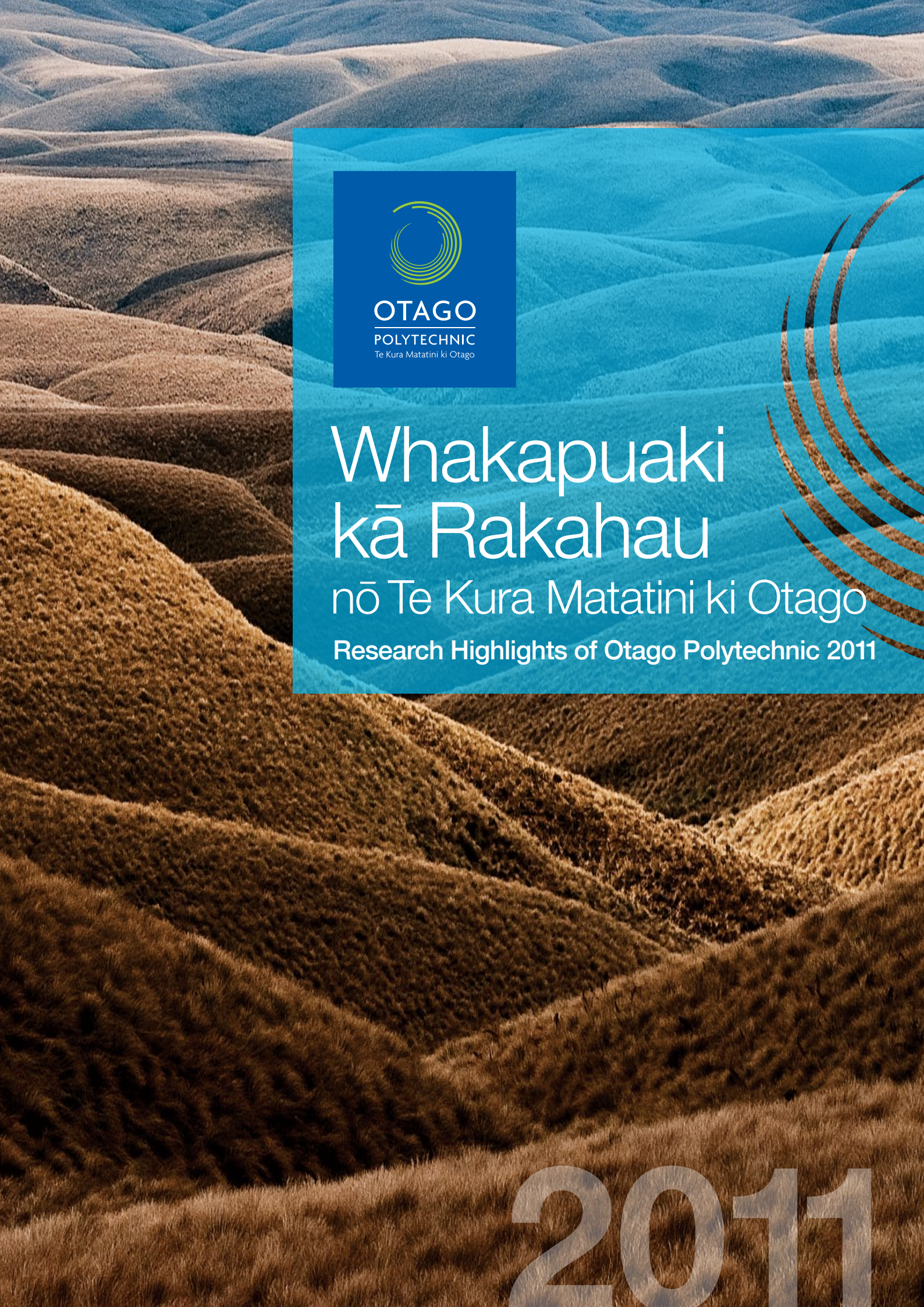

OTAGO
POLYTECHNIC
Te Kura Matatini ki Otago

Whakapuaki kā Rakahau

nō Te Kura Matatini ki Otago

Research Highlights of Otago Polytechnic 2011

2011

Contents

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Introduction

Alistair Regan

>

While 2011 was predominantly a year of consolidation, we are also sowing the seeds of change for research at Otago Polytechnic. As staff prepared to enter the Performance Based Research Fund Quality Evaluation for the second time in 2012, they continued to develop multi-layered platforms of research delving deeper into topics that benefit our learners and wider communities of interest.

Teaching and learning has always been a strong feature in Otago Polytechnic's research highlights. We pride ourselves on being early adopters of new methods and techniques in this area. Digital literacy and its relevance to teaching continue to challenge teachers and learners: Bronwyn Hegarty's work on obstacles to digital literacy and Graham Burgess and Matt Thompson's look at using e-portfolios in their carpentry programme are examples of new work done in this area. The need to apply learning to the real world features in Hamish Smith and Professor Samuel Mann's investigation into project-based learning; Justine Camp's exploration of importance of Kai Tahutaka in the New Zealand learning environment and Dr Sharleen Howison's work in cooperative education also consolidate our role in community-based learning.

Health and well-being, particularly in vulnerable areas or populations, has always been an area that has been of interest to Otago Polytechnic researchers. Our Nursing and Midwifery staff have a particular interest in investigating the challenges faced by rural practitioners, evidenced here by further work from Jean Ross on place-based practice and Dr Jean Patterson on patterns of transfer in labour and birth in rural New Zealand. There has also been a focus on women and children's issues this year, including investigation into children's ear disease by Emma Collins, nutritional and environmental risk factors for young children by Megan Gibbons, children's rights in social work practice by Margaret McKenzie and the relation of place to mode of birth by Professor Sally Pairman and Associate Professor Sally Baddock. At the other end of the human life cycle, Dr Linda Robertson considered the skills needed for engaging older people in the research process.

Also highlighted in 2011 was our contribution to a pluralistic New Zealand culture where artist Neil Emmerson challenges the male stereotype in his exhibition 'I must confess…,' while Matthew Blair's work into the physical requirements of elite-level rugby union refereeing contributed debate relevant to the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

Sowing the seeds for change and signalling a new future-focused approach for 2012 and beyond, sustainability continues to be a significant research interest for Otago Polytechnic. Bridie Lonie, Professor Samuel Mann and Tracy Kennedy bring multiple lenses to sustainability in education, art practice and innovation. The move to a future focus is supported by our new professorial appointments, Professor Khyla Russell and Associate Professor Richard Mitchell.

Expect more changes to come in the combined special issue of *Rakahou-ā-mahi hou : New Applied Research* that will be published in late 2012. Last but not least, I must acknowledge the retirement of Dr Robin Day at the end of 2011. His significant institutional knowledge is however retained with his appointment as an emeritus staff member. Robin has led research and development at Otago Polytechnic for many years. It is with great respect for his leadership that I take up the position of Director: Research and Enterprise at this pivotal time.

For more information and contacts please visit our website: **www.op.ac.nz**

Alistair Regan
Director:
Research and Enterprise

Leading from the heart

Professional appointment: Introducing Professor Khyla Russell

Academically, Otago Polytechnic Kaitohutohu, Professor Khyla Russell, could be described as a late developer – she already had a mokopuna by the time she began university study.

But she has more than made up for lost time, and her pioneering role as a Māori academic leader has now been recognised with her appointment as the Polytechnic's second full professor. Russell grew up at Otakou – 'the Kaik' – on the Otago Peninsula, a thriving and established Māori community. She was 15 when she first travelled inland to Central Otago – before this her experiences of much of the South Island were from the sea. Her elders could navigate by the stars, "smelling the land as they neared the coast."

