

A hand holding a pen writing on a blue surface. The background is a solid blue color with a lighter blue horizontal band across the middle. The text is white and bold.

AUSTRALIAN WRITING PROGRAMS NETWORK (CG642)

Final Report

prepared for the Australian Learning and Teaching Council

31 August 2008

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

In partnership with

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Writing Programs Network (AWPN), commenced in January 2007, was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, to build on the strengths and ameliorate the challenges of creative writing research training, at a national level. The project involved the design, construction and maintenance of an interactive online Network to contribute to the learning experiences of postgraduate creative writing students. Specific elements to be included on the website included databases, archives of information, links to relevant sites, and online training seminars. The three stages of the project were completed on time over 18 months. Stage one included extensive research into the potential user community; stage two involved building and testing the website to near-completion; and stage three saw the completion of the website, hosted at www.writingnetwork.edu.au, and associated workshops and publications. The team continues to operate the project for the University of Canberra, the partner institutions and the Australian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP), an organisation that played a key role in the development of the project.

As the project has been a collaborative effort, wider uptake of the website content among creative writing programs, and by audiences beyond the tertiary education sector and Australia, is both a measure of the project outcomes, and in itself a process and a mode of dissemination. The Network's website fulfils two modes of dissemination: the online bulletin board, and greater networking; and the repository of information encourages "repeat business" and investment in the project. Important short-term benefits have been delivered. The members' database allows easy identification of experts and interested practitioners across a range of theoretical and form-based topics. An examiners' database is on the website, and past and present postgraduate students have been identified at all reference group universities, and others across Australia. Interaction between supervisors has begun, with a very effective supervisors' workshop which, with the annotated bibliographies deposited on the website, promotes knowledge building about supervisory best practice. The Network's website is linked to the AAWP website, which has comprehensive information about grants, scholarships and prizes.

Additional outcomes have been obtained; for example:

- students have gained a better understanding of their rights, and of what constitutes good supervision
- there has been sustained discussion of what constitutes research in the creative writing discipline
- the website promotes greater awareness of the research areas being explored, and consequent opportunities for collaborative work and other linkages
- there has been high uptake for workshops, indicating that these sorts of training fora and topics are not being addressed by individual institutions.

Many projected impacts and deliverables are long-term, and could not be effectively evaluated over the project. To this point, however, the project has achieved excellent results in building knowledge, capacity, and a national community. It provides a model for networking, community-building and professional training for the creative writing discipline. With ongoing support, it has the capacity to serve national and international communities, not only in writing but also in other creative disciplines.

1. Overview of the project

1.1. Introduction

Creative writing research higher degrees are comparatively new in Australia and overseas: just a decade ago very few universities offered creative doctorates, and only a handful offered creative writing research masters. Now 20 Australian universities offer a full range of creative writing programs, from undergraduate to doctoral levels (AAWP 2005). This rapid growth has offered many opportunities to universities and students, but has also resulted in inconsistencies in curricula, supervisory relations and examination standards. The relative youth of the discipline has also caused some concerns about staff expertise levels: teaching staff come from highly diverse academic and professional backgrounds, with many practising writers appointed to positions in Australian universities to provide undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. While they are often highly appropriate teachers of undergraduate courses, many have little research training, or knowledge of what is involved in preparing a candidate to complete a doctoral program. Other supervisors are experienced researchers in cognate fields but have limited background in creative practice. Consequently, some students report inadequate supervision of their projects and uncertainty about appropriate approaches to research. As well, the small size of most writing programs and differences in institutional location mean some students feel isolated and lacking in direction.

Not surprisingly, many staff and students feel out of place, or out of their depth, at this level of academic practice. Indeed, staff and research students in this diverse discipline share, according to recent research, a sense of isolation from the research community and from one another. Nor is the concern within universities only; within the wider writing community professional writers and publishers have expressed concerns about the extent to which higher degree training fits graduates to function as professionals. Yet despite such issues, creative writing programs are in demand among students at all levels.

This project – the Australian Writing Programs Network, later renamed the Australian Postgraduate Writers Network” hereafter “the Network” – aimed to ameliorate the difficulties and build on the strengths of creative writing higher degrees programs at a national level. Thus it responds to two objectives listed under the Competitive Grants Program: to “develop effective mechanisms for the identification, development, dissemination and embedding of good individual and institutional practice in learning and teaching in Australian higher education”, and to “identify learning and teaching issues that impact on the Australian higher education system and facilitate national approaches to address these issues”. It also addressed two current Funding Priorities of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. The first is innovation in teaching and learning, particularly in relation to the role of new technologies. The second Funding Priority it addressed was “research and development focussing on issues of emerging and continuing importance”.

1.2. Project aims

The project aimed to design, build and maintain an interactive web presence that included: a forum for the discussion of areas of concern; searchable databases of relevant knowledge; and a training mechanism for both students and supervisors. The website thus created aimed to contribute to the learning experience of creative writing candidates by improving standards, consistency

and information access, and by relieving the sense of isolation. The Network aimed to raise the profile and recognition of higher degrees learning and teaching, and facilitate strategic change at both institutional and national levels. Moreover, once embedded in Australian universities' programs, the Network is designed to provide effective mechanisms for the identification, development, dissemination and embedding of best practice.

The specific outcomes the project sought to achieve were to:

- initiate a national postgraduate creative writing research and supervision network
- promote a culture of collaboration across the creative writing higher education sector in Australia to reduce HDR student isolation and attrition and improve supervision quality
- build a national and international research culture among postgraduate research students and their supervisors in creative writing
- disseminate information about Australian creative writing higher degrees research, learning and teaching to potential students, early career supervisors, and the publishing community/industry
- produce a sustainable and scaleable model for use by other creative arts and creative industries disciplines in Australia.

1.3. The project team

(see Appendix A for brief CVs)

Chief investigators:

Professor Jen Webb (UC) – responsible for overseeing and coordinating the project and, with A/Prof Brien, liaising with the AAWP and other stakeholder groups. Primary responsibility for questionnaire design; oversight of UC team and Administrative Support Officer

Associate Professor Donna Lee Brien (UNE – now CQU) – responsible for design of collaborative mechanisms for project team and for Network; with Prof Webb, liaising with key stakeholder groups. NB: on July 1, 2007, CI Brien left UNE to take up a position at Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Queensland, as Associate Professor, Creative Industries and, Head, School of Arts and Creative Enterprise

Dr Axel Bruns (QUT) – responsible for structure of website and the focus on weblogs and wikis; also oversight of QUT team members and the Technical Support Officer

Team members:

Dr Greg Battye (UC) – worked with Dr Williams and Mr Bolland on the design of the website, particularly the interactive writing aspects

Dr Jordan Williams (UC) – worked with Dr Battye and Mr Bolland on the design of the website; responsible for establishing the postgraduate working papers publication

Mr Craig Bolland (QUT) – worked with A/Prof Brien on collaborative online learning requirements, and produced initial website design

Mrs Jude Smith (QUT) – responsible for collating data on principles of online learning for higher degrees students; collaborating with A/Prof Brien on online seminars

Administrative Support Officer: Ms Kristen Davis (UC) – responsible for collating, coordinating and inputting data, assisting with sourcing information, maintaining records, and communicating with research participants; reported directly to Prof Webb and indirectly to project team

Technical support: Oxide Interactive (initially the role of QUT) – responsible for designing and building website; reported directly to Prof Webb and indirectly to project team

Research assistants – responsible for supporting archival research and administering questionnaires in Stage 1, and for research support and facilitating data entry in Stage 2:

Ms Rosemary Williamson

Ms Janene Carey

Ms Sandra Burr

Mr Philip Grimmett

Mr Keith Davidson

1.4. Key terms and definitions

AAWP: the Australian Association of Writing Programs, the peak body for teachers and students of creative and professional writing in Australian (and, more recently, New Zealand) tertiary institutions. See <http://www.aawp.org.au>

ASA: the Australian Society of Authors; the peak professional association for writers, illustrators and other literary creators. See <http://www.asauthors.org/>

CI: Chief investigators: team members responsible for the project, its direction and its management

CQU: Central Queensland University

Creative disciplines: while we recognise that all educational and research workers are engaged in creative activity, in the context of producers of intellectual and aesthetic property, the term “creative” or “creative art” disciplines is commonly applied

HDR: Higher Degrees by Research: master and doctoral level degrees

PLE: Personal Learning Environment; sometimes understood in a purely instrumental way, as computer programs, PLEs provide students with a personal space in which to organise and conduct their own learning

QUT: Queensland University of Technology

RA: Research assistants: junior researchers working under the direction of CIs to gather data and perform basic analysis

RQF/ERA: Research Quality Framework – discontinued following the 2007 election and change of government, and replaced by the Excellence in Research for Australia initiative; both programs designed to evaluate the quality of research conducted in Australia

UC: the University of Canberra: the responsible institution for this project

UNE: University of New England

wiki: server software that allows users to create, edit and share web page content

2. The project context and rationale

2.1. The context of the project

Each of the institutions involved in this project include in their priorities for teaching and learning a focus on creativity and literacy, and on developing in their graduates the capacity to work collaboratively. Among its aims, the University of Canberra is “committed to graduating creative professionals who are capable of developing innovative solutions to problems facing society ... [and] able to work with others as part of a group” (UC 2002). The University of New England seeks to graduate students who are “capable of applying logical, critical and creative thinking to a range of problems ... [and] able to work collaboratively to achieve common goals” (UNE 2006). QUT “aims to develop graduates who are able to demonstrate ... critical, creative and analytical thinking, and effective problem-solving ... [and] the ability to work independently and collaboratively” (QUT 2005). The project shared these principles, and sought to build a teaching and learning community committed to them, and to ongoing learning.

