

# definingnz

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SUMMER 2009/10



## Finding the right words

Writers lead the creative charge

Hamish McKay – “that guy who came up the stairs”

Simple advice for Christmas shoppers

Rocking the New Zealand Music Awards





## Outside the box

**It is a cliché** to say that we live in a changing world. But the implications of living with so much change are not always fully understood. Too often the response is to reassert old traditions or work harder on more of the same.

The better response is to promote creativity, innovation and flexibility. There are some outstanding examples of where this is beginning to happen. The words are in constant use and people who have these capabilities are widely sought after.

But the fact is that not enough is being done to promote creativity and innovation as central to the future success of communities, businesses and New Zealand.

Massey University is determined to change this situation. Already we have the nation's leading College of Creative Arts based in Wellington and Albany. The college is ranked first in the Performance-Based Research Fund, is the first choice for arts and design students, routinely wins national and international awards, has staff who are known throughout the world and leads the creativity charge through such events as its annual *BLOW* festival of the arts.

The students who graduate from the College of Creative Arts each year go into New Zealand's growing creative industries. Over time many find their way into other careers, taking with them a world view that emphasises thinking differently. This is good for the nation.

But Massey wants to do more than this, because we believe creativity and innovation are not confined to people who train in specific disciplines. Our view is that all people have creative capacities and that these capacities are needed in every area of our society.

If we are to have a creative nation, then our schools need to give all children opportunities to develop their creative capacities. Our businesses must be able to transform themselves and be led by people who understand what it means to be innovative. If we are to resolve the great challenges of our time, scientists of every kind will need to think outside the box. And we need to live in a nation where creative expression is seen as crucial to our future. As New Zealanders, not only do we have to think outside the box – we need to be capable of inventing an entirely new box.

This issue of *DefiningNZ* is a celebration of creativity. It features the work of Massey staff who have won awards for their creative work and make a significant contribution to the cultural life of the nation – and the students who have studied under them and gone on to win awards and, in some cases, become teachers themselves. Massey alumnus Hamish McKay, who has enjoyed a stellar career in the media, talks about his life, and Professor Ingrid Day, our Assistant Vice-Chancellor Academic and International, discusses her plans for implementing our teaching and learning strategy.

As this is the last *DefiningNZ* for 2009, I would like to wish readers all the best for the festive season. The staff and students at Massey are looking forward to making new discoveries in 2010. We will keep you informed about our work. ❖

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Maharey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steve Maharey

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Photograph: David Wiltshire





# The Open Well

What do a judge, an agoraphobic and a young mother living in India have in common? As Paul Mulrooney discovers, they are extramural students of Massey's creative writing courses, where the staff and tutors lead by example, writing their way to success.

*Photographs: David Wiltshire*

***The Open Well*** is the name of Massey lecturer Dr Thom Conroy's entry that was runner-up in the *Sunday Star-Times* Short Story Awards this year.

The title is also reflective of the broad depth now evident among Massey creative writing staff and students.

None more so than Conroy's former pupil Sue Francis, who went one better than her tutor to win the newspaper's top short story award.

Their success follows that of Wellington tutor Mary McCallum who was presented with the Best First Book award for Fiction at last year's Montana New Zealand Book Awards for her novel, *The Blue*, about a Tory Channel whaling community.

Other staff have also earned accolades amid growing respect for Massey's reputation for forging quality writing.

In the winning *Star-Times* short story, judge Elizabeth Smither, in a clear reference to the late British poet laureate Sir John, noted the "Betjeman-like bounce" of one of Sue Francis' main characters.

And while such work doffs a cap to the English literary tradition, much of it is also unafraid to reflect a local voice too, encouraging students who aspire to be a budding Janet Frame or Hone Tuwhare.

As numerous staff from the School of English and Media Studies note, there is an almost unwritten rule to hire the most

qualified and dedicated lecturers and tutors for the internal and extramural creative writing programmes offered.

“All our teachers are working writers,” tutor Joy Green says.

“We take a primarily skills-based approach, centred on workshopping student work, so that students are actually ‘doing’ pretty much all the time – either writing or responding to the writing of their peers in a way that helps them develop a critical faculty they can apply to their own work.”

McCallum, whose own writing was given the ultimate plaudit from the readers when *The Blue* was also voted the Readers Choice Award winner at last year’s Montana Book Awards, believes the creative writing course works “so well” because it starts from the ground up, and offers students inspiring examples of poetry and prose that show them a way to proceed.

“It doesn’t assume any knowledge of literature and doesn’t have a lofty tone to it.

“My extramural students have included a judge, a young mother living in India and an agoraphobic,” she notes. “I have seen students who don’t regard themselves as ‘writers’ turning in some astonishing work that makes them sit up and say ‘I might be a poet after all.’”

Lecturer Dr Bryan Walpert, who this year had his own book of poetry published and has been a winner of a national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award for teaching creative writing, says the School of English and Media Studies offers three essential benefits for prospective writers:

- Attention to what writing does.
- Rigorous assessment and feedback from staff to students.
- The fact that constructive feedback comes from other published writers.

“It’s important as well that our students see creative writing within the broader context of literary studies,” Walpert says. “As a result students don’t feel they are writing in a vacuum – they can see their work as part of a rich tradition that has a lot to teach them.”

It is a tradition that is regularly enhanced by ongoing success at the School.

Tutor Louise Wallace and Wellington life-writing lecturer Ingrid Horrocks have new poetry books being published in March, while this year another tutor, Alice Miller, won the Katherine Mansfield Short Story Competition.

Miller also compered the full house who attended a Writers Read session with poet Glenn Colquhoun.

Meanwhile, Walpert was the feature guest at another of this year’s Writer’s Read sessions, started in 2008 to allow writers, sequestered in their solitary craft, to engage more actively with their audiences.

Other initiatives devised to foster the kind of environment essential for creative writing success include the visiting artist’s residency scheme to the Manawatu campus, (which last year included Colquhoun), performances of *Summer Shakespeare*,

an international playwriting competition, a weekly campus performance under the guise of an Arts on Wednesday programme and the awarding of the RG Frean Prize for academic and creative writing.

“The idea here is that literature is alive and exciting,” Walpert says.

Before submitting her winning short story, Sue Francis recalls that some of the poetry exercises she did eventually morphed into short stories.

“I remember one about taking apart a single word to make a poem – it helped me to get the essence of ideas and the best words to use.”



Tim Upperton, Joy Green, Helen Lenhendorf, Dr Jack Ross, Dr Bryan Walpert, Dr Thom Conroy, Dr Angie Farrow, Stuart Hoar

Francis, a former journalist who has opted for the more isolated life of a South Canterbury beef farmer, also valued the online contact with other extramural students.

“It was wonderful to be part of a community of people who care about words, and the length of a line, and the best place for a comma!”

Massey’s writing focus is not confined to fictional genres, with a theoretical and practical study examining the nature of life-writing, including oral

history, biography and autobiography, personal memoirs and family history becoming increasingly popular.

As Horrocks says, “It allows students to shape life stories and non-fiction subject matter in creative ways.”

Her colleague Dr Jack Ross, based on the Albany campus, says it also makes increasing sense to study literature, including non-fiction, in a purely pragmatic way, looking at past and present masters of the art to pick up suggestions for improving one’s own writing.

“Also, it’s hard to see how you can really understand the choices previous writers made in their poems, plays and novels if you’ve never even attempted to write one yourself,” Ross says. “Speaking personally, I wouldn’t trust an architect who’d never nailed in a nail or poured concrete on a building site.

“The writing life will never be an easy row to hoe, no matter how many grants, academic programmes and incentives are built up around it. It’s profoundly inspiring to me to see how many people are determined to pursue it, though. My hat’s off to them.”

Staff spoken to were reluctant to define the sheer volume of New Zealand writing available on the market as an indicator of a golden age for literature, though Conroy believes “this is the golden age of wanting to write.

“There does seem to be a craving out there to put words on paper and experiment with ways of creating literary art as never before.”

McCallum sees more opportunity, too, for writers to use their talents in the broader area of script-writing and web-writing.

