

New Media Resources for Indigenous Researcher Training



Promoting excellence in higher education

2011

Fellowship Report

New media resources for Indigenous
researcher training

<www.indigenousresearchers.org>

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BATCHELOR INSTITUTE
OF INDIGENOUS TERTIARY EDUCATION

Support for this fellowship has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, an initiative of the Australian Government. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd.

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2011

ISBN 978-1-921856-75-4

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1. Executive summary

Indigenous research students have significantly reduced participation in the academy compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. The (Australian) Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council identified the need to pursue strategies that are pedagogically in line with Indigenous Knowledge(s) practice and that promote alternative methods of merging the community experience of Indigenous research students with sound research training. (James and Devlin 2006)

This fellowship program has aimed to respond to this dire situation by stimulating Indigenous research students and their supervisors to consider how new media forms of dissemination, such as image/sound, film, exhibition and digital media, may form culturally appropriate alternatives or adjuncts to the linear, written thesis form. Working within the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education's Both-ways philosophy, this program has reviewed and articulated current knowledge practice with the aim of encouraging multi-disciplinary Indigenous Knowledge(s) outcomes across the higher education sector. Using a framework of development and dissemination, this program has sought to articulate strategies for Indigenous research students and their supervisory teams to achieve meaningful goals in their research training, by engaging the epistemologies and cultural knowledge they bring to the academy, while challenging a perception of remediation.

The program, and its ongoing projects, relies on collaboration and networking as a key strategy, with five areas of development including:

- a review of current materials that explore the landscape of alternative dissemination
- the articulation of new media dissemination
- seeding discussion through workshops and seminars
- exploring networking for key stakeholders
- the development of a range of online resources

Originally titled *Promoting strategies and creating opportunities for inter/multimedia practice as a culturally appropriate dissemination tool for Indigenous postgraduate research training*, the program was reframed to invoke 'new media' as a catch-all, accessible term for inter- and multimedia. There was also a shift in focus from creating opportunities, to creating a resource system. It is hoped that this scaffolding acts as a more authentic epistemological approach. This fits more appropriately with Both-ways practice, that acknowledges that strategies and opportunities form a negotiated space of learning, rather than a place of demonstration. (Bat and Ober 2007) In line with that approach, these resources and this fellowship have been intended to provide a way of thinking through a research problem and exploring multiple alternatives for dissemination that are both rigorous and culturally inclusive. Rather than the focus being on the generation of a resource exchange; instead, exemplars, citations and ways of managing these dissemination strategies form the focus of the outcomes, with a further note on the importance of networking.

This program has drawn on disseminated materials, methodologies, pedagogies, and exemplars from the creative and media arts forms, to best demonstrate the capacity of alternative dissemination in fields where it is supported and accepted as a rigorous research degree outcome. In line with Indigenous Knowledge(s) processes that frequently cross boundaries of knowledge silos and academic discipline structures, creative arts in Indigenous Australian contexts, is inextricably linked with other forms of knowledge management. It, therefore, becomes a pragmatic, possible alternative dissemination outcome that challenges the barriers of discipline, while providing a supportive framework that is accepted and rigorous without having to reconfigure Indigenous Knowledge(s) outcomes. For all of these reasons, the focus is on the broad humanities including, but not exclusively, the media and creative fields. Owing to this broader focus, outside of the



discipline-recognised alternative fields of dissemination, the availability of materials, resources and discussion points was as important for supervisors and supervisory panels as it was for the research student.

Importantly, this program has taken the approach that Indigenous research students, rather than Indigenous students undertaking Indigenous-focused research, may find it appropriate to explore a broader range of outcomes across the discipline fields that they inhabit, invoking Indigenous Knowledge(s) as a structure and strategy, rather than a focus of the research they undertake. In creating opportunities for the inclusion of alternative media material, it is hoped that this program provides scaffolding and support for the development of Indigenous research methodologies connected to research training. In particular the work has focused on the kind of Indigenous research methodology development that education theorist, Shawn Wilson has proposed, with a focus on developing new strategies and ways of thinking through the engagement of Indigenous processes and pathways, rather than simply reproducing existing research methods. (Wilson 2001, p.175-9)

It is also important to note that the fellowship program began during one of the most significant changes in the national research landscape: the introduction of the government-led Excellence in Research for Australia program that encourages and compensates for the generation of alternatively disseminated material in research output. This process, adopted by all universities in Australia, will have a lasting effect on research training processes, outcomes and the encouragement and resourcing of alternative dissemination processes in the academy, and this in turn may encourage changes in the relationship between the discipline areas and effect fields like Indigenous Knowledge(s) that utilise a range of dissemination strategies to provide meaningful research outcomes.

Finally, the success of this program is contingent on it being adopted, used and expanded. The end of the program of activities, therefore, brings the beginning of the development of practical resources and networking opportunities that rely on networks and an ongoing commitment to maintain currency of the resources and solve the problem of the eminently improvable numbers of Indigenous research students engaged in reforming Australian universities.



2. Program background and development

The following report documents the range of activities that took place from mid-2008 through to mid-2010, and some of the key issues that led to the formulation of the approach. These activities, and the developing resources that have emerged from the process, have focused on expanding the capacity of Indigenous research students to contribute in unique and culturally meaningful ways, scaffolding on their existing cultural knowledge and epistemologies, with the broader scope of encouraging discussion on what Indigenous research outcomes may look like, and how they may form a contribution to the research training landscape of Australian academic work. The primary goal, however, has been to improve the outlook for Indigenous research students, and make their journey more meaningful.