Anthropologists were fascinated by these traditional skills, and the way in which these academics observed her whanau whanui (extended family) was equally fascinating to Russell.

"They watched us, so I thought it was fair to watch them right back." An essay on the experience developed into a master's thesis, which then evolved into a PhD – redefining "landscape" as a way of reclaiming the concept from a Māori perspective.

This theme of challenging and reformulating understandings has remained through her career. Her roles for Ngai Tahu and the Ministry of Education centred on "enabling organisations to find ways of understanding Māori perspectives, so they can engage meaningfully with them".

But working with Russell was never about being handed a check list of dos and don'ts. And success means more than adding a koru to your logo. "Organisations need to take responsibility for gaining the knowledge they need and applying it authentically. It has to come from within."

Since 2006, Russell has found herself in a role focusing on just that – helping to change the system from within as the Kaitohutohu at Otago Polytechnic. The position was borne of the Memorandum of Understanding with four Kāi Tahu rūnaka and is responsible for overseeing the incorporation of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Polytechnic's day-to-day operations.

She advises and participates in a wide range of research projects, bringing Māori perspectives to disciplines from information technology to occupational therapy. She also sits on national and international panels including the Health Research Council and PBRF panel for Māori knowledge and development.

In the process, Russell has herself become a subject of intrigue from researchers and administrators around the world. "There is a lot of interest in the Kaitohutohu role among indigenous communities worldwide – whether a position such as this can make a real difference."

She is confident that it can. But it won't happen overnight. "You might think my job is going around blessing things. But it is important to make things Māori more visible at the Polytechnic. It creates an environment where people are more likely to ask themselves, 'How might my teaching or research – or the way I am eating my food – seem to Māori? Does this create an environment where Māori can live as Māori without having to apologise or change themselves to fit in?'"

Culinary experience

Professional appointment: Introducing Associate Professor Richard Mitchell

Ask people about their most memorable food experience, and they're unlikely to refer to a slick, posh restaurant.

Instead, they might tell you about being welcomed into someone's home, enjoying delicious food and wonderful company. Their language will be full of emotion. They will talk of their connection with others and use words like 'real' and 'experience'. If they are travelling, they may feel this that this was an authentic cultural moment.

For Associate Professor Richard Mitchell, this sense of being welcomed and looked after is the true meaning of hospitality.

And now, as an Academic Leader for the Polytechnic's School of Hospitality, his goal is to help students think beyond executing a number of set tasks "and consider all those intangible, emotional elements that are part of a great hospitality experience".

Mitchell joins Otago Polytechnic following eight years at the University of Otago's Department of Tourism where he developed an interest in New Zealand's growing wine tourism sector. It's an area where New Zealand can still offer a point of difference, he believes. While vineyard tours around the world offer very polished and rehearsed experiences – "They all say the same thing: our wine is created from the soil, and crafted with care" – New Zealand wineries are more casual. This informality, which characterises much of New Zealand's hospitality scene, is an important part of a memorable tourist experience.

"There's still this vibe in New Zealand where you can go into a café and have a great coffee served by someone with dreadlocks and tattoos. People love it and will remember it. It's something to celebrate." This makes the Polytechnic's new Bachelor of Culinary Arts an exceptional opportunity for hospitality

students, he believes. "It's really about developing critical thinking and creativity. It incorporates design studies, so students can think about the entire hospitality experience, including the environment they are in and how they present their meals."

Indeed, this integration of design thinking with traditional culinary skill development has captured Mitchell's imagination as a researcher. A paper recently accepted for a conference in London explores how hospitality should count itself among the creative and design-led industries so important to New Zealand's economic future. Cookery training in New Zealand is entrenched in a model that barely differs from the master-apprentice approach of 18th-century France, Mitchell argues.

But the world has changed. "We have celebrity chefs like Hester Blumenthal deconstructing and reinventing the whole concept of preparing and presenting food, while issues around sustainability have grounded food within a much more political discourse." He is excited about being part of the "paradigm shift" offered by the new degree. It's one of the great things about teaching at a Polytechnic, Mitchell says. "You can see the outcome of introducing different ideas to students. They don't just give you an essay, they give you a meal. And you know that when they graduate, this approach will be influencing industry in a very real way."

"There's still this vibe in New Zealand where you can go into a café and have a great coffee served by someone with dreadlocks and tattoos. People love it and will remember it. It's something to celebrate."

Place of birth

Associate Professor Sally Baddock; Professor Sally Pairman

The environments women choose to give birth in has a significant impact on the rates of intervention in labour and the type of births they will have.

These are the findings of a recent study conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers that included Otago Polytechnic School of Midwifery Co-Head, Associate Professor Sally Baddock, and Director of Learning and Teaching and Head of Midwifery, Professor Sally Pairman.

Their exploration of New Zealand's model of midwifery care, published in the prestigious *Birth* journal in June 2011, provided a unique opportunity to investigate the impact of the place of birth on outcomes for women and their babies. A unique feature of New Zealand's maternity system is that, for most women, their chosen midwife provides their midwifery care in whatever birth setting the woman chooses. Therefore, it is possible to look at the impact of the place of birth without the confounding factor of different care providers in different settings, as is the case in most parts of the world.

The research showed that women at low risk of complications who planned to give birth in a tertiary hospital rather than a primary birthing unit, were four and a half times more likely to have an emergency caesarean section despite their lack of risk factors. Those in secondary hospitals were more than three times more likely to have a Caesarean section.

Low-risk women planning to give birth in secondary- or tertiary-level hospitals were also at increased risk of vacuum extraction, forceps, artificial rupture of membranes, augmentation of labour, epidural, episiotomy and neonatal admission to intensive care than low-risk women who gave birth in a primary unit. "Interventions in labour and assisted modes of birth such as Caesarean section expose women and their babies to additional risks and also come at financial costs to the health services," Pairman adds.

"Given the lack of clinical indications for the interventions women in this study received, it appears that the significant differences in outcomes can therefore be more precisely associated with place rather than caregiver or model of care."

16,453 women were included in the study, using data from 2006–2007 obtained from the New Zealand College of Midwives' database.

In New Zealand, low-risk women may choose to give birth at home, in primary maternity units or in secondary or tertiary hospitals. Just over 40 per cent of the almost 40,000 births for which data was available met the accepted definition of low risk. Most women gave birth in their planned setting.

With fewer interventions occurring in the 57 primary maternity units in New Zealand, Pairman says they "offer a non-technological and more relaxed setting for normal birth".

"However not all women have access to these units," she continues. They are not available in all geographical areas, and some rural women opt to travel to hospitals with more extensive facilities to give birth.

"District health boards need to consider how to increase this opportunity for women," Pairman believes.

"An emerging body of literature shows that it is more difficult for midwives to facilitate normal birth in obstetric hospital settings, and that the physical environment influences the way women feel and behave during labour and birth," she says.

"It is important that maternity caregivers explore factors that may assist them to better support women and encourage physiological birth where appropriate, including making more use of primary birthing units."

Associate Professor Sally Baddock

Professor Sally Pairman

Davis, D. Baddock, S. Pairman, S. Hunter, M, Benn, C, Wilson, D, Dixon, L & Herbison, P. (2011) Planned Place of Birth in New Zealand: Does it Affect Mode of Birth and Intervention Rates among Low-Risk Women? *Birth,* 38:2, June 2011, 111–119.


SPINE DISORDERS

Building platform

Graham Burgess and Matt Thompson

Carpentry Programme Manager Graham Burgess reflects that the potential of e-portfolios for demonstrating students' work "seems so obvious now!"