The project was timely, as it built on several research projects conducted by team members over recent years. Brien¹ had extensive experience investigating and practising collaborative research and practice. Bruns and Smith were currently completing a major QUT-based project dedicated to the deployment of blogs and wikis to support online learning and teaching communities. Webb’s research history addressed the social location and function of creative practice, and she carried out a major project researching the state of university-based creative writing in Australia.

Their knowledge and experience were enriched by other contemporary work in the field. One example was the Australian National Writing Research Board, which is collating completed creative writing theses, and aims to promote research in the teaching of creative writing. Another was the Academic Publishing Wiki (<http://academia.wikia.com/wiki/>), which trains early-career researchers in the peer review process. Further examples can be found in other disciplines, such as QUT’s media learning site, and the UNE-based Australian Law Postgraduate Network, which takes a similar approach in the postgraduate area.

2.2. The rationale for the approach

By mounting the Network in the electronic domain, the team could exploit the advantages of that medium: rapid updates, searchable sites; hotlinks to relevant points; low and sustainable maintenance costs; speed of communication in both formal (workshop papers, a refereed publication of working papers) and informal (bulletin boards, chat rooms, weblogs and wikis) modes. Specific elements to be included in the site included databases, archives of information, links to relevant sites, and online training seminars.

Its sustainability would be based on the fact that the project had considerable commitment from the Australian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP), and would use its networks and other connections, including the database of AAWP

¹ Dr Brien was awarded a prestigious Carrick Institute Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning in 2006: “For consistently providing outstanding student learning outcomes since 1998 by harnessing the input of research-teaching nexus and service activities in creative and professional writing.”

members, *TEXT* (refereed journal) subscribers, and the annual conferences for launching and workshopping aspects of the project. The funding requested was to support the development work needed to establish the website, and the resources and personnel required to do that.

2.3. Intended advances in existing knowledge

The outcomes of this project were intended to improve opportunities, practice and outcomes in an area of emerging importance in higher education. In particular, it aimed to introduce innovations in learning and teaching for postgraduate creative writing students and their supervisors. Outcomes include the functioning site as a developed and sustained learning resource for all Australian higher degrees creative writing students and supervisors, and an inclusive online community for researchers – students and supervisors – in this new field of creative higher degrees research.

3. The project methodology

3.1. Protocols and procedures

To complete this project and achieve its aims, the required resources included human, financial and infrastructural support. The project funding was used to hire server space to support the Network's interactive website, and to hire support and development staff. Resources contributed by the institutions included the time and expertise represented by the team members and leaders, and their networks, which were invaluable for establishing and maintaining the Network. Other university contributions included infrastructural support in the form of computers and peripherals, communication devices, stationery and postage; hosting and long-term maintenance of the Network's website; and support to attend conferences to assist in discussion and comprehensive dissemination of research results and deliverables. All team members contributed to data collection and analysis, networking and research.

The project was coordinated by the University of Canberra Communication Research Group, overseen by Project Leader, Prof Jen Webb, with collaboration and input from staff of the University of New England (subsequently from Central Queensland University) and Queensland University of Technology. During the project, financial governance was provided by the UC Financial Services Team through the UC Office of Research and Research Degrees. Following the decision of the AAWP Executive at the Annual Executive Meeting in November 2007, it was agreed that the Network would be managed under the auspices of the AAWP with ongoing input from creative writing programs in Australia. This confirms the Network and greatly assists with embedding it within the discipline, thus both institutionalising it, and ensuring its ongoing identity is not dependent on individual personalities and interests.

The basic approach was collaborative, consultative action research over 18 months to establish the Network and its website. The model used was mainly contribution collaboration, where each member worked on a specific aspect of the project, bringing specialist knowledge and skills to the task. At times the collaborative process shifted to a synchronous model, where the members worked side-by-side on elements of the project: for instance, questionnaire and website design, and evaluations.

3.2. Consultation

Reference group involvement was sought through tele- and video-conferencing to advise on the progress of the project and its achievement of milestones, and evaluate reported outcomes. Reference group members also nominated students and supervisors to participate in the pilot tests of the Network's website.

Other involvement with audiences included annual presentations at relevant conferences (especially the AAWP conference); reports in the AAWP newsletter and to the Australian Society of Authors (ASA); publications of research articles; direct representation to university writing program directors and other executives; and active hotlinking with cognate sites, including listservs and fora.

Reference group:

- Postgraduate students nominated by the participating universities, and universities represented by the reference group members (videoconferencing and AAWP 2007 conference)
- Prof Jeri Kroll, Immediate Past President AAWP, Program Coordinator of Creative Writing at Flinders University
- A/Prof Nigel Krauth, Writing and HDR Convenor, School of Arts, Griffith University; co-editor of *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Programs*
- A/Prof Kevin Brophy, Coordinator of Creative Writing, Melbourne University
- Dr Paul Dawson, University of New South Wales
- Dr Marcelle Freiman, Coordinator of Postgraduate Creative Writing, Macquarie University
- Prof Lee Gutkind, Director, Creative Nonfiction Foundation, Pittsburgh University, USA
- Dr Julienne van Loon, Lecturer in Creative Writing, Curtin University of Technology
- Dr Jeremy Fisher, Executive Director, Australian Society of Authors (ASA)
- Executive members of the AAWP
- DASSH Deans (Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities) from the participating universities: see list below:

Deans from the following universities offered particular support and commitment to the project:

Macquarie University

Melbourne University

Queensland University of Technology

University of Canberra

University of Flinders

University of New England

University of New South Wales

University of South Australia

University of Sydney

University of Wollongong

Respondents to videoconference:

Kevin Brophy (Melbourne)

Dominique Hecq (Swinburne)

Jeri Kroll (Flinders)

Sue Page (UniSA)

Philip Edmunds (UniSA)

Jeremy Fisher (ASA)

accompanied by postgraduate students:

Rosemary Williamson (UNE)

Gay Lynch (Flinders)

Amy Espeseth (Melbourne)

Carol-Ann Croker (Swinburne)

Sandra Burr (UC)

Allan Robins (UniSA)

Team members present: Jen Webb, Donna Lee Brien, Greg Battye, Jordan Williams, Kristen Davis

3.3. Ethics approval

Ethics approval for surveying and communicating with participants was given and monitored by the UC Ethics Committee; project no 07-44. (See survey instruments at Appendix B.)

3.4. Advisors

The project team managed the research aspects through monthly meetings, held using the facilities of UC, including tele- and video- conferencing. An annual report detailing progress on the project was submitted to the ALTC, the AAWP and all the participating creative writing programs.

The development of aspects of postgraduate teaching and learning, and of supervisory practices, was undertaken by drawing on the expertise of UC's Centre for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Scholarship (CELTS), UNE's Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), and the Teaching and Learning Support Services (TALSS) at QUT. The reference group had input into the approaches taken, and the learning and teaching elements developed.

Independent evaluations were conducted by an investigative team drawn from the reference group members, who evaluated and assessed the project to ensure that milestones are met, that valid techniques were used for collecting, analysing and reporting data, and that the Network is on track to deliver its longer term objectives.

3.5. Timetabling and use of resources

The project leader, supported by the Administrative Support Officer, oversaw and coordinated all phases of the project, and worked with other team leaders to achieve its aims. QUT had intended to host the Network's server and, working with UC members and the Technical Support Officer, to design and go live with the site. However, following initial design work conducted by QUT team members,

this role was contracted out to an ACT company, Oxide Interactive. The UNE team leader developed and initiated all collaborative aspects, and networked with stakeholders. All team members shared the work of undertaking archival research, analysing data and other findings, and overseeing pilot use of the site.

Stage 1. The project timetable stated that in the first six months, the website for the Network would be designed and established. However, early research into Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) indicated that the best approach to website design was that, rather than beginning with building the site, the project should begin with extensive research into the potential user community: their needs, abilities and aspirations. Actioning this finding delayed the construction of the website by some six months. It also delayed the contracting of technical support staff, as they were not required until more knowledge was available and the technical development of the website was in progress.

Other research into PLEs, and web communities more generally, directed the CIs away from the initial plan to purchase and manage a server for the website. Current practice is, rather, to rent server space. This released the funding earmarked for the server, and thanks to the ALTC's support, it was expended on related activities (including ongoing maintenance and web support, as approved following the interim reports).

Significant input by UC, UNE and CQU, with support from QUT, enabled CIs to travel, meet and communicate without having to draw on the project funds; this released part of that funding for other activities (as recorded in the interim reports, and approved).

Other planned research and activities took place according to the Stage 1 schedule.

Stage 2 was to involve incremental building and testing of the website to near-completion, and extensive communication with key stakeholders and the reference group. In fact, due to the Stage 1 findings and actions detailed above, it involved initial building of the website. This was trialled in November 2007. Responses from users then led to new design elements being incorporated into the site, as well as the refining and debugging of the site.

During this period, research continued into significant elements relevant to the project, including the supervision and examination of creative research degrees. There was also significant communication with reference group members, users and stakeholders. The proposed "map" of creative writing programs in Australian universities was completed, and a searchable database of all programs in Australia and New Zealand was constructed and trialled, and modified incorporating feedback. This "map" is now complete and available through the writingnetwork.edu.au website.

As in Stage 1, the universities involved continued to support the communication component of the project, releasing project funds for use as advised in the interim report.