As an Indigenous academic who has worked in both the Aboriginal studies and the mainstream multimedia/media arts fields, I am aware of the dearth of Indigenous academics able to contribute technical expertise to the incorporation of new media strategies in research dissemination. The current national statistics demonstrate that both undergraduate and postgraduate Indigenous students are more likely to be engaged in the fields of education, health and social sciences (DEEWR 2008). As postgraduate training generally builds on the skill-sets learned in undergraduate training, the implications for Indigenous students suggest that a complex knowledge of digital resource management is unlikely, yet the fields of research that Indigenous postgraduate researchers are engaged in could benefit from a more comprehensive understanding of media that is gathered in the research of our communities and our lives, and a greater understanding of the tools that we might use to best communicate the research in order to find our own research paradigm.

The program of activity under the fellowship aimed to build on the pedagogies of Indigenous research training, by providing a better understanding for Indigenous research students, their supervisors and Indigenous support units, of the capacity for embedding meaningful Indigenous methodologies. The capacity to understand and validate a broader scope of methodological inclusion, beyond the written, linear thesis-form, may require, in some cases, a better understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of media dissemination strategies. This program aimed to further that understanding through demonstration, training and resource skilling opportunities, and through a broad overview of the use of these practices in disseminating research. It was necessary to provide examples using disciplines where this work had already been completed and to offer this landscape of dissemination as a part of the development of the individual student's own learning process, in providing for them a range of dissemination outcomes that may inform not only the final materials outcome, but also the process of data gathering, analysis and synthesis.

If, in the Indigenous experience and in our communities, storytelling, orality and multiple histories have significance, as Indigenous methodology theorist Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests, then creating spaces where the dissemination of these forms have fewer layers of translation, may better assist in the creation of a truly Indigenous methodology. (Smith 1999, p.33) Combined with Wilson's theories of the opportunities to create an Indigenous-informed strategy for dissemination, a key issue became the risk of taking on a potentially combative task at an early researcher level. This risk is intended to be mitigated by this program, through the production of a set of resources and opportunities for Indigenous research students to network and form a national cohort, and by offering ongoing demonstrations and workshops that build a strategy to understand these fields better. In fact, it emerged early in the program that the main audience for developing these frameworks was likely to be the supervisors and supervisory teams, and that this stakeholder group would need the same set of skills and information.

Rather than aimlessly promoting media-rich research outcomes as having greater currency, or having greater Indigenous integrity than the linear narrative text form of the traditional



thesis, this process is about acknowledging some of the shared experiences of Indigenous Australians and our learning experience and building on this to contribute a unique voice that may include New Media forms as a part of the process. Research students in the broad humanities who undertake field research are often required to take photographs, video, sound recordings, and conduct interviews or forums that require combinations of these forms. In addition to the exploration of specifically Indigenous methods of incorporating material into the student's particular research field, the program focuses on creating a better understanding of strategies for managing these processes; from the selection of equipment to basic use, through to understanding how images, sound, video and interactive processes may support a variety of outcomes and, importantly, to provide access to examples of this use. Arguably, these skills will assist and support non-Indigenous students and career researchers in these fields, as well as Indigenous students. Again, while a secondary aim, it furthers the argument that Indigenous research students and Indigenous research cohorts can alter the landscape of research and research training through their contribution, not simply keep up with it.

As a significant outcome of this program, we have proposed a framework of development and dissemination that may be used by a supervisory team to assist Indigenous research students in developing their own candidature experience, informed by a better understanding of their own research question and, eventually, a culturally enriched dissemination outcome. The fellowship aims to contribute further by providing advice on some of the ethical and legal implications of new media resource management and dissemination. The most difficult realisation in the process coincided with some of the findings of Professor Michael Christie's fellowship, where he discussed the difficulties of intellectual property and determining an easy negotiation on ownership. This continued to be a present issue in discussions and questions throughout the process, in particular who owned the research and – as researchers in training – their responsibility back to community. Fortunately, when it became clear that this was a massive undertaking that may be too extensive for this program of activities, it also coincided with some solutions being offered by a range of new resources, including Terri Janke's proposed National Indigenous Cultural Authority, documented in her 2009 book *Beyond Guarding Ground*, a resource that is downloadable in full text and that not only explores all aspects of new media forms, but provides some practical solutions and articulation with aspirations of the legal system, academic processes, and the United Nations. As with the process of the emergence of the Excellence in Research for Australia program, Janke's text was timely, providing answers to a range of questions that were necessarily emerging in the Australian research and research training landscape. It became clear that it was no coincidence that these issues were emerging at this time, and is yet another reason why the resource development for this program has only just begun.

Indigenous Knowledge(s) articulation

There are a number of theorists exploring the ways that Indigenous communities are likely to have a greater engagement with technology, when given an equal opportunity to their non-Indigenous counterparts. Indigenous technology theorist Michael Donovan suggests that it is the movement of Indigenous peoples and communities that has created a need for effective communication tools to compensate for the disconnections that the diaspora of communities and peoples has caused (2007, p.99). Similarly, there is frequently an engagement of media and access to the pan-Indigenous experience through national strategies, like the National Indigenous Television service, that deploy media to create communal spaces for a national Indigenous community that are, necessarily, as fractured as the number of Indigenous nations and communities within Australia. These spaces form cohort, as they connect through a pan-Indigenous naming, shared experiences and knowledge systems.

The issue of how new media dissemination strategies provide culturally appropriate tools for Indigenous research, and Indigenous research methodologies, has been explored through workshops and resources during this fellowship, by applying the Both-ways



philosophy promoted by Batchelor Institute and embedded in our teaching and learning processes, and combining it with the diasporic nature of the post-colonial Indigenous experience. Both-ways acknowledges the differences, advantages and unique structures found in both Western and Indigenous research and practice, and offers both as solutions to individual learning problems, making the process ideal in the management of an individual research student's candidature experience. (Ober and Bat 2007)

There is also an opportunity in employing new media tools in research dissemination that maintains both the literal and figurative voice of the researcher and the researched. If the pan-Indigenous experience of community participation, engagement and involvement by an entire community in story (re)telling, or the focus on the maintenance of otherwise endangered languages, or the ongoing attempts to create spaces where our cultures and voices can be heard, and are a core to our identity, then reducing that voice and those expressions through several layers of translation to form a linear text-based narrative could significantly mitigate the integrity of the research findings. The question may not be how new media manages to provide an adjunct to formal written narratives, but how a written narrative can possibly maintain the currency of Indigenous research outcomes or, arguably, the research completed by Indigenous researchers.

