

ADELAIDEAN

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NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE'S leading position in Australian research has been recognised at the inaugural Australian Technology Awards, with the Department of Plant Science winning the university section.

The University—which was shortlisted in three of the 12 categories—was the only university to win an award in its own right.

The Department of Plant Science won the award for "Excellence in the Development of Technology from a University" for cereal breeding technology developed by Associate Professor Peter Langridge.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mary O'Kane, said the award was a wonderful recognition of Dr Langridge's status as one of the world's leading molecular biologists in this field.

"Peter Langridge and his team based at the Waite campus have developed a technology which puts Australia way ahead of its international competitors," Professor O'Kane said.

"He is a highly-creative researcher who really has led the way in developments in this field."

Professor O'Kane also praised the work of the Department of Mechanical Engineering (shortlisted for "Excellence in Education Delivery Systems") and the CRC for Viticulture (shortlisted for "Excellence in the Development of Agribiotechnology").

Mechanical Engineering was recognised for its Acoustics and Active Noise Control Experimentation Kit, developed by Dr Scott Snyder. The kit is a teaching tool for secondary and tertiary students which generates enthusiasm for the subject, allows experimentation and makes complex technology



STUDENT Association president Ms Sophie Allouache (right) is smiling because she's received her new student 'smart card' for 1998.

About 14,000 University of Adelaide students are receiving the new cards as they prepare for the start of the academic year.

The University is the first in Australia to introduce 'smart' card technology for all its students.

The cards can be used for a wide range of services, such as photocopying and laser printing, library use, and access to authorised buildings and facilities.

By mid-year the cards will also enable students to store cash for use at a network of retail outlets, vending machines and payphones which are being developed by Telstra.

The University's new Card Centre was launched at the Hughes

Plaza on Tuesday, 17 February by the South Australian Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training, Mr Malcolm Buckby.

The 'smart card' is one of

several electronic services now available for the University's students. On 19 February the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mary O'Kane, launched a free student

e-mail service which will see all students provided with an email account from the start of first semester this year.

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Last week I attended a conference on 'The New Humanities: 2000 and Beyond,' held to mark the establishment of the Faculty of Arts, Health and Sciences at Central Queensland University. At a time when, as a recent Australian Higher Education Supplement reported, some Departments and Faculties of Arts are being closed or significantly reduced in size and scope, the opening of this new Faculty was an encouraging note of optimism. But the conference also crystallised some important issues about the place and role of the Humanities in the current changing and sometimes turbulent conditions of tertiary education in Australia.

A key concern for the conference was the apparent disjunction between public understandings and expectations of the Humanities and developments within the disciplines themselves. Keynote speaker Henry Reynolds, a distinguished historian widely recognised as having made a major contribution to the reinterpretation of Australia's past which has found expression in the Mabo and Wik cases, spoke powerfully about the paradox which sees the rise of 'truth commissions' demanding historical accuracy in public debate coinciding with the loss of certainty on the part of many practitioners of the discipline that historical truth is ever genuinely available. His conclusion was that history is able to exercise both moral authority and political effectivity in the public sphere, but only if historians are prepared to reassert the validity of their methodology as a means of establishing truth.

By contrast, Simon During, Robert Wallace Professor of English and Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne, identified a major shift within the Humanities, away from their longstanding role in the validation and perpetuation of national cultures towards a critical but positive engagement with the authorlessness, commodification and relativism of much contemporary cultural production. The interactions between the continuing central importance of critique and the increasing harnessing of Humanities disciplines to national economic objectives give rise to what During termed a 'prevailing mood of demoralised euphoria' in the Humanities.