Stage 3, as proposed in the original timetable, saw the completion of the website and the full functioning of the Network through the first workshops conducted online, community-building activities, and both finalised and planned publications about the Network. The dissemination and embedding of the Network nationally has commenced, but is still in progress. The independent evaluation has been conducted, and all the deliverables projected are either completed or in progress.

The website is fully functional and working both as a repository/archive of important information, and a space for community discussions and networking. The Network communities are established, though still in a somewhat nascent form. The change to the timetable in Stage 1 delayed the project in relation to the plans to scale the Network up to accommodate other creative art programs. However, a multi-disciplinary workshop and publication is planned for 2009; this will bring music, performance, film and visual arts programs into the Network, and as users build their communities, research suggests that students and academics in other disciplines will build and maintain their own PLEs. Following the 2009 workshop, and on the basis of information provided by participants (both supervisors and postgraduate students), the website content will be amended to include material pertinent to the other creative disciplines.

The support provided by all the universities involved in this project, and the use of an independent IT contractor rather than a staff member, have meant that part of the Project's budget was not expended as originally planned. As approved by the ALTC, these available funds will be put to the costs of additional online workshops and ongoing site maintenance.

3.6. Workshops

The project aimed to provide workshops, both to offer training to members, and to help build the community of users. Successful online workshops have been held, with more workshops planned for 2009 and 2010. (See workshop convenors' reports at Appendix C.)

Publishing workshop: this was directed at students and early career researchers; it was over-subscribed, and will be offered later in 2008 for those unable to take part in the first workshop. Outcomes include:

- learning opportunities for new academics, particularly to do with the arcanities of journal publishing
- networking opportunities: there was considerable discussion online about publishing in the weeks following the workshop
- workshopping online: a "room" was established on the Network's website for workshopping of drafts, and one paper has been posted and discussed
- publishing activity: several participants have prepared papers and submitted them to TEXT for review.

Supervisory workshop: this was directed at early career researchers who are comparatively new to supervision. Extensive discussion took place among supervisors, over a period of some weeks, and there has been very positive feedback. Outcomes include:

- learning opportunities for new academics about approaches to supervision, dealing with difficult situations, and encouraging students in their research
- networking opportunities between supervisors
- knowledge transfer: between convenor and participants, and among the participants themselves
- knowledge archive: a bibliography of publications on supervision is on the website, and the discussion postings remain available to Network members.

Practice-led research: this was not an online workshop, but involved members of the Network who met at the 2007 AAWP conference. The participants were

self-selected, and came from across the Network community: from professors of writing through to new research students. After explanation and discussion of the meaning of research, and how it is officially defined, participants gathered in small groups to workshop what research means in this discipline, and what constitutes valid findings. The workshop ended with an extensive plenary discussion of perspectives and points of view. A summary of the plenary, and a bibliography on the topic, are available on the Network's website.

CIs Brien and Webb also participated in the ALTC-funded forum on collaborating to deliver small courses (UNE, 2007); they delivered a paper and participated in discussions.

Scheduled workshops (these are in response to user requests or suggestions):

- On publishing: a repeat of the earlier workshop
- On examination of creative arts theses: this will bring in examiners from other creative arts disciplines to consider the evaluative criteria and examination standards applied in this field
- On supervision: effective mechanisms
- On life writing and creative nonfiction: this will be conducted by a very significant international writer/academic, and member of the reference group
- Conference preparation workshops: these will be semester-long online asynchronous workshops, aimed at postgraduate students and early career researchers. Each workshop will be based on the theme of the current AAWP conference, and convened by the organisers of that event. Participants will be supported by convenors and potential editors in thinking through their approaches to the topic, and planning and preparing their papers.

4. Website development and dissemination

4.1. Introduction

The Australian Postgraduate Writers Network is housed online at www.writingnetwork.edu.au. The design of the site is reflected in the site map, shown at Appendix D. Usage statistics show that in the period during which the website was being developed and trialled, 1,310 unique visits were counted for a total of 41,305 hits (see Appendix D). This is commendable, given the early stage of development and dissemination.

4.2. Website development

As noted above, the website is developed and in use. The designers were meticulous in setting up the website so that search engines can locate it. Oxide Interactive provided the following advice, in this respect:

Keywords: Australian Postgraduate Writers Network, APWN, university, writing, Australian, course, research, creative.

Description: The Australian Postgraduate Writers Network is a national community of teaching academics, research students and graduates involved in creative writing higher degree programs.

These days search engines pay less attention to meta-tags (as they are easily spoofed) and more attention to other attributes of the site, such as:

- *How many sites link to your site?*

- *What keywords are used in headings and page titles?*
- *How easily can a search engine interpret the information on the page?*

We've taken care that the code behind the site is easily read by search engines, and that descriptive headings and titles are used. The best way to get the site more exposure and better search engine rankings would be to ask other related sites to link to the APWN site. This has the added benefit of attracting more users.

A number of changes were made to the original proposal for website development, mainly due to the information gathered in initial research into PLEs, online communities and contemporary Web 2.0 protocols and patterns of use.

4.3. Dissemination strategy

The dissemination strategy for this project is multidimensional, involving both engagement and information provision. Engaged dissemination is marked by the uptake of the project by creative writing programs in Australian tertiary institutions, and by a wider audience both beyond the tertiary education sector, and beyond Australia. As the project is a collaborative effort, wider uptake among creative writing programs is a measure of the project outcomes, and in itself is both a process and a mode of dissemination. The Network's website fulfils both modes of dissemination: the online bulletin board supports the uptake of the project, and greater networking; and the repository of information encourages "repeat business" and investment into the project. The purpose-built interactive website of the project and its resources will continue to open the project to the world, with overseas universities encouraged to link to it. Supervisor training programs are an integral part of this aspect of the project, assisting wide dissemination by bringing relevant people onto the website, and into the Network. Information provision has taken place throughout the project: reports were written at the conclusion of each stage and distributed to the partner and reference group universities for the perusal and comment of their Teaching and Learning Committees. Papers and conference presentations reporting the project and its facets have been carrying the project into the wider academic community, mainly in the writing discipline, but also in both higher education and other creative arts disciplines. A printed report and promotional brochures have been published to introduce potential users to the Network and mailed to creative writing programs across Australia, and to university libraries and Teaching and Learning Offices; the brochures will be included in Humanities higher degree students' initiation packages.

4.3.1. Materials or outcomes that will be made available to the higher education sector or groups of stakeholders within the sector

Brien, DL and J Webb, "Australian Postgraduate Writing Network", in *Collaborating to Offer Small Courses: Final Report*, Carrick Institute in association with UNE, Armidale 17-18 May 2007, 39-41

Brien, DL, "Australian University Programs in Writing: Graduate and Discipline Futures", address to the Council of Writing Program Administrators, Annual Conference, Tempe, Arizona, 12-15 July 2007

Webb, J, "Watch this Space", keynote address for *The Writing is on the Wall*, Tertiary Writers Network colloquium, Hamilton NZ, September 2007

Launch of website in progress and of Network at the AAWP conference in Canberra, November 2007 (as noted in the December 2007 Stage 1 report)

Brien, DL and R Williamson, "Towards Teaching Excellence: A Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (Creative and Professional Writing)", AAWP conference in Canberra, 21-23 November 2007

Williamson, R and DL Brien, "Rescue from the Deep End: The Case for Postgraduate Awards in Teaching Writing", *the and is papers: Proceedings of the 12th conference of the AAWP 2007*, refereed proceedings, paper at <<http://www.aawp.org.au/and-papers-proceedings-12th-conference-aawp>>

Webb, J and DL Brien, "Preparing Graduates for Creative Futures: Australian Creative Arts Programs in a Globalising Society", *Partnerships for World Graduates* conference, Melbourne, 28-30 November 2007

Webb, J and DL Brien, "The Australian Postgraduate Writing Network: Developing a Collaborative Learning Environment for Higher Degree Students and their Supervisors", *Lifelong Learning Conference*, 16-19 June 2008, Yeppoon (refereed paper attached)

Brien, DL and J Webb, "Envisioning Change: Quality and Creative Arts in Australian Universities", in J McConachie, M Singh, P Danaher, F Nouwens and G Danaher (eds), *Changing University Learning and Teaching: Engaging and Mobilising Leadership, Quality and Technology*, Post Pressed, Tenerife (forthcoming)

Refereed stream paper scheduled, Carey, J, J Webb and DL Brien, "Examining Uncertainty: Australian Creative Research Higher Degrees", *Creativity & Uncertainty*, 13th Annual AAWP Conference, UTS, Sydney, November 2008

Refereed stream paper scheduled, Williamson, R, DL Brien and J Webb, "Modelling Best Practice in Supervision of Research Higher Degrees in Writing in Australia", *Creativity & Uncertainty*, 13th Annual AAWP Conference, UTS, Sydney, November 2008

Refereed stream paper scheduled, Brien, DL, "Publish or Perish?: Investigating the Doctorate by Publication in Writing", *Creativity & Uncertainty*, 13th Annual AAWP Conference, UTS, Sydney, November 2008

Refereed stream paper scheduled, Webb, J & Brien, DL, "'Agnostic' Thinking: Creative Writing as Practice-led Research", *Research into Practice* 2008 conference, Centre for Research into Practice, Faculty for the Creative and Cultural Industries, University of Hertfordshire, at Royal Society of Arts, London, UK, 31 October 2008

Research and planning also informed:

Brien, DL and J Webb, "Writing Courses: Who Needs Them?", commissioned article, *Australian Author*, December 2007, 12-15

Webb, J and DL Brien, "Writing Courses", commissioned article, *Australian Writers' Marketplace*, Queensland Writers Centre, Brisbane (in press)