A further note is that while the fellowship began by posing a question that explored alternative dissemination outside of the currently accepted forms of media and the creative arts, it is arguably through the conflation of these accepted forms with other disciplines that the Indigenous Knowledge(s) space becomes revealed. It is, therefore, important to consider that these same modes of delivery, rather than a modified mode of delivery may be an acceptable outcome. The role in articulating the issues to stakeholders and providing a range of resources in the 'Resource Shed'.

Stakeholders

It was identified that the key stakeholders for the fellowship were:

- Research student supervisors/supervisory teams, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous
- Indigenous research students
- Indigenous academic support units
- Indigenous researchers
- Non-Indigenous researchers
- International researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous
- Creative arts researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous

An important outcome of this fellowship program was the development of a set of resources, accessible to stakeholders as a Resource Shed through the website: www.indigenousresearchers.org. The name 'Indigenous Researcher' is used on the site, and on most of the publicly disseminated material. Focusing on the term 'researcher' rather than research student is intentional. Even though the program is squarely concerned with research students, the naming forms a strategic decision that recognises a concern with solely identifying the term 'research student' by the key stakeholders. Many Indigenous research students have already been engaged in research or academic work prior to beginning their studies. Combined with the more difficult issue that, as a training ground for researchers, students are often encouraged to see themselves as researchers, rather than as students, the use of the term 'researcher' seemed to be a way to create a space of engagement that acknowledged ownership by the student. This, in some ways, also provides a challenge to the acquisition of new skill-sets that this program promotes, where research degrees often rely on a scaffolding of existing knowledge, rather than the acquisition of new skill-sets outside of research tools within their fields. This issue is touched on in the position paper.

Similarly, although career researchers were not the focus of the program, the capacity for this ALTC fellowship to contribute to the career training development of academics



engaged in research reflects the inextricable links between research training, research and academic practice. It also reflects the difficulty of isolating research from teaching practice or research training as separate spaces of development. The Australian Learning and Teaching Council, as a funder of this program, has as its task to support the development of teaching and learning tools within the academy, and this program was squarely aimed at refiguring research students back into the research training landscape, even where there has been an emphasis on research demonstration.

There are over 40 Indigenous support units at universities around Australia, most supporting Indigenous research students as a single cohort, regardless of their discipline area. This has resulted in groups and support structures that cross academic fields of practice and these cohorts have provided a clear means through this program to provide across the range of disciplines a resource base that would be shared accordingly. Again, it became clear that while the main focus is on Indigenous Australian researchers, a further use for the developed resources will be to provide support and networking for international Indigenous research and researchers.

The identified stakeholder groups have played an important role in shaping the program. At information sessions, seminars, workshops and through correspondence held throughout the fellowship, there was a pattern of consistent feedback. The persistent questions that emerged have been shaped to inform the disseminated outcomes of the fellowship, in particular the Resource Shed on the website, and in workshops and seminars.

3. Considering new media dissemination

This program promotes the potential of alternative dissemination through new media forms as a culturally appropriate tool for Indigenous research student outcomes. Importantly, it is not attempting to promote the replacement or the sole use of alternative dissemination, but rather to consider these as a resource kit that might better allow the student to develop their knowledge-base throughout their research training. In simple terms, it may mean taking a better photograph to include in a thesis, or to better understand issues involved with sound recording to ensure a more authentically transcribed data-set. It may, however, result in the consideration of the linear, thesis form as only a less suitable form of dissemination. As a part of this fellowship, we undertook a time-specific, informal review of acceptable dissemination outcomes throughout Australian universities by contacting research offices, reviewing university websites and through our ongoing contact with the libraries acting as repositories for the outcomes of alternative research materials. This review showed that many institutions allowed dissemination practices outside of the standard thesis form, ranging from research as practice to research by publication, with emphasis largely being on the discipline area to dictate the appropriate research outcomes by which a research degree could be assessed. The tools provided in this reporting process and through the Resource Shed on the website are intended to support and assist decision makers, supervisory panels and students in reviewing their own practices in considering New Media outcomes as a part of their dissemination. As students and academics are increasingly moving into collaborative areas, and as the process of research outcome normalises alternative dissemination through processes such as the Excellence in Research for Australia matrix and assessment criterion (ARC, 2010), the capacity and value of incorporating these outcomes will need to be considered. This resource is intended to act as a tool for this assessment, but rather than simply encouraging mainstream consideration, it also aims to explore how alternative dissemination is specifically useful in the context of Indigenous researchers staking an epistemological claim on the restructuring of these outcomes.

During the early stages of presentation on this program, I sought feedback from stakeholders/stakeholder groups on the idea of alternative dissemination for Indigenous research student training, and this feedback has informed the resources and information made available under the fellowship. From this feedback there were four major concerns that emerged, and these helped in part to create the themes of discussion in the New Media



dissemination space of the website and in the training and dissemination that took place over the period of the fellowship.