“I think all this is helped enormously by the internet creating a community for younger writers, which brings them closer together and provides support.” ❖

that I have never seen,  
the one my wife refuses to show me,  
the one in the frame hugged to her chest,  
she stands in a crowd, as I imagine it,  
her hair larger, and looks ahead  
to a future she has no idea includes me  
imagining in the past  
framed by this photograph a bird  
sits just barely discernable in a tree  
behind the voluminous mane of her head.  
It has a red beak or, if the photograph,  
which I may have mentioned I have not seen,  
is black and white, it is a beak one might  
have to imagine to imagine to be red.  
I may be making too much of the beak.  
The tree might be what most matters  
in this photograph, the way its skeletal  
branches importune something about  
winter sneaking up behind her,  
like the future she thinks  
she's looking into, so young,  
younger than I've ever known her.  
It's a group shot, but the photographer  
has noticed her. Not her hair,  
which is beautiful, but the red line  
of her lips, the smile he commands  
darting too quickly across her face,  
a bird alighting on a branch  
then flurrying away, like the present,  
as if noticing it has been noticed  
by someone who wants to say to the person  
beside him, Quick, look at that bird,  
but that person will say, What bird? What tree?  
Anyway, she'll say, this person beside him,  
the person putting the frame face-down  
on the table, then placing a book on top of it,  
she'll say, Anyway, it's winter now,  
and what's gone is gone.



**Dr Bryan Walpert**  
(published in *Runes*)



**Excerpt of untitled novel**  
**Thom Conroy**

The sky grew brighter, blossoming above the arms of forest that fell out of the hills into the channel. Okukuri was wide as a lake and it stunk of brine. The man at the prow wore a sailor's worsted cotton shirt, still faint blue on the cuffs, but the other rowers were bare-chested. Steam rose off their shoulders. They moved quickly, keeping to the centre of the waterway, the sail full, and all the men singing. Often one of them broke off on his own from the song, calling out a chant that returned to the boat as if it were thunder at a distance.

The sun broke over the hills on their left at almost the same minute that the man at the prow shouted, *Moana*. Clinging to her musket, its wood and metal now warm in her hands, Clara turned. She saw the light hitting the rocky tops of headlands that rose up out of the breaking surf like grey fingers broken off at the knuckles. An island now took the shape of the head of dog and, had they been in Europe, she might have taken it for sculpture. As she looked, a wave crashed over the island, burying it. Now her eye caught the expanse of blue. She turned nearly completely in her seat. A haze, tinted aquamarine, lay over a plain of water. The walls of the channel, more narrow now than they had been for all of the voyage, gave off an echo, as if the stone were roaring.

Beyond the haze, at such a distance that she could make no sense of it, Clara saw a black line. Hills. Our destination, she thought. Almost overlapping this thought came another. It came as the boat rose on a sudden swell that slapped ice water at the sail, so that the motion seemed in keeping with the thought.

We won't make it, this was the thought.

They were not more than a hundred yards out of the channel when the waves changed. Clara saw it first on the fingers of rock. As she watched, columns of white water climbed them, engulfing them. The sound from the channel mouth grew louder, and now they seemed to be climbing rather than sailing. The power of the open water held the oars in the water, and the rowing slowed, she could feel it in the motion of the boat, but also in the sudden change in the rhythm of the men. At the back and front of the boat, the two men who had stood through the channel now sat. The one at the stern threw a coil of rope at Te Hoki.

Te Hoki took the coil of rope and crawled to the pole of the sail, tied it fast there, and passed the other end around Clara's waist. She said, A rough crossing today.



**History**  
**Tim Upperton**  
(Previously published in *New Zealand Books 86*, Winter 2009)

Turn the pages, slowly. Each word afloat  
on narrative's sea, each glyph the principal  
character in its own story, each clinging on  
for dear life. A is aleph, an ox. Upside down,  
its blank, horned face blazes through millennia.  
Imagine each letter like this. Imagine  
its cursive bend and swoop the black-clad  
curve of a peasant's thigh as he bows  
among dew-weighted barley. Here, the tendril  
on the pale nape of a concubine's neck.  
Here, the serif of a beggar-child's bare foot.  
They cluster, they importune, they whisper  
but we don't listen to them, we turn the pages,  
slowly, lifted by the grand wave. A letter, a word,  
a page, a book. Smoke coils and thickens, ash  
carries on the wind, lifts and settles, and this, too,  
is history: the burning of a thousand thousand libraries.



*New Zealand's Next Top Model Speaks*

Dr Jack Ross

I'm trying to be flirty with the camera  
& relax my eyes  
What these other girls don't realise is  
I'm the tallest one here  
I can learn to show emotion  
Can they grow taller?  
I don't think so

Hosanna is a genius  
We all laughed at her  
when she started practising  
12 hours a day  
walking  
looking in the mirror  
I'm going to do the same

I've got a good body  
I'm not going home  
I've got a future in this industry  
Those other girls are bitches  
5 of them said that I was going home  
They're going home, not me  
I'm here to stay

Hosanna is an idiot  
I'm going to New York  
I'm going to be a star  
If they tell me to eat myself  
I'll do it  
I've dieted before  
Nobody's getting any sleep

until we've cleared this up



*Fall Geese, New Jersey, 2004*  
Ingrid Horrocks

Each bird  
in passing  
catches sun  
on its wings.

The day  
seems brighter  
warmer

as in paintings  
of hunting scenes  
where birds  
are most beautiful  
the pulsing moment  
before they fall.



*Excerpt from Boiling*  
Joy Green

There was never a genuine silence to be had during waking hours, but in the bathroom the clunking pipes and roaring water drowned out any extraneous sounds from the yards: she could hear no bleating sheep, nor the crude jokes of the men in the engineering works across the narrow road, nor yet their radio blaring words as tuneless as they were obscene, and when Evelyn turned off the tap the abrupt cessation of the mechanical symphony was contrast enough with the previous noise to pass for quiet.

A quick mental inventory confirmed that everything was where she needed it to be, so she slid out of her robe and hung it on the hook behind the door, safe from splashes. Before she stepped up to the bath, however, she spent a couple of minutes staring into the mirror. Ribbons of steam curled into her hair, and it had started to darken. Wet, it seemed to regain some of the colour that time had leached out of it, but it was never the startling red that had distinguished her in any crowd when she was a girl. Still, she saw, its anaemic curls clung to a face that, at 39, remained unlined. Blue eyes stared at her from under brows which arched neatly and never required much plucking and her lips were full: bee-stung, Cameron always called them. It didn't look as ridiculous as it felt, she thought, for the owner of that face to be pregnant – despite the fifteen years that had passed after Anthony's birth and twelve after the last miscarriage – it still looked easily young enough. Even her skin, already sheened with sweat, looked youthful, plump, and elastic.



*Extract from The Blue*  
Mary McCallum (Penguin, 2007)

Background: Lilian lives in the isolated whaling community at the mouth of Tory Channel and is making the best of a life that has at its core a secret grief. It is 1938 and for three months of every year the men take to the sea to hunt whales with fast boats and explosive harpoons. This year, Lilian's troubled son Micky has returned too.

[Chapter 20]

Rain was falling. Falling all afternoon and most of the night, and now with the morning barely begun the ground was too wet to hold it. Streams were filled to bursting, rock faces spilled with waterfalls and earth slid like water into the bays. There were dark pools where mud met sea and then as it spread outwards it lightened to a milky brown aureole. The cloud was so low it shrouded all but the rocky outcrops at the water's edge. When they spoke, the men's voices echoed, but mostly they stood on the chasers grave and silent. In the distance they heard a rooster and it made Micky think of eggs and bacon. He could do with a good fry-up. Even after a week on the chasers he couldn't get used to getting up in the dark and eating a cooked breakfast before cock crow. He always regretted what he'd left behind on his plate as the cold seeped into his skin and his body cried out for fuel.

Despite low cloud at the Lookout first thing, Phil had managed to spot a humpback coming in close to Jordy's Rock. Without too much trouble, the whalers had herded it through the narrow entrance into Tory Channel, despatching it efficiently right there in the middle of Fishing Bay. They'd left it to float in the muddied water with the blind eels and the cape pigeons. Now they were returning to Lookout Hill, following the line between the milk chocolate of the bays and the huffing teal water of the channel. The men were wet and cold, and the day had barely begun.

# Moriori project next on writer's list

**Award-winning** writer and senior life-writing tutor Tina Dahlberg's next literary challenge is to complete a PhD thesis that will become a fiction novel focused on a Moriori ancestor.

The novel her thesis will become is centred on a female ancestor and will involve research into her own whakapapa. She says although the late Michael King's book *Moriori: a People Rediscovered* helped give credence to Moriori identity and the 900 descendants living today, she is apprehensive. "I don't think it is going to be easy. The invasion of Rekohu [the Chatham Islands] and Moriori identity isn't something that has been written about much. I feel a bit scared, and I think it's okay to be scared." She has set herself a three-year deadline.