It's often the way with innovation: hurdles are recognised, a system is developed, trialled, adapted and adopted with multiple benefits. Nevertheless, it's not often one hears of students at assessment time "keen, wanting to get in to the labs".

Burgess and Senior Lecturer Matt Thompson run the Certificate in Carpentry (Level 4) at Otago Polytechnic, which involves three groups of students building a three- or four-bedroom home to be sold at on-site auction, with substantial amounts of the funds raised donated to charities.

Burgess notes, "It has proven very difficult, however, to translate this spectacular achievement in experiential learning into written student assessments or produce evidence for moderation purposes." But at an internal review of Carpentry in 2010, partially in collaboration with their Industry Training Organisation, he and Thompson put forward e-portfolios as possible way to present evidence of the learning achieved.

"The solution we subsequently developed not only dealt with our moderation issues; it also contributed to new and much improved teaching and learning methods, which we believe have improved student educational experience and results."

Thompson laughs that in their search of the literature, they found that "everybody has written about e-portfolios, but no one's ever used them!"

Burgess reports, "We settled on a simple PowerPoint presentation, and developed a series of master slides which students could duplicate, inserting their photos and text as required."

Students present their e-portfolios to Thompson, usually with two or three other students around. Thompson says the "instant feedback is a huge advantage".

The first group to go through the certificate using e-portfolios finished in mid-2011. The researchers took input from all the staff working with the system, adjusting some areas to align more closely with unit standards, and adding and altering sections to incorporate feedback: they changed about 15 per cent of the portfolio. An independent facilitator allowed students in the course to give feedback freely, and the responses were "99 per cent positive".

Burgess says, "From our perspective, a big plus is the way the students have approached it. When it comes to presenting their evidence, students aren't stressed about it – they don't even see it as assessment. We see students chat among themselves, about their work, their photos. It gives them the opportunity to reflect back on their learning."

In the meantime, further benefits are becoming apparent: graduates retain their portfolios as a resource throughout their careers, and are able to use them to get that foot in the door. In situations such as job interviews, students can be somewhat reticent, "not good at talking about what they can do. But," says Burgess, "they will happily talk about a photo."

Burgess, G. & Thompson, M. (2011) The use of e-Portfolios for student assessments on the Carpentry programme at Otago Polytechnic. *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics, Learning and Teaching,* November 2011.

Matt Thompson and Graham Burgess

"We settled on a simple PowerPoint presentation, and developed a series of master slides which students could duplicate, inserting their photos and text as required."

Food sources

Justine Camp

Kaitohutohu team member Justine Camp vividly remembers sitting on a bus on an interschool sports exchange holding a bucket of clams to give to her host family at the end of the journey.

She did feel embarrassed. It set her apart from her Catholic school classmates, yet it was firmly the way things are done in her world. On her return journey she would carry a reciprocal gift of muttonbirds, fish or oysters.

She also remembers mischievously how her vigilant grandfather watched clam gatherers through the sights of his old rifle. Legend has it he may even have fired a few shots towards some greedy gatherers who failed to respect the gifts they received.

Today his granddaughter is just as vigilant, but uses the tools of research and academic discipline to bring her tribe's message to the "powers that be".

"Kai Tahu's identity is based around our food sources," she says. "It is our responsibility to be the guardians of these resources to ensure that we continue to keep our customary rights to feed our guests, trade and protect our resources for future generations. We are tasked with ensuring the identity of our descendants."

Her paper, Kai Tahutaka – or more irreverently, Bush Tucker – presented at the Australasian Regional Food Cultures and Networks Food Conference in Salt Beach, Australia, examined the ongoing management of the resources of muttonbirds by Kai Tahu and cockles by the Ministry of Fisheries in the Otago region.

"Muttonbirds are the only Māori-managed resource in New Zealand," she says. Meanwhile, the ongoing debate about sustainable practices for gathering local cockles is under growing scrutiny. "The cockle beds in our harbour that are under threat are the largest cockle beds in the world.

"It was revealing to me to see how few indigenous scholars were represented at this conference and how interested people

were in my paper," comments Camp. "One woman was especially interested because she had eaten cockles from a café at a Sydney university and wanted to understand how they were sustainably harvested."

Her ability to find a language that touches the heart was demonstrated by a standing ovation following a speech she gave at a hui with representatives of the Takata Titiaki and the Ministry of Fisheries present.

"We need to find a whole new position in this debate," she says. "It is obvious that the binary position we find ourselves in does not assure a positive outcome."

The present stalemate brings the economic perspective of commercial fishing firmly up against Kai Tahu customary gathering rights and the interests of recreational fishermen. Although the system of permits for gathering cockles, paua and pipi issued by Takata Titiaki provides a method of monitoring the quantities that people are harvesting, Camp believes that there are many anomalies to this system. "These beds are being regularly pillaged by recreational and commercial fishermen."

Dredging cockles with huge forked scoops ransacks the entire habitat for all the seafood that naturally dwells there, she says.

"There needs to be a third perspective that benefits all."

Camp, J. (2011) Is Education and Research Leading Innovation and Kai Tahutaka? *Australasian Regional Food Cultures and Networks Food Conference,* Salt Beach, Australia. 28 November–1 December.

"It was revealing to me to see how few indigenous scholars were represented at this conference and how interested people were in my paper."

Journey planning

Dr Jean Patterson

Rural people factor in the elements of terrain, weather and distance into most of their critical decisions – and this is especially the case for maternity care.

All pregnant women in rural areas of New Zealand create birthing plans with their midwives that factor in the possibility of transferring to an urban birthing unit if they encounter a difficult or lengthy labour.

This strategy alleviates much of the anxiety that can surround the decision to transfer to town when a woman is feeling at her most vulnerable.

"Early in a woman's pregnancy, the need for a 'plan B' is discussed with her midwife in acknowledgement of the fact that some women do need to be transferred from their local birthing unit while in labour," says Dr Jean Patterson, Principal Lecturer and Postgraduate Midwifery Coordinator at Otago Polytechnic's School of Midwifery.

"These conversations in early pregnancy are critical. They create solid and trusting relationship between the woman and midwife.

"For many women, particularly rural women, birthing locally and within their own community is important for personal, social and cultural reasons," she says.

The online journal, *Rural and Remote Health,* published a recent study of this process. The research, Patterns of Transfer in Labour and Birth in Rural New Zealand, was conducted by Jean Patterson together with colleagues from Victoria University and the University of Technology, Sydney.

The article presented the results of a national survey taken from 45 women in remote maternity units over a period of two years. It captured the number and reasons for transfer for low-risk women close to full term who began their labour in a rural or remote setting. The data, sourced from the birth registers in each rural community, included findings for both maternity and neo-natal transfers. Respondents detailed the reasons for their transfers and described the rural context in which the transfer decisions were made.

The primary reason for transfer during labour was found to be slow progress during labour. 16.6 per cent of women and 3 per cent of babies born to these women were transferred.

All decisions were found to be made in consultation with the woman, midwife and obstetrician to allow a generous time buffer to make the process as considered and stress-free as possible.

Key features factored in the decision-making were the combined elements of the projected travelling time, geological and climatic factors to be encountered in the transfer and the assurance of the availability of local assistance.

Rural ambulance drivers and paramedics are volunteer crews who need to be summoned from work. Decisions anticipating the likelihood of transferring a woman in labour alert all parties to be influenced by this decision well in advance.

"None of these decisions are made in isolation. The deliberations on these decisions are made well in advance and in all cases the links are clearly established between all parties involved."

Patterson J. A. Foureur, M. Skinner, J. (2011) Patterns of Transfer in Labour and Birth in Rural New Zealand. *Rural and Remote Health,* 11: 1710: (Online), 1–15.

