The trauma of being a refugee can be worse than the trauma of war, according to research by Dr Anita Milicevic.

The Social Sciences and Psychology PhD graduate interviewed nearly 50 Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Serbs who escaped the Balkans conflict 20 years ago to live here.

Her study concluded the loss of dignity during the refugee experience was more psychologically damaging than the horrors of war or persecution.

"Many of those interviewed said having managed to survive torture or the perils of living in a war zone, they then experienced much greater humiliation, degradation and rejection in every aspect of their emotional, social and professional lives as refugees," Dr Milicevic said.

Participants commonly reported shock, denial, fear and a sense of powerlessness in the initial stage of the refugee experience, she said.

"Being a refugee for them meant loss of control over their lives and gave rise to a profound feeling of uncertainty," Dr Milicevic said.

Refugee camps and detention centres were a major source of anxiety, but by no means the end of it.

Dr Milicevic said the “open stigma” around refugee families in Australia made it difficult to negotiate a dignified identity in the host country.

"After arriving in the host country participants experienced further disturbance when they found the label of refugee imposed on them by the host society carried a stigma," she said. "Comments or media portrayals of refugee families as drains on social resources, as intruders into neighbourhoods and of being unsuccessful at integrating are humiliating."

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Another major hurdle to achieving dignity as a refugee family was the breakdown of traditional family roles, where a father could not provide for his family in a refugee camp or get a good job in Australia, or where parents became reliant on their children to act as interpreters.

“It’s this loss of dignity and value systems that is being neglected in refugee settlement and that needs to be addressed,” she said. “A starting point would be asking families what they need to maintain their dignity.”

Dr Milicevic said refugee integration was a two-way responsibility: the community and policy-makers needed to understand and address the difficulties of being a refugee, not just the difficulty of what they had escaped.

“For many in the study the war did not end once they had escaped the fighting – it continued in the refugee camps, in the playgrounds of their new country and in their battle for identity in their new life here,” she said.

“The best way to help is to listen to these stories and build support systems around that, rather than the other way around. The human story and people’s dignity is the most important thing.”

Dr Milicevic’s research was covered in the Wall Street Journal and India Times, local papers and a long list of online news and health sites. She was also contacted by Harvard Law School’s refugee clinic requesting the thesis.

Dr Milicevic came to Australia with her young family as a refugee from the Balkans war. She just graduated with her thesis titled ‘From family damage to family challenge. Stories of rebuilding lives after war and refugee trauma: Australia after the Balkans conflicts’.
SPRING SYMPOSIUM

A presentation on how visual information relates to catching has taken out the audience prize at this year’s Spring Research Symposium.

Dr Derek Panchuk from ISI and ISEAL was the last of ten researchers to present at the annual Office for Research event, impressing the audience of more than 50 researchers and staff with his clear and confident delivery.

“It was great to be acknowledged among a group with some strong presentations,” Dr Panchuk said.

His study provided insight into how we plan and execute actions, specifically when catching, striking, reaching and grasping for an object.

“Practically these results can be used to better inform teachers and sports coaches on what type of visual information they need to provide individuals to maximize their performance,” he said.

Dr Panchuk received $1,000 towards his research.

He explained the VC’s plan for research income to grow from $11 million in 2009 to $25 million by 2016 and $55 million by 2020.

The 2010 ERA ranking of ‘at world standard’ or ‘above world standard’ in five research areas would need to reach at least 10 by 2016 and at least 15 by 2020, he said.

“The challenge ahead of us is how to grow with quality,” Professor Payne said.

VU’S AWARD-WINNING RESEARCHERS

The Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Dawkins presented 27 staff awards at a ceremony this month to celebrate excellence and achievement throughout the university.

The Vice-Chancellor’s awards included the following peak awards for research and research training, shining a light on some of our brightest sparks.

Professor Yanchun Zhang

Professor Yanchun Zhang received a peak award for creating an engaged, personalised and career-oriented postgraduate research environment at Victoria University’s Centre for Applied Informatics.

As Centre director he brings international expertise and over 20 years’ research experience in database and information systems and web services.

In the past decade Professor Zhang has supervised 17 students to completion with a focus on developing their independence in a supportive framework, providing compassionate rigor and tailored research training plans for each student.