Dahlberg, 35, writes under the name Tina Makereti and has won two writing prizes this year. The first was the Huia Publishers Short Story Award for *Skin and Bones*, a tale about the creation of the first woman by the Māori god of the forests, Tāne Mahuta. The second was with *Twitch*, a story that compares the Māori creation beliefs, including the legend of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, with the "Big Bang" theory, which won her the Royal Society Manhire Prize for Creative Writing.

"I don't always write on Māori things," she says. "I write about people in general and identity. I guess you could say I have an obsession about identity." This stems from what she describes as an unusual upbringing that saw her moving from place to place around the North Island with her Pākehā father, and being somewhat of an outsider. "I moved around a lot and was exposed to different approaches to life and living." Takapuna Grammar was the first school she stayed at for any length of time and where she won her first creative writing prize and an English scholarship at age 16.

In the next two decades she completed a Bachelor of Arts in social anthropology at the Manawatu campus in 1994, a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts (Māori studies) in 2006 and had two daughters, now aged 13 and seven. She says she studied social anthropology to find out about culture and identity, discovering that many cultures have outsiders, and that being an outsider can inspire creativity. Just before she started her studies she reconnected with her mother, who is of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Te Atiawa, Rangatahi and Moriori descent.

"I didn't find out about my Māori heritage until I went to university. So I took as many Māori studies papers as I could." One was on mythology. "The legends were completely new to me and stayed in the back of my mind until I sat down to write last year, and came up with *Skin and Bones*." The story has been included in a collection of short stories about old and new myths, *Once Upon a Time in Aotearoa*, to be published next year.

Dahlberg returned to Massey as a staff member in 2005. After about six months working as a Kaitautoko Māori support staff member in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, she found out about the creative writing and life-writing papers

on offer and enrolled. "Taking the writing papers was really important. I had a lot of stuff waiting to be written. I always knew in the back of my mind that I wanted to return to writing but kept coming up with barriers – no computer, no time, too busy with the children."

She has just returned from Auckland, where she received the Manhire prize, and is feeling a bit frustrated at missing out on her daily writing. "Writing is now a vocation; I feel I can say I am a writer. A few years ago I would have said, 'I teach, I study, I am a parent'. It's fantastic to say 'I'm a writer'."

Royna Fifield is another former creative writing student and winner of the 2007 Huia Publishers Short Story Award. Her passion for writing began with a passion for reading. "I have always enjoyed being pulled into the lives and minds of others." The creative writing papers at Massey helped her to deconstruct the ideas and processes of creative writing and she has applied the skills she has learnt to other areas of her life. Phillip Braithwaite completed drama papers in 1997-99 taught by Dr Angie Farrow. "She was an inspiration and a great help, and continues to be," he says. "She gave me a lot of guidance and support as a writer, and staged some of my work at drama festivals."

Louise Jennings has been an extramural student for nearly 10 years. She is due to complete her Bachelor of Arts in 2011. Jennings took Dr John Muirhead's double-semester Travel Writing paper last year and won the AA *Directions* Best New Travel Writer of the Year Award this year. She says the skills she learnt on the course helped her to write her winning story on Melbourne.

Bonnie Etherington, a current student, says she was motivated to take creative writing papers to, "write more and write better". She won second prize in the Katherine Mansfield Antipodes Competition this year. "Massey's creative writing classes provide students with the environment to hone their writing passion," she says. "Taking creative writing classes has stretched me in ways I didn't expect and has taken me out of my comfort zone."

Elena Moretti is this year's recipient of the University's RG Frean Prize for Creative Writing. She completed the creative writing course extramurally last year while travelling overseas. "The online component gets students involved in others' writing, so I didn't feel like I was missing out on the classroom experience, even on the other side of the world."

David Collins is a former student and winner of last year's Manawatu (International) One-Act Playwriting Competition. Collins says once he caught the theatre bug, he threw himself into other creative aspects besides acting, including directing and writing. "I liked getting under the hood of works in class to see how other authors are doing what they are doing.

"Basically, every story at its core has already been told. What makes your work different is language. You have to find a unique way to tell it." ❖ – Lana Simmons-Donaldson

“I write about people in general and identity. I guess you could say I have an obsession about identity.” – Tina Dahlberg



*Photograph: Mark Coote*



# Talking a good game

TV3 sports presenter Hamish McKay is passionate about his job, his hometown and his rugby, as Melanie McKay finds out.

*Photograph: Ben Campbell*

**TV3** sports presenter Hamish McKay set out to do an agricultural science degree, then switched to teaching, but instead has become one of the most recognised faces on television and voices of rugby commentary.

While McKay thoroughly enjoyed his time at the Manawatu (Hokowhitu) campus completing his Bachelor of Education and Diploma in Teaching from 1988 to 1991, his passion for our national game created an opportunity for him to move into sports broadcasting while he was still a student.

After hearing that radio station 2XS had secured the rights to cover local rugby, McKay turned up at the Broadway Ave studio and offered to work for them. "After that they always called me 'that guy who came up the stairs', because that's literally what I did, I just walked in and asked them if I could help. The following Saturday I was on the sideline at Johnston Park with an old brick of a cellphone giving a live report of the Feilding Yellows vs Marist top club rugby match," McKay says.

Although teaching runs in McKay's family – both his mother and his younger sister are teachers – looking back he says it is not surprising that he ended up commentating rugby. "I've been doing it since I was seven, basically ever since I could memorise two teams' worth of names. It was all played in my head of course, but I used to go out to a paddock at the back of the farm and pretend it was a pitch and call all the plays and the names. That's where the passion started for what I've made my career out of really."

McKay was born and bred in Palmerston North, growing up on his parents' sheep and beef farm. He did play rugby himself, for the Palmerston North Boys' High School First XV and the Oroua Club, but says he always "talked better than I could play". He was still involved in the sport at university, and has fond memories of his time there. "It was a magical time really with such great people, and in 1989 I was the proud coach of the trainee teachers' rugby

team, which won 19 out of 20 games – although unfortunately the 20th was the final."

McKay has been at TV3 for 14 years, the past three as the sports presenter, and prior to that as sports reporter and rugby commentator. Even with the change to presenting he still does three or four stories a week himself, and was a finalist in two categories for this year's TP McLean Sports Journalism Awards.

McKay says the keys to being a great commentator are flow, an understanding of the game, and of course the passion for it. That brings both highs and lows, the extremes of which he experienced during the Rugby World Cup 2007. "It was the best six weeks of my life and the worst two weeks of my life, because although I got to call the final we weren't in it."

For McKay, his hometown Manawatu Turbos team is as close to his heart as the All Blacks. He has lent his profile to the Save the Turbos campaign to prevent changes to the Air NZ Cup that could see the team and three others dropped from the top division. McKay proudly remembers the province's heyday, and is a firm believer it can be repeated. "The '70s and the early '80s were the best – it would be like being a child in Christchurch now and having the Canterbury Crusaders as your home team. Put it this way, when the Springboks came here in '81 they played three tests against the All Blacks and one against Manawatu. Although the Springboks beat us, there wasn't much in it, and at that time there were seven All Blacks in the Manawatu side. I think what they've tried to do with the Air NZ Cup isn't right and if they keep going it'll destroy the game eventually."

Rugby aside, McKay is looking forward to a family Christmas with his wife and three children, his parents, two brothers and two sisters in Palmerston North. As he always does when he visits, he will take a trip down memory lane by driving around the University's ring road to remember where it all started, and think how far he has come. ❖

**After months in development, accomplished playwright and senior lecturer in the School of English and Media Studies Dr Angie Farrow has mined Manawatu's rich mystical history in a new play staged earlier this year.**

*Before the Birds* was performed as part of Student Arts Week in October and contrasted the ancient history of Manawatu with a topical plot about branding Palmerston North as the biggest little city in the world.

Locals, including a 70-year-old Māori woman new to acting, migrants to Manawatu, numerous sets of siblings and at least one entire family unit, all featured in a highly choreographed production that involved multiple Palmerston North settings including Terrace End Cemetery and The Square.

Backed by a musical ensemble, the cast of 30 made for a play that is epic in scale, yet counterbalanced by its obvious connection to the local community. "It is a play that asks questions about community – about our sense of belonging and the need for congregation," Farrow says. "The play anticipates a kind of corporate world and explores the way the corporate universe and the machine universe – computers – are eroding our sense of community."

Farrow says the process of getting the play from the page to the stage had its own interesting history. Originally conceived as part of millennium celebrations, *Before the Birds* underwent extensive rewrites, with storylines adjusted and songs replaced by a new musical score.