Middle ear care

Emma Collins

Chronic middle ear disease is an invisible condition posing a serious health risk throughout New Zealand.

Repeated episodes of the disease can result in hearing loss, language delay, difficulties in literacy and lowered school achievement.

Particular communities – including children in the Hutt Valley – are affected severely by the disease, making effective prevention, detection and intervention significant public health challenges.

In 2011, Emma Collins, now an Otago Polytechnic Lecturer in Nursing, strengthened the case for greater resourcing for ear nurse specialists and clinics to reach at-risk children.

While working in Wellington as an ear nurse specialist, Collins analysed cases of childhood middle ear disease as part of her Master's dissertation: "We ran a mobile community ear clinic – basically a converted campervan – for children in the Hutt Valley."

The aim of the clinic was to identify rates of middle ear disease in children attending the clinic. Collins' team targeted locations of predicted higher disease incidence, and during the two-year trial more than 2,000 children were examined.

Part of the research was to see if it was possible to reach "marginalised populations" effectively. "We stopped at places where there were children who had failed hearing tests at school. We also visited areas with larger Māori and Pacific Islands populations, because we know that children of these ethnicities are more prone to ear disease."

Emma says her team "reached a higher number of Māori and Pacific Islands children than average, yet the research showed that we could have got more. Overall, we were doing very well, but it's certainly something to focus on improving for the future."

This multifaceted study fulfilled two objectives: it provided up-to-date data on ear disease for New Zealand, and it supported government policies to increase funding and resource allocation for the management of ear disease.

"There aren't many ear nurse specialists in the country, but [the study] would support the case for more to be employed, and for more ear clinics to be established."

Collins acknowledges her research as "integral to getting a teaching position at the Otago Polytechnic School of Nursing".

The medical field is continuously changing, and Collins believes that in order for health professionals to "remain current", it is important to be publishing new material regularly. She hopes that her enthusiasm for lifelong learning will inspire students to consider a career in research alongside daily nursing practice.

"The level of resources at Otago Polytechnic is exceptional for research. The potential is absolutely there, and it's up to the individual to make it happen."

Collins, E. & Ram, F. (2011) Rates of Ear Disease in Children Visiting a Mobile Community Ear Clinic in New Zealand—Two-Year Study of Over 2,000 Children. *Asia Pacific Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing,* Volume 14, Number 2, 119–128.

In print

The latest books from Otago Polytechnic researchers

Open Education Practices

A User Guide for Organisations

Authors: Leigh Blackall & Bronwyn Hegarty

Publisher: Pedia Press

This user guide is designed for educational developers, teachers and coordinators with an interest in open educational resources and practices and the use of popular social media in education and research. It draws on documentation and analysis of Otago Polytechnic's experiences in being the first Polytechnic in New Zealand to officially engage in such development work in the period from 2006 to 2009.

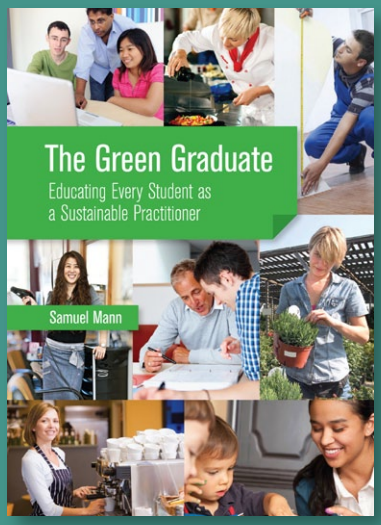
http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Open_Education_Practices:_A_User_Guide_for_Organisations/Resources_and_Practices

Green Graduate

Educating Every Student as a Sustainable Practitioner

Author: Professor Samuel Mann

Publisher: NZCER Press Wellington,
ISBN 978-1-877398-99-5



The challenge: every student graduates able to think and act as a sustainable practitioner, whatever their field.

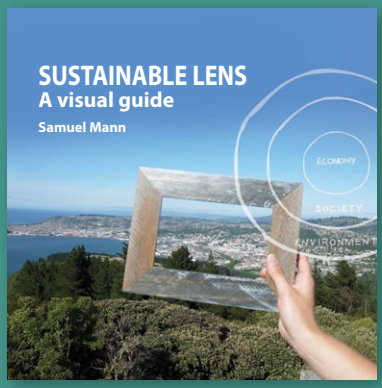
This is the goal Otago Polytechnic set itself and, as one of the main proponents, Samuel Mann became the go-to guy. Here he takes the reader on that journey and in doing so provides the framework for making sustainability a core competency for graduates across every kind of tertiary education and training. The book will give practitioners the tools to integrate sustainability into their programmes in ways that work for them and are directly relevant to their discipline. The book also tackles common barriers to sustainability education, from "Do we need to tackle this right now?" to "Is it even our problem?"

Sustainable Lens

A Visual Guide

Author: Professor Samuel Mann

Publisher: CreateSpace,
ISBN-10: 1468112775
ISBN-13: 978-1468112771



Sustainable Lens: A Visual Guide traces the development of sustainability through its representation in diagrams. It presents a model for seeing the world through a sustainability-driven perspective.

Visualising the future

Professor Samuel Mann

When you receive over 100,000 hits to your blog about sustainability, you know you are onto something good.

Each day, Information Technology Professor Samuel Mann receives hundreds of hits for his posts and this response has been in action for several years.

It speaks to a community of interest, hungry for the values of sustainability to be expressed in new and relevant ways. Now, looking for a further way to communicate a vision for sustainability, Mann's ground-breaking book *Sustainable Lens: A Visual Guide to the Key Idea of our Time* provides a graphic framework for perceiving and implementing sustainability practice as a better choice.

"It's something we all know we have to do," he says. "It's like gravity – you can't avoid it."

Sustainable Lens documents in both graphic and written form the historical progression of critical thinking about sustainability, and provides accessible pathways to actively integrate these principles. His work is carefully scripted to be applied by any discipline or organisation.

"When I started looking for visual representations of the concept of sustainability, I could not find an image that reflected my perception of sustainable practice. To portray an intellectual definition in visual form, whether artistic, scientific or both, may misrepresent its original meaning," he says.

This curiosity led Mann on a journey through the images and written history of more than 100 teachers, designers and writers. His focus is on imagery that helps to transform our perceptions to become "thoughtful inhabitants of ecosystems".

Many of the diagrams in the publication are often seen disassociated from their original context. *Sustainable Lens* brings each of these images into a new context. The book is laid out in such a way that it can be read from cover to cover, or each page can be pondered in isolation. Using images, rather than relying on words to describe sustainability, allows us to think in terms of systems and "the bigger picture", believes Mann.

"It is so easy to become disconnected from the impact that each individual can make," he says. "We turn on our computers without pausing to think of the resources, manpower and technology that have been harnessed to make this possible."

Sustainable practitioners, however, view the world through a lens that incorporates the accumulated unseen impacts that exist within time and space, believes Mann. Their perception needs to see across scales and thresholds in time, space, systems, culture and information – not only to document their findings, but to use all of their creativity and knowledge to transform the malleable elements into a sustainable form.

"The first step towards sustainability is that you have to care, and not to do less, but in fact, to do more."

Otago Polytechnic has successfully absorbed and integrated sustainable practice into all of its teaching programmes. Following the publication of *Sustainable Lens,* Mann has fielded a number of inquiries from fellow organisations wanting to provide a similar perspective.

Sustainable Lens is an extension of an earlier publication *A Simple Pledge* which was written in 2010 to showcase the many long-term benefits that can be yielded through sustainable practice in industry. The booklet documented some of the successful collaborations of Otago Polytechnic students and their industry clients to provide creative solutions to real-life problems.