The first issue was a concern that employing new media outcomes would isolate students further by requiring them to undertake more training in the form of new media skills acquisition. There was also a concern expressed that encouraging students to create research outcomes that was atypical of their discipline field would further marginalise their academic experience. The final two issues concerned the supervisor or supervisory team's capacity to advise students when they chose a dissemination outcome that was unknown to the mentor, and a further concern that assessment and resourcing would extend the student and would hinder, rather than help a timely completion. These are all important issues, and real risks in any dissemination mode, whether a written linear form or an alternative outcome. Rather than simply answering these concerns or positioning the resources as a response to negative feedback, it became clear that it may be helpful to inform why and how new media should be considered in the research students toolkit, to provide some resourcing answers and to show evidence of where it was being used currently. It was hoped that a set of information and benchmarking tools may clear up some of these issues, or allow them to be better addressed within the individual research training program or student experience.

Themes: managing, understanding, exploring

In order to provide some practical and theoretical ways of thinking around alternative dissemination, the website and general broadcasting strategy has revolved around three key themes: *managing*, *understanding* and *exploring*. The themes are intended to encourage a better understanding of the role of new media in existing research outcomes, and provide strategies and more articulated ways of thinking about new media as a tool for indigenous research training. these themes are not constantly revealed to the end user, except through this reporting tool, instead they emerge as strategies to understand new media, resources to share and explore, and ways to engage with one another and are woven throughout the website, in the resource shed, known as 'Shed space: new media resources', the positioning information (Understanding alternative dissemination) and in the information about the process of the fellowship (The real gunya: about us). Gunya is the Wiradjuri word for home.

The three areas are:

Shed Space: new media resources

Managing, Understanding, Exploring

The Resource Shed is separated into six areas, all areas are available online and downloadable. They are listed in the screen capture below.

Understanding alternative dissemination

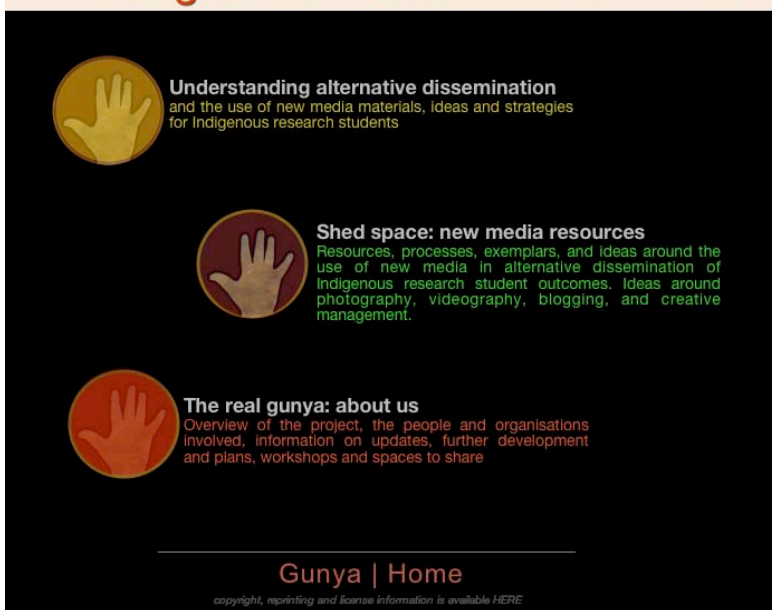
This section brings together some of the research and ways of thinking through new media dissemination outcomes in Indigenous research. It includes some of the text of the report, background documents and a range of outcome suggestions.

The real gunya: about us

This area discusses the development of the fellowship and reveals the background processes. Further information on the colours, look and approach towards the development of the website is included here.



New Media Resources for Indigenous Research Students



Practice-based and practice-led research: locating dissemination practices

In order to fully explain the process of alternative dissemination in standard research contexts, it is important to provide for stakeholders an explanation of the underpinning methodologies of practice-based and practice-led research. Although there is an ongoing debate around the differences between the terms practice-based and practice-led, for the purposes of maintaining consistency throughout the Resource Shed and position document, practice-based research has been framed as research outcomes use practical - in the case of this program, new media forms - as a mode to demonstrate research. Practice-led research is framed as an investigation of the form and structure of the practice. How this translates into practice dissemination is that a thesis that documents the history of a community and uses images, sounds and video to demonstrate the findings of that research is practice-based; while a thesis that explores the practice of printmaking in that community, where the research reveals new ways of thinking about the practice of printmaking, is practice-led research. The Research Guide produced by Creativity and Cognition Studios at the University of Technology, Sydney provides clarity by articulating the following definitions:

1. *If a creative artifact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is **practice-based**.*
 2. *If the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, it is **practice-led**.*
- (Candy 2006)

It is hoped that a further explanation of practice in research will both normalise the process and encourage a problem-based, therefore student-specific, approach to considering this dissemination either as an alternative or in concert with a thesis outcome.

Supervision solutions

The key focus of the program, and the resources developed within it, is to encourage Indigenous research students and their supervisory team to consider the dissemination forms used in their research. Although new media is the focus of the program, the discussion does not centre on it being the most appropriate outcome; instead it provides background, methods, and issues around this form of dissemination to encourage discussion around the boundaries of discipline and the alternative pathways to a meaningful engagement of Indigenous research training pedagogies.



I was reminded recently that good researchers do not automatically make the best supervisors, and similarly the pedagogical approaches to research training and supervision are often distinctly different than undergraduate teaching. Supervisors are tasked with the role of shepherding students through research degrees, often without training or specific support beyond a strong understanding of research in their fields and undergraduate teaching practice. For Indigenous research students this process can become more difficult when supervisors perceive their students as deficient. Countering this possible perception became a focus as questions around Indigenous student competency emerged from the feedback sessions. It was important to affirm that rather than dealing with students failing to enroll, undertake or complete research degrees, that this program is not seeking to articulate or respond to a deficiency, but instead to build on creative dissemination outcomes that will have more meaning for Indigenous students.