Farrow specialises in performance drama, public speaking and creative processes. She has a particular interest in creative dynamics and runs seminars and workshops in creative leadership, creative presentation and creative planning both in New Zealand and overseas. ❖



Photograph: David Wiltshire







# The shopper's guide to the perfect gift and a great bargain

Dr Andrew Murphy has simple advice for those set to brave the stores for Christmas as he tells Melanie McKay.

*Photographs: David Wiltshire*

**If you** are thinking of giving gift vouchers for Christmas rather than battling it out at the mall to find the perfect presents, think again. Research led by Department of Communication, Journalism and Marketing lecturer Dr Andrew Murphy reveals that not everyone appreciates them, and besides, if you don't actually brave the shops, you might miss out on some good bargains.

Previous international research showed that giving and receiving gifts is an emotionally charged experience, not just because of the economic importance, but also because gifts are widely accepted as being instrumental in maintaining social ties and relationships.

"Postgraduate student Dean Crow's research looked at how gift certificates were received by different people, and whether there was an increase in sales when gift certificates were redeemed. It showed that 74 per cent of respondents under 30 found the gift certificates they received very appropriate, but only 25 per cent of those over 60 did," says Murphy.

"How much thought goes into a gift voucher? Some receivers want to know that you know them well and that you care, and these receivers think if you give a gift certificate you are demonstrating that you don't know them well enough, or that you don't trust yourself to get them a gift you know they would like, or even that you think the person is too fussy."

When it came to people redeeming their vouchers, retailers were the winners. The data supported the hypothesis that "upselling" occurred, where the average value of purchases made when redeeming vouchers was higher than the average face value of the vouchers.

Retailing is a fascinating subject for Murphy, who has taught

courses at universities in Britain, Canada and New Zealand in retailing and services, consumer behaviour, marketing planning, marketing principles, macro- and microeconomics, economic geography, geographic information systems, market analysis, statistics and research methods. He recently completed his own research into farmers' markets.

So what advice does he have for making it easier and hopefully cheaper if you do decide to brave the Christmas shopping crowds? Simple really – you've got to get out there early.

"The thing about Christmas is that shoppers really don't have any choice – they have to shop because they've got a looming deadline, and the closer to Christmas it gets the more it becomes a chore, with less to choose from and less energy for and commitment to shopping. Under this kind of pressure people shop differently, they shop to satisfy the requirements, not to optimise them," he says.

The good news is that it is worth getting out there and shopping around, because there will be some pre-Christmas bargains to be had. There won't be the extreme clear-out sales there were last year, when retailers had to move stock at any price to survive, but goods are cheaper as a result of the New Zealand dollar being stronger.

"They can't afford the same level of crisis clear-out this year because they will still be trying to recoup some of the cost of doing that last year. Things are starting to get a bit easier for retailers, and they'll want to capitalise on consumers being keener to spend," says Murphy. ❖



# Translating knowledge to support

Kate Armstrong is driven. She is bettering herself through study and practice and putting her skills to work helping others. Kereama Beal meets the registered teacher and online counsellor.

*Photograph: Geoff Dale*

**Kate Armstrong** had a teaching career ahead of her when she first graduated from the College of Education in 2000. Little did she realise that five years later she would be back with a passion to do something more.

After finishing her studies, Armstrong completed her teachers' registration and travelled, which she says provided her with the opportunity to re-evaluate what it was she wanted to do.

"When I returned to New Zealand, being challenged by teaching gifted children, I realised my interests in their development focused on their social and emotional well-being," Armstrong says.

She returned to the college and decided to take postgraduate papers in guidance and counselling, which led to a Postgraduate Diploma of Counselling.

"I have always wanted my career to be about working with people," Armstrong says. "It is a privilege to witness other people's stories and provide a confidential and nurturing space where individuals feel heard, acknowledged and supported in their journey towards creating constructive change in life."

She now works for a government website aimed at helping young New Zealanders understand and deal with depression. The Lowdown features interactive guides and testimonials from prominent Kiwi sportspeople and entertainers, as well as access to web-based support services.

Armstrong is one of The Lowdown's text and email operators, providing support and early intervention for youth who are experiencing depression or know somebody who is depressed. "We use counselling skills to build rapport with service users and provide brief intervention to assist them to seek further, more comprehensive support, and learn strategies for self resourcing and self-care," she says.

The web-based forms of communication employed by support staff are familiar and relevant to The Lowdown's young clients, but the medium is not without its challenges.

"Communicating via text and email and without voice can lead to misinterpretation or misunderstandings on both sides," she says. "We can't see the response to the intervention, nor do we

have control over what context or environment the client might be in.

"We also manage multiple sessions at a time with various presenting issues, so it can mean shifting gears and focus quite often and quickly. We work as a team and try to keep a consistent team approach, as one client may have two different operators if their session falls during a change of shifts or they use the service on different days."

However, the free service, she says, can be a huge support tool, particularly to those in more isolated areas where services – or access to them – are limited. "We are able to provide 'in the moment' support. Clients choose whether or not to disclose their own details and in this way can remain anonymous. It can make contact feel less threatening, which is very important.

"Clients remain in control of the communication, which means it can be easier for them to disclose challenging thoughts or feelings. They don't have to be concerned about reactions or responses from others and can stop the communication whenever they choose. Importantly the text and email correspondence remains confidential – unless a client presents an imminent risk to themselves or someone they have identified to us.

"While I was training I was looking for work in the counselling field and was intrigued by a Lowdown advertisement that spoke of text and email support," she says. "Given that technology is so pervasive, it felt inevitable to me that it would trickle down into the helping professions. I was keen to be involved in this original and contemporary way to provide support and as it was an innovative approach, I knew it would be an evolving and exciting process and service to be a part of."

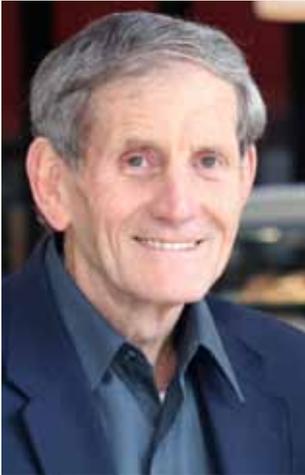
Armstrong is now working on her master's degree and plans to take a break from study after that, but not for long. "I want to continue on the path I am on and be open to new learning and experiences that will further my knowledge and understanding in both my professional role and personal development. I have interests in being involved in counsellor training and in the future I would like to go on to complete a PhD." ❖

2010

# Looking ahead

What does the new year have in store?

A panel of experts share their views with *DefiningNZ*



## Property market

**Bob Hargreaves, Professor of Property, Economics and Finance department**

During 2009 the New Zealand housing market proved to be more resilient to the effects of the worldwide recession than many of the pundits had forecast. Overall house prices are just about back to their record 2007 levels. Real estate cycles typically last about

seven years' so what we are seeing now is quite atypical. Can it continue?

Factors likely to keep pushing the housing market up in 2010 are relatively low interest rates, positive net migration, a looming shortage of houses and the cost of new construction continuing to rise. On the negative side interest rates in 2010 are likely to increase, joblessness will continue to rise for at least part of the year and net migration will start to fall off as the Australian economy improves and our government reduces borrowing money to stimulate the local economy. Also, there are likely to be taxation changes making it less attractive for people to buy investment housing. On balance the housing market is likely to stay moderately positive during 2010.

The rural market is quite a different proposition and tends to be countercyclical to the housing market. The single biggest factor driving the rural market is the commodity prices farmers receive for their exports. The outlook for dairying has improved recently but the outlook for sheep and beef remains weak. A significant number of farmers are in a precarious financial position and will need to sell during 2010. The rural market is likely to remain subdued in 2010.

My biggest hope is we will learn from our recent mistakes and do something to rectify various excesses. Although borrowers bear the ultimate responsibility for repaying mortgage loans, it is fair to say some lending institutions appear to be culpable because they were encouraging people to borrow in the knowledge there were likely to be repayment difficulties.



## Agriculture

**Jacqueline Rowarth, Professor of Pastoral Agriculture and Director of Massey Agriculture**

As uncertainty in climate, exchange rate and customer preference increases, agriculture and agri-business will flourish by continuing to produce primary products efficiently and ethically.

"New Zealand food – ticking all the boxes" will become the

new catch-cry.