Here he was raising a second major issue for the conference: the adaptations being made in curriculum and teaching to the current focus in tertiary education on vocationalism, employability and transferable skills. Speakers variously proposed, discussed and contested a range of strategies, including greater emphasis on marketing and recruitment of students in community contexts, more explicit identification of the skills content of humanities subjects, greater flexibility in course structures to allow more interaction between Arts and other disciplines, the establishment of more double degrees, and the widespread adoption of flexible delivery approaches. Some of these, of course, are

initiatives necessary for any academic area as universities become more client-oriented and competitive. My own Division has been considering most of these possibilities, and it was useful to hear of their introduction and results elsewhere.

Technology was also a recurring theme in conference discussion. Enthusiasm for the possibilities of the new technologies was intense in some and lukewarm in others, but several speakers explored the role for the Humanities in maintaining a focus on the social, cultural and ethical contexts within which other forms of professional and technical activity necessarily take place. Reflecting on our local



HISTORIAN OF EUROPE HERE

The History Department and Writers' Week are collaborating to present the inaugural Adelaide Writers' Week Lecture in Napier Theatre 102 on Thursday 5 March at 8.00pm.

Their guest speaker is Professor Norman Davies, author of the phenomenally successful *Europe: A History*, which has sold some 25,000 copies in hardback, and is now released in paperback.

Adelaide's Professor of History, Wilfrid Prest, described it as a "beautifully written, extraordinary book" and says Professor Davies' lecture ("Europe Overseas and Overland") is an event not to be missed.

ENGINEERING EDUCATION HONOUR

Associate Professor Caryl Cresswell from the Department of Mechanical Engineering has won the Australian Association for Engineering Education (AAEE) 1997 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to Engineering Education.

Dr Cresswell's leadership in the area of engineering education has impacted Australia-wide, and resulted in invited membership of the national Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT) and the national Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD) where—according to CUTSD Chair, Professor Ingrid Moses—she has "successfully worked as a change agent".

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The student email project has been managed by the University's Information Technology Division (ITD), with academic aspects guided by a working party of the University Information Technology Committee convened by Dr Kingsley Garbett.

The Vice-Chancellor said there were many significant benefits to be gained from increasing the accessibility of e-mail for students.

"Students will be able to communicate electronically with staff and students at the University of Adelaide and throughout the world through the Internet for research purposes," she said.

"The resulting improved communication between staff and students should enhance teaching and learning outcomes."

Benefits should also flow from the ease with which the system can be used to notify students about academic and administrative matters.

The Web interface being used for the student email system will allow students to access their mail from any networked machine with a Web Browser on any campus.

This has positive implications for students undertaking cross-campus

or cross-institutional studies, as well as those with disabilities and those studying part-time.

In another recent development, South Australia's three universities have

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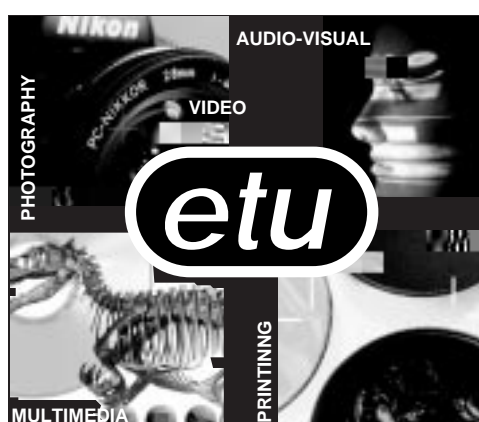
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Computer model to 'give fish a say'

SCIENTISTS at the University of Adelaide will develop a new computer model to help landowners and other groups assess the potential environmental damage caused to inland rivers by irrigation.

Called DRY/WET, the computer model is aimed at providing pastoralists, irrigators, water resource managers and conservationists with detailed information about how irrigation affects rivers.

The name DRY/WET reflects the flood/drought cycles of inland rivers. Over the last few years there has been a national debate over proposals to establish irrigation on two of these rivers—Cooper Creek and the Paroo.

"Water withdrawals from the Murray-Darling rivers have caused many

environmental problems," said Mr Jim Puckridge, Principal Scientific Investigator on the project and research officer with the University of Adelaide's Department of Zoology.