4.3.2. Ways in which the project outcomes have been or will be shared across the higher education sector both nationally and internationally

In addition to the above publications and presentations:

DL Brien Visiting Research Fellow, Research School of Humanities, ANU, Canberra, May-August 2008 (discussing project process and outcomes with Research School teaching staff and other visiting fellows)

J Webb visiting UTS; QUT; and ANU in July and August 2008 (discussing the project outcomes and futures mostly with creative writing staff, and also with visual and performing arts)

J Webb to visit UK universities September to November 2008: Brookes Oxford University, University of Manchester, University of East Anglia, York St John University, University of Wales, University of Hertfordshire (discussing the project outcomes and futures mostly with creative writing staff, and also with visual and performing arts, and inviting staff and postgraduates to join)

J Webb to present on the project at the *Writing Encounters* conference in York, September 2008: “The Object of the Book”

J Webb and DL Brien to present at the *Research into Practice* conference in London, October 2008, “‘Agnostic’ Thinking: Creative Writing as Practice-led Research”, University of Hertfordshire

DL Brien to present at the 2008 AAWP conference, “Publish or Perish: Investigating the Doctorate by Publication in Writing”, UTS, Sydney, November

J Webb to visit University of Melbourne in December 2008 (discussing the project outcomes and futures mostly with creative writing staff, and also with visual and performing arts)

J Webb to present at the Tertiary Writing Network colloquium in Auckland, New Zealand in December 2008: “From Words to Works: The Material of Creative Writing and Research”

DL Brien to present invited keynote address at the Tertiary Writing Network colloquium in Auckland, New Zealand in December 2008: “Australian Writing Programs: Past, Present and Possible Futures”

Project information dissemination at AAWP conference, UTS, Sydney, November 2008

Workshop, Brien, DL and J Webb, “Developing Effective Feedback Mechanisms in Writing Research Higher Degrees: Making Supervision Work”, 2008 Tertiary Writing Network conference, Auckland, New Zealand, 1-2 December 2008

Panel presentation, DL Brien, J Kroll (Flinders), G Pittaway (AAWP executive member, NZ), M Butt (UK), G Harper (UK), M Wandor (UK), “Writers’ Organisations: An International Perspective from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom”, Association of Writing Programs (USA), Chicago, 2009

4.3.3. Information on how the project material can be accessed

The project material has two main locations:

- The website, www.writingnetwork.edu.au, where bibliographies, summaries of findings, workshop material and relevant databases are housed
- The final printed report on the project

The website will have its final formal launch at the AAWP conference in Sydney, November 2008. Printed copies of the report will be available for members to peruse, and a pdf of the report will also be lodged on the website.

5. Project outcomes

5.1. Anticipated outcomes

As pointed out in the original grant application, many of the proposed impacts and deliverables are long-term, and cannot be effectively evaluated over the 18 months of the project. **Improved supervisory practice, improved course experience** and **improved research higher degree completions in minimum time** are outcomes that cannot be measured until perhaps 5 years after the establishment of the Network.

Other aspects, though, have been delivered. The members' database allows easy **identification of experts** and interested practitioners across a wide range of theoretical and form-based topics. A nascent **examiners' database** is on the website, and supervisors have recently been asked to log in and add their details to that database.

Past and present writing students have been identified at all reference group universities, and others across Australia; in addition, Massey University staff are now setting up a PhD in creative writing, and have approached the CIs for support in their endeavours. Their first cohort of students will be encouraged to register and participate in the Network.

Interaction between supervisors has begun with a very effective supervisors' workshop; this will be followed in December 2008 with a workshop on effective mechanisms in supervision, and in 2009 by an examiners' workshop. This contact and the discussions generated, along with the annotated bibliographies deposited on the website, provide excellent opportunities for **knowledge building about supervisory best practice**.

Other outcomes proposed in the original application have been achieved: the Network's website is linked to the sibling AAWP website, which has comprehensive and regularly updated information about **available grants, scholarships and prizes, visiting international scholars and other points of interest for writing students and supervisors**.

The only planned outcome not achieved was the **six-monthly web-based publication**. An outcome from the publication workshop was that Network members did not want such a web-based publication. Rather, they wanted a site for works in progress. This was instituted, with work posted and discussed. One paper has gone through this process (and is now listed being refereed for publication in *TEXT*). In addition, two special issues of *TEXT*, relevant to project outcomes (supervision, examination) are planned for 2009 and 2010.

Annual workshops dedicated to higher degrees teaching and learning, at the AAWP annual conference

Workshops on these topics were conducted at the 2007 AAWP conference in Canberra. Plenary panel with discussion at the 2007 conference (on online networking, and on research in writing), and outcomes on the latter have been posted to the Network's website. Ongoing discussion on these issues will be held at the 2008 conference; and for subsequent AAWP conferences, convenors will facilitate long-term asynchronous workshops on the conference theme.

5.2. Additional and long-term outcomes

- Improved, consistent supervision of students – and a better understanding on the part of students of their rights, and of what constitutes good supervision, so they can ensure they are supported effectively in their studies.

- More sustained discussion in the discipline of what constitutes research in the creative writing discipline (practice-led research plenary at AAWP 2007; see website; special issues of *TEXT* will continue this discussion).
- Identification of a low level of knowledge about examination practices in creative higher degrees; projects are planned to build and disseminate knowledge, and to ensure improved and more consistent examination practice.
- Higher awareness of the research areas being explored by members of the community, staff and students, and opportunities for collaborative work and other inter-institutional linkages.
- Unexpectedly high uptake levels for workshops, indicating that these sorts of training fora and topics are not being addressed by individual institutions.
- The identification of several current postgraduate students with high level research skills in learning and teaching in higher education, able to work as research assistants, and to build their own professional resumes in the process (employed as RAs, co-publishing with CIs).
- The importance of professional writing in many institutions in Australia and how to incorporate this aspect of writing into the Network and the discipline.
- An unexpected outcome of consultation is that volunteers will take it in turns to run workshops and facilitate discussions on the site; this constitutes a cost saving, as well as encouraging the use of the site, and professional training for early career academics and postgraduate students.

6. Analysis of project outcomes

6.1. Critical success factors

- Skilled and motivated personnel: both the research team members and the research assistants employed came to the project with a high level of specialised discipline knowledge, networks and interest.
- An already established working relationship between CIs Brien and Webb, a relationship that is collaborative and productive in this and other projects.
- The connection to the AAWP, which provided an immediate source of support, project input, website users and critics.
- The support offered by the universities: UC, UNE and CQU in particular. The support took the form of: travel allowances and time; infrastructural support including space, technological and communication support, and administrative staff inputs; and also the interest and encouragement offered by colleagues and Deans.
- Postgraduate students in the discipline who have generously and enthusiastically provided input into, and taken up use of, the Network.
- The support and flexibility shown by ALTC staff in approving changes, and providing advice, throughout the project.
- Generous input from members of other ALTC-funded teams, especially into the use of Drupal as a site engine.
- High level of public presentation and publishing during the process – being driven by dissemination has meant that the ideas and knowledge developed have been subject throughout the project to discussion, peer review and input.

6.2. Factors that impeded the project

Team challenges

- Limited current literature on examination, supervision and creative practice research at higher degree level made it difficult, at times, to find the best way forward in planning and prioritising, and identifying best practice.
- Since CIs Webb and Brien are also senior academics/researchers, both were required to be heavily involved in RQF (now ERA) planning and preparation, and this ate into available time and energy.

Website development issues

There was a change in the proposed timetable for website development that was to a large extent the result of the information on web design protocols gained from research on potential users/use of site and network. This change meant that the process cost less than anticipated, but it limited the amount of iterative testing and user input in the early stages.

6.3. Transferable aspects of the approach/outcomes

- Ensuring that IT protocols are well understood.
- Intensive surveying of users and potential users, and iterative development.
- Use of current postgraduate students as RAs to complete the work under close supervision, to train them in the practice, build their confidence and ability as part of their career development, and help develop the discipline through this expertise and succession planning.
- Knowing about other ALTC projects happening contemporaneously, and dovetailing with them.
- Any projects planning a website could similarly make use of Drupal, as it is a very user-friendly program.
- High level of publishing during the process – being driven by dissemination – meant that ideas and knowledge can be subject to peer review and input.
- Potential new research project: it is expected that the repository of information, and the supportive network of users, will result in cost and time savings for universities; the work involved in supporting students from their initial thoughts about a possible research project, through making application for a HDR place, and then actually conducting the research, are underwritten by this Network. Measuring these savings and their extent is a potential new research project.

6.4. Dissemination of project outcomes

The major part of the dissemination process focuses on the higher education sector. The outcomes, in terms of knowledge generated, have been and are being shared through publications and presentations (see section 4.3 above). This has put new knowledge into the literature on PLE, creative writing, supervision and examination in creative arts higher degrees, and creative practice as research.

Another way in which these outcomes have been and are being shared is through the open source website. People outside creative writing, and writers outside the higher education sector, visit the site, and some have joined and become participants in the Network.

6.5. Links with other ALTC-funded projects

One important point of connection was the ALTC-funded forum on delivering small courses (UNE, 2007) where CIs Brien and Webb delivered a paper and participated in discussions. This project also shared personnel and knowledge with another ALTC-funded project on teaching in the new media discipline, with Dr Greg Battye on both teams, and Dr Rob Fitzgerald presenting a workshop on Drupal and online communities. CI Brien developed close ties with the UNE Teaching and Learning Centre and their involvement in a number of ALTC-funded projects, and has been involved in mentoring project development at CQU.