During the feedback sessions, it was articulated by a surprising number of supervisors that they believed that in order for students to compete on an equal basis they needed to understand that the academy operated in a certain way and that Indigenous ways of learning and knowing may not always mesh with these academic practices. It's easy to dismiss this as unreconstructed, but this fellowship trajectory has been less about changing the mechanisms within the academy and instead it has focused on promoting better ways of understanding some of the epistemological differences, as opposed to deficiencies. Students engaged in using the Indigenous Knowledge(s) paradigm that Wilson discusses of finding the most appropriate form to disseminate, may find themselves using methods and methodologies that belong outside of their nominated discipline field, and that may require an expanded knowledge of a range of dissemination outcomes, new media being just one of these options. Similarly, if this program is concerned with making the process more meaningful and aspirational for Indigenous research students, then it may well be that these issues of broad ranging consideration of discipline boundaries are important to consider whenever Indigenous research students are proposing research outcomes, regardless of the dissemination strategy.

Feedback from the public sessions suggested that the key issues were around understanding how to devise a plan that would support the research question, enrich the research student experience, and contribute to the outcomes of the student's program. This feedback was reinforced by suggestions that were made by a large Indigenous research student cohort (18 students present) at the feedback session run as a part of the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education in Melbourne in 2008. This session resulted in specific discussions on the importance of cross-disciplinary supervision, panel supervision and mentoring on skill-set acquisition. Panel supervision, in particular, was seen to address some of the issues resulting in cross-disciplinary research. One student spoke of her enthusiastic supervisor who had strongly urged her to create a film as her major research contribution. Unfortunately the supervisor had no skills, knowledge or background in film, nor did the student. This kind of advice to explore alternative dissemination without any clear support, has been mentioned several times in feedback through the process of the fellowship and I can provide no clear reasons beyond a sense that the supervisor was attempting to engage the student in a meaningful outcome, no matter how ill-prepared they were to support the students in their endeavours. It does highlight a major argument for panel supervision, to ensure that there are people expert in a particular process or discipline to support, assist and advise students of the work involved to fully realise a research outcome in an unfamiliar creative form, and perhaps sometimes to dissuade them from this path or to assist them to find a more feasible solution.

Resources, exemplars and a guiding hand

In order to demonstrate research outcomes using alternative dissemination, the development of a framework that included exemplars, citations and information on how alternative assessments have been developed, assessed and delivered, was an important contribution. This framework was delivered in part in the process of workshops, seminars and in sessions carried out with research student cohorts through the period of the fellowship, but a more enduring demonstration was required in order for this program to have a lasting effect and as a means of providing a tangible resource outcome. The development of the Resource Shed on



the www.indigenousresearchers.org website, in part pointing to existing research outcomes available online and through repository spaces, was identified as a key strategy. In the early stages, demonstrations of practice-based research were planned, but instead of simulating research student or career researcher outcomes, it became clear that a more authentic process would be reached if demonstrations of actual work were identified and discussed.

With a significant number of exemplars already linked from the website, it is anticipated that the resource will build exponentially now that the Excellence in Research for Australia process developed by the Australian Research Council has funded each higher education space to provide a repository that will store alternative dissemination materials. Similarly, as more material becomes available on the use of practice in research, these texts will be cited and linked from the site.

The function of the site, as it grows, is to keep up with the patterns of research and research training, to provide a space for understanding new media outcomes, and to allow an exchange of information on important changes that may affect those involved with Indigenous researcher or research student training. It was also important to nominate the differences between standard dissemination and alternative dissemination, articulated in the following diagram from the website.

Alternative Dissemination	Standard Dissemination
Assumes existing skill level in field	Assumes existing skill level in field
Research, investigation and review is required	Research, investigation and review is required
Supervision is required	Supervision is required
The plan for a body of work is designed and deep investigation is undertaken	A thesis plan is developed, research is undertaken
A body of work is prepared	A thesis is prepared
An exegesis is prepared to accompany the body of work	Any accompanying materials are designed to support the thesis
The work is submitted when it meets national standards of excellence in the creative arts	The work is submitted when it meets national standards of excellence in the research discipline
Assessment is usually by production of secondary documentation of a body of work, exegesis and a 'viva' process	Assessment is usually by submitted thesis

4. Activities and outcomes

There were four key activities of the fellowship:

- seeding information and feedback sessions through workshops, presentation and publication
- the development of a website and resource space
- networking appropriate to the outcomes of the fellowship
- an articulation through these processes, of the relationship of new media outcomes in research and Indigenous research training



At times they overlapped, but the main message of the process was to support better outcomes for Indigenous research students and to encourage new ways of thinking about dissemination that might allow Indigenous research students to contribute their unique epistemologies to their learning process.

Getting the word out

The goal with public presentations was twofold: to instigate a discussion and seek questions on the focus of the program, and to act as a formal dissemination process by which we seeded investment in the findings. The informal and formal presentations sometimes coincided with workshops on alternative dissemination strategy. They were held at the following institutions and forums:

Presentations

- World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education
- Harvard University Native American Program (HUNAP)
- Desert Knowledges Forum (Alice Springs)
- Yale University (informal dissemination to students and staff)
- American University
- Newcastle University
- Charles Darwin University
- The University of Queensland
- The University of Melbourne
- Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Workshops and seminars

- The University of Newcastle, 2009 (Kunarr Symposium)
- American University in Washington DC, 2009 (Native Students)
- World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education, 2008
- Wilin Centre, VCA @ Melbourne University, 2010
- Charles Darwin University, 2009
- Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education: Alice Springs and Batchelor, 2008, 2009
- Online Workshop [7 attendees], 2009
- State Library of Queensland, 2009

These varied spaces provided important feedback that informed the structure of the program. The first major presentation was at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education 2008. WIPCE 2008 was one of the largest international Indigenous education conferences ever held and was an important conference as it brought together thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, all concerned with education and all interested in new pathways of learning. The conference was well attended, with over 3000 participants, and was followed up by a presentation at the Desert Knowledges Forum in Alice Springs - in both cases a workshop and presentation were given, and the feedback from these sessions informed the beginning of the process. These forums focused on uniquely Indigenous ways of managing knowledge, providing a space for discussion on epistemologies of dissemination and meaning and provided a solid stakeholder base for the program.