He said he was honored to receive the award.

“I wish to thank all my past and current research students for their enthusiasm and dedication in research work,” he said. “I am even more pleased to see them receiving various success and awards, such as winning ARC Discovery and Linkage Projects and receiving promotions to full professors and managers.”

Three quarters of Professor Zhang’s PhD graduates have become university professors, associate professors, lecturers and research fellows, while others became an ANZ bank manager, software developer and researcher in Victoria University’s human resource department.

Under his guidance all PhD candidates publish in high level international journals and conferences before they submit their thesis.

He pays great attention to understanding each student’s academic strengths and career goals and helps them incorporate this into their research topic and research plan.

As one of Professor Zhang’s priorities is to establish rapport with his students and a collegial research environment he regularly hosts parties to celebrate new students’ arrivals, successful grant applications, thesis submissions, academic papers and job offers.

Professor Zhang has published over 200 refereed research papers, founded and edits both the World Wide Web journal and the Journal on Health Information Science & Systems, chairs the Web Information Systems Engineering Society and was a member of the Australian Research Council College of Experts from 2008 to 2010. For his world-class research he was recently recognised in China’s prestigious One Thousand Talents Program.

Dr Jacqueline Williams

Dr Jacqueline Williams was awarded for achieving significant research outputs in a relatively short time.

“Winning the peak award was a bit of a shock but it’s always nice to be recognised for your work, particularly given the caliber of the other nominees,” she said.

The early-career ISEAL researcher focuses on how the brain controls movement and what might be going wrong in individuals with motor skill problems.

She also looks at how movements are represented in the brain and ways of using that for motor rehabilitation.

Dr Williams has carried out this research while leading development of an international, interdisciplinary research network in an expanding area of research at VU.

Other speakers included Dr David Rouffe with his research into measuring bicycle pedaling techniques in real-world conditions and Dr Rafael Pagulo, who discussed the potential of internet for home-based businesses.

Dr Gretel Taylor shared stories of her time in the remote Aboriginal community of Yuendumu, north-west of Alice Springs.

Dr Taylor is studying how Walpiri elders pass down their traditional dances to younger women and has even learnt a few dances herself.

Keynote speaker and director of the Victoria Institute for Education, Diversity and Lifelong Learning Professor Roger Slee spoke of his own research journey and the importance of the symposium in building VU’s research culture.

PVC Research Professor Warren Payne agreed that without first building the university’s research culture the Vice-Chancellor’s plan for VU to be a top-20 Australian research university by 2020 would not follow.

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The team’s focus on balancing water consumption and environmental needs involves research into water resource planning and management, storm water harvesting, river water quality management and infrastructure and asset management.

Professor Perera said the team boasted 58 journal publications over the past three years and a high impact on the Australian water industry.

“The success and impact of our research projects are due to the team’s range of skills and the effective collaboration within the team and with the water industry,” he said.

Members of the team and their PhD students are presenting at the MODSIM conference in Perth this December 12 to 16.

Dr Jianhua Zhang

ISI research degree graduate Dr Jianhua Zhang took out a peak award for his groundbreaking membrane studies as a doctoral researcher.

Dr Zhang received the award based on the quality of his thesis, the number of published journal and conference papers and his engagement in research.

“It is a reward for both the excellent tutoring of my supervisors as well as my work,” he said.

Dr Zhang completed his PhD in less than three years while also publishing seven papers.

His research focuses on the performance of membrane distillation in water treatment and desalination.

It was judged by three world-leading researchers on membrane distillation to constitute “an impressive collection of works” that demonstrated “mastery” of his field.

Dr Zhang has recently completed a paper on modelling energy efficiency in the membrane distillation process and is now working on reverse osmosis brine management with the National Centre for Excellence in Desalination Australia.

Associate Professor Todor Vasiljevic

Associate Professor Todor Vasiljevic was recognised for exemplary research on food processing and distribution over the last 20 years through collaboration with national and international researchers and industry partners.

“It means the world to me,” he said. “I am so delighted the hard work has paid off and there is finally some recognition for the people in my research group, who all my work has involved.”