Making confessions

Neil Emmerson

Neil Emmerson has Goya in mind when he points out that printmaking has a history of imaging war.

Neil Emmerson with Master of Fine Arts candidate Kim Brash

The Otago Polytechnic School of Art Studio Coordinator of Printmaking says reflecting on this got him "thinking about the way that images circulate, and the way that they become something that they initially might not have been".

The result is *(I must confess…) 2*, exhibited at the William Mora Galleries in Melbourne – a rethink of war and beauty based on a curious combination of visual dichotomies.

The pointed hat atop the figure is reminiscent of a clown's, yet also has haunting associations with the Ku Klux Klan. Slender wrists and ankles suggest youth, yet stooped stances hint at age-induced frailty. The black cloak conceals the figure's identity, while sheer fabric reveals his nudity.

Viewers' preconceptions are subverted – we are forced to ponder. Even the managers at the Melbourne gallery where Emmerson's work was exhibited last year admitted their "surprise that people were spending a lot of time in the gallery".

> "There's this push and pull between something that's aesthetically seductive, but on the other hand, vulgar and atrocious."

These layers of meaning are enabled by Emmerson's printing technique which, he says, "had the effect of being a little bit beguiling for people. I was double-printing digitally to get a very rich surface, and then I was screen-printing a very shiny varnish over the top of that."

The intensity of double-printed black ink suspended upon a white background highlights the intricacy of the finely-threaded costume and the delicate beauty of the body's form.

Yes, beauty is very much displayed in Emmerson's works, despite their overt association with infamous Abu Ghraib torture photographs.

He explains, "I was interested in producing an image that was both seductive and disturbing at the same time, similar to those original images. There's this push and pull between something that's aesthetically seductive, but on the other hand, vulgar and atrocious. It's that sort of friction that I'm interested in recreating."

Emmerson is known for his engagement in art activism, and his recent works utilise symbolic power as a vehicle for challenging homosexual stereotypes: "The GOD lettering [on the costume] is an acronym for 'Gay on Demand', and is most pertinent to the situation, because those prisoners were forced to enact gay sex as a means of shaming them.

"Also, gay people are regularly stereotyped in media, often in a derogatory way. At once, [the outfit] is hiding the person's identity, but on another level, it's pushing that part of the person's identity forward. Sexuality is just one part of your personality, but it's often – without you wanting it to be – the biggest part on a social level."

Emmerson says that viewers' response of, "Yes, I'm seduced, but I'm not sure whether I like it," is intentional. Indeed, this internal juxtaposition of feeling reflects the unconventional combination of connotations captured by the works.

Another dichotomy, then: despite consisting of only black and white, Emmerson's prints contain uncountable shades of grey.

Emmerson, N. (2011) *(I must confess…) 2.* William Mora Galleries, Melboune, Victoria, Australia.

Addressing pneumonia

Megan Gibbons

Many New Zealanders would be surprised to hear that our country has a hospitalisation rate typical of the developing world.

The WHO attributes 21 per cent of deaths in children under five years of age to a primary diagnosis of pneumonia.

New Zealand's high rate of child pneumonia has been the focus of Megan Gibbons, Programme Manager/Research Coordinator at the Otago Institute of Sport and Adventure.

Currently completing a PhD in paediatric nutrition at the University of Auckland, she looked at the nutritional and environmental risk factors associated with the disease.

Gibbons' team conducted a case-control study of children residing in Auckland who were less than five years of age. The "cases" were children admitted to Starship Children's hospital (or presenting at the emergency department) with pneumonia, and the "controls" were randomly selected children living in the community.

> "We focused on Auckland, because the rates of pneumonia in Auckland are really high. In fact, the hospitalisation rates in Māori and Pacific populations are similar to rates in developing countries."

"Essentially, we looked at what children of that age ate and patterns of food intake, and compared children with pneumonia to those without pneumonia. We focused on Auckland, because the rates of pneumonia in Auckland are really high. In fact, the hospitalisation rates in Māori and Pacific populations are similar to rates in developing countries."

Through analysing the impact of various risk factors, the study concluded, "Children need to be breastfed, and they need to spend time outside getting vitamin D. Mould or mildew in children's bedrooms was a high risk factor as well." Identification of these "controllable risk factors" will hopefully lead to improvements in national policies, primary care, and prevention of hospitalisation.

Gibbons presented the findings at the 2011 New Zealand Nutrition Society Conference in Queenstown. From here, the project's recommendations could be integrated into government health policy, and the information is passed onto a bigger study called "Growing up in New Zealand".

"This study is huge; it consists of following 8,000 children from birth until their 30s or 40s, to see how we can engage intervention."

The applicability of health research is Gibbons' main reason for pursuing such a career: "It's good to be able to make a meaningful difference."

And as a lecturer, she points out that it's helpful for students to have teachers who double as active academics. "It means that we're using research to inform teaching, which provides meaty material for students. Our students get to be involved through the research programmes, and they find it quite exciting to experience the professional research environment."

Gibbons M, Wall C, Grant C (2011) Nutritional and Environmental Risk Factors for Young Children in Auckland, New Zealand, Developing Community-Acquired Pneumonia. *2011 NZ Nutrition Society Conference,* Queenstown, December.

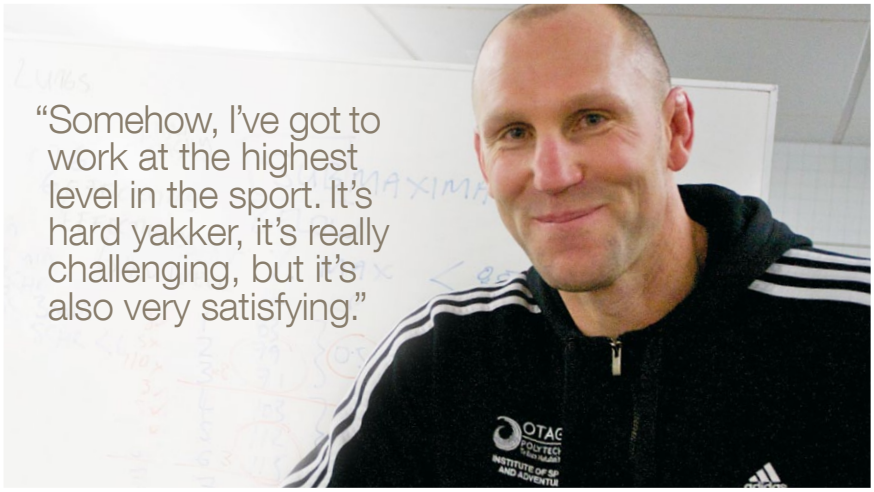
Referee checking

Matthew Blair

While athletes are racing around the field during a high-level rugby match, spare a thought for the referees who have to keep up with them.

Match officials are often undervalued and overlooked members of elite-level sport, and even vilified when their game decisions seem contentious. While working with New Zealand rugby union referees, Matthew Blair – Programme Manager and Senior Lecturer at the Otago Institute of Sport and Adventure (OISA) – realised that there was a paucity of research into what they go through on the field: "They need a bit of love, basically."

Blair acknowledges that "it's really only in the last decade that we've started to focus on referees in terms of high performance support, which includes physical conditioning. Meanwhile, the players have been engrossed in high performance structures from when the game of rugby union went professional in 1995."



For Blair's thesis (as part of his Master's in Physical Education at the University of Otago), he conducted a study to "quantify the physiological response and work-rate demands of professional rugby union refereeing." Blair admits that he never expected to end up working with referees: "I'd always worked with players, but I'm glad that I've gone this way now. It's given me a completely different view of the game!"