The 17 million people New Zealand can feed will be prepared to pay appropriate prices for food produced with maximum animal and human welfare considerations and minimum environmental impact. Carbon footprinting will reward good farmers because they achieve good yields per unit of carbon-costly input. A kilogram of nitrogen, for instance, costs 7.03 kg carbon dioxide equivalents. Achieving a high yield per kilogram of input reduces the effective carbon cost of that input. The use of clover-based pastures in New Zealand reduces the requirement for fertiliser nitrogen and so reduces carbon costs. Post-farm gate, a kilogram of Welsh lamb costs 14.14 in comparison with 11.56 kg from New Zealand – New Zealand lamb, even with a hemisphere to travel, still has the advantage.

In the developed world the drive for primary production systems to move towards systems and processes that minimise the use of resources will have implications for food prices and farmers will be rewarded for their sustainable production systems. The current return of approximately 20 per cent of an average food basket (ranging from 5 per cent for cheese to 18 per cent of apples, chicken and steak, to 35 per cent for milk) is unsustainable for the farmer. Improved profits will encourage good people to come into the industry at all levels.

New Zealand can already show that products are produced efficiently with minimum use of carbon and water. Minimising loss of nitrogen and other nutrients is also a focus. Reducing the inputs per unit of food products will increase the eco-efficiency of New Zealand's food production systems and improve the profit – ticking all the boxes.



## Politics

**Dr Richard Alter-Shaw,  
Politics Programme  
Coordinator, School of  
People, Environment and  
Planning**

The second year of the National-led Government's term may be an awkward one. A new administration can generally expect a pretty clear run at things while voters take time to figure out who the new faces are (and to forget the old ones). But around about now in the three-yearly political cycle things start to change: next year people will be less likely to suspend judgement, and the Government will start to force the pace before the "don't-panic-the-horses" mentality of a pre-election year sets in.

The Government still has political capital in the bank, for much of which it has the Prime Minister to thank. Large dollops will be spent on stitching together the parliamentary alliances needed to implement changes to ACC, the revised emissions trading legislation, and reforms to the benefit system. Major administrative changes in the health sector, and the implementation of the new governance arrangements in Auckland and National Standards in literacy and numeracy, will consume a good deal of time and have the potential to throw up political speed humps.

And we should expect to see John Key's political management skills put to sterner tests than they have thus far faced. Tensions within the Māori Party pose the most pressing challenges; if it all turns pear-shaped, Key's ability to keep the relationships on which his government relies on an even keel will be sorely tested – as will his aspirations to build a relationship between the National Party and tangata whenua that is capable of enduring beyond this particular administration.

The Government – indeed, the wider political class – has also been tarnished by rolling revelations of ministers' and MPs' spending. Key himself appears to have escaped the worst of the opprobrium, but – regardless of whether or not spending on airfares and holidays was within the rules – the actions of Bill English, Rodney Hide, Roger Douglas, Chris Carter and others have done further damage to the legitimacy of our political institutions. Come next year, public resentment over this conduct will fuel support for a further round of electoral reform.

The biggest political event next year will be the Budget. There are indications that Bill English's second Budget will be markedly more austere than his first, and that people will be asked to absorb spending cuts right across the spectrum of government activity. Selling reductions of the magnitude of those recently signalled in health will be a big political ask, especially if – notwithstanding recent talk of the end of the recession – mortgage sales and the unemployment rolls continue to grow in the real economy. 2009 was the year in which John Key arrived; 2010 will be the one in which he earns his stripes.



## Social policy

**Dr Jackie Sanders and Professor  
Robyn Munford, principal  
investigators of the Resilience  
project on troubled youth.  
School of Sociology, Social Policy  
and Social Work**



Our first concern is with young people, particularly vulnerable young people and the impact that the recession has upon them and opportunities for them. They are the first to be hit by changes in the economy and society and they often have the fewest resources to protect

themselves. When employment drops, social services get hit too because their income drops, so that's really a double whammy effect for young people.

Recently, many youth organisations have had funding cut or stopped completely and not much attention has been brought to this. Some organisations have had to close. Training budgets for groups that work with young people and families have also been cut – as families and young people's circumstances get worse and deteriorate the capacity for people to be trained to deal with that has reduced.

We are also hearing that the threshold of service is being raised and will continue to rise. This means that fewer and fewer young people are able to be supported and their conditions have to deteriorate more before they can be seen. For example, young people wanting support to find employment, might now have to be unemployed for three months not one month. People still want to offer a service but it becomes harder to get into the service. That's happening in mental health where the threshold is already really high.

2010 will also bring change to alternative education programmes – for a year there's been a question over their future. The Government has put \$35 million into private schools but is still deciding whether to continue to fund alternative education beyond 2010. One thing we see really strongly in our data is the critical significance of having a place for young people to go to – anything that holds them, keeps them participating, having a sense that they are of value, learning social skills. Often alternative education programmes are the one thread we have to hang on to vulnerable kids by. These are the organisations that care enough to go and find that young person and take him or her to a course and this makes a world of difference. These programmes are not terribly well resourced – actually they survive on the smell of an oily rag – but they do wonderful work and it would be fantastic to see their resources increased.

We would like to see those alternative education and support programmes for vulnerable young people funded at least equal to what the Government is putting into private schools. Poor, vulnerable kids are as just as valuable as those at private schools. Why spend about \$90,000 a year keeping them in prison as adults – why not spend it now?



## Copra farming, Keats and campus life

**Tongan-born** former journalist and public policy graduate Sione Tu'itahi came to Massey's Albany campus a decade ago with a vision of a strategy that would help to unleash the potential of talented, gifted Pasifika people to achieve in tertiary education and beyond. In 2007, the *Pasifika@Massey* strategy was launched, with Professor Sitaleki Finau as inaugural Director Pasifika. Tu'itahi has been at the helm of the strategy's unfolding as its Acting Director Pasifika for the past 18 months.

The importance of a good education has always been central to

Tu'itahi's life. As a youngster he paddled 12km in a canoe across rough seas to get to school on neighbouring Lifuka Island from his home on Ha'ano Island in Tonga's central Ha'apai group.

The fourth of 11 children, his family was one of 300 living in the island's four villages. His father farmed yams and copra, was the island copra inspector, ran a provisions store and bakery, and caught fish for the family.

Tu'itahi and his seven brothers and three sisters helped out with all these enterprises. They had no electricity, radio or television,

only kerosene lamps for light, and cooking was done on an open fire.

The journey to school, where he stayed in a dormitory throughout the week, was par for the course. "Education was a major goal in our family, on both my mother's and father's side. My parents inculcated into us from an early age the value of spiritual education, intellectual development and serving the community," he says.

"These form the traditional Tongan outlook – a core set of principles that guides us."

His maternal grandfather was a minister of the Methodist Church, and Tu'itahi says the combination of Western-style education, Christian teachings and traditional Tongan knowledge of agriculture, healing, governance and leadership have stood him and his siblings in good stead. Six have university degrees, including one PhD, with Tu'itahi on track to be the second doctoral graduate when he completes his research in public health on Tongan community development in New Zealand.

His educational island-hopping continued when he moved as a 16-year-old to the capital Nuku'alofa on Tonga's main island to attend the Atenisi Institute, an independent, private institution whose name (the Tongan word for the Greek capital, Athens) reflects its educational philosophy of embracing scientific and democratic ideals advanced by the ancient Greeks.

There, he revelled in a broad education, especially poetry, drama and prose. "I loved the Romantic poets – Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, although I never saw a real daffodil [alluding to William Wordsworth's famous poem *The Daffodils* which he learned by heart] till I went to England to study."

This very Western curriculum was balanced by his indigenous knowledge of Tongan storytelling, music and history passed on by his grandparents, as well as informally taught Tongan arts and crafts at school – rope and roof making – for purely utilitarian purposes.

After a two-year stint working for Radio Tonga as newsreader and DJ, then a year in Auckland living with his two older brothers and working at manual jobs, he returned to Tonga to write for the government-owned newspaper, *The Tonga Chronicle*. A British Council scholarship to study journalism and management at Darlington College of Technology near Newcastle two years later gave him the opportunity to develop news-gathering and writing skills (he wrote features on Whitby, where Captain James Cook learned navigation and from where he sailed to discover new lands in the Southern Hemisphere, and on Whitby's abbey, where Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is said to have been set).

He visited the offices of *The Times* and *The Guardian* newspapers on London's Fleet Street, saw daffodils and had his first white Christmas. Being the only Tongan in town did not bother him – he was an avid reader and curious to build on what he already knew of England's history, literature and people. He says his experiences not only enhanced his professional journalism skills but also gave him a better perspective on the media in Tonga, which were constrained by a political system of constitutional monarchy with the prime minister appointed by the king rather than democratically elected.