Similarly, further national and international dissemination was an opportunity to seed discussion at the same time as reviewing practices in Indigenous Knowledge(s) outcomes in these varied spaces of research training. Some key points emerged from the international process, including a note that the length of research degrees in the United States of America was significantly longer, compared to Australian research degrees, with the former typically requiring the inclusion of coursework as a necessary element of a program of research study. Although practice-based research in non-creative arts fields is uncommon in the United States, the frequent response from the audiences was to assume that new media could simply form a part of the program developed for that student's research training if the outcomes were deemed acceptable by the university. The articulation of the research student as 'student' in



the US context, rather than 'researcher in training' articulated by many supervisors in the Australian context, was an important point of distinction, possibly contributed to by the significant difference in length of degree, where five years or longer is a typical period of study for the completion of a PhD in the US. In Australia, the Federal Government funds three years for the expected completion of a PhD, allowing little time for research training and a genuine requirement that students are building on existing knowledge rather than gaining new skills. These international comparisons proved useful and could only have been carried out through a workshop and feedback of the ideas of the fellowship. It also emerged that there were some major mainstream international spaces that would provide the crossover of art and Indigenous Knowledge(s) alternative dissemination exemplars. The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) has a flexible space of dissemination supporting alternative dissemination in the broad creative and media arts, with significant crossover as a number of their graduate students work in Indigenous research contexts. Examples of this work is linked in the Resource Shed on the www.indigenousresearchers.org site.

The national workshops ranged from hands-on demonstrations of new media forms, to intensive discussion of individual research outcomes. The focus in all cases was on practice-based and practice-led research processes, and the suitability within the context of Indigenous Knowledge(s) practice and dissemination.

Workshops and seminars focused on a framework that explored four areas:

- supervisory team
- skill-sets and research training capacity building and skills acquisition
- developing a research plan
- Indigenous epistemologies and the development of a research plan

Owing to the timing of these workshops, there were also questions answered on the relationship between alternative dissemination outcomes and the Excellence in Research for Australia process. As the nominated head of the ERA process at Batchelor Institute, I had a rigorous and up-to-date understanding of the issues and opportunities of the ERA for alternative dissemination, and found that I was not only informing supervisors of options for their research training, but for their own research profiles.

Networking

The workshops and other face-to-face opportunities were important in this process, but a struggle from the beginning of the process was how to manage the emerging (over the life of the fellowship, in particular) use of social networking and blogging tools.

In early 2010, the Wilin Centre at the Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music, The University of Melbourne, masterminded by Wilin Centre Director and Indigenous academic, Michelle Evans, held what we believe to be the first Indigenous Creative Arts Research Forum ever. I was asked to facilitate one of the key workshops on alternative dissemination and to manage that part of the Forum. The focus was almost entirely on research training and research student experiences, and was attended by these Indigenous students and supervisors. As the program developed, it became clear from feedback that alternative dissemination was still being challenged in the accepted forms of practice in the creative arts, particularly as the Indigenous research students often cross the boundaries of disciplines. Understanding the capacity for alternative dissemination to exist beyond the creative arts, was at the heart of this forum, and has resulted in the development of a Facebook group that was immediately vibrant and engaged in informing members of opportunities, links, exchanges and forums for their further development. What I had struggled with for more than a year through standard blogging had become virtually immediately viral, with more than a hundred fully invested members joining within a day. This connection between the real space and the space of the social networking experience has informed not only the way to continue the networking of these outcomes, but also to encourage the use of these tools as a viable strategy to counter what Donovan referred to in his concerns over the diasporic disconnections of Indigenous cohorts. (2007)



Publication

O'Sullivan, S. (2009). Intermedia: culturally appropriate dissemination tools for Indigenous postgraduate research training. *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*, 12(1-4), 155-161.

Publications were not the focus of the program, as the goal was to disseminate information through new media forms and in workshops, however the JAI was selected because it is a key international publication for Indigenous matters with the publication linked to the WIPCE 2008 Conference, and the main audience of academics within the broad humanities.

An online resource: <www.indigenousresearchers.org>

The three areas of the Shed Space, New Media and Research and About the Process sections all converge to address the key themes of *Understanding, Managing, Exploring* detailed in Chapter 3. In addition to the articulation of New Media and Research, the outcomes include a Resource Shed that aims to provide resourcing tools, and an About the Process, that explains the intentions behind the fellowship.



RESOURCE SHED

The Shed has been developed to assist stakeholders in identifying resources, existing materials and ways to investigate the use of alternative dissemination forms in research training.

The Shed is intended to build over time, and will become an ongoing outcome of the fellowship. It is hoped that this will grow by developing further information sheets, updating these resource materials, and through updates to the available research materials and benchmarking available in the fields. As new blogging, social networking and information sharing resources become available they will be reviewed and tested as a part of the process.

The Shed is divided into three areas, with the overarching themes driving their structure. The first area is essentially outside information, sites and resources selected to provide a better understanding of the resources available, following the first theme of *understanding*. The second area provides information, resources and ways of thinking about the pragmatics of New Media approaches, following the second theme of *managing*. The final theme of



exploring focuses on blogging, social networking and the spaces of dissemination.

