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MONTAGE

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM MONASH UNIVERSITY

# Aboriginal youth crisis in Victoria

A Monash study has found that the number of arrests of Aboriginal youths is continuing to rise at an alarming rate.

A paper written by Koorie Research Centre research fellow Mr Michael Mackay shows a 46.4 per cent jump in the rate of police processing of Aboriginal youth between 1993/94 and 1994/95.

In contrast, the increase in the rate of police processing of non-Aboriginal youth in the same period rose by only 4.6 per cent.

The paper, *Victorian Justice System Fails ATSI Youth,* shows that young Aboriginal alleged offenders were less likely to be cautioned for offences than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, and Aboriginal youth were much more likely to be arrested for alleged offences than non-Aboriginals in all categories of criminal offences.

The research is the first comprehensive survey of the contact between Aboriginal youth and the criminal justice system in Victoria since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The commission found that early contact with the criminal justice system was a common factor in the lives of the Aborigines who died in custody and recommended that police limit their powers of arrest when dealing with Aboriginal youth.

Director of Monash's Koorie Research Centre Ms Sharon Firebrace said the pattern of an over-zealous use of arrest procedures by police against Aboriginal juveniles was found in the research to be evident even in the most minor cases.

"These figures lend credence to fears in the Aboriginal community that adult incarceration levels are set to increase dramatically in the next few years," she said.

The Royal Commission recommended that breaking the cycle of arrest of juveniles was an integral part of reducing adult imprisonment.

Ms Firebrace said the latest figures "make it starkly obvious that ATSI youth are being processed by police at an alarming rate, and are suffering from the discretionary decisions of police in regards to the method of processing young Aboriginal alleged offenders."

*Ms Sharon Firebrace predicts a leap in Aboriginal imprisonment rates following the release of some disturbing figures this month.*

She called on the Victorian Government to re-evaluate its policies of police arrest procedures and for the government bureaucracy and ATSI organisations to look for practical solutions to the problems of juvenile offending.

*Continued on Montage 2*

**• The impact of 12-hour shifts in a remote mining town (3) • Legal issues put world-first genetically designed products on hold (6) • Surprising similarities found between the echidna snout and the human penis (10) • Savant: From papyrus scrolls to the Internet (15)**

# Spike

## If I had a hammer ...

Following the recent federal election, members of Prime Minister John Howard's new cabinet had their educational origins scrutinised by *The Australian* in an article titled 'Courses in Cabinet-Making'. Monash graduates numbered four. It just goes to show what good honest professions like carpentry can lead to. Oh, and if you are wondering who these cabinet makers are, they include Peter Costello, Richard Alston, Peter Reith and Michael Wooldridge.

## Horses for courses

Monash Course and Careers Centre recently came across an Internet page titled 'Memorable Interviews' – an account of some unusual interview experiences. They included a job applicant who challenged the interviewer to an arm wrestle, one who interrupted the interview to telephone her therapist for advice, and a balding applicant who excused himself and returned a few minutes later wearing a hairpiece. Questions from job applicants included: "What is it that you people do at this company?", "What are the zodiac signs of the board members?", and "Will the company pay to relocate my horse?"

## That last step is a doozey

Some words of wisdom from the Disability Liaison Office (DLO) during the recent Disability Awareness Week: "Avoid actions and words that suggest the person should be treated differently. It's okay to invite a person in a wheelchair to 'go for a walk' or to ask a blind person if she 'sees what you mean'." It seems that the DLO has taken their own advice a bit too seriously – their office is located on the second floor, just a short trip up the stairs.

# NOW & THEN

## 25 Years Ago

What is this new building that dominates the eastern end of the University's Forum? Who paid for it? Do we need it? What will happen in it? Who is Robert Blackwood? Who is responsible for the design of the hall (and its colour)? What is it like inside?

Robert Blackwood Hall is, basically, a ceremonial hall, designed by Sir Roy Grounds, at the request of Monash University. We hope that the official opening of the Hall, on June 19, will show just how well the Hall is suited for great ceremonial occasions.

Robert Blackwood Hall is a building that we can be proud of, both architecturally and functionally – just you wait and see!

## 15 Years Ago

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ray Martin, yesterday strongly criticized proposals on education recommended in the Federal Government's Razor Gang Report.

In the occasional address delivered at an Arts graduation ceremony, Professor Martin said that the proposed introduction of fees for some newly-enrolling higher or secondary degree and diploma students "poses a serious threat to the Australian research effort at the very time when the Government is ostensibly seeking to foster and expand research".

## 5 Years Ago

University degrees will be offered by television next year for the first time in Australia. A Monash-led consortium has been awarded a $2 million contract by the Federal Government to provide pilot open learning broadcasts from February.

The first year courses for first semester will include marketing, Australian studies, psychology and biology. Possible second semester subjects are law, accounting, engineering and humanities.

The consortium – Monash, the University of New England and the University of South Australia – was one of eight competitors for the project.

## This Month Last Year

Film buffs will be able to view rare and old archival footage, thanks to a restoration technique that allows it to be shown as video on CD-ROM and CD-I.

The first proof of this method is already accessible over the Monash University computer network – the 1906 classic *Story of the Kelly Gang*, believed to be the world's first feature film.

# Aboriginal youth crisis in Victoria

*From Montage 1*

Ms Firebrace also recommended an examination of the preventive programs currently in place, and pointed out that young Aborigines were leaving school at a younger age than non-Aborigines and were lacking in skills as well as training and employment opportunities.

Mr Mackay said his research painted a grim picture of the future for many Aboriginal youths in Victoria in the next few years.

"It would be reasonable to predict that the number of Aborigines in custody will reach the high levels currently evident in other states where the problem of Aboriginal incarceration has always been considered worse than in Victoria," he said.

"I can only hope that increased incarceration rates will not result in a spate of deaths in custody in this state."

MONTAGE
NEWS AND VIEWS FROM MONASH UNIVERSITY

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# Miners sing the praises of eight days a week

Joe Bloggs earns more than $60,000 working four days a week and spends the next four taking his kids to school, doing maintenance work for community groups and helping with the family chores.

He may not be a typical Australian male, but he represents about a third of the Peak Gold Mine staff.

The other side of the coin is the bloke who spends his four days off at the local pub, at sporting events and going on 'fishing trips' (a euphemism for drinking and hanging out with other men).

Monash researchers have recently been examining the impact of 12-hour shifts on Peak Gold Mine staff, their families and the remote mining community of Cobar. It is the first time the impact of the rostering system has been studied since Peak introduced underground operations in 1992.

Project coordinator Dr Marion Collis said the company, which runs the mines 24 hours a day, hoped to establish whether the shift work was beneficial to the workers' health and social life.

Located in outback New South Wales (297 kilometres north-west of Dubbo and 159 kilometres south of Bourke), Cobar, with a population of about 6000, could be the town that people refer to as 'back of Bourke'.

While Cobar was definitely a 'man's town', with all activity revolving around the mines, the pub and sport, the researchers were surprised to find many men in non-traditional roles.

"Gender roles have been redefined out of necessity. So many relationships break down that the ones that are left intact try extra hard to make things work," Dr Collis said.