Team members also had good connections with the ALTC-funded Law Network at UNE, and members of that team generously supported initial stages of this project, especially with reference to ideas about building and managing a repository for student information.

APPENDIX A THE PROJECT TEAM

Academic team leaders:

UC: Professor Jen Webb (overall project manager), Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Design and Creative Practice. Research and teaching interests: creative writing, cultural theory; co-editor of *TEXT* and of the Sage book series, *Understanding Contemporary Culture*. Webb has conducted many research projects, including Australian Research Council projects into creative practice. She was until 2006 the director of creative writing at UC, and is a widely published creative and academic writer. She holds a PhD in cultural theory, and a Doctor of Creative Arts in Writing. To date she has supervised 20 research candidates to completion, and is currently supervising or co-supervising 14 candidates.

UNE (CQU): Associate Professor Donna Lee Brien Head, School of Arts and Creative Enterprise; President, Australian Association of Writing Programs. One of the few senior academics in Australia with MA and PhD degrees in creative writing and a Grad Cert Higher Ed. An internationally recognised scholar experienced in developing, coordinating, examining, researching and publishing on HDRs. Since 1999, has supervised 11 HDR creative writing students to completion, with no attrition, 5 achieving mainstream or academic publication of their theses. Associate editor of *New Writing* (UK), Member of the Board of Readers of *Writing Macao*, extensive project management experience in industry and academia.

QUT: Dr Axel Bruns lecturer in Creative Industries. Author: *Gatewatching: Collaborative Online News Production*, nominated for the Communications Policy Research Award at Fordham University. Bruns has written extensively on blogs and wikis as collaborative content creation environments, and is co-director of a large teaching and learning grant project that investigates the use of blogs and wikis to build critical, creative, and collaborative ICT literacies in a teaching context.

Team members:

UC:

Dr Greg Battye Acting Dean, Faculty of Design and Creative Practice; research and teaching interests in writing for new media forms. With Webb, Battye was team leader in a successful UC Teaching Grant in 2002 that investigated collaborative practice in teaching and learning, and resulted in a new 3rd year program that combines research, collaboration and creative practice. Dr Battye holds a creative PhD from Wollongong in photography and narrative, and runs the interactive writing program at UC.

Dr Jordan Williams lecturer in interactive creativity. Research and teaching interests: new media writing. Dr Williams holds a creative writing doctorate focused on interactive poetry and place. She has built a number of websites, and has very high order teaching, research and management skills demonstrated over two decades of professional life.

QUT:

Mr Craig Bolland researches online communities of creative writing pedagogy and practice, notably in the area of blended learning research higher degrees. He co-administers two blended learning RHD cohorts with a total of 22 MA students. He is the founder of an online writers group (www.queenslandwriting.net) that is presently the largest writers group in Queensland.

Mrs Jude Smith is an experienced arts educator who has expertise in curriculum development and online learning for the Creative Industries. Her current roles include Creative Industries Learning and Teaching consultant, Director of two QUT Teaching and Learning Development Large Grants and Faculty coordinator of online learning. In 2004 she undertook a QUT Teaching Fellowship into electronic portfolios and learning; she was chief investigator on an ARC project researching electronic portfolio assessment in the arts.

APPENDIX B SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

B.1 Australian Postgraduate Writing Questionnaire (for current research students)

Part A: Demographics

You may choose to leave some items blank. Please do not make up a profile as this will invalidate (spoil) the analysis.

A. Gender Female Male

B. Age group:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <21 | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> >60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 | |

C. Previous tertiary studies (e.g.. TAFE, polytechnic, uni)

D. Current institution and degree (e.g.: QUT, PhD or UNSW, MA):

E. Enrolment Status Full time or Part time,
 Internal or External

F. When did you enrol in this degree (year):

G. What type of creative work are you producing:

<input type="checkbox"/> Novel	<input type="checkbox"/> Film/TV Script
<input type="checkbox"/> Script for performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Poetry
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

PART B: RESEARCH NETWORK

We are presently looking at designing an online community to help creative writing Research Higher Degree students in Australia. To assist us in doing this, would you please indicate how often you might use the following resources and activities:

Activity/ Resource	Description Please tick appropriate column: Column 1: Never Column 2: seldom Column 3: sometimes Column 4: often Column 5: very often	I would use this activity/resource				
		1	2	3	4	5
A	A searchable database of creative writing MAs and PhDs in Australia (i.e. examples of ones that have passed examination)					
B	A list of grants and scholarships available to creative writing students					
C	An area where I can critique others' work in progress and have my own work critiqued.					
D	Resources relating to formatting a PhD proposal					
E	A searchable database of creative writing supervisors from Australian universities (including information about their own research interests and experience)					
F	A tutorial area where I can participate in creative writing exercises					
G	The ability to join in special interest discussions (e.g.: students living in Canberra, or a Lacan reading group, etc)					
H	Maintain an online reflective journal (e.g.: blog)					
I	A wiki based around creative writing theorists and theories					
J	A peer-reviewed journal of student work in progress, operated by students and for students.					

In order of importance, what are the four most important activities and/or resources from the above list? (e.g.: C, B, F, and G):

Are there any useful resources missing from the above list?

PART C: RESEARCH PROCESS

For any of the learning environments or activities you have experienced in your candidature, think about what/who helped or hindered your learning. In your own words, please describe how or why they helped or hindered.

Examples of how you may respond are:

In my candidature my supervisor helps my learning when s/he gives me space to discuss my unique issues in my creative process because you can't learn that stuff from how-to-write books

In my candidature my supervisor hinders my learning when s/he talks about her or his own writing because it's not always relevant

Fill in the blanks:

In my candidature my supervisor helps my learning when _____

because _____

In my candidature my supervisor hinders my learning when s/he _____

because _____

(Please add more helps/hinders options, as required)

PART D: RESEARCH VALUES

- How do you envisage the relationship between the exegesis and the creative work?
- What do you see as the value of the exegesis? (if you don't see the exegesis as having value, please elaborate on your view)
- What are your reasons for choosing to produce creative work as a research degree?
- Do you believe this higher degree will assist in your future professional goals? Briefly state what these are.
- How valuable is it for you to engage closely with fellow postgraduate students? Why?

Thank you for your participation.

B.2 Australian Postgraduate Writing Questionnaire (for research students who graduated in the past 5 years)

Part A: Demographics

You may choose to leave some items blank. Please do not make up a profile as this will invalidate (spoil) the analysis.

A. Gender Female Male

B. Age group:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <21 | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 – 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> >60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 | |

C. Previous tertiary studies (e.g.. TAFE, polytechnic, uni)

D. Current institution and degree (e.g.: QUT, PhD or UNSW, MA):

E. When did you enrol and finish in this degree (year):

F. What type of creative work did you produce:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Novel | <input type="checkbox"/> Film/TV Script | <input type="checkbox"/> Script for performance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poetry | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

PART B: RESEARCH PROCESS

For any of the learning environments or activities you have experienced in your candidature, think about what/who helped or hindered your learning. In your own words, please describe how or why they helped or hindered.

Examples of how you may respond are:

In my candidature my supervisor helped my learning when s/he gave me space to discuss my unique issues in my creative process because you can't learn that stuff from how-to-write books

In my candidature my supervisor hindered my learning when s/he talked about her or his own writing because it's not always relevant

Fill in the blanks:

(Please add further helped/hindered options, as required)

In my candidature my supervisor **helped** my learning when s/he _____

because _____

In my candidature my supervisor **hindered** my learning when s/he

because _____

Thank you for your participation.

B.3 Australian Postgraduate Writing Questionnaire (for supervisors)

Part A: Demographics

You may choose to leave some items blank. Please do not make up a profile as this will invalidate (spoil) the analysis.

A. Gender Female Male

B. Age group:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <21 | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> >60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 | |

C. Previous tertiary studies (e.g.. TAFE , polytechnic, uni)

D. What is your background as a writer (e.g.: novelist, poet, journalist, etc?):

E. What is your background as an academic (e.g., teacher of creative writing, researcher in literary studies, philosopher)

F. How many staff in your unit teach creative writing?

G. How many RHD students are you currently supervising?

PART B: NETWORK

We are presently looking at designing an online community to help creative writing Research Higher Degree students in Australia. To assist us in doing this, would you please indicate how often you think students might use the following resources and activities:

Activity/ Resource	Description Please tick appropriate column: Column 1: Never Column 2: seldom Column 3: sometimes Column 4: often Column 5: very often	They might use this activity/resource				
		1	2	3	4	5
A	A searchable database of creative writing MAs and PhDs in Australia (i.e. examples of ones that have passed examination)					
B	A list of grants and scholarships available to creative writing students					
C	An area where they can critique others' work in progress and have their own work critiqued.					
D	Resources relating to formatting a PhD proposal					
E	A searchable database of creative writing supervisors from Australian universities					
F	A tutorial area where they can participate in creative writing exercises					
G	The ability to join in special interest discussions (e.g.: students living in Canberra, or a Lacan reading group)					
H	Maintain an online reflective journal (e.g.: blog)					

Are there any useful activities/resources missing from the above list?

As a supervisor, what additional online resources/activities would you yourself find useful? (e.g.: conference notifications):

PART C: PROCESS

- How many postgraduate creative writing students have you supervised to completion?
- What have the outcomes been?
- What is your current supervisory load?
- What training or professional development, if any, have you had in supervising higher degree creative writing students (for example, university-based courses)?
- Have you found it more challenging to supervise the creative work or the exegesis? Please elaborate on why or why not.
- Would you find any of the student resources useful for yourself i.e. to use in your own practice?
- What would you like to see included in a postgraduate creative writing network online website?
 - For supervisors
 - For students

Thank you for your participation

B.4 Questionnaire for pilot group

Australian Postgraduate Writers Network website

1. For receiving updates regarding the Australian Postgraduate Writers Network, would you prefer to use (a) a forum (b) groups (c) an email distribution list?