"Having time away allowed me to think about the role of media in society back home, and about how we could get more balance. There weren't good channels for the voice of the people to be heard in Tonga."

Back home he set up the Tongan News Association in 1989. "It was a professional body to help address issues of balanced reporting and responsible journalism with a code of ethics and more formal training for journalists."

In 1994, aged 39, Tu'itahi returned to New Zealand – this time for hospital treatment, having fallen off a ladder and snapped a femur bone in his leg. He was advised to stay two years for follow-up treatment following complications due to osteoporosis.

He was joined by his wife, Tupou, an Otago University-trained health promoter currently doing a degree in early childhood education, and his three sons. Rezvan, 26, is now an audio engineer and hip hop artist with the group Immigrantz, Sosaia, 23, is a Christian rap and hip hop artist with the group Usual Suspects, a teacher aide and studying for a Bachelor of Sociology at Massey, while Benjamin, 13, attends Glenfield College on Auckland's North Shore.

In Auckland Tu'itahi retrained as an adult educator, teaching at the Pacific Island Education Resource Centre in Auckland before taking up a part-time position as Learning Adviser for Pacific Islands students at Massey's Auckland campus in 1999. In the same year he moved into public health. As the first Pacific manager, he established the Pacific team at the Auckland Regional Public Health Service, and today is deputy director of the Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand.

As learning adviser he witnessed students make the transition from school or work to university and could see the potential for more to take advantage of what a university education could offer. So he initiated discussions among Massey's Albany staff for a strategy that would encourage and support Pasifika students. It took another seven years before the *Pasifika@Massey* strategy was formed with support from Professor Mason Durie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori and Pasifika. Launched in 2007, the strategy was a first for any university in the country.

Ten years on, he is pleased and proud at progress made so far through the efforts of a small, dedicated team of Pasifika learning, research and development advisers and student mentors charged with implementing the strategy. Milestones include: Pasifika graduation ceremonies on all three campuses, a network of mentoring programmes with secondary schools on Auckland's North Shore, the introduction of a new Certificate in Pacific Development from next year, numerous bridge-building seminars to inform Pacific Island groups of what university education offers, and steady growth in Pasifika enrolments.

Why does he think the strategy is so vital? "The Pacific population is growing in New Zealand. In 30 years it is predicted that 40 per cent of workers will be Māori and Pacific. We're a youthful population. This has huge implications for the future economy. We need to educate Pacific people so that they realise their full potential, so that they can help their communities to flourish and contribute to society as a whole." ❖ – Jennifer Little

"The Pacific population is growing in New Zealand. In 30 years it is predicted that 40 per cent of workers will be Māori and Pacific. We're a youthful population."  
– Sione Tu'itahi



# Human mind 'most fascinating'

Professor Balaji Krishnan  
Photograph: David Wiltshire

It is not that Balaji Krishnan is particularly keen on shopping; more that he is fascinated by the behaviour of others who are. Krishnan, a marketing specialist, has had more than a dozen papers published in international journals on marketing and consumer behaviour. He is regarded as having led thinking about internet marketing with a book of the same title published in 1999, and he recently finished editing an eight-volume series of books on the works of his mentor, marketing and business strategy expert, Jag Sheth.

His fascination with the marketing discipline is one that he discovered while at university. Although an engineer by trade – completing his bachelor's degree at Marathwada University in India – he has never worked as one.

"I discovered that the ultimate machine is the human mind, and it is by far the most complicated and unpredictable," Krishnan says. Consequently he went on to do his master's in marketing at Bombay University and PhD at Louisiana State University.

Krishnan moved from his home town of Chennai (formerly known as Madras) at 18 in order to continue his study, but visits his parents, sister and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins there every two years. Chennai, capital of the Tamil Nadu state, population seven million, has changed a lot since Krishnan moved away in 1985. "The place where you grew up is always frozen in your mind as it was when you left it – it's prettier, greener and nicer than it actually is. That is what nostalgia does."

That connection with home and his family keeps him grounded, says Krishnan, regardless of where he lives. He is delighted to have moved from Memphis, Tennessee, to New Zealand, and is looking forward to the challenge of his new role. The core disciplines of communication and marketing were recently combined into the new department to give a more coherent structure across the

**People-watching is one of Professor Balaji Krishnan's favourite pastimes. The new head of the Department for Communication, Journalism and Marketing at the Albany campus explains to Melanie McKay why he loves spending time in shopping malls.**

College of Business, and reflect the University's intention to grow its capability in these areas under its Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Communication degrees.

For the past decade he lectured in the Master of Business Administration programme at the Fogelman College of Business and Economics at the University of Memphis.

"I guess you would call it serendipity because I was absolutely happy there, but then my cousin, who now lives in Wellington, came to visit. She told me all about the lifestyle here, where people have a better work/life balance rather than being defined by their jobs. Not long after their visit I saw the opportunity at Massey and, as I am always talking to my students about seizing opportunities, I decided to do it myself.

"I looked at studies that showed New Zealand was in the top five or seven countries worldwide with respect to education in science, maths and reading at primary school level," he says. (He has an eight-year-old daughter.) "Also, Massey University is on the cusp of something special. We already do substantial research in our department, but can increase its visibility with a little more effort. My focus will be on increasing our interaction with the community at large – especially the business community – to increase the relevance of our work."

His own research and teaching will go on hold temporarily while he commits to the management role, but Krishnan plans to research the cultural differences between organisations in terms of the people they attract, and intends to teach a paper next year. "None of what we do matters without the students, and I'm a people person and I want to get involved and give back to the discipline." ❖



# Maths solution for exploding ship

Professor Graeme Wake  
Photograph: David Wiltshire

In the past four years Professor Graeme Wake's mathematical expertise has been shared with a London maritime court room in a series of late-night phone calls.

Wake, director of the Centre for Mathematics in Industry at Albany, was an expert witness in an insurance claims case involving the cause of an explosion in the Atlantic Ocean of a Chilean-bound ship carrying a dangerous chemical.

The *Aconcagua*, a Lloyds-insured German ship chartered by a Chilean company, was carrying 334 kegs of Chinese-made calcium hypochlorite, used for water treatment and as household bleach, when the hold exploded on December 30, 1998. Several crew were severely injured and the massive fire that erupted forced the ship to be abandoned.

The explosion was caused by the self-ignition of the chemical, and Wake was called on because of his reputation as an international expert on spontaneous combustion. It was the subject of his PhD in Applied Mathematics at Victoria University, which he completed in 1967, and ongoing research.

During the court case, he travelled to Australia to work with another expert witness, chemistry professor Brian Gray, to analyse the chemical and mathematical data that contributed to the explosion. They concluded the cause was a fault in the manufacturing process rather than how the chemical was stored during the voyage.

The case resulted in two settlements totalling nearly \$US60 million – one to the ship owners, Hamburg Schiffahrtsgesellschaft, which claimed damages from the charter company, and the other for damages paid to the charter company by the Chinese chemical supplier.

Wake says the project involved hours of mathematical modelling and several three-hour phone calls in the middle of the night to give evidence. It also yielded new discoveries. A team of Massey staff worked on the case, including Massey PhD graduate Weiwei Luo. Her thesis, *Numerical Determination of Critical Conditions for Thermal Ignition*, grew out of her work on the case and has led to new understandings of the chemical dynamics of hazardous materials. She now works in the United States researching space rocket fuel combustion.

Wake says the case highlights the diverse use of mathematics and statistics in solving real-world problems. It also provided part of the motivation for introducing a new master's degree in industrial mathematics and statistics, unique in New Zealand, which will be taught at the Albany campus from next year.

He says New Zealand needs more industrial mathematicians if businesses and research agencies are to thrive and succeed. "Industrial maths is client focused. It starts from, and stops with, the client's problem, which might not be described in mathematical terms but is possibly solvable by the use of applied maths and statistics such as quantitative analysis and/or computation."

Projects on which his postgraduate students and staff colleagues have worked include calculating chemical spray drift in horticulture, optimising the relationship of electricity spot price to real-time input data factors, modelling high speed product-weighting and determining temperature control of wash water in a laundry environment. Other industry problems the centre's staff have solved are: predicting the effects of agricultural land management change on soil quality and productivity, measuring expectations for loss of power supply, tree growth and wood formation in forestry, and sustainable water management in the minerals industry.

More recently, a Massey student devised a formula used to improve the water quality of the Waikato River, by regulating farming practices in the catchment area to make it safer and clean enough for Auckland residents to drink after minimal treatment.