Blair's research involved assessment of the physical demands on referees during games, using global positioning systems (GPS) – a tool enabling efficient collection and analysis of game data such as distance, speed and heart rate.

It showed that referees deserve a bit of appreciation: while rugby players often run up to four kilometres in one game, referees typically run more than seven kilometres.

Blair's study also revealed that refereeing rugby union at the professional level is a highly intermittent, variable-intensity activity, placing stress on both the aerobic and anaerobic energy systems. He presented his findings last year at the quadrennial World Congress on Science and Football in Nagoya, Japan.

Blair's research has provided evidence for developing specific training programmes for referees, and has proved him as an asset at the industry's highest international level, leading to a consultancy role as the physical conditioning advisor for International Rugby Board referees.

He's also an advisor and a mentor for the Pacific Islands teams.

"Somehow, I've got to work at the highest level in the sport. It's hard yakker, it's really challenging, but it's also very satisfying."

Blair, M. (2011) The Physical Requirements of Elite-level Rugby Union Refereeing. *7th World Congress on Science and Football,* Nagoya, Japan, 19 May.

Speaking from experience

Dr Linda Robertson

Qualitative researchers' methods to gain insights into an older person's world require a delicately-balanced skill set.

A recent research paper completed by Dr Linda Robertson, Principal Lecturer of Occupational Therapy at Otago Polytechnic, has uncovered a new perspective on some of the issues that arise whilst conducting research interviews with older people.

The research was completed in collaboration with Beatrice Hale, a social gerontologist, through semi-structured interviews with New Zealand health professional researchers.

Their findings show that although health professionals may consider themselves practised interviewers, the ways in which older people tend to respond to questions require more than just the traditional skill set of open-ended questions, active listening and working with technology.

"Often the interviewer is surprised at their own response to the length of time it takes to conduct an interview with an older person," Robertson says. "Learning how to adapt to the often discursive nature of the conversation without being too overtly controlling is a particular skill."

One observation is the way older people perceive an interview as an opportunity to tell their stories, whilst at the same time purposely including the answer to the question posed.

"Interviewers need to acquire the skills required to regulate interviews, either by assuming the role of host and introducing breaks in the form of a cup of tea, or by gently guiding the conversation back to the approved themes or topic of the interview."

The research stresses the importance in an interviewer establishing and maintaining a relationship and a genuine notion of reciprocity with the older person he or she is questioning.

The boundaries of normal discourse such as "where do you live and where do you come from?" enable an interviewer to establish links and connections.

"It is really important as a researcher to have supervision, often people open up a great deal more when talking in their own home."

"Each person establishes their credentials in an individual way and it is in allowing this process to take place that true connection is made."

This highlights the subjectivity inherent in any research interview process where researchers bring to the interview their own world view, experiences and understandings and ideas.

Robertson adds that older people appreciate the opportunity to receive written copies of their interview, review their answers and share their findings with their families.

"In some cases, interviewers discover that older people choose to share some of their more difficult memories during an interview, which can be quite disturbing at times.

"It is really important as a researcher to have supervision. Often people open up a great deal more when talking in their own home."

A future goal is to develop a video which features role-play to highlight some of the findings and common challenges that researchers may encounter when conducting interviews with older people.

"I advise my younger students to gain some active experience listening to older people before they begin to enter into research in this area."

Robertson, L., Hale B. (2011) Interviewing Older People; Relationships in Qualitative Research. *The Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences and Practice,* July 2011, 9 (3)–1-8.

Play time

Bronwyn Hegarty

In the midst of busy professional and academic lives, 'play' implies something for children, or at the very least something self-indulgent. But recent collaborative research cites it as being key for developing essential digital information literacy.

With educational resources moving increasingly online, the ability to move comfortably through an online space is important, believes Otago Polytechnic Educational Developer Bronwyn Hegarty. "Yet how do staff know they have adequate digital information literacy for their academic endeavours? How do students select and use the most appropriate tools and information for their learning?"

To explore this, Hegarty led a nationwide project looking at developing capability of staff and students in managing digital literacy information. The team's findings emphasise the importance of 'play' for developing these important skills.

"We employed an action research cycle during 10 weekly workshops to work through the digital information issues that participants brought to the project – to help them set goals and develop solutions. It involved monitoring, including self-review and evaluation."

Participants, including students and general and academic staff, worked collaboratively as a group within each of four participating institutions.

Some became involved because they realised the gap in their professional practice and learning, explains Hegarty, while "others wanted to explore the possibilities".

Even though some participants were initially confident, "when it came to trying out Web 2.0 approaches, such as social networking sites, wikis, blogs and other tools on the open internet, they found the concept of putting themselves out there challenging."

What helped, Hegarty says, was the opportunity to explore the technologies in a non-threatening way, and have fun with them. "Because we gave them permission and time to play, exposed them to Web 2.0 technologies and other platforms, they increased their digital information literacy." Encouragingly, she reports, "all the participants, through learning collaboratively, developed characteristics associated with digital information capability.

"They displayed openness and willingness to play with technologies and not be afraid to make mistakes when trying new tools and methods. These are also characteristics linked to self-efficacy; that is, a belief in one's ability to do the task."

The Ministry of Education called for the research, realising a gap in the tertiary sector. Hegarty comments that one of the distinctive things about reporting on this research was its focus on the obstacles, such as when students have teachers who don't have the digital information literacy skills to guide them. "There can be an assumption that because students are of a particular generation, they have the skills. They may be used to using Facebook and Twitter in a social capacity, but they need guidance to be able to use them effectively for learning," Hegarty says. "We found you can't just assume that they already know how to use these technologies for learning."

The researchers also described socio-economic status as a potential obstacle: if learners come from a household without access to a computer and internet, they often don't have enough exposure to acquire the skills and attributes needed in a digital world, says Hegarty. They don't get the opportunities to play.

The concepts from the research and the approach inform Hegarty's educational development work. "It was pleasant to be working in a model where people build capability through enhancing their confidence while working collaboratively. I would like to see more staff development like this.

"People just have to keep practising, practising and doing so in a supportive community."

Jeffrey, L., Hegarty, B., Kelly, O., Penman, M., Coburn, D., & McDonald, J. (2011). Developing Digital Information Literacy in Higher Education: Obstacles and Supports. *Journal of Information Technology Education,* 10, p 383 – 413.

Change of climate

Bridie Lonie

For hundreds of years, artists have drawn inspiration from their natural environment. Landscapes have been used as metaphors for the mind, proof of God's perfection and propaganda for colonists – among much else.

Now, believes Dunedin School of Art Principal Lecturer Bridie Lonie, the ways in which artists are engaging with the planet they inhabit is undergoing another shift, as they participate in the global discourse of climate change.

Change Tactics, presented at an Australiasian conference, explores what Lonie describes as a new genre in landscape art.

"Instead of art celebrating nature – where landscape may be dramatic but humans are safe – this is art about uncertainty and disturbance."

And while there is nothing new about landscape sometimes being depicted as hostile or overwhelmingly powerful, what sets climate change art apart is the destabilising role of the human.

By its nature, then, climate change art is political. It implicates our social and economic systems, and is based in a global discourse drawing upon science, politics and activism.

Lonie believes that the ways in which artists are responding to this has seen the emergence of a "new generation of activist artists, working with the methodologies of the discourse in a very precise way".

Take Amy Balkin, for example. Her *Public Smog* work involved purchasing carbon credits from the emissions market, effectively taking them out of circulation for polluting industries. She then sought to donate them to the people of San Francisco in the form of "a park in the atmosphere".