2. If you prefer an email distribution list, would you prefer continuous delivery or a daily / weekly digest?

3. On a scale of 1-10, how user-friendly would you rate the following functions:
 - Logging on
 - Links and contacts
 - Using the forum
 - Using the groups directory
 - Using the blogs
 - Navigating the network

4. Did all the functions (log-in, password, links etc) work smoothly? If not, please outline any specific problems you experienced.

5. Which resources do you think you will find the most useful?

6. Are there any resources you do not think you would use? Please specify.

7. Are there any resources or links that you think should be available on the Network? If so, please specify.

8. Do you have any additional comments about your experience using this site that may help us in refining and developing it?

Thanks for your feedback.

Appendix C Workshop reports

C.1 Publishing workshop report written by Associate Professor Nigel Krauth

“Workshop on Editing and Publishing an Academic Journal” held March 15 and 16, 2008, each day for 2 hours online; convened by A/Prof Nigel Krauth

Executive summary:

RHD students are notoriously bad at following through on administrative structures set up for them – as are postgraduates and academics generally. But some ideas really take hold. I consider that Conclusions 7(a) and 7(b) below are significantly worth following through on. They have potential merits in the old RQF system and hopefully in the new ERA system. They will give postgraduates a far greater sense of networking and belonging – and a hope for publication of their work – than currently exists.

1. The preliminary material sent out to participants in this workshop included the following directive:

This workshop on editing and publishing an academic journal, is designed for early career researchers and graduate students so they can

(a) know how the academic publishing process works from a writer's point of view; and

(b) develop editorial skills for becoming editors themselves.

The online, synchronous workshop will run for 2 hours each day over two days.

Topics include practical processes of:

(a) The academic journal's relationship to its discipline

(b) Calling for papers

(c) Responding to queries

(d) Receiving and archiving (managing) submission manuscripts

(e) The role of the peer review/refereeing process

(f) Finding and managing referees - including dealing with wildly disparate reports

(g) Anonymity

(h) Editorial integrity

(i) Dealing with authors after peer review

(j) Editing the rewritten manuscript

(k) Styles and formats

(l) Cautions about the world of academic publishing

(m) And more

2. The pre-reading material for the workshop comprised the following articles:

“TEXT Editorial: Putting Refereeing into Context”; and

“Peer Reviewing: Privilege and Responsibility” by Jane Johnston and Nigel Krauth

These were displayed on the APWN site.

3. On March 15 and 16, 2008, the online chat room put in place by Canberra Oxide and the administrator, APWN, worked perfectly from the point of view of most participants. Two Mac users had difficulties and were unable to join the group.
4. There were 8 participants from around Australia. The discussion was lively and informed. There were participants seeking CW discipline networking and also those seeking publishing, and bringing up to standard, their research work. All those who were part of the Saturday group rejoined for the Sunday group.
5. The enthusiasms of the group particularly indicated the isolation in which writing RHDs feel themselves placed across the country. Their enthusiasm also indicated their keenness to start up an online forum whereby they can readily contact each other.
6. In the 4 hours of intense chat several major ideas emerged:
 - (a) That a national RHD cluster / blog should be established, where CW postgrads from all over Australia:
 - (i) can meet and respond in their own time;
 - (ii) can put online, draft writing chapters and articles for feedback consideration from their peers; and
 - (iii) can contribute as referees to their peers' work.
 - (b) That a national chat session might be instituted, say fortnightly, regarding matters of interest for the national writing RHD group.

Conclusion to the above:

7. In the knowledge that national websites and especially new national refereed journals are hard to sustain, I **recommend** the following as an initial outcome to these enthusiastic workshops:
 - (a) that a national RHD APWN cluster chat room / blog be established, where writing postgrads from all over Australia:
 - (i) can meet and respond in their own time;
 - (ii) can put online draft creative writing chapters and exegetical articles for feedback consideration from their peers; and
 - (iii) can contribute as referees to their peers' work.
 - (b) This development would be of key value to developments at the postgrad level in the CW discipline. If things get going in this cluster enterprise, other developments can follow at postgrad level. Administration of the initiative is involved, but might be undertaken by the postgrads themselves.
 - (c) That a national chat session might be instituted, say fortnightly, for two hours, regarding matters of interest for the national writing RHD group. There was keen enthusiasm at the time of the workshops above for such a development. Administration of the initiative is involved.

C.2 Supervisory workshop report written by Craig Bolland

Report on the Supervisory Workshop for the APWN convened by Craig Bolland, July 2008

The APWN supervisory workshop was run over two weeks in June/July 2008. It attracted a total of thirteen participants, all of whom were active supervisors of creative writing higher degree students in Australian universities. Ten different universities were represented among these supervisors. Participants discussed issues including (but not limited to):

- Selection of candidates
- Research ethics
- The inclusion of coursework in creative writing HRDs
- Practices around introducing students to appropriate research methodologies
- Examination practices
- Personal issues relating to supervision
- Cohorting of HRD students (formally and informally)

The workshop was structured along several formal topics, but discussion often “spun off” into unanticipated but valuable secondary areas. In this way, the group itself dictated the locus of concern for each discussion. The workshop went some way to establishing a broad picture overview of issues surrounding supervision of creative writing higher degree students in Australian universities. It is the first time such a broad community of practice has discussed these particular issues, and a “state of play” of research supervision in Australia has begun to emerge as a result. The workshop will articulate into an ongoing online discussion around these practices, with the current participants as seed participants in that community. Over time, it is envisaged that this discussion, through the APWN, will become the major hub for this knowledge-sharing in Australia. This is a significant move toward providing a place where supervisors can reflect on and interrogate personal and institutional practices around creative writing higher degree supervision in Australia.

APPENDIX D WEBSITE

1. Front page of www.writingnetwork.edu.au

The screenshot shows the front page of the Australian Postgraduate Writers Network (APWN) website. The header features the site's name and a search bar. The main content area is titled "Home" and contains several paragraphs of introductory text. A prominent blue button labeled "Join the APWN" is positioned on the right side of the main content. To the right of the main content is a dark sidebar with a navigation menu and several sections: "Active forum topics", "New groups", "Recent blog posts", "Recent comments", and "Who's new". The navigation menu includes links for Home, About APWN, Getting Started, Resources, Blogs, Forums, Groups, Help, and Contact us. The "Active forum topics" section lists several topics with their respective authors and dates. The "New groups" section lists various writing-related groups. The "Recent blog posts" section displays a list of recent posts with their titles and authors. The "Recent comments" section shows a list of recent comments on the site. The "Who's new" section lists the names of new members who have joined the network.

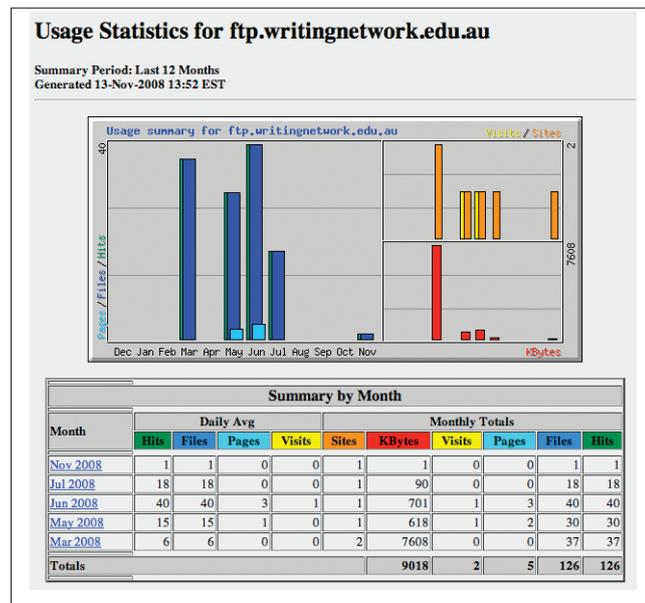
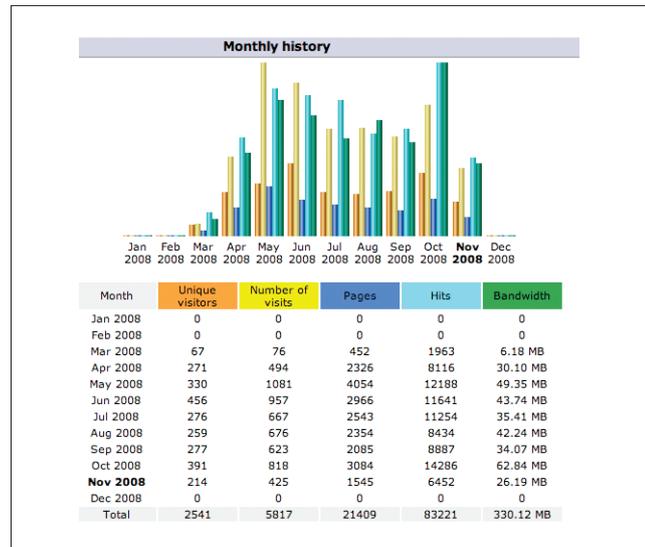
2. "About us" page from www.writingnetwork.edu.au

The screenshot shows the "About Us" page of the Australian Postgraduate Writers Network (APWN) website. The header features the site's name and a search bar. The main content area is titled "About Us" and contains several sections: "Home", "Aims and Objectives", "Team Members", and a logo for the Australian Learning & Teaching Council. The "Aims and Objectives" section lists several key goals of the network, including building a national postgraduate research and supervision network, promoting collaborations between supervisors and candidates, providing mentorship for new supervisors, disseminating information about Australian creative writing higher degrees, and building on the strengths and ameliorating the differences of creative writing higher degree programs at a national level. The "Team Members" section lists the names and affiliations of the network's staff members. The Australian Learning & Teaching Council logo is prominently displayed at the bottom of the main content area. To the right of the main content is a dark sidebar with a navigation menu and several sections: "Active forum topics", "New groups", "Recent blog posts", "Recent comments", and "Who's new". The navigation menu includes links for Home, About APWN, Getting Started, Resources, Blogs, Forums, Groups, Help, and Contact us. The "Active forum topics" section lists several topics with their respective authors and dates. The "New groups" section lists various writing-related groups. The "Recent blog posts" section displays a list of recent posts with their titles and authors. The "Recent comments" section shows a list of recent comments on the site. The "Who's new" section lists the names of new members who have joined the network.