The School of Biomedical and Health Sciences research coordinator’s work focuses on management of the increasing and competing demands for resources and development of sustainable environmental technologies.

This includes water technology, sustainable buildings and risk engineering, fire safety engineering and viable food industries.

Associate Professor Vasiljevic said he was excited by his current research into the effects of processing conditions on food proteins.

FAIR TRADE LOYALTY A MYTH

New research shows consumers switching between fair trade and non-fair trade brands, despite claiming otherwise.

Dr Maxwell Winchester from the School of International Business surveyed 8,000 shoppers and found even those claiming a commitment to ethical shopping were more likely to buy large national brands than fair trade when both were available.

“A majority of consumers will confess to having strong ethical attitudes and practices including boycotting, but the reality of their actual behaviour was shown to be otherwise,” Dr Winchester said.

“Consumers are not taking their ethical concerns to the checkout.”
In one example, nearly half the respondents claiming to boycott Nestle products admitted they had actually bought Nestle coffee within their last three coffee purchases.

Dr. Winchester said the findings challenged assumptions that ethical brands, because of what they stood for, could achieve more loyalty than would be expected for a normal brand.

"People did not just swap between fair trade brands but between fair trade and non-fair trade, showing there is no excess loyalty to fair trade brands," he said.

He said the implication is that consumers were choosing a brand rather than its fair trade status.

"Purchasing of fair trade brands appears to be more a function of brand share rather than a function of ethical beliefs," he said. "There is no reason why fair trade brands cannot compete with national brands but marketers need to be more realistic as to the reasons why consumers are purchasing fair trade brands."

Dr. Winchester said the study was based in England – being the world’s largest fair trade market – but that supermarket purchase behaviours were similar here.

The study was conducted in supermarkets where both fair trade and non fair trade items were sold.

The results will be published in an upcoming edition of the *Journal of International Food and Agribusiness*.

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**CERIDWEN’S ENDEAVOUR**

Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Ceridwen Spark has clinched a prestigious award for her research on contemporary women in Papua New Guinea.

The Endeavour Research Fellowship of more than $20,000 will allow Dr Spark to live in Papua New Guinea for the four-month project from February. The study, reported in August’s edition of Research Matters, will see Dr Spark creating films on the lives of contemporary Papua New Guinean women.

Born and raised in Papua New Guinea, Dr Spark has focussed her research there in recent years, looking at gender equity and biographical research on the experience of expats in the country.

She will work with local film producers Yumi Piksa (‘Our Films’) through the University of Goroka in the Eastern Highlands province.

Dr. Spark said being able to live in the country, thanks to the research fellowship, was crucial to immersing herself in the lives of locals.

“Living there day-to-day as opposed to flying in and out for the research can be the difference between whether this kind of project works or not,” she said.

Dr Spark said the project would be highly collaborative, not a continuation of the history of outsiders telling Papua New Guinean stories.

“Hopefully I can contribute my skills and there is a strong capacity-building element in the project with local students helping produce the films, but it will also be a big learning curve for me and I will be very much led by them," she said.

Dr Spark said the films could be screened in Papua New Guinean schools to encourage discussion of gender equity, as well as possible screenings to international audiences.

The Endeavour Awards are the Australian Government’s internationally competitive, merit-based scholarship program for high achievers to develop educational, research and professional links internationally.

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**NEW GUINEA PATROL**

A special screening will look back at a famous Papua New Guinean documentary from over half a century ago.

Dr Jane Landman from the School of Communication and the Arts will convene the one-day symposium featuring the 1958 documentary *New Guinea Patrol*.

This film follows Australian patrol officer Jim Sinclair and his team as they set off into the inhospitable mountains of New Guinea, capturing the first contact between local people and foreigners.

Plaudits at the time of its release described *New Guinea Patrol* as the film “had been crying out to be made in Papua and New Guinea”.

Mr Sinclair, now 82 years old, will attend the December 9 event at the Australian National University in Canberra.

The interdisciplinary event will focus on documentary film, history and colonialism.

Dr Landman said the film retained a singular historical place as a visual record of the work of the Australian administration, the experience of the patrol and of first and early-contact encounters. It was filmmaker Ron Maslyn Williams’ most