The research findings overwhelmingly supported the 12-hour shifts, which condensed the working week to four days and extended the weekend to four days.

Dr Collis and co-researchers Dr Arthur Veno and Dr Harry Ballis reported that all Peak staff were in favour of the shifts: "They love it! They live for those four days off."

The researchers found that issues of safety, relationships between staff and the fact that Peak was a non-union workplace were considered the greatest benefits of the work environment.

Less positive, however, was the impact of the restructured week on workers' families and the wider community.

With plenty of time and money on their hands (the miners earn well above the national average, between $60,000 and $120,000) but with nothing to spend it on and nowhere to go, workers find themselves in an unusual situation.

The year-long study found that miners and their families tended to take advantage of the four-day break, leaving the town for entertainment and major shopping in another town, usually Dubbo.

"This has a profoundly negative impact on the commercial sector of Cobar, with resentment flowing from those retailers directly affected," the researchers reported.

While families were usually able to find a reason, such as taking children to the dentist or purchasing something not available in Cobar, the motivating factor in taking four-day trips was "really about getting away".

Sporting and community groups were also affected, with community routines out of step with workers operating on an eight-day week.

The researchers found that businesses and community groups either adapted to suit the restructured week or floundered.

The local pubs, for example, were able to adapt to meet workers' demands, with the New Occidental Hotel holding a 24-hour license and the other four hotels closing at 3 am.

The researchers said pubs were busy every night of the week as miners were not tied to a five-day working week with leisure activities restricted to weekends.

But the restructured week had a negative impact on those institutions not able to adapt. As one local church minister told the researchers: "It's hard to have Sunday on a Tuesday".

Another problem was the fate of pets, who were often left for days at a time while workers and their families took the opportunity to visit a nearby town.

In their recommendations, the Monash researchers called on Peak to support a local council or private initiative to develop a low-cost kennel facility.

Other proposals included the development of a picture theatre/fast food outlet in the town, and for the company to work with council and other organisations to ensure shiftwork routines fitted in with sporting and other community activities.

The independent study involved all Peak staff completing questionnaires as well as in-depth interviews with consenting staff and their partners. Researchers also ran discussion groups with local community organisations, clubs, the health centre and key professionals such as doctors, counsellors, teachers and the clergy.

BY GEORGIE ALLEN

# Violence an occupational hazard for social workers

Twenty per cent of child protection workers caring for severely abused children were physically assaulted by the children's families in a six-month period, a Monash study has found.

Ms Janet Stanley from the university's Child Abuse and Family Violence Research Unit said the research suggested that the levels of emotional and physical violence experienced by protection workers adversely affected their ability to prevent re-abuse of severely abused children.

"Re-abuse of children known to health and community services is unacceptably high," she said.

The two-year study, involving interviews with 50 Department of Human Services workers and analysis of 50 case files, found that child protection workers were often subjected to verbal and emotional abuse, intimidation and death threats.

Violence experienced on at least one occasion by the workers over the six months included:

- extensive verbal abuse – 78 per cent
- assault – 20 per cent
- threats of assault – 48 per cent
- death threats – 46 per cent
- intimidation such as blocking exits, turning out lights, grabbing car keys – 26 per cent.

*"Re-abuse of children known to health and community services is unacceptably high."*

Ms Stanley said the violence, as well as feelings of isolation and stress, contributed to workers denying or underestimating the risks of re-abuse in severely abused children.

The study found that there was at least one instance of confirmed or strongly suspected re-abuse after notification in 80 per cent of psychological abuse cases, 57 per cent of physical abuse cases, 56 per cent of neglect cases and 35 per cent of sexual abuse cases.

"This reduction in work standards is not the fault of the child protection workers but is largely due to the impossible situations, in which they are sometimes placed."

Workers' jobs were further complicated because families in which severe child abuse occurred usually had multiple issues to deal with such as drug abuse, mental illness and violence.

Ms Stanley said low morale was exacerbated by cut-backs to welfare services, counselling facilities and accommodation agencies.

"Workers say they have very few services to offer families, and those that are available often have long waiting lists," she said.

"This leads to feelings of frustration in families and is thought by some practitioners to increase the risk of violence to workers."

*Low morale was exacerbated by cut-backs to welfare services, counselling facilities and accommodation agencies.*

More than 90 per cent of workers said they were dissatisfied with the counselling available for the abusers, and 80 per cent thought counselling for the abused child was inadequate.

Workers reported significantly high levels of stress and anxiety, with 80 per cent never or rarely optimistic about their work, 64 per cent often physically exhausted and 30 per cent often experiencing adverse effects in their private lives.

And 90 per cent reported that they believed the general public viewed the standard of child protection work as poor or very poor.

Ms Stanley concluded that either the Department of Human Services was not providing adequate protection for the more severely abused children or that high levels of abuse to children were acceptable in society.

The study was funded by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth).

By Georgie Allen

# Drugs and driving: the jury is still out

As state politicians debate the merits of drug law reform, research by Monash's Forensic Medicine department suggests that cannabis use reduces the risk of drivers causing a fatal accident.

In a wide-ranging study into the links between drugs and road deaths in Australia, cannabis was the only drug found to reduce road accident risk.

But research leader Associate Professor Olaf Drummer cautioned that the results should not be interpreted as evidence that smoking marijuana improved people's driving skills.

"There is little doubt that marijuana use does adversely affect cognitive abilities and hand–eye coordination", Dr Drummer said.

The unexpected finding came from an ongoing study which has highlighted the dangers of drink-driving and raised concerns about motorists using other drugs, including prescription medications.

More than a third of dead drivers had a positive blood/alcohol reading (the average was 0.18 per cent) and one in five had traces of other drugs in their blood.

The Monash study set out to determine the extent to which drug use could be blamed for causing fatal accidents in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia.

Blood samples from 1045 drivers killed have been tested for alcohol content and drugs ranging from tranquillisers and stimulants to cannabis and opiate-like drugs such as morphine, codeine and methadone.

Each accident situation has also been investigated to determine the responsibility of drivers in causing the accident.

"We gave each driver a numerical 'responsibility score', after taking into account other things which may have contributed to the accident," Dr Drummer said. "We considered mitigating factors such as the mechanical state of the car, adverse weather and road conditions."

Drivers were then placed into one of three categories – culpable, contributory and not culpable.

By working out the ratio of 'culpable' drivers to 'not culpable' drivers in each drug use group and comparing them to the ratio for drivers deemed to be drug-free, the researchers were able to assess the effect of each drug on accident risk.

The results indicated that drivers were six times more likely to be involved in a fatal accident if they had been drinking alcohol than if they remained drug-free. Accident risk increased nine-fold if alcohol was combined with other drugs.

There were smaller increases in accident risk, ranging from 60 to 130 per cent, when drugs other than alcohol were used alone. These included legal drugs such as mild tranquillisers and stimulants.

"All of these drugs have the potential to impair driving skills or increase fatigue," Dr Drummer said. "There are a significant number of fatalities involving abuse of common prescription drugs such as Valium or slimming tablets."

The only drug that reduced accident risk was cannabis. Users were 40 per cent less likely to have been the cause of a fatality than drug-free motorists.