3. Site map for www.writingnetwork.edu.au

- Home
- About APWN
- Getting Started
- Resources
 - > Guidelines on formatting a thesis
 - > Accessing successful writing higher degrees theses
 - > Writing a project proposal
 - > Brief notes on Practice-led Research
 - > For bibliographies on topics or genres
 - > Using “translation”
 - > Using early memories
 - > Using observation
- Examiners
 - > Prof Harry Aveling
 - > Assoc Prof Kevin Brophy
 - > Dr Janie Conway-Herron
 - > Assoc Prof Jill Durey
 - > Dr Jeremy Fisher
 - > Dr Brenda Glover
 - > Professor Dennis Haskell
 - > Dr Donna Mazza
 - > Dr Marcella Polain
 - > Prof (emeritus) Andrew Taylor
 - > Professor Jen Webb
 - > Dr Patrick West
- Blogs
- Forums
- Groups
 - > APWN Workshop - Publishing Process
 - > Australasian Postgraduate Students Group
 - > Reading lists
- APWN Members
- Working Papers
- Help
- Contact us

4. User statistics for www.writingnetwork.edu.au



The website user statistics demonstrate increasing use of the website. The summary by month shows that visits increase markedly in June, and then drop off during July. This is explicable if we take into account the pattern of the university year (June is the midyear break; in July users return to teaching and have less time available to spend on their research). The summary shows that 186 unique visitors made, between them, over 3000 visits in the course of 5 months. The site received over 41,000 hits, indicating that even in the early, pre-official launch period, it was attracting not only initial visits, but also return traffic. In the months to October 2008, there was a noticeable increase in unique visitors (to 391, more than doubling unique visitors in July), and a comparable increase in hits, to almost 82,500. These figures are satisfying, in that they demonstrate the site has value for the writing community.

Appendix E Research paper J Webb and DL Brien

THE AUSTRALIAN POSTGRADUATE WRITING NETWORK: DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS AND THEIR SUPERVISORS

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ABSTRACT

After a decade of rapid growth, most Australian universities offer writing courses, from undergraduate to doctoral levels. The Australian Postgraduate Writing Network provides a series of “community of practice”-focused personal learning environments for postgraduate candidates and their supervisors in order to enhance their creative and professional skills and knowledges.

KEYWORDS:

creative writing – research students – collaboration – PLE

[a] complete learning environment will require a continual examination and evaluation of the reciprocal relationship between the philosophy on which it rests and the teaching conditions which are thought to be in coherence with this philosophy (Lian, 2000, p. 21)

Introduction

A combination of economic pressures, internal and external competition, and an increasingly customer-normed higher education sector is driving the need for better, more efficient and more sophisticated systems of delivery. This is evident across the academy, and our interest is particularly focused on the discipline of creative writing, especially at higher degree level. What are we doing, as a sector, to deliver best practice learning environments to our masters by research and doctoral candidates, arguably “the jewels in the university crown” (Krauth & Brady, 2006, p.14)? What are we doing – an equally important question – to ensure graduate research students possess the capacity to function as effective citizens, committed to collaboration and knowledge sharing, able to communicate in a variety of domains, and invested in lifelong learning?

A great deal, from some perspectives, not enough from others. Progress has been hampered as creative writing research higher degree (RHD) programs face conditions that differ significantly from research programs in other parts of the humanities and social sciences, and that call for different approaches to the delivery of learning environments. One difference is these programs’ youth. Though individual writing units have been offered in Australian universities since the 1970s, research degrees in writing are of much more recent origin, many of them dating only from the Dawkins era (1988 on). Since those reforms, higher education institutions have seen rapid growth in programs offering creative writing, and in the numbers of students wishing to study in that area. Now more than 20 Australian universities offer a range of degree programs in writing, from undergraduate to doctoral levels. Almost as many again offer a wide range of undergraduate and/or postgraduate coursework units (AAWP, 2008). This growth should be understood in the context of what can be called the “creative disciplines” – university units and programs in visual arts, craft, design, creative writing, the performing arts (drama, dance and music) and film, television and electronic media production. In

2000, some 4 per cent of all university course enrolments were in these areas (Australia Council for the Arts, 2003, p. 5), but latest reports state that this has grown to 6.5 percent – or 1 in 15 of all tertiary students in the country (Schipper, 2006). The most recent Australian government report on higher education enrolments, moreover, adds that while enrolments in most fields of higher education increased between 2004 and 2005, the creative arts was among the five that experienced the most growth during this time (DEST, 2007, pp. 7, 9). Though RHD enrolments in writing tend to be small, demand for the courses has at least remained steady, and in many cases has grown, over the past decade (Neill, 2008).

While this expansion has offered many opportunities for research degree candidates in writing and their supervisors, the rapid growth has resulted in what Paul Dawson (2001) describes as a “piecemeal” approach to teaching and learning and its underlying philosophies. Writing courses are delivered in English, communication, cultural studies, creative industries and fine arts programs; some focus extensively on literary analysis, others on professional practice, others again on aesthetic production. In the absence of a national approach to the teaching of this discipline, writing programs have been marked by inconsistencies in curricula, research paradigms, supervisory relations, and examination standards. Part of this can be attributed to staff expertise. The difficulty students experience in finding an effective supervisor has been pointed out by postgraduate students (see North, 2005); while supervisors have also published on the problems associated with research degrees in this area (see, for example, Dibble & van Loon, 2004). The problem can be attributed to a number of sources. An important one is that, as is the case for many creative (and indeed professional) disciplines, writing program teaching academics come to higher education from highly diverse backgrounds. Some are drawn from the community of practising writers, and provide excellent undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in how to write, but typically have little or no research training, or knowledge of how to supervise a candidate in high-level research. Others are professional academics drawn from cognate disciplines such as communication, media studies or literature. These staff often provide excellent supervision in traditional research methods, but typically do not have a background in what are becoming widely known as practice-led research methods (Gray, 1996; Gray & Malins, 2004; Barrett & Bolt, 2007). The situation is exacerbated by the small size of most Australian RHD programs in writing, the geographical distances between many universities, and the wide variety of research areas engaged in under the umbrella of “writing”². These factors militate against the development of a community of creative writers in the academy, and have led to many students and supervisors expressing a sense of isolation from each other as well as from the wider creative arts research community (North, 2005; Sved, 2005).

The Australian postgraduate writing network: a case study

The Australian Learning and Teaching Council-funded³ Australian Postgraduate Writing Network (APWN) aims to respond to, and ameliorate, these difficulties by building on the strengths of creative writing RHD programs at a national level. These strengths include a genuine desire to collaborate to solve problems in the discipline, as well as the creativity and flexibility

2 These include biography and life writing, fiction and poetry, scripts for film and theatre, art writing and food writing, speculative and crime writing, graphic novels and artist books, and many other genres and forms. These may be based on any number of conceptual frameworks, including phenomenology, consciousness studies, identity, postcoloniality, performance studies, communication and cultural theory, literary studies, business and marketing, and narratology – the list goes on.

3 The Australian Learning and Teaching Council; see their website at <http://www.altc.edu.au>.

of candidates and supervisors, and their high level of communication skills, especially in text-based media. Another strength is the very energetic national association, the Australian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP), now in its twelfth year. The AAWP's annual conference, its fully refereed online journal *TEXT*, and the network of national and international institutional and personal connections offer considerable disciplinary input and support to a large proportion of Australian academics and higher degree students in writing. The APWN aims to enhance this institutionally-structured, but very engaged, community, and direct its assets to the construction and maintenance of an environment that will nurture and support RHD writing students. The Network's central aim is to facilitate the collaborative development of candidates' (and supervisors') personal, aesthetic and intellectual potential beyond the boundaries of individual universities.

Central to the choice of structure for the APWN project was a desire to embed the "communities of practice" model of collaborative interaction (Lave & Wenger, 1991) within a web-based personal learning environment. To do so, the project team sought and utilised extensive input from the community of potential users (including research students in writing, their supervisors and examiners, professional and community associates, and industry representatives) during the Network's development. Various aspects of a community of practice approach were important concepts in this thinking because such communities allow the refining, communication and shared use of knowledge that is essential to "the kind of dynamic 'knowing' that makes a difference in practice" (Wenger, 1998). Wenger and Snyder (2000) stress that such communities are stronger and more functional when members select themselves, while Lesser and Everest point out the importance of community input for sustained viability:

the community tends to set its own agenda over its lifespan, continually defining itself by the needs of its members. Communities typically take part in a number of formal and informal activities, ranging from education sessions and conferences to day-to-day interaction designed to solve specific work problems (2001, p. 38).