"If we are going to make wise decisions about using the waters of the arid zone, we must understand the likely ecological costs.

"Predicting the environmental effects is extremely difficult because these rivers are wildly variable, and there is very little data on them," he said.

The project, funded under the National Wetlands Research and Development Program, is being run by Jim Puckridge, Justin Costelloe and Associate Professor Keith Walker, members of the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology at the Department of Zoology.

Mr Puckridge said the project team would develop the DRY/WET computer model using a unique database gathered over five years in the Coongie Lakes region of the lower Cooper.

"This database links river flow with responses of fish and other animals. It will be used to try to predict what effects water withdrawals would have on these creatures of the river."

The DRY/WET model will be publicly released on CD-ROM and also as a book late in 1998.

In the meantime, the project team is inviting input from industry representatives, water resource managers, conservationists and pastoralists. For more information contact Mr Jim Puckridge on (08) 8303 5689.

Petroleum focus in industry seminar

OVERSEAS LINKS and industry support were two features of a recent short course held at the University of Adelaide's Department of Geology & Geophysics.

The course, conducted by Professor Detlev Leythaeuser, dealt with the accumulation, movement and redistribution of petroleum beneath the surface of the earth.

The movement of petroleum, known as 'migration', is one of the least understood processes in the field of petroleum exploration. Professor Leythaeuser, who is head of the Department of Geology at the University of Cologne, is one of the world's leading researchers into petroleum migration.

He has recently completed a six-month stay at the University of Adelaide as a Faculty of Science Distinguished Visiting Scholar, working closely with Associate Professor David McKirdy and his Organic Geochemistry in Basin Analysis Group.

Attending the course were dozens of industry representatives, including some from Australia's biggest oil exploration companies—SANTOS, BHP Petroleum and Boral Energy.

Other participants included geologists from the Department of Primary Industry and Resources, staff and students from the University's National Centre for Petroleum Geology & Geophysics (NCPGG) and



Professor Detlev Leythaeuser in the Tate Museum. Photo: David Ellis

Geology & Geophysics Department, as well as an Adelaide-based consultant.

Professor Leythaeuser said that by better understanding petroleum migration, oil companies could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations.

He also said collaborative research ties would be established between the universities of Adelaide and Cologne, as well as a possible student exchange, following his work here in Adelaide.

—David Ellis

Brainwaves showcase for best

RADIO 5UV has been funded to plan and present four live one-hour radio programs as part of the 1998 Teacher Professional Development Program.

On Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm throughout March, *Brainwaves* will focus on some of the world class teaching and learning in South Australian schools.

5UV's Tony Ryan has been working with four teacher associations to develop the programs since October. Four other 5UV producers are contributing through a recorded report of about 16 minutes.

As well as featuring innovative teaching and learning, the project provides an opportunity to explore the potential for educational broadcasting by linking radio to the Internet.

The pilot project is a cooperative effort initiated by the SA Chapter of the Australian College of Education and the Council of Education Associations of SA, with funding from Satisfac Direct Credit Union.

With at least another 50 teacher associations in South Australia, it's hoped the project will enable Radio 5UV to establish a weekly showcase for South Australian education.

4 March: Modern Languages and the World of Work

11 March: So what is an eco-school?

18 March: Listening and speaking in Mathematics

25 March: Visual Arts and the Internet.

New home for AFUW

THE AUSTRALIAN Federation of University Women Inc has a new home in the Mitchell Building at the University of Adelaide.

The accommodation, on the first floor of the Mitchell Building (Room 132), was made available to AFUW by the Vice-Chancellor for the coming Triennium, while the AFUW Federal Council is in Adelaide.

AFUW President, Dr Daphne Elliott, said the AFUW was very grateful for a University address, which was a recognition "not only of the standing of AFUW Inc, but of the value that the University of Adelaide places on the promotion of the University and contributions to the University's intellectual life and student and staff interests by AFUW-SA".

Australian Alumni Convention is se

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