Dr Drummer said the result supported evidence from a similar US study, and he offered two theories to explain the surprising results.

One explanation might be that the metabolite carboxy-THC (the form of cannabis detected in testing) remained in the body long after the effects of use wore off.

"Impairment from using cannabis will last up to four hours, but the metabolite might persist in the blood for several days and in the urine for weeks. So if carboxy-THC shows up in blood or urine testing, it doesn't mean that the person was impaired at the time of the accident," Dr Drummer said.

This would account for cannabis users recording a lower accident risk than users of other drugs, but it doesn't explain why they appear safer than the drug-free group.

For further explanation, Dr Drummer referred to a recent Dutch study which showed that drivers became more cautious after smoking marijuana.

"Being more cautious might mean they are less likely to drive recklessly, and more likely to avoid dangerous situations," he said.

Victorian police have no power to blood-test drivers for drugs other than alcohol. But in states and countries that allow such testing, marijuana is the most common drug present in drivers pulled over for dangerous driving.

Dr Drummer has presented submissions to the Victorian Parliamentary Road Safety Committee, which is investigating legal and enforcement procedures for dealing with drugs other than alcohol.

The committee does not report until later this year, but Dr Drummer expects it will recommend that Victorian laws be changed to allow police to test drivers for drug use.

BY GARY SPINK

# Genetically engineered products

*World-first genetically engineered Australian products are waiting on the sidelines while lawyers ponder the way forward. Brenda Harkness reports on one Monash researcher who is helping to set the 'designer gene' agenda.*

Legal uncertainty about the use of genetic modification technology in the food and horticulture sectors is preventing Australia from gaining a competitive edge in world markets, according to a Monash researcher.

And the lack of "clear regulation" covering the development and commercialisation of genetically modified produce threatens to discourage investment in the science, according to lawyer and Monash law lecturer Ms Karinne Ludlow.

Three finished or near-complete Australian-first modified products – a leaner variety of pork, two new varieties of potato (specifically designed for potato chips) and a blue carnation – have already been put on hold because of the legal dilemma surrounding their development, she said.

Ms Ludlow has been following the progress of the three case studies as part of her PhD. It is believed to be the first comprehensive study into the legal status of genetically modified products in each stage of the production process and marketing chain, from scientific development to field testing and product release.

*"Laws covering the sale of food and goods must be brought into line with scientific developments."*

"While the potential commercial applications for genetic modification in Australia is extraordinary, its future may be at risk because developers and traders do not know their legal obligations or the potential liabilities in producing and selling these products," she said.

Companies currently investing in the technology were also at risk of losing their competitive advantage because of the delays and lack of certainty. "The danger is that while they are waiting, someone else will copy their ideas. That is the reality of the market."

There was also a risk that Australian scientists would take their ideas off-shore and that Australians would miss out on both investment opportunities and export rewards: "Laws covering the sale of food and goods at both the national and state level must be brought into line with scientific developments."

Legal issues identified by Ms Ludlow as requiring clarification included:

- the responsibilities and liabilities relating to safety during development
- the impact of environmental laws under international treaties affecting

# in a legal vacuum

Australia (for example biodiversity treaties) during the trial stages of a new product

• questions over contracts, sales and trade practices.

Ms Ludlow said one of the key dilemmas of commercialisation was product labelling: "If companies label food, what do they put on it? For instance, the Goods Act, which was based on legislation introduced earlier this century (1905), refers to 'adulterated' food. Would genetically modified foods be considered adulterated under this present Act?"

Public perception of genetically modified produce could be another major barrier to the industry's development.

"Companies are loathe to release products onto the market if they are unsure of consumer reaction," she said. "At the same time, recent studies show that people don't understand what genetically modified foods are. And they often connect them with mad cow disease."

She said public awareness campaigns were needed to overcome misunderstandings and to educate consumers about the benefits of applying genetic manipulation technology to a wide range of industries.

The climate of uncertainty surrounding the sector was compounded by the fact that it had so far been self-regulated. The Genetic Manipulation Advisory Committee was set up in 1992 by the previous federal government to oversee voluntary monitoring of the technology, but users of the technology and other interest groups believed there was now an urgent need for a statutory body to oversee the industry's development.

Ms Ludlow said the federal and state governments had failed to reach agreement on various issues, including the appropriate form of regulator to oversee the legal and ethical aspects of the industry.

"Basic guidelines were acceptable when the technology was restricted to the laboratory, but once products are ready either for trialling in the open air or for release in the market, the position of industry members needs to be made more certain. A statutory body with legislative authority may then be necessary," Ms Ludlow said.

While there are no known genetically modified foods sold on the Australian market, a number of genetically altered organisms and food ingredients have been approved for commercial release. Australia was the first country to release a modified bacteria for use as a pesticide in 1989, and some processed foods contain enzymes produced by altered organisms such as chymosin, an ingredient used to harden cheese.

*People don't understand what genetically modified foods are. They often connect them with mad cow disease.*

Ms Ludlow, who also holds a science degree, said the first genetically modified food available overseas was the tomato FLAVR SAVRTM. It first went on sale in the United States in 1994 and is now available in the United Kingdom. The fruit is billed as having a longer shelf life and a better taste than ordinary tomatoes.

Ms Ludlow said the tomato was modified by "suppressing the action of one of its own genes". This delayed the softening process, stopping the tomato from "going mushy".

In Australia, a leaner variety of pig has been ready for market since mid-1995, but the animal's producer, BresaGen, has been unwilling to proceed in the present climate of legal uncertainty and has resorted to culling stocks.

Ms Ludlow said there were many benefits to genetically modified food, including productivity and efficiency gains.

"For instance, there is less need for fertilisers, and products can be made more robust and less susceptible to disease. And in the case of livestock, varieties could be genetically matched to Australian conditions."

The technology could also be used to produce vaccines for both humans and animals, medical products such as insulin, and for research, mostly in medicine and science, in the mining and agricultural sectors.

## CASE ONE:
### LEAN PIGS

Genetic modification was used to make pigs grow faster but leaner. The science was initially developed in 1985 by University of Adelaide researchers and has since been improved.

The modification involves insertion of extra copies of the pig's own growth hormone and a promoter – derived from a human promoter – into the pig's own DNA. The pigs reportedly reach market weight up to seven weeks earlier than conventional pigs and provide almost fat-free pork.

Stocks are being culled by the producer because of uncertainty over the legal status of the pork.

## CASE TWO:
### DESIGNER POTATOES

CSIRO's Division of Plant Industry reportedly spliced a synthetically created gene into two popular varieties of potato – the Atlantic and the Kennebec – used by the food industry to produce potato chips and other potato-based snack foods.

The new gene makes the potato resistant to potato leaf roll virus, which reduces potato yields by up to 20 per cent in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

There are no plans at this stage to release the potato to either the food industry or the public.

## CASE THREE:
### A BLUE CARNATION

The blue carnation, if it reaches the market, would generate enormous sales and substantially boost Australia's horti culture industry.

Two petunia genes have been inserted into the carnation to enable the plant to produce blue flowers.

