collaborative process, with each artist creating a video that was then passed onto another artist to re-develop and expand.



"We were all very independent people," she says, "very used to controlling our own art practices. And on reflection, I think that we created a kind of democracy. Usually even in a democracy there is someone in charge overall, which we didn't have. And that can be quite disturbing for some people."

Activelayers continues to be active, and Bryce is also working on her own projects, stimulated by her interest in the possibilities for artistic interaction afforded by new technologies. She is particularly interested in incorporating cellphones into her work, demonstrating that in the hands of an artist, even the most plainly functional tools can become a means of expression.

"We were all very independent people, very used to controlling our own art practices. And on reflection, I think that we created a kind of democracy."





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