Specifically the Shed provides the following resource lists and resources:

-Technical Information Sheets

These are a developing resource, intended to build over time and with the aid and support of the critical friends process and contributors to the site. Each sheet includes the following information

What's Covered

[specific resource name e.g. Photography] for Researchers - Issues to consider

Resources/Equipment

Links

Topic FAQ

-Listings, citations, references, resources, exemplars

This process took several months to complete and it is hoped that the offerings will shortcut unnecessarily lengthy leg-work by research students in locating a range of exemplary research outcomes, including a range of student-based work. They include a range of outputs, both within and outside of the creative arts context. The work includes a brief summary of the alternatively disseminated research, including some work that focuses on Indigenous research outcomes. Some of this work is squarely in the creative arts, but allows the reader to have a sense of the articulation between exegesis and a creative body of work. There is also information on accessing alternative materials in Australian university libraries. There is a discussion on this section of the site that explores some of the emerging issues around alternative dissemination and the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) process. The ERA process has funded universities in Australia to install and run research output repositories, and these repositories are only now managing to include their new media output. Some clear examples are suggested, but the process of accessing offline materials is also included.

-Blogs, Social Networking, Online Research Dissemination

This area provides both practical advice and some of the underpinning theories, methods and intellectual property issues with the management of a public new media outcome for the process or outcomes of research. As previously mentioned, this process will build over time.

ABOUT THE PROCESS

This section of the site exposes the background to the fellowship and provides the stakeholder with a clear idea of the reasons behind this work and the intentions of the ALTC, BIITE and the Fellow as authors of the program of activity and the site. It includes a researcher profile, information on those involved with the fellowship and further information on the sponsors of the program. The *researcher profile* is further acting as exemplar of the use of new media spaces of dissemination to promote researchers.



Dr Sandy O'Sullivan



A proud member of the Wiradjuri (Aboriginal) Nation, I live in Brisbane and work in the Research Division of **Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education**, located in the Northern Territory of Australia.

Work

My work focuses on alternative dissemination processes for Indigenous Australian research students and career researchers and the digital museum space. I'm interested in the ways that we might use new media and digital forms to create research outcomes that are both rigorous, culturally appropriate and meaningful for our cultural communities and our communities of practice. I am an ALTC Teaching Fellow and current ARC Indigenous Research Fellow.

From August 2010 to January 2011 I will be travelling to the National Museum of the American Indian in the United States, the British Museum and the British Museum System in the United Kingdom to look at the management of Indigenous materials in new media contexts.

Institution

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education is a national higher education institution located in the Northern Territory of Australia. Our focus is on Both-ways learning and research processes. The Institute has around 3000 students, all of them Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, coming from all over Australia. At the post-graduate (PhD and Masters) level we focus on Indigenous Knowledge/s.

Current Research Projects

New media forms in the dissemination of Indigenous researcher and Indigenous research student practice (ALTC)

Reversing the gaze: Indigenous perspectives on museums, cultural representation and the equivocal digital remnant (Australian Research Council)

(select) Publications, Exhibitions, Performances

Publications

(2010 Forthcoming). How to [not] define Aboriginal lesbian identity. In P. Dudgeon, J. Herbert, J. Milroy & D. Oxenham (Eds.), *Australian Indigenous*

Researcher Info

WORKING @

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

POSITION

2008/9 ALTC Teaching Fellow
ARC Indigenous Research Fellow (2010-12)

COUNTRY

Wiradjuri Nation, Australia

RESEARCH FIELDS

Art, Indigenous Knowledge/s and Aboriginal cultural materials, identity and self-representation, museum studies, gender and sexuality studies.

RESEARCH INFLUENCES

Dr Marie-Claire O'Sullivan
Uncle Stan Grant
Dr Peter Stephenson
Dr Anita Heiss
Professor Jeannie Herbert
Robynne Quiggin
Joe Fraser
Dr Kerri-Ann Kealohapau'ole Hewett-Fraser
Annie Vanderwyk
Professor Anne Graham
Dr Shawn Wilson
Professor Michael Christie
Terri Janke
Dr Christine Asmar
Jeanie Bell
Professor Larissa Behrendt
Kathy Suter, NMAI
Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson
Assoc Prof. Lyn Fasoli
Michelle Evans
Vicki Grieves
Dr Brooke Collins-Gearing
Dr Maggie Walter
Sam Cook
David Hardy
Assoc Prof. Pat Dudgeon
Shannon Quist, NMAI
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http://www.indigenousresearchers.org/NMR_IR/Sandy_OSullivan_Bio.html



5. The role of fellowship

The Australian Learning and Teaching Council took an acknowledged leap of faith in supporting a program of activities that would only be fully testable after the life of the fellowship. Unlike many other fellowship programs, this did not start with a range of questions, but instead aimed to find out what questions the stakeholders may have and then create a space of dissemination. Similarly the resources and materials developed as a part of this program played only a small part in the process of fellowship, which focused on making connections, running workshops, and facilitating thought and change in research training practices.

The ALTC played an important role in the development of resources and support materials for those engaged in higher education teaching and learning, but for all of the targeted resources the ALTC produces, it also provides the space that academics can grow when they come together. The process of 'fellowship' provided an enormous opportunity for me as a mid-career academic. With seventeen years of teaching experience, but – like most academics – a limited range of cross-discipline exposure, I was able to tap into, and engage with other Fellows and read through their work, to better facilitate the broader range of disciplines catered for in my fellowship program. The space of fellowship outside of our own home institutions and within a nationally-funded, non-institution-aligned organisation like the ALTC, has proven consistently engaging for me as an academic. It has allowed me to cut through the vested interests of an increasingly competitive university system and explore an area that should be important to all institutions: the increase of Indigenous student engagement, meaningful contribution and completions.

The current situation of Indigenous research student take-up and completion is dire and there is an urgent need to address this concern. ALTC could well have decided that this program was too research-focused in its outcomes, but instead chose to recognise the dearth of material available in research training, particularly in Indigenous contexts. Along with a range of other programs of activity that they have funded and encouraged in the research training area, they are forging meaningful new structures for Indigenous learning in Australia by acknowledging that research students are not demonstrating research outcomes, but learning and being taught new ways of thinking and exploring through a process of engaged pedagogy. The Indigenous research students of today are the Indigenous academics of our future, and through the funding of this program, the ALTC has taken the position that it has a responsibility to support these emerging academics.