The producer, Florigene Pty Ltd, estimates the world cut-flower market at $US25 billion and the ornamental plant market at $US15 billion.

Carnations make up 18 per cent of the cut-flower market, but are not yet available in blue. Up to 12 per cent of all other flowers sold are blue.

# Unearthing new clues to early Christianity

*New light is being shed on early Christian architecture with the unearthing of one of Egypt's earliest churches this year. Gary Spink reports.*

Discovering what could be Egypt's earliest Christian church has created both excitement and a dilemma for Monash archaeologist Dr Colin Hope.

The senior lecturer in Classics and Archaeology has been leading international excavation teams to a dig in the Dakhleh oasis, 800 km south of Cairo, for 10 years.

The results from his latest annual pilgrimage pave the way for greater understanding of fourth-century Christianity, but demand for access to the church could threaten its very existence.

*Professor Colin Hope found graffiti images of Egyptian gods sketched in black ink under the brittle plaster of the temple walls.*

"I hope that at some stage we can open the building, even if only for a couple of days, but I am also morally bound to make sure that such a significant monument is preserved," Dr Hope said.

At the moment the best way to preserve the building is to backfill the diggings with sand at the end of each excavation 'season' (December to February), but this means much time is spent digging it out again the following year.

"We have backfilled the lower sections and told the guards that no one is to go in, but when word gets out, people will want to see it," Dr Hope said.

"Egypt still has a relatively large Christian community, who will want to see what is possibly the earliest church in their country."

Preparing the fragile mudbrick building for public view would require extensive reconstruction, and there was the risk that the new work would "impose an interpretation" on the ruins.

There would also need to be some form of shelter to protect the building from natural elements and a new floor to safeguard the original mudbrick from human traffic.

"Where do you stop, and in the end what have you created?" asked Dr Hope.

"Everybody who walks over mudbrick damages it in some way, and the worst thing that could happen would be groups of tourists visiting with backpacks and boots."

The Dakhleh excavations are part of one of the largest archaeological projects in Egypt, and it has an impressive track record of unearthing significant discoveries.

*"It's like piecing together a huge historical jigsaw. Every year you can find something that changes your understanding of how these early cultures developed."*

Over the last decade, teams involving Monash academics and students have uncovered evidence that Egyptian religious and artistic culture prospered throughout Greek and Roman rule, produced evidence that questioned widely-accepted dating methods for certain styles of classical painting, and compiled the most important collection of ancient Greek and Coptic text found in the last 60 years.

"It's like piecing together a huge historical jigsaw. Every year you can find something that changes your understanding of how these early cultures developed," he said.

At the beginning of this year, Dr Hope made the bold decision to remove layers of badly preserved painted plaster from the

wall of a temple shrine to see what secrets might have been covered by later generations.

The gamble paid off. Underneath the second layer of the brittle plaster were four well-preserved graffiti images of major and local Egyptian gods, sketched on the wall in black ink in the second century AD.

The team also began excavating a set of 10-metre high gateway built in a rare mixture of limestone and sandstone. Limestone was not a common material in the area, so its use in the gates and surrounding paving suggests that the Dakhleh community had a significant level of affluence.

But the work from this year's dig that is likely to attract the greatest attention is the first excavation in the main section of one of three churches known to have existed at the oasis settlement.

It revealed an extremely well-preserved church, large enough to cater for several hundred worshippers.

There is an apse at one end flanked by two small chambers, and a large nave with two central columns which once supported a flat wooden roof more than four metres above a mudbrick floor.

Coins found in the building leave no doubt that it was in use between about 350 and 400 AD, and possibly much earlier.

Text found elsewhere at the Dakhleh site shows that Christianity was practised in the community from the early fourth century.

Dr Hope said other texts indicate that Egyptian churches existed from the late third century but very few from this period had been identified.

*The church at Dakhleh is the only Egyptian Christian church that researchers can categorically prove was operating in the fourth century AD.*

"This makes the Dakhleh church extremely important as it is among the first to be built and is the only fourth-century church that can be dated by archaeological and text evidence," he explained.

He said there were a couple of other Egyptian buildings that had been named as fourth-century churches, but this classification was highly debatable.

"What we've got at Dakhleh is the only large church that we can categorically prove was in use during the fourth century.

"We know that other large Christian churches would have existed throughout Egypt at the same time, but nobody has been able to find them yet."

Dr Hope said Egypt played an important role in the development of Christianity, with the city of Alexandria one of the three major early centres of the religion.

"In the fourth and fifth centuries, Alexandria regarded itself as the equal of Rome in terms of Christianity, and the study of early Christianity in Egypt is as vital as its study anywhere else," he said.

Dr Hope believed the Dakhleh church would shed new light on what the earliest Christian architecture looked like in Egypt and help complete the picture of life in the oasis at the time.

"We not only have the church, we've got the surrounding settlement, we have a great number of letters that these people wrote and, in the nearby cemeteries, we've probably got their bodies."

A team of physical anthropologists from Canada is currently investigating human remains from two nearby cemeteries to investigate the community's longevity, nutrition, diseases and likely causes of death.

The Dakhleh dig is also proving a rich source of material for Monash postgraduate research and training for students in field excavation and conservation techniques.

Working alongside the team of international experts and 60 local labourers this year were three Monash students – Ms Gillian Bowen, who is using information from the excavations in her PhD on the origins and diffusion of Christianity throughout Egypt; Ms Amanda Dunsmore, who is completing a masters in Egyptian ceramics; and honours student Mr Arthur Gidis.

*Ms Gillian Bowen with some of the local workers at the Dakhleh church excavation.*

# The echidna snout: a sensitive issue

*Studies into the foraging behaviour of burrowing animals have led researchers closer to understanding the workings of the human penis. Tim Thwaites reports.*

Research into the sense of touch in the echidna snout has unearthed an uncanny similarity to the nose of the mole, an unrelated species, and provided a surprising explanation for the sensitivity of the mammalian penis.

The suggestion is that all three – the echidna snout, the mole nose and the mammalian penis – contain tissue that can engorge with blood. This pushes their tactile receptors hard up against the skin, thus increasing sensitivity to touch.

Part of the evidence comes from a continuing study of the sensory systems of monotremes – egg-laying mammals of which the platypus and the echidna are the only living representatives. For more than a decade, a research team – which includes Professor Uwe Proske and Dr Ed Gregory of the Monash Department of Physiology and Professor Ainsley Iggo, dean of the Veterinary School at the University of Edinburgh – has been investigating sensory receptors in the bill of the platypus and the snout of the echidna.