Wake's expertise has been called on for investigations into other cases of spontaneous combustion – from milk powder to brown coal, fish and chip cooking oil and even wet wool. Milk powder can ignite during the drying process, and brown coal has caught fire when transported by train across Australia's scorching outback. The spontaneous ignition of wet wool in a Wellington waterside storehouse in 1948 – which caused most of the surrounding waterfront buildings to burn down – was the subject of his PhD thesis. ❖ – Jennifer Little



# Delivering the defining learning experience

Massey's academic environment is on the move, with bold visions and possibilities, says the new head of academic and international, Professor Ingrid Day.

**Professor Ingrid Day** has a brief to steer the implementation of Massey's *Road to 2020* teaching and learning strategy. This includes reviewing the University's academic portfolio and ensuring that its qualifications and graduates are distinguished by their quality and exceptional learning experience.

Appointed in July as Assistant Vice-Chancellor Academic and International, her job encompasses the academic portfolio, which covers courses and learning modes, the University Library and the Centre for Academic Development. She also has responsibility for international students and the staff who recruit them.

Before joining Massey, Day was seconded to Macquarie University in Sydney from the University of South Australia to act as Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Her job there was effectively to launch a new faculty. Prior to that she was a Dean for Teaching, Learning and International at the University of South Australia and helped lead a university-wide renewal of its teaching and learning framework. So she is familiar with the challenge of change management. "It starts with recognising existing excellence and what is fundamental to the identity of the university, and opening up the possibilities of what can be enhanced."

She does not hesitate on Massey's qualities: "Massey is a very, very good university. It has excellent staff, a quality core curriculum and is exceptional in the way it engages with students. Its long history and expertise in distance learning serve its whole academic activity extremely well."

Day says the potential for development from that quality base is enormous. "In a highly competitive domestic and international environment we need to be very clear within the University and beyond about Massey's distinctive and defining approach to what we teach, how we teach it and, importantly, the qualities that our graduates gain through their study with us."

"Massey's principles about access to education regardless of demographic, geographical location, social and cultural context or other inhibiting factors are rock solid." But the external context has changed, she says. School-leavers going straight to university are often working in part-time jobs while they complete their degrees and they expect and need wider options than attendance at lectures and tutorials.

"To engage today's learners and provide the convenience they require in an increasingly globalised, mobile and borderless educational context, we need to be delivering study materials in a range of digitised media. Print is certainly still important but to deliver an education that is widely accessible – as well as environmentally responsible – we have to diversify."

Massey's new online learning environment – *Stream* – has

"forged a road to the future", she says. "We're doing really outstanding work on a new platform that affords a very rich teaching and learning experience that can provide interactivity with staff and between fellow students that can be even richer than that available in a conventional face-to-face format."

The other important step is to blend modes of study so students do not always have to make a choice about whether to study at a distance or on campus. "Blended learning is about integrating different resources, environments and delivery modes to provide an exceptional learning experience."

What makes Massey's *Stream* environment different is the fully developed online classroom that it offers, she says. Some universities simply transfer lecture notes to the web. "We're quite deliberately not doing this. Massey academics, with the support of expert educational developers, are committed to creating a rich and interactive environment for student learning. We want our students to be successful in their study and it's our job to create a place where this happens regardless of whether it's 'real' or virtual."

"Staff expertise in distance education positions us extraordinarily well. Associate Professor Mark Brown, who is our director of Blended and Distance Education, is really an inspirational leader and certainly the feedback Massey is getting internationally shows that we are a world leader in our approach."

On the wider academic initiatives that Day is leading, she says: "Given the three campuses and five colleges that make up Massey, we need to pay conscious attention to ensuring a 'one university' approach to our academic offerings... consistent policies and regulations, clear pathways to successful completion regardless of where or how you study."

"Over the next year we will also be looking at the core attributes we see as defining a Massey graduate, in consultation with staff as well as with employers. We will also look at what we do within our qualifications to achieve those outcomes."

"It may be that we claim we have creative graduates and that is agreed upon as a defining attribute. So if we say that our graduates are creative, then that will mean looking at our curriculum and saying, okay, where are there opportunities to develop their creativity, to apply and to demonstrate it?"

"I don't think that students choose to study at a particular university because of its regulations or policies or administrative structures such as schools and departments. What I believe is more compelling is knowing that the experience they will have, and the learning that they undertake and can demonstrate, will make them graduates who are confident in their own abilities and knowledge, and who are also highly attractive to employers." ❖



## Students rock New Zealand music awards



When Dr Jennifer Reid, international editor of Canadian-based online music magazine *SoundProof*, wanted contributors to cover the Vodafone New Zealand Music Awards, she collaborated with Albany-based Communications, Journalism and Marketing lecturer Dr Andrew Chrystall, to create a competition to cover the awards. The idea was to give the students real-life experience, elbow-to-elbow with professionals in the game, and break them out of their comfort zones.

"I'm constantly trying to get students to grow a portfolio as soon as they start studying," says Chrystall. "The communications and journalism industry is going through a massive transformation. Students need to get involved at a practical level. From there, they can bring back into the classroom the real-world situations they've encountered, which benefits their fellow students and me."

The two teams had different areas of focus and different approaches. Team One comprised journalist Nina McSweeney and photographer Tarryn Garton who, as representatives of *SoundProof*, enjoyed all-access media passes to the event. Team two – journalist Jessica Gillon and photographer Martiné Joubert – represented *DefiningNZ*, and were given general media passes (with no access to backstage).

At the awards, Gillon, Joubert and Garton worked the red carpet, grabbing musicians for photographs and comments and soaking up the atmosphere, while McSweeney ventured backstage to the media centre, scoring one-on-one interviews with Ladyhawke, Midnight Youth and Prime Minister John Key. Their published work in *SoundProof* exhibits their two approaches,

with McSweeney's cynical observations a sharp contrast to Gillon's newsy style.

As an editor, Reid found she had to work carefully with the journalists' material, while trying to stay faithful to the writers. "Both had to undergo some form of reconstruction," she says. While Garton's photographs were published in *SoundProof*, Joubert was to learn a valuable lesson about online publishing.

By uploading her VNZMA pics to facebook before submitting them to *SoundProof*, the element of online exclusivity disappeared, as did her opportunity to have many of her images published.

"It's exciting – they get to document the experience of their age and time," says Chrystall. "This process seems to have stimulated and activated their learning, because it's provided a vehicle to engage deeply with what they're studying."

All four students agree, saying the experience has opened their eyes to what they need to do to get into their chosen field. "The mistakes you make... you can't learn from books," says Joubert.

With the connection established, Reid is commissioning further work from the students, and they're excited with what lies ahead.

And the ultimate winner of the competition? It ended up being too close to call, so *SoundProof* is looking to do a rematch at the Big Day Out in January. ❖ – Sonia Yoshioka-Braid

Martiné Joubert, Jess Gillon and Tarryn Garton prepare for the awards (top); and some of the stars they mingled with – Ladyhawke, Karl Steven (C4 and Supergroove), Jeremy from Midnight Youth, and Bill and Ben.



## Reality and robots

**Turning** Hollywood movie fantasies into believable robots – from man-eating sharks and a giant octopus to talking sheep – is not what made film robotic engineer Chris Chitty a household name in New Zealand.

He is constantly approached – in shopping malls and on the street – by young and old fans of the popular kids' TV series *Let's Get Inventin'* in which he stars as "Dr Robotech", helping aspiring young inventors figure out how to turn their designs into functioning realities. The fourth series is due to go to air in early 2010.

Whether behind the camera or in front of it, Chitty is clearly in synch with his work as only a compulsive creator and technical perfectionist can be. Never mind the mess, stress and risks.

He has tangled with the tentacles of a giant octopus he created for the 1997 television mini-series based on Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, and loitered underwater in diving gear for hours to manipulate a life-sized white pointer shark during filming of the 1997 Jackie Chan movie *First Strike*.

Recently he has dangled from tall trees in the pouring rain on Great Barrier Island refining a young inventor's trap for tree rats, and been splattered with yellow paint from head to toe tweaking yet another kid's invention – a paint gun game – while filming the latest *Let's Get Inventin'* series.

As a product development and mechatronics lecturer at the School of Engineering and Advanced Technology at Albany, he teaches in the only such course of its kind in New Zealand – a four-year Bachelor of Engineering degree with a major in product development.

The degree, taught at Massey for 18 years, is built on a solid base of engineering with skills in design, marketing and project management aimed at turning new ideas into marketable products, processes or services.