Lonie also cites Natalie Jeremijenko, whose Environmental Health Clinic at NYU emulates a visit to the doctor, with "patients" making appointments to discuss their environmental health concerns, and leaving with a prescription for environmental actions. Lonie points out that, in participating in this discourse, one of the languages an artist must speak is that of science: "To understand climate change is to engage with hard data, graphs and diagrams." This requires a bridging of the gap between art and science, a task that Lonie – with a medical historian/poet and science teacher as her parents – is comfortable to negotiate. Her previous research into art and science suggests that, despite the way in which they are often polarised, the disciplines have much in common. Each involves the interpretation and presentation of information, and both share the challenge of how to make concepts visible.

Artists addressing climate change, like all other contributors to the debate that surrounds it, need to draw upon robust interpretation of real evidence for their work to be credible. The skill as an artist is to use their ability to think laterally and provoke new ways of thinking about familiar problems.

Those who do so can make very interesting and powerful statements, says Lonie. "Art is a space with a huge amount of potential for activism. People engage with art differently than they engage with a scientific article or a political speech – like those, art is in a public sphere, but one that enhances resilience through imagination and empathy."

Lonie, B. (2011) Change Tactics: Artists Dealing with Climate Change. *Art Association of Australia and New Zealand Conference,* 7–9 December, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.

Out there, online

Dr Sharleen Tuhiwai Howison

When students are out in the field, high-quality online tools are a critical lifeline back to their lecturers, and enable them to truly make the most of their experiences as learning opportunities.

For polytechnics that pride themselves on preparing students for the real world of work through work placements and industry-based research – also known as cooperative education – the developments in ICT are especially significant, says Applied Business Principal Lecturer, Dr Sharleen Tuhiwai Howison. In her own programme, students spend their final semester working full-time in an internship-type arrangement, and complete a 10,000 word research project on a problem or issue in the workplace.

Drawing upon her doctoral research, in 2011 Howison provided an important update to the *International Handbook for Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education: International Perspectives of Theory, Research and Practice* co-writing a chapter around administering programmes and incorporating developing technologies in cooperative education. In the 10 years since the first edition, she comments, there have been numerous developments in ICT technology. This brings both opportunities and challenges to those charged with keeping tertiary programmes up to date with current technological and pedagogical practices.

"One of the most promising aspects of e-learning is the opportunity to activate students and shift more of the responsibility for the learning outcome to the learner." This can be done, she says, by making good use of communications tools to foster collaborative learning and discussion with other administrators and peers. She cites Skype, discussion boards and online journals as examples of such useful tools and sees the ICT platform Moodle as importantly

"allowing students the ability to interact and reflect on their learning".

"The main findings from my [doctoral] research include the fact that technology and the functionalities associated with it can enhance the quality of the cooperative education experience for learners, administrators and academics. Certain platforms can be adopted and implemented that nurture deeper learning for the students and encourage further reflection."

Her research not only benefits students, but provides an important evidence base for educators as well. Working in a field where learning through practice is so emphasised, theoretical bases for technology and work-integrated programmes are a necessity.

Of course, where students have more opportunity and also responsibility for their own learning, much relies on students actually using the various technologies that form part of course delivery, Howison points out. The key, she says, is that in their planning "administrators and course managers are encouraged to choose technology that works well and is user-friendly enough so the students want to engage with it".

It's like all good teaching: encourage students' motivation, enable them to engage, and everything else will follow.

Howison, S., Lazarus, S., & Oloroso, H. (2011) Administering Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education Programs. *International Handbook for Cooperative and Work-integrated Education International Perspectives of Theory, Research and Practice,* (2nd ed.) Waikato University Print: New Zealand pp.337-347.

Getting practical sooner

Hamish Smith and Professor Samuel Mann

"Even though it is a small project event over a short timeframe, it utilises a variety of skills across the four courses that make up the programme."

Graduates of Otago Polytechnic's Bachelor of Information Technology say it's the thing that gives them jobs: more than a third of their final year of study is project based.

"In a job interview, candidates can talk about a real problem they've worked through," says Professor Samuel Mann.

In recent years, capstone projects in the degree programme have been as diverse as a GPS-based virtual walking tour of central Dunedin historical landmarks to Pestweb, a system that gives farmers interactive information about pests.

Now, wanting to transfer the benefits of project-based learning to all students, Mann and Programme Manager Hamish Smith researched how to translate the capstone approach to a lower-level course.

Their work acknowledged the substantial body of knowledge around project-based learning at degree level, but in all their reviews, Mann says, "we didn't find much at an introductory level. So we looked at what is different and what works at a certificate level." Smith says, "There were a number of situations that applied pre-degree. We designed something from the body of knowledge that could work." Informal feedback from the Certificate in Computing (Level 3) programme that integrated these changes in 2011 has all been positive, and the researchers are collecting formal feedback on the 2012 programme.

Usually, a capstone project is a course in the final semester of a degree programme that requires students to draw on all previous areas of study. Mann says the research question became whether it was legitimate to call the pre-degree certificate project a capstone programme at this lower level. "We had to ask, 'How much freedom do we let them run with? How much hand-holding will they require?' "

The Certificate involves 12 ½ weeks of students taking four different classes, with conventional teaching methods such as applied labs in utilising software, professional skills, multimedia and developing computer applications. Then, for the final four weeks, students take on a project event full-time. Given a brief, such as creating 'a prototype for a motion demonstrator in the form of a small application for a portable device' (2011), students in groups of two or three follow differing pathways through the task.

"Even though it is a small project event over a short timeframe, it utilises a variety of skills across the four courses that make up the programme," says Smith.

While there are not external clients, the dynamic project structure works as "an environment that replicates a client with the issues of a real client". It also allows students to see and reflect on what they've learned.

From a research perspective, Mann says the experience of investigating a lower-level project event was also useful for the degree: going through all the parameters of how to set up the project and working out the required balance between obvious hand-holding and behind the scenes scaffolding are relevant at all levels.

While the building analogy would suggest that a capstone should not be part of a foundation, the experiences of ICT students at Otago Polytechnic suggest otherwise: project events in computing at certificate level are a successful innovation.

Smith, H. and Mann, S. (2011) Students' Experiences of Project Based Learning within a Pre-Degree Programme. *Journal of Applied Computing and Information Technology,* Volume 15, Issue 2.

Fashion model

Tracy Kennedy

Thanks to the Dunedin Fashion Incubator's new Design Studio, some Otago Polytechnic graduates are already a step above the rest when entering the fashion industry; they're being provided, literally, with cutting-edge opportunities.

The DFI has been supporting and mentoring emerging designers for over a decade now, but only became affiliated with Otago Polytechnic in 2009. As of 2012, the DFI is now located within the School of Design, a move that Manager Tracy Kennedy says gave the project "more of an education focus".

Kennedy recently introduced a new component – the Design Studio – within the existing DFI, and she presented her concept last year at the International Conference of Fashion Incubators. The aim of the Design Studio is to further develop the DFI as a sustainable business model, and to better serve the needs of upcoming designers.

Similar to Otago Polytechnic's NewSplash Communication and Design Studio, the DFI Design Studio makes the connection between education and "real world" work experience for its clients. The Design Studio employs DFI resident designers, talented graduates and existing students as "design assistants".

The design assistants are able to undertake paid work experience and internships, while increasing the commercial viability of the DFI. Both established and "start-up" local apparel companies and community groups employ design assistants to help with a variety of fashion-related design and production work; projects such as design development, patternmaking, and sample assistance. Throughout the entire process, they are supported and supervised by the experienced DFI staff, including Kennedy.

"It's quite exciting! It's fun for me to see them grow and move on to become successful in their businesses."