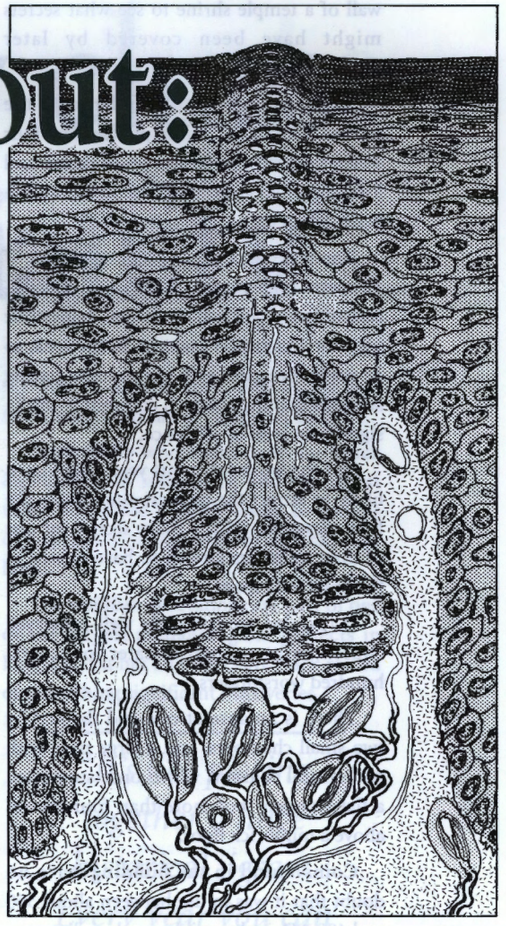
The team has concentrated its efforts on two unique structures found only in monotremes – the sensory mucous gland and the push rod. In ground-breaking work, the researchers found that the sensory mucous gland was associated with a sixth sense in monotremes capable of detecting minute electric currents. The echidna uses it for detecting the movements of its prey, such as the wriggling movements of a cockshafer larva.

But the push rod tells a different story. It consists of a tiny, tightly-packed column of cells, the tip of which is about a fiftieth of a millimetre in diameter and which protrudes from the skin surface in a dome shape. At the other end – the base of the rod – are a host of sensory receptors of two types known to be associated with touch, vibration and texture in other mammals.

Because of this association, the researchers assumed the push rod was some sort of tactile sensor. So members of the team began to record electrical impulses from the nerve which supplies the upper jaw in the echidna as they stimulated the skin on the snout. But while they were able to record plenty of nerve activity, they could not associate it with any specific structure in the skin. This, Professor Proske said, was possibly because at the point at which they were recording, they happened to be able to pick up impulses from all over the snout.

But another group working on a strikingly similar receptor in the North American star-nosed mole has had more success. The star refers to a star-shaped appendage on the nose of the mole used to probe mud and soil for prey. The skin of each ray of this star is packed with a sensory structure called Eimer's organ, which resembles the push rod. Eimer's organ has been directly implicated as a tactile receptor.

Like the snout of the echidna, the star in the star-nosed mole contains an extensive system of blood vessels just below the surface of the skin. When these vessels fill with blood, both the star and the snout inflate, pushing their respective sensory organs against the skin. Not only would this improve contact between the receptors and anything pressing on the skin, but the blood flow would lead to a rise in temperature, increasing the response fidelity in the receptors.



*The push rod consists of a column of compact cells that protrude at the skin surface as a dome-like projection. Deeper in the skin below each column are numerous specialised nerve endings, seen here enclosed in oval connective tissue capsules.*

Professor Proske speculates that this mechanism could be very useful to both mole and echidna in locating and catching prey. "It is conceivable that whenever an echidna's interest is aroused during a nose poke into the soil, it is able to tune its skin sense organs to greater fidelity by inflating the snout with blood."

The only remotely similar phenomenon in other mammals occurs in the penis. In fact, measurements of flaccid and erect cat penises suggest that erection is accompanied by a several-fold increase in the sensitivity of skin to touch. "Who would have thought otherwise?" asked Professor Proske.

And so it may be that what seems to have evolved independently in two lines of burrowing animals has arisen a third time in mammals as a mechanism to increase tactile sensitivity in quite a different (though critically important) role.

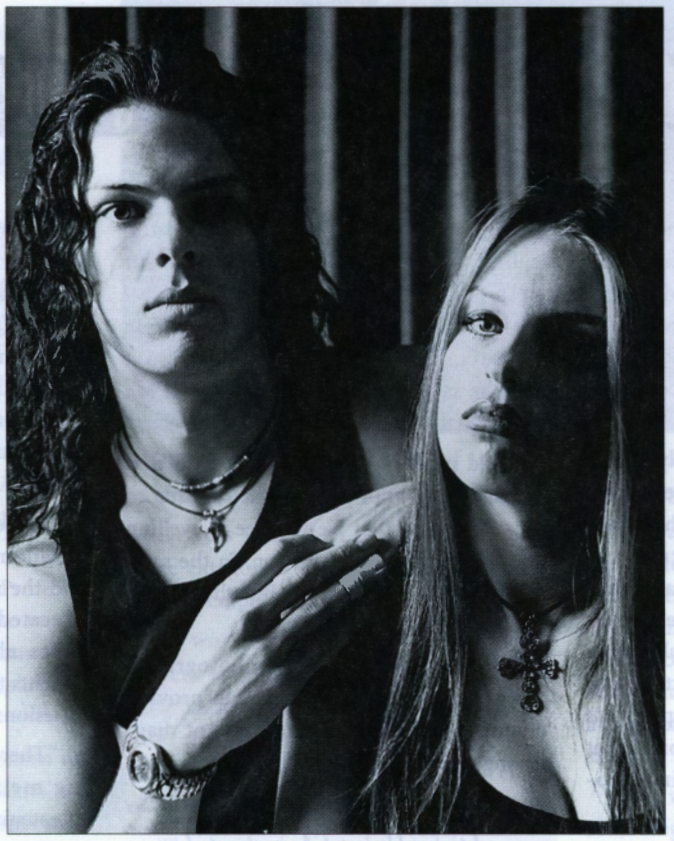
# Anger in the outer suburbs

While 1980s Australia earned notoriety for its excesses, a Monash historian predicts the 1990s will be remembered as the 'decade of reversal'.

Dr Mark Peel, a lecturer in the university's Department of History, said that in a climate of continuing high unemployment and contracting community services, the working poor and disadvantaged felt increasingly insecure about their future.

As well, people of all ages within these groups felt a strong sense of betrayal and anger toward the major political parties, according to Dr Peel, who is studying outer working-class suburbs in four of the nation's capital cities.

The research, conducted in the Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows, Sydney's Mount Druitt, Adelaide's Elizabeth and Brisbane's Inala, aims to profile modern patterns of social disadvantage. Incorporating interviews with more than 350 people, the findings will be published shortly in a book entitled *Places of Prophecy.*



*Shane and Bindy Paxton became the target of community anger after refusing jobs on a tourist resort island.*

According to Dr Peel, the results reveal that many Australians consider themselves less well-off today than 20 years ago.

"What I am hearing consistently is a real sense of uncertainty and anger at the loss of opportunities which once held the key to social mobility for the working poor and disadvantaged," Dr Peel said.

Those interviewed also believed that 'generational success' had been destroyed. "Grandparents spoke of their children doing well, but of grandchildren being unable to get jobs or having limited access to adequate schooling and skills training.

"For these Australians, the 1990s has been a decade of reversal. It has exposed how fragile our commitment to social justice and equality of opportunity has been."

Dr Peel said this insecurity had been heightened by recent economic restructuring policies, including privatisation and deregulation. These measures, along with labour market reforms, he said, had left people feeling that their future depended more on stockmarket fluctuations and on decisions made by credit agencies and multinationals than on their own efforts.