In the school's busy workshops and laboratories, Chitty goes through the trial-and-error experimental processes of adapting textbook technical and design knowledge to new, innovative

projects with engineering students, such as student Iain Emerson's Robot Ray.

The lightweight ray (pictured) is designed to sit on the ocean floor and move through the water, with the potential to be fitted with more electronic wizardry enabling it to detect illegal fishing boats, or monitor ocean temperature change and water quality.

Chitty spent his first nine years in England before moving to New Zealand with his parents and older brother. They settled in the rural idyll of Albany before it was developed into one of the fastest-growing residential, business and retail hubs in the country. From his ridge-top farmhouse where he made go-carts and motorbikes from old car wrecks, he looked down on Albany's commercial strawberry fields, now the site of the engineering school where he works.

Despite a keen interest in learning and understanding the mechanics of the world, he says he was not an obvious contender for academia, struggling with spelling in what might have been classified these days as mild dyslexia. After leaving school he worked in post office telecommunications, installing telephone relays around Auckland, making and inventing gadgets and gizmos in his spare time.

A series of guest lectures at Massey led to his taking on a teaching role in product development. He moved from Wellington, where he ran his company Robototechnology making bungee jumping, wind surfing and sheep shearing simulations for Te Papa museum.

Whether working with younger inventors for the television show or with final-year engineering students intent on a career, his message is: "It's the journey, not the destination, that counts. Inventing is a problem-solving exercise – there are no shortcuts. You have to see each problem before you get to it and solve each problem before it arises. Only then will the next step be the right one. It's one thing to come up with an idea. It's what you do next that counts. A lot of people tend to give up and don't seek help at the right time. Thinking is cheaper than making it wrong and finding out later." ❖ – Jennifer Little



## Unexpectedly broadening and completely engrossing

**Creative writing** now has more than a quarter century of history at Massey after RG Frean, the foundation Professor of English, introduced it in 1980 in a paper called *Writing: Theory and Practice*.

We now have eight undergraduate creative writing papers, covering all major genres: poetry, fiction, script-writing for media and theatre, and creative non-fiction in a variety of forms including life-writing and travel writing. Additionally, there are taught postgraduate papers, doctoral supervisions in creative writing, and a dedicated, thesis-only master's in creative writing proposed for 2011 that has been designed – consistent with the University's distinctive character – with extramural students in mind.

Creative writing papers sit alongside the critical study of literature within the subject area of English, and that says something important about the way we teach it. Good writers need also to be good readers, so we have students think critically in class about their own writing and the writing of established authors in their genres. Creative writing also sits alongside papers in speech, performance and media production in the cross-disciplinary Expressive Arts area, contributing to the University's substantial creative portfolio.

We host a visiting writer in the first semester each year (Glenn Colquhoun this year) and co-sponsor a Writers Read series in Manawatu and Wellington that has featured such literary luminaries as Elizabeth Knox.

We now have six dedicated lecturers and several specialist tutors on all three campuses. As the stories in this issue show, these are accomplished writers, publishing in print and through performance, with prizes for their work in national and international competitions. They are also dedicated teachers, including holders of University and national teaching awards.

Good teaching enables excellence in students. We celebrate the success of Louise Jennings in the Cathay Pacific Travel Writing awards and Sue Francis, winner of the recent prestigious *Sunday Star-Times* short story competition. Professor Frean's legacy lives on in the RG Frean prizes, awarded this year in Creative Writing to Elena Moretti. Our success is measured by the response of students to what we do, and we couldn't ask for better than Elena's conclusion: She says creative writing at Massey "is exactly as challenging as I'd dreaded, but also unexpectedly broadening, illuminating, and completely engrossing".

I hope the stories in this issue give you a sense of why she feels that way. ❖

**Dr John Muirhead is the head of the School of English and Media Studies. Creative writing is also taught in the the School of Social and Cultural Studies.**



# ‘Math-magician’ to give public lectures

The beauty of mathematics and magic is the subject of next year’s Sir Neil Waters Distinguished Lecture by Stanford University Professor of Statistics and Mathematics Persi Diaconis.

Diaconis, a musician and former professional magician, will deliver free public lectures with magic tricks included at the Albany campus and at Palmerston North’s Regent on Broadway Theatre on January 13 and 14 respectively.

At age 16 Diaconis gave up violin lessons at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York to work as a magician, inventing tricks, giving lessons and leading a colourful life. After reading a book on probability led he began studying mathematics and, in 1974, graduated from Harvard University with a PhD in mathematical statistics. He has spent his career working at Harvard and Stanford University.

“The way that a magic trick works can be just as amazing as the trick itself.” Diaconis says. “I will illustrate with good tricks, whose works take us to the edge of what’s known in mathematics. The same math applies to problems in cryptography, breaking and entering, genetics and robot design.”

The lecture on the Albany campus will be in the Sir Neil Waters Lecture Theatre at 6pm on January 13. It is open to the public as well as students and staff. To attend please email contact Annette Warbrooke [a.warbrooke@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.warbrooke@massey.ac.nz) or phone 09-414-0800 ext 41031.

The Palmerston North Lecture is in the Regent on Broadway at 5.30pm on January 14. To attend contact Sue Leathwick [s.m.leathwick@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.m.leathwick@massey.ac.nz) or 06-356-9099 ext 3504.

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This work by Master of Design (Spatial) student Lauren Skogstad, called *Becoming*, illustrates the pull of a visually appealing art form. It is a site-specific performance proposal for Wellington's waterfront.

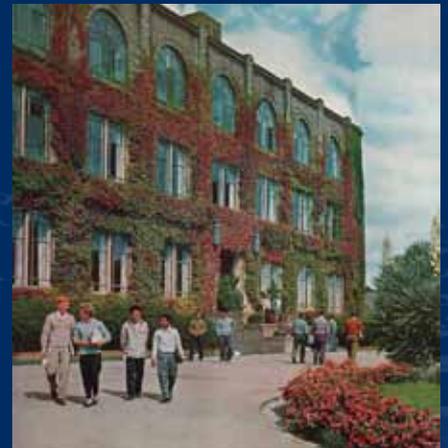
Originating from the field of interior design, spatial design is the practice of imagining, forming and creating environments that consider space, time and sensory inhabitation. It focuses on architecture, exhibition, digital and performance design.

Massey University is the only tertiary institution in New Zealand to offer performance design as a component of the Bachelor of Design degree and as a specialisation at postgraduate level.

Professor Dorita Hannah, who heads the spatial design programme, has led by example with her creative work in the discipline and in October was honoured with two international awards for her own performance designs. At this year's World Stage Design Awards in Seoul, an international jury selected Hannah's projects *Her Topia* and *Aarero Stone* from 247 entries for gold and silver awards.



The Old Main Building construction site in 1927 (above), the completed building in 1931 and in 1962 (right) and Refectory today (left)



## Campaign launched to fund heritage restoration

The University has announced a major fundraising initiative to raise \$18 million to restore and refurbish two of the Manawatu campus' most iconic heritage buildings, Old Main Building and Refectory. The Massey University Foundation, the University's charity, will lead the campaign.

Vice-Chancellor Steve Maharey was guest speaker at the fundraising launch on November 25.

"We have set an ambitious strategy that will see Massey acknowledged as New Zealand's defining university and as a world centre for tertiary learning," Maharey told guests and staff. "This means Massey must compete on a global scale, undertake world-beating research, attract and retain some of the brightest and most enquiring minds and, of course, have world-class facilities.

"However, the reality is that while core funding remains the mainstay of any university, Massey, like many other institutions, relies on a degree of philanthropy to bridge the gap between its core income and the real cost of providing internationally competitive facilities."

Old Main Building housed virtually the entire Massey Agricultural College indoor teaching facilities when it was constructed in 1931, while Refectory was built to provide social, accommodation and dining space for staff and students.

The restoration and refurbishment will include seismic strengthening to make the buildings compliant with new requirements well before they become mandatory in 2029. The work will take about two years.

The University will kick start the fundraising with a commitment of \$9 million, and aims to raise a matching amount from the public.

"This is Massey's first major fundraising project," Maharey says. "We are proud of our heritage and have strategic vision for our future as New Zealand's defining university. We seek the support and involvement of the entire Massey family – our alumni, our friends, business partners, research collaborators, clients, suppliers, students and past and present staff. Together we represent something great and have the opportunity to ensure that we touch even more lives and effect even greater success."

Contact Massey University 0800-MASSEY TXT: 5222

[www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz) [contact@massey.ac.nz](mailto:contact@massey.ac.nz)



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