This system of business and educational collaboration will hopefully establish the DFI Design Studio as a self-funded, sustainable production. "The Design Studio brings another stream of income into the DFI, which in turn means we can support more talented, emerging designers."

Kennedy refers to the Design Studio as a "space between".

"It's a link between education and industry, and that's going to grow more and more. It fills the space between graduation and career; it's this place in the middle where emerging designers can get advice, mentoring, confidence, and they can ease into the community before they go out into the real world."

Kennedy hopes that the Design Studio experience will lead its fashion clients into a "career path, a job".

"It's quite exciting! It's fun for me to see them grow and move on to become successful in their businesses."

Kennedy, T. (2011) Modelling Design: Developing a Sustainable Business Model through Introduction of a Design Studio within the Dunedin Fashion Incubator. *International Conference of Fashion Incubators,* September.

Photos courtesy of moodie tuesday

Country life

Jean Ross

A documentary showing the realities of rural life is one of the innovative ways Otago Polytechnic's Bachelor of Nursing curriculum is preparing student nurses to practise competently as registered nurses in rural settings.

Jean Ross, Principal Lecturer and Postgraduate Coordinator, has been a leading figure in supporting the professional development of rural nursing in New Zealand over the past 15 years. Using innovative models, such as the recently produced documentary, to engage with learners, she facilitates rural community knowledge among her students.

The Central Otago town of Tarras was chosen as the setting: it represents a town typical of the rural Otago hinterland and is relatively close to Dunedin.

The documentary captures the thoughts of local rural people including new arrivals, working people, rural families and children, and transient workers of Tarras. Their comments highlight the social and economic issues associated with life in a more remote setting and provide insights about access to health services.

"This documentary has proven to be an excellent teaching resource that integrates didactic content with nursing practice in a particular rural community," says Ross.

This approach is part of the Place-Based Practice Model, which she has researched and described in a chapter in *Rural Nurse: Transition to Practice*. It contributes to the "thread of recognition" of the impact of rural environment on both patients and student practitioners that runs through all of the Polytechnic's Bachelor of Nursing programmes.

This thread is unique: Otago Polytechnic's programme is the first in New Zealand to offer dedicated rural content and clinical experiences, while considering the distinct, diverse and challenging nature of New Zealand nursing practice. Students apply this awareness with at least two rural clinical placements within the three years of their training.

"Rural nursing is a distinctive way to nurse," Ross says. The effects of living in a close-knit rural community affect people and their decision making on many levels. Isolation creates self-reliance and stoicism while the physical environment dictates the income and lifestyle of residents of rural communities.

Rural nurses also use their insider knowledge of the communities they live in, combined with their advanced clinical skills, to provide a nursing service which is particular to the unique health needs of their community, Ross says.

The Place-Based Practice Model focuses on what constructs a rural nurse, explains Ross. "This includes the effects of isolated geographical locations; the social relationships that a nurse develops within and external to a rural setting and the concept of a 'sense of place' that can facilitate a student's transition into a professional nursing practice in a rural area."

For this reason, finding ways to communicate and experience rural life is essential, believes Ross. As well as the documentary of rural life, students are also exposed to the rural context through educational resources such as rural practice tools, a New Zealand rural nursing textbook and web-based resources.

"To achieve competence, rural nurses are expected to adapt their knowledge and clinical skills to meet the genuine needs of the community they serve."

Ross, J. (2011) Place Based Practice: A New Zealand Nursing Education Model. In D Molinari and A. Bushy (eds). *Rural Nurse: Transition to Practice,* New York: Springer Publishing Company, September 2011.

"This documentary has proven to be an excellent teaching resource that integrates didactic content with nursing practice in a particular rural community."

Child safe

Margaret McKenzie

It's a problem with no easy solution, says Senior Lecturer in Social Services Margaret McKenzie – when to remove a child from a potentially risky situation, and when to focus on supporting families and communities to succeed.

Taking children from their families can begin one path of trauma, she knows. Leaving them there may expose them to more.

McKenzie is not alone in agonising over this: the dilemma concentrates the minds of child protection workers, researchers and policy-makers around the world. And since New Zealand struck out on the child welfare stage with its family-group conference model in 1989, which emphasises maintaining children in family life as much as possible, McKenzie says that international eyes have locked on whether this family-centred philosophy actually improves outcomes for children or is a utopian fantasy.

This community of interest has led to McKenzie co-authoring a paper in the *European Journal of Social Work,* exploring how community development strategies – and the right of children to participate in decisions affecting them – have enhanced outcomes for at-risk children in three contexts: urban New Zealand; remote Western Australia and within a family with mental health issues in Norway.

The approaches, she says, have been as distinct as the communities they have taken place in. "In Australia, community development was about spending time in, and gaining the trust of, members of the remote indigenous community. Only then would the social worker hear of children who needed to be watched because their mother would 'go wild'." The social worker also gained a much greater understanding of how the wider community already noticed and supported at-risk children, and could help resource these efforts.

A world away, in Norway, a social worker found a similar undercurrent of resilience within a family where a child's mother suffered mental health and addiction issues. "By talking to the child and the extended family, she uncovered a system of alerts, intervention and support that operated beneath the radar of child protection systems and which became a huge resource to draw upon."

In New Zealand, meanwhile, the case study focused on a low socio-economic suburb where a number of homes saw little sun in winter. The public health nurse at the local school noticed that children in these colder, cheaper houses were more likely to be absent. "Rather than labelling households as dysfunctional with bad parenting, a community-wide response was initiated," McKenzie reports. Landlords, local government and NGOs worked together to improve warmth and insulation in the homes. Parents began to discuss their challenges and joined forces to establish worksheds, community gardens and health groups.

"What was perhaps most powerful about this approach was that it broke down the isolation that many parents felt, where they were perceived as failures. They could see they weren't alone, and that they could be part of the solution."

McKenzie is quick to point out that community development is not a magic cure; it takes time and resources. And it does not avoid the problem that some children still face threats and that community workers are often blamed for failing to act when things go wrong.

"But it can achieve long-lasting, systemic results. As a society, we need to ask ourselves how we can stop working in a risk-aversive way and adopt a more positive, family-supporting approach."

Young, S., **McKenzie, M. ,** Schjelderup, L and Orme, C. (2011) The rights of the child enabling community development to contribute to a valid social work practice with children at risk. *European Journal of Social Work.* Online June 2011: DOI10.1080/13691457.2010.543889

Otago Polytechnic research degrees: Theses and dissertations submitted in 2011

Master of Fine Arts

Bell, Victoria	Colonial Desire: Resisting Afrika
Fay, Colleen	SITE+SIGHT+CITE
Houlihan, Lee	Long Time Coming: An Unassimilated Māori/Pākehā Identity
Hunter, Don	LINES OF SITE
Liversage, Desi	Bloodlines and Bloodstains: Layers of the South African War
Mackay, Kerry	Carried Away
Novena Sorrel, Juliet	We Are Here - Recreating Place through Observational Drawing and Mapping
Reynolds, Jacqueline Rewha	Shelter
Shailaj, Rekha	Two Worlds of a Migrant: Wrapped in the Folds of Clothing
Slattery, Della	make + believe =
Springford, Kate	Nicotine
Terry, Ana	(E)mergence
Walton, Karyn	A Slice of Heaven or a Series of Follies: The Scarring and Consuming of our Landscapes

Master of Occupational Therapy

Penelope Kinney	Exploring Connectedness: The Meaning of Transition Experiences for Patients within a Forensic Psychiatric Service

Master of Midwifery

Catherine Rietveld	Antenatal Colostrum Harvesting for Pregnant Women with Diabetes in Preparation for Breastfeeding

Available from the Robertson Library **http://www.library.otago.ac.nz/robertson/**

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