People generally regarded an effective government as one that provided security, enabling individuals to pursue their goals. "The role of government should be to provide paths to security through access to education, employment and housing."

According to Dr Peel, the extent of community frustration was borne out by the results of the recent federal election. But he believed the dramatic swing to the Coalition reflected the depth of community disquiet with politicians rather than a vote for or against the major political parties.

A striking example of that frustration, he said, was the electoral victory of independent candidate Pauline Hansen in the Queensland electorate of Oxley.

Ms Hansen had been accused of racism and prejudice during the campaign for her comments about Aborigines and 'dole-bludgers'.

"But people weren't necessarily voting against minority groups, they were voting for someone who was a stirrer; someone who was prepared to start a barney," he said.

One of the most disturbing signs of the times, according to Dr Peel, was the 'climate of vindictive blame' that had recently emerged, in which the poor were portrayed as villains and dole-bludgers.

"I think we have reverted to the language of the 1970s and earlier when we were blaming the poor."

Recent media debate surrounding the Paxton family in Melbourne illustrated this culture of blame, he said. The issue centred on the refusal by three unemployed teenagers to take up jobs organised for them at a tourist resort by Channel Nine's 'A Current Affair'.

"In historical terms, the debate about the Paxtons shows there has been a revival of the concept of the 'undeserving poor'. This concept insists that 'poor people' have to be passive and do what they're told," he said.

While Dr Peel was critical of the way the media had sensationalised the Paxtons, he said the ensuing debate had raised questions about using the poor and unemployed as scapegoats.

"The criticism levelled at these teenagers could be read as a statement to a group of Australians that says: 'You don't have the right to self-determination. If you're poor, you don't have the right to make decisions about your life – even wrong decisions.'"

Dr Peel said his book aimed to challenge perceptions that poor communities were dependent and helpless by stressing the strength, courage and resilience of people who were struggling with difficult conditions and decisions.

BY BRENDA HARKNESS

# Doctors fail to warn patients on skin cancer

While the incidence of melanoma in Australia is increasing faster than any other type of cancer, some people are being falsely reassured about moles and discoloured skin.

Dr John Kelly, senior lecturer in dermatology at Monash University's Department of Medicine, said that while most melanomas were successfully treated when detected early, melanoma patients commonly reported that they had been inappropriately reassured.

He warned that even a benign mole or skin discolouration could turn into a melanoma.

"False reassurance is a type of misdiagnosis," Dr Kelly said. "If a doctor tells a patient there is no way a lesion could be a melanoma and not to worry about it, changes that subsequently occur, such as bleeding, could be ignored."

He said that while melanomas under 2 mm were difficult to detect, they usually started showing typical characteristics before they became life-threatening.

Education campaigns were helping increase awareness of the risk of melanoma, but Dr Kelly predicted that the incidence of the disease would not level off until today's children were adults.

"The main factor determining whether a person is going to get melanoma is how many moles they have. And the number of moles a person has is determined by how much sun they were exposed to as a child," he explained.

He was critical of what he called the 'cult of the tan'. "This current epidemic of melanoma in Australia is due to the behavioural aberrations of the past 30 or 40 years, when people actively sought a tan," he said. "It was a fashion that didn't work out too well.

"And most of us have to live with that damage. It will not be until the children of today grow up that we will see a levelling off, and hopefully a reduction, in the rates of melanoma in Australia. But there is no sign of that at the moment."

New techniques such as photography and skin surface microscopy can provide doctors with more accurate ways of diagnosing melanoma early.

*It will not be until the children of today grow up that we will see a levelling off, and hopefully a reduction, in the rates of melanoma in Australia.*

"Skin surface microscopy uses a small magnifying glass attached to the end of an oroscope – the instrument that doctors use to look in eyes and ears," Dr Kelly explained.

"This enables the doctor to look through the skin's surface to where the pigment is and see detail that cannot be detected with the naked eye, enhancing doctors' diagnostic accuracy quite significantly."

The other, more frequently used option is photography, which enables doctors to make direct comparisons between moles.

"Because they are new techniques, photography and skin surface microscopy have not yet had much opportunity to influence early diagnosis," Dr Kelly said. "But in the future they will offer more hope for early diagnosis and a resulting reduction in death rates from melanoma, even though occurrence rates will still increase for a while."

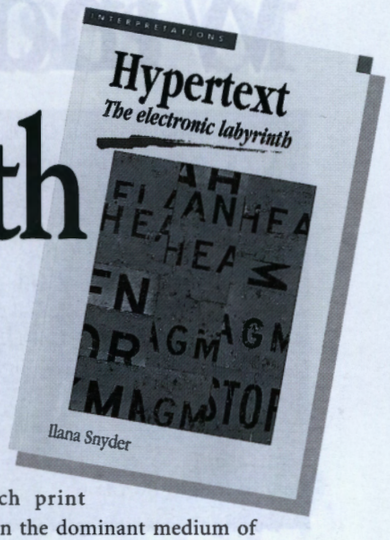
Dr Kelly, who also runs the Victoria Melanoma Service at the Alfred Hospital, said the medical community needed to be educated not to give categorical reassurances about moles and to explain to patients that they needed to keep an eye on all lesions.

"There is no room for error in diagnosing melanoma," he said. "It is a life-threatening disease if not detected early."

BY JULIET RYAN

*Melanomas usually show typical characteristics such as bleeding and skin discolouration before becoming life-threatening.*

# Negotiating the electronic labyrinth




The historically passive role of the reader, the notion of a self-contained text and the traditional concept of authorship are being challenged by the emergence of hypertext, according to a Monash academic.

Dr Ilana Snyder, senior lecturer in language and literacy education, has recently launched her book *Hypertext: The Electronic Labyrinth*, an examination of the way writing and reading are being transformed by new electronic technologies.

Hypertext, another name for hypermedia or multimedia, is a way of connecting text, pictures, film and sound in a non-linear manner by electronic links. And Dr Snyder believes it is changing the ways in which people read and write, teach reading and writing and define literary practices.

Challenging notions that reading is a sequential, continuous and generally linear process, Dr Snyder said hypertext "creates fluid structures and presents them interactively to the audience".

In a hypertext environment, the writer no longer controls the reader's path through the text or even the content of the text itself. Hypertext allows the reader to enter the text at any point and not necessarily where the author would have chosen.

"Hypertext blurs the boundaries between readers and writers," she said.

"Although we know that readers, particularly expert readers, have always read in this non-linear manner, hypertext explicitly encourages this kind of active reader.

"Unlike printed texts, which generally compel readers to read in a linear fashion – from left to right and top to bottom – hypertexts encourage readers to move from one chunk of text to another, rapidly and not in any particular sequence."

Dr Snyder said people could no longer deny that society was moving from an age in which print had been the dominant medium of communication to an age of information in which the computer was dominant. "Whether we like it or not, we are now living in a technoculture."

Writers have already entered these "electronic spaces" for creative reasons, publishers and book sellers for economic reasons and academics for the enhancement of scholarship, teaching and learning.

However, Dr Snyder does not believe the emergence of hypertext signals the death of the printed book.