Alongside this community input, the intentional flattening out of conventional academic hierarchies (such as those of student/supervisor, individual/institution) that is supported by the community of practice concept was also central in the setting up, and the early life, of the APWN. Recognising also Trude Heift and Catherine Caws' finding that collaboration in synchronous writing environments is "fostered when less knowledgeable students work with more knowledgeable peers" (2000, p. 213), this smoothing out of rank was achieved by seeking, and utilising, equivalent levels of student and immediate past graduate input as well as that of supervisors, higher degree program coordinators and examiners.

Online communities of practice as learning communities

In planning and producing the APWN, we were interested in the harnessing the value of online communities of practice as learning communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Barab & Duffy, 2000; Rogers, 2000), exploring how they can be networked across individual institutions (Grisham, Bergeron, Brink, Farnan, Davis Lenski & Meyerson, 1999) and how such online communities can successfully reproduce the "watercooler" conversations, classroom activities, and social activities that take place in the "real" world (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p. 141). Perhaps the best articulation of this concept, and its clearest manifestation in learning communities, comes from the comparatively recent notion of Personal Learning Environments (PLEs).⁴

⁴ Though virtual learning formally dates from as early as eighteenth-century correspondence classes, PLEs as such really only date from the 1990s with the increasing use of new technologies in education, and the development of electronic learning tools.

PLEs, understood sometimes in a purely instrumental way – as computer programs – and, more interestingly, as a teaching and learning concept, provide students with a personal space in which to organise and conduct their own learning. Scottish educator, Ewan McIntosh recently described them succinctly, as:

where the platform for learning outside the classroom belongs to the student, not to the institution. It's where it is highly personalisable. That does not mean it is individualised, but for me it means that it is the individual choosing which elements are most important for them (in Murray, 2007).

This central logic of personal responsibility, a kind of freedom, and the value of meaningful student-directed learning – is central to the thrust of the APWN. In providing an electronic learning space personalised for each user, but where learning is both individual and collaborative, it recognises research postgraduate students' already-present capacity to learn, as well as their already-present ownership of their learning. It is both respectful of students, and entirely committed to academic values, including the value of lifelong learning for both those who are formally students and those who are also involved in the learning journey involved in being a postgraduate supervisor or examiner. Such considerations are of central importance to anyone considering the axiological basis of higher education. As Pierre Bourdieu pointed out in his several publications on the subject (see especially Bourdieu, 1988, 1996), education is capable of transforming social relations by providing the whole population with both opportunities and skills. However, Bourdieu also makes it clear that education is as likely to reproduce social inequalities and social divisions as to ameliorate them. Any innovations in educational technology and/or pedagogical approaches need to bear this in mind.

PLEs have the capacity to rupture the negative patterns of higher education because they give students a sense of ownership over their own work, and provide a user community where students can build their own networks, their own knowledge archives, their own ways of negotiating their disciplines, curriculum content, institutional imperatives and ways of thinking and being. At base, therefore, whether considered as a software tool or an educational concept, a PLE must be driven by the user's needs; it must allow users to write, to aggregate data or other content, to access and manipulate their own materials; and must allow open, and at least semi-autonomous, engagement with learning. This makes PLEs particularly appropriate in the RHD context, where candidates already largely manage their own learning journey, under the mentorship of their supervisor/s.

Yet this self-management and self-direction may also exaggerate the already identified isolation that many research postgraduates feel and to which writing postgraduates, in particular, attest (North, 2005). This is where a final integral component of effective PLEs, that of communication and engagement with others, comes into play. Communication technologies are central to the cultural, social and political forms of contemporary life; and while it is possible to trace globalising tendencies across recorded history, as scholars such as Armand Mattelart (2000) point out, such tendencies have been intensified and quickened by the use of communication technology, something that has brought about, Manuel Castells writes, "one of those rare intervals in history ... the transformation of our material culture" (2000, 29). For our graduates to function effectively in the contemporary world, they need not only disciplinary knowledge, not only skills with digital materials, but also a confidence and fluency in the values and practices of the online world. Ulises Mejias argues that the "true potential [of social software] lies in helping us figure out how to integrate our online and offline social experiences" (2005). In an increasingly global and networked society, PLEs offer not only a culturally appropriate mode of learning, but also one that allows

students to develop specific discipline-related knowledge as well as the sorts of skills and attributes that will make them better and more capable citizens and professionals after their studies: including collaborative modes of knowledge creation, sharing and review. In this aspect of our development of the APWN, we were motivated by the proposal articulated by Rafi Nachmias et al, that: “a key characteristic of knowledge generating communities ... is the dissemination and mutual review of ideas and intellectual produce” (2000, p. 98).

The APWN contributes to the development of such skills, qualities and values through the logic of its networked environment. An eighteen month long period of iterative development and testing (a process that is still ongoing) has delivered a web-based domain in which research students work alongside each other and their supervisors and examiners in using, refining and constructing an environment in which their learning needs are met, and their learning is facilitated. In this, they have available to them a range of databases (including information on available programs, supervisors, examiners, and areas of research interest); lists of links to useful and important sites (including conferences, relevant journals, funding sources and employment opportunities); weblogs and email chat lists; workshop exercises and writing spaces; and occasional online seminars (for instance, on the publishing process for students and on supervisory practice for new supervisors). Perhaps most importantly, the APWN provides research students and their supervisors and examiners the opportunity to network with each other and to form their own communities of practice, outside the institutional strictures and structures of their own universities, but in an environment that is still driven by academic values and learning outcomes.⁵

In our development, we have sought to integrate the usual “knowledge archive” function of databases with a strong drive towards facilitating knowledge creation. In this latter function, the social networks created by the APWN will both cross institutional boundaries, and use networking protocols (Peer-to-Peer, web services, email discussion lists) to connect a range of individuals, resources and systems within a series of personally-managed spaces. In this, the APWN’s e-learning spaces do not seek to disrupt or take the place of the learning in which the candidate is engaged as part of their higher degree studies. The Network, instead, seeks both to be individually supportive and to build a sense of shared purpose and direction with the end point of knowledge creation, sharing and review. That is, to allow user-members to collaboratively produce, disseminate and refine information in a continuous cycle, while still satisfying their own personal academic needs.

Although it is still in the final stages of development, the APWN already includes not only the searchable databases of relevant expert knowledge common to such educationally-focused websites, but also a forum for the discussion of areas of concern and a number of training mechanisms for both students and supervisors. Users can add new areas of inquiry and discussion, ask for online workshops in necessary areas, and propose to lead those workshops. This means that, unlike many such websites that are produced solely to *supply knowledge* in the form of a mediated archive, the APWN aims to *build a community of engaged co-learners*. As is already beginning to occur in the late development phase with a growing community of users, we envisage that, as the Network (and these communities) develop, users will not only utilise, review and refine, but also create a significant proportion of the content and user features of the site, and direct its future elaborations.

⁵ Until the APWN is launched and fully operational (from July 2008 onwards), we will not be able to report on the success of these tools and, indeed, that of the network itself.

Sustainability

By mounting the APWN in the electronic domain, we have been able to exploit that medium's advantages: rapid updates, searchable sites; hotlinks to relevant points; low and sustainable maintenance costs; and speed of communication in both formal (we plan for workshop papers and a refereed publication of working papers) and informal (bulletin boards, chat rooms, weblogs and wikis) modes.

One of the problems of such learning environments is, however, that they are often developed in a flurry of enthusiasm but then remain static in terms of content, soon afterwards peak in terms of use, and then die. The World Wide Web is a graveyard of such inactive sites and here we return to the value of the underlying principles of communities of practice, and of PLEs. If the community has ownership of the site, *and* if the software works in a way that is both easy and useful, *and* if the community remains motivated by their own attributes, by institutional encouragement, and by an evident improvement in their skills, knowledge and confidence, we predict that the APWN should not just remain in use, but be dynamic and expanding. That said, we have not been able, of course, to test this in practice. We recognise that no software program, no community, no environment, either in the virtual or the "real world", has an indefinite or eternal life. Research students and their supervisors are creatures of their times and their particular, individualised contexts. The context of postgraduate and research higher degree education is also rapidly changing in the face of political, economic and social change. With this in mind, we expect the APWN to function for its useful lifespan, and then face a natural death, as do all communities of practice. What is important, then, is that the community of practice which the APWN facilitates is sufficiently resilient, connected and aware that a newer type of learning community – perhaps a yet unknown mode of PLE – is able to be put into operation after the APWN itself no longer remains relevant or useful.

Conclusion

By setting up a networked, collaborative learning community using the framing rationale of a series of personal learning environments, the APWN seeks to service individual needs while providing a space for the establishment of an inclusive, supportive and responsive online community for researchers – both students and supervisors – in a relatively new field of higher degree endeavour. In doing so, the Network seeks to turn weaknesses (the wide variety of backgrounds, expertise levels and research interests; the small numbers of HDR students and supervisors at each institution and their isolation from each other) into strengths. The framing project rationale has been to attempt to exploit the potential of web-based communication technologies to increase real and ongoing collaboration and networking among students, academics and institutions. Providing a lively, intellectually grounded and supportive interactive online community for students, supervisors and examiners will, we hope, contribute to already identified disciplinary imperatives to improve standards, consistency, and information access across institutional boundaries. Moreover, once embedded in a series of Australian universities' research degree programs in writing, the Network will, we believe, provide effective mechanisms for the identification, development, dissemination and embedding of best practice in the creative arts across the higher education sector in Australia.

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