Complementary work within the fellowship

As the first Aboriginal Australian ALTC Fellow, I made it an important aspect of the fellowship to explain very clearly to many of my Indigenous colleagues, within and outside of the academy, the role of the ALTC and the capacity for the ALTC to contribute to Indigenous higher education across a range of areas. Where possible, it was attempted to interweave this into the main messages of the fellowship, but there were also opportunities in the national press (*National Indigenous Times* and *Koori Mail* and on ABC Radio National) to further promote the work of the ALTC in the wider Indigenous community, and within academic contexts to look beyond the work of the fellowship to broader issues for Indigenous education.

This relationship-building was an important part of the fellowship, as it acted as a strong indicator to community that a mainstream enabling organisation that has a brief to promote better learning and teaching practice, is concerned with the issues that affect our peoples, and are working to provide solutions to improve our education outcomes.

I will continue to promote the important contribution of the ALTC throughout the rest of my career, recognising the opportunity that this process has provided to those engaged in Indigenous research training and to my own work as an Aboriginal academic.



6. Acknowledgements and partners

In addition to the contributions already mentioned in the report, the following people and organisations provided immeasurable support, with many of them now committed to being involved with the important upkeep and growing of the resources. Some of these people acted as informal or formal *critical friends* in the process, but all are acknowledged here as essential participants.

Thanks to the following contributors and partners:

Charles Darwin University, particularly ALTC National Teaching Fellow, Professor Michael Christie, who provided opportunities for dissemination and important advice on process and engagement.

ALTC Teaching Fellow, Dr Christine Asmar, who provided an opportunity to connect with other Indigenous academics, and grew this program exponentially through her excellent networking and support for the work.

The staff of The University of Newcastle, in particular Professor John Maynard and Annie Vanderwyk and the staff of Wollotuka, who provided opportunities and support for the program.

Harvard University Native American Program, Yale University, the American University and other academic institutions in the United States that provided a space to disseminate these findings and begin an international discussion.

The staff and students of Batchelor Institute, in particular my research students who continue to test this process and provide ever increasing circles of dissemination.

Associate Professor Lyn Fasoli, who acts as an academic mentor and reminds me that even after 17 years of academic teaching, I still need one.

Dr Kerri-Ann Kealohapau`ole Hewett Fraser, who provided mentoring through the process, and continues to provide support to Indigenous students using the essential principles of Both-ways learning.

Sam Cook, formerly of Wilin Centre, now Director of The Dreaming Festival and BlakArts for providing ongoing advice and input into the importance of growing unique talents, and who will provide, with The Dreaming Festival, an opportunity to develop meaningful creative dissemination of research outcomes.

Finally, the most important body to thank is the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. This process of being in 'fellowship' was as important as having a formal fellowship. The staff of the ALTC was particularly supportive and helpful, always culturally aware, and frequently tapped into what was happening in the academic community in a way that enriched the fellowship program. In particular I would like to thank the staff of the ALTC that, with their support of this program, have exemplified the ALTC commitment to fostering new ways of thinking about teaching and learning. They have demonstrated an implicit understanding of the variety of epistemologies in higher education, and have demonstrated practical support throughout all of the issues that emerged in the development of the fellowship.



Critical Friend statement

There have been many *Critical Friends* who provided support, input and a sounding board through the process of the fellowship. Some of them were formally engaged and others became important in the process because of the input and resources that they shared with the process.

The role of critical friends in this fellowship allowed a wider examination of the work and a greater dissemination of the developed framework. The idea behind critical friends is that they provide support that ranges from input in the design of the program, to assessment of the outcomes, to networking, to supporting the dissemination of the findings.

All those acknowledged above contributed as mentors or in support of the process, and in their own way became critical contributors to the ongoing work of this program. The four people listed below, however, contributed in ways that require a more articulated response.

Dr Melissa Hardie (Co-ordinator, American Studies, School of Letters, Art and Media, Faculty of Arts, The University of Sydney) was asked to comment on the program from the perspective of an experienced mid-career academic who works in the broad humanities field, in a discipline area that sits outside of either the creative arts or the Indigenous Knowledge(s)/Studies fields. Melissa has provided both a critical eye over the process, and a supportive commentary on some of the issues for the broad humanities field. It is not intended that the program focus on changing discipline practice, but rather that it encourages discussions around individual student programs and solutions, and Melissa's implicit understanding of these practices have assisted this program immeasurably.

Michelle Evans (Wilin Centre, Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music, The University of Melbourne) began her contribution to the program unwittingly, but her genius in joining to form both a Facebook site that will grow Indigenous research outcomes in the creative arts and running one of the most important national sessions on alternative dissemination made her an essential critical friend in the process. Michelle's commitment to exploring alternative dissemination further is a testament to her drive as an Indigenous academic.

Dr Marie-Claire O'Sullivan (Research Division, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education) provided research support on the fellowship, but has acted as more than merely a 'support' through the process. Marie-Claire provided research input, an unstinting commitment to gathering the best resources available and acted as an essential and critical friend. Marie-Claire will continue to be involved in the process of updating and resource managing on the website, through her networking and in her ongoing commitment to Indigenous researcher training.

Dr Peter Stephenson (Head of Research, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education) provided ongoing support for this program. He unswervingly promoted it within the Institute and in his national roles. His contribution to the program is a testament to the work of the Institute and to his own commitment to developing Indigenous research training in Australia.



7. Citations

Full list of references used in the fellowship is available on the website:
<www.indigenousresearchers.org>

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