"The introduction of a new technology of writing doesn't automatically make older ones obsolete, mainly because no one technology has ever proven adequate for all our needs.

"A more likely scenario is that handwriting, typesetting, word processing and hypertext will continue to co-exist and complement each other, at least for the immediate future."

She also rejected claims that hypertext was producing an alienated youth culture and was responsible for a decline in literacy standards.

"My concern is less controversial but far more significant in its implications for those involved in the business of books. I'm interested in how hypertext alters the roles of author and reader, the emergence of a new generation of reader-writers and what these changes may mean for the idea of the book and the book industry."

*Hypertext: The Electronic Labyrinth* is published by Melbourne University Press. RRP $14.95

**Elections and the Political Order in Russia**

*Edited by Peter Lentini*

*Published by Central European University Press*

*RRP $37.95*

In December 1993, Russia held its first multiparty election in more than 75 years in the hope that it would usher in a new democratic political order. However, the success of the right-wing populist Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and other anti-reform forces shocked the world.

*Elections and the Political Order in Russia* provides an analysis of the 1993 election focusing on the main events and players and examining their impact on contemporary Russian politics and society.

Peter Lentini is a lecturer in the Department of Politics and Centre for European Studies at Monash University.

**The German Language in a Changing Europe**

*By Michael Clyne*

*Published by Cambridge University Press*

*RRP $29.95*

Recent socio-political events have profoundly changed the status and functions of the German language and influenced its usage. In this study, Michael Clyne analyses the language in light of changes such as the end of the Cold War, German unification, the redrawing of the map of Europe, and growing European integration.

His discussion includes the differences in form, function and status of the various national varieties of the language; the relationship between standard and non-standard varieties; gender; generational and political variation; Anglo-American influence on German; and the convergence of East and West.

Michael Clyne is professor of linguistics at Monash University.

# Wind in Utopia


Photo: Gary Spink

Melbourne artist Chris Barry's work varies from intricate photo assemblies to rooms filled with red clothing with every piece in some way sourced from her family history.

"I come from a culture with a strong sense of oral history, and I feel like I'm the storyteller of my family – collecting their stories and incorporating them into bodies of visual work," Barry said.

She grew up in a family of Polish immigrants that came to Melbourne's western suburbs after World War II.

During the war, her parents had been transported from the Polish industrial city of Lodz to be used as 'factory fodder' for Germany's labour-starved industry. After the war, they chose not to return to Poland and sought a less turbulent life in Australia.

"But my parents never developed a sense of the Australian way, and I inherited that cultural dislocation," Barry said. "I was born in Australia, but I was brought up very Polish."

While Barry's parents embraced the relative sanctuary of Australia, their displacement from their indigenous culture and their inability to meld with their adopted one instilled in her a sense of belonging to neither.

Barry's latest exhibition, *Wind in Utopia*, is being staged at the Monash-affiliated Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in June and July. It traces the progression of her art over the past decade as she has constantly sought new ways to explore metaphorical links between her personal history, the Holocaust, the impact of Western culture on modern Poland, and Australia's treatment of its Aboriginal culture.

Australia's major galleries have been collecting Barry's work since her first exhibition 10 years ago. Her early pieces were small photo assemblages of portraits of family members surrounded by fragments of images that evoke concepts of identity, place, heritage and memory.

After the success of her first body of work in the late 1980s, Barry travelled with her parents on their first trip back to Poland, and observed their displacement from their heritage.

"Anyone who leaves one place to settle in another ends up existing in between," she said.

Poland was also existing between two cultures. It was still under Communist rule, but its people were becoming fascinated with Western, and particularly American, culture.

*Decrepit buildings representing Polish culture and society sit uneasily alongside brash soft-drink advertising, neon signs and Hollywood imagery.*

After spending six months in Poland, Barry continued to explore her heritage through photo assemblage, but the focus shifted from images of personal experience to her own documentary-style photos with cut-outs representing cultural symbols.

Decrepit buildings (representing Polish culture and society) sit uneasily alongside brash soft-drink advertising, neon signs and Hollywood imagery. The different subject matter evokes the same feelings of cultural displacement as Barry's earlier work.

In keeping with the move away from personal, intimate topics, she enlarged her Poland works to billboard size for exhibitions in London and Warsaw.

"Once I started doing huge installation work, I had tapped into the broader arena of public, rather than private, history."

Barry has abandoned photo assemblage for her most recent exhibitions, preferring to fill gallery spaces with large collections of red clothing.

For one show, she wrote personal family stories in Polish on 4000 cardboard tags and attached them to 150 kilograms of dyed clothing covering the walls of a Fitzroy gallery.

The piles of anonymous clothing recall images of concentration camps and missing people, while the stories written in Polish put Australians at a disadvantage, intentionally removing them from an environment they understand.

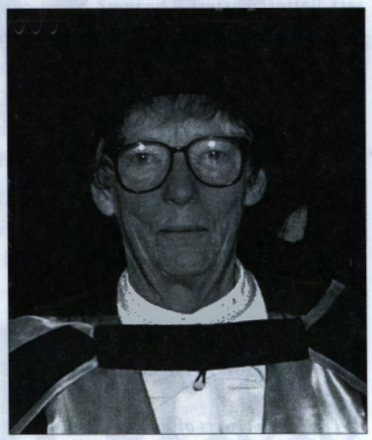
Barry said that *Wind In Utopia*, as well as being a survey of all her work, would include pieces based on her recent visits to central Australia. Her time with Aboriginal communities again raised the themes of cultural identity, place and history.

"My interest lies in disturbing the main narrative of post-colonialism with personal histories, imaginings and my experiences in central Australia."

*Wind in Utopia* is showing at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art until 28 July.

BY GARY SPINK

# From papyrus scrolls to the Internet



*Emeritus Professor Jean White was recently awarded an honorary doctorate of letters for her pioneering work in establishing librarianship as a university discipline at Monash. In her speech she brought to life the magic of the written word.*

It is hard for me to express adequately my happiness on the award of this degree and I thank you and the university council for it. I see it as a recognition of Librarianship, Archives and Records in the university, and I thank all staff of that department who helped to make this possible. I must also mention the debt owed to Professor Guy Manton, then dean of the Faculty of Arts, whose vision established the department in that faculty.

Today the department is strategically placed in the Faculty of Computing and Information Technology. Like so many disciplines on the eve of the 21st century, it needs the expertise of staff from many different backgrounds and seems well-placed in its new faculty.

So long as it does not forget about Callimachus.

Forty years ago I met Callimachus. Some of you might remember that he was librarian of the Alexandrian Library in the third century BC, that he was a Greek poet and scholar and one of the first librarians whose name we know.

But that is not the whole story. Callimachus, like Merlin and Tithonus, still lives in libraries. In 1956 I met him in the stacks of the State Library of South Australia. Last week he was sitting at the back of the room at a seminar on the dubious value of electronically produced editions.

Over the centuries he has written many poems about libraries, always in verse forms appropriate to the times.

His first poem was written in the 13th century. It is about monastic libraries and the monks who copied books by hand:

*To him who beareth the Book: behold we are bounded*
*For that wight hath wisdome: well-favoured is he*
*Who heareth high mystery: and in his herte keepeth,*
*And loveth to learne: and for men illumine*
*The sayings of the Saviour: and Son of the Highest*
*But derkely the Devil; dealeth with the dreamer*
*Privily promising: power over all men.*
*Great care must he carry: the Keeper of knowledge*
*That servants of Satan: with chains on his volumes.*
*Lest wicked wights stealeth: the wordes of wisdome.*

This is a rather frightening poem with its warning about the devil and the wickedness of scribes whose work is not careful enough. But we must remember that textual errors can be found in printed books also. There is a 17th-century edition of John Donne's poems which has many mistakes. Some of you will know this poem, *The Extasie.* It begins:

*Where, like a pillow on a bed*
*A pregnant bank swel'd up, to rest*
*The violet's reclining head*
*Sat we two, one another's best.*

This edition prints the first three lines correctly, but the fourth reads:

*Sat we on one another's breast.*

The invention of printing meant that the manuscript book, although it lingered a while, was doomed. But it meant more than that, as Callimachus wrote:

*Johannes Gutenberg,*
*Goldsmith of Mainz,*
*John Fust, the Master*
*And Peter Schoeffer*
*Have lightened our travail*
*And given us volumes*
*Not written with labour*
*By scribe at his carrel,*
*But printed in numbers*
*A hundred together.*
*So all men hereafter*
*May buy books and read them.*
*Ah woe that the beauty*
*Of handwritten volumes*
*Has vanished forever!*
*And those who question*
*Their rulers and betters*
*Can send through the Kingdom*
*Their treasonous pamphlets*
*And heretics scatter*
*Their lies to the four winds.*
*For books are no longer*
*The precious possessions*
*Of priest and of prelate,*
*Of statesman and student.*
*And soon like the sea-sand*
*They'll grow beyond number.*
*And through the King's axes,*
*And all the Queen's tortures*
*Do battle against it,*
*The press and the printer*
*Will never stop working.*

Much is being written today about the doom hanging over the printed book and about the paperless society. But there is more paper around than ever – offices are swamped with printouts. Why are so many full texts of books on the Internet? Is it easier? Better? Faster? Cheaper? More comfortable? – to read a book from a computer screen. The piles of paper copies that clutter offices bear witness that it is not. Of course these texts are there because the Internet is a carrier which can deliver them (and perhaps an advertisement?).

The Bodliean Library in Oxford was opened in 1602. Callimachus, as befitted a seventeenth-century poet, wrote in a Shakespearian form:

*Where the sweet Thames meanders on her way,*
*The gentle towers of Thomas Bodley rise.*
*Here will the eager scholar spend his day,*
*On volumes that the world should ever prize*
*Here calm and peace dwell with neglected time,*
*While scholars study dream and history,*
*To give the world back some forgotten rime,*
*Or find some clue to nature's mystery.*
*Here shall the men of nations yet to be*
*Pore over volumes, by their world un-read,*
*And in the quiet of Bodley's Library,*
*Shall keep the scholar's bargain with the dead.*
*And though his eyes see not these later days*
*All those who enter shall speak Bodley's praise.*

This picture of that university library is a far cry from the bustle and urgency of our modern university libraries. Bodley is a copyright library and like the British Library, the National Library of Australia, and the state libraries in this country, has the privilege and responsibility of keeping the books that have been published in their country or state.

The great event of the 18th century was the founding of the British Museum Library. You remember the story of its foundation – Sir Hans Sloane left his collection for purchase by the nation and the trustees of the British Museum decided to hold a lottery and raise the money for a building to house the several collections, including Sloane's. Fortunately the Archbishop of Canterbury decided to approve of this gambling.

Callimachus wrote thus:

*This day we have opened the British Museum*
*All men of good will now should sing the Te Deum*
*And rejoice that our London, and not the Bodliean,*
*Holds now and forever manuscripts Harlein.*
*May the labours of Sloane and collections of Cotton,*
*Be used by the scholar and never forgotten.*
*Because the Archbishop frowned not upon chance,*
*Our England no longer must lag behind France.*
*For here will historians gather to read,*
*The works which the present and future should heed.*
*And here will the students of politics write*
*The books that will alter our world overnight.*
*And we shall preserve while the paper shall last,*
*The hopes of the present, the dreams of the past.*

Libraries such as these can be seen as post boxes in which the literary heritage of today is consigned to future generations of scholars. It is a very important responsibility. If the messages of our poets, historians, scientists and scholars do not get delivered to their peers (who just happen to live in another time), our civilisation will be diminished and research impeded.

There is not time to read all of these poems, but I think you should hear the one about the Mitchell Library. Many of you will know that David Scott Mitchell, who owned a property in the Hunter River District of New South Wales and who spent his early life collecting books of English literature, turned to the collection of Australian books, and left to the Public Library of NSW the greatest collection of Australiana that this country possesses.

*'Twas the man from Hunter River*
*Who struck the Sydney town,*
*And he soon began to quiver,*
*As he wandered up and down.*
*He wandered here, he wandered there,*
*Till he was like to drop.*
*Until at last he came upon a secondhand bookshop.*
*"Though English Literature has great and undisputed mana,*
*A fallow field for me does wait*
*In this Australiana.*
*I here declare that naught on earth*
*Can force me now to stop,*
*I'll be the favoured customer of every good bookshop.*
*And when my bookcollecting's done,*
*And I from hope and sin am free,*
*I shall bequeath them every one*
*To our great Public Library.*
*I'll leave no dead collections*
*To be a certain flop,*
*For I shall give them cash to spend in every good bookshop."*
*So Mitchell left the books that he*
*Collected with such skill,*
*To New South Wales Library,*
*And wrote it in his will*
*That ever in that Library*
*The volumes had to stop*
*And gave them cash galore to spend in every good bookshop.*

Mitchell's stipulation that his collection could not be lent to other libraries raised the ire of some scholars in other states (notably Morris Miller in Hobart) and probably encouraged the growth of Australiana collections in all the Australian states.

I do not expect to see Callimachus again, but I am glad that he, too, is optimistic about our future and not worried by the present problems of the Internet or the World Wide Web. But why should he be – he who remembers seeking answers in papyrus scrolls and the world of the manuscript book? We grumble at the slowness of the Net, but remember the handset printing?

Here is the poem that he left me with:

*More than two thousand years have passed since I*
*First sorted scrolls in Alexandria,*
*And I have seen the fires of chance and hate*
*Burn through more volumes than your world possesses.*
*And I have heard men twist the written word*
*To serve their dream of power. Have seen them change*
*The truth of history for a tyrant's end.*
*It is not long, as I can measure time,*
*Since books were not the right of everyone*
*And even now I see they are denied*
*To more than half the men who live on earth.*
*Ah yes! I know that knowledge walks with power*
*And, without wisdom, is a dangerous gift.*
*Soon you must turn your eyes from the machines*
*The problems of your world will not be solved*
*By asking How? But asking Why? What for?*
*Though I confess that Nets bring thoughts of drowning,*
*And Webs suggest magician Merlin's fate*
*I envy you the next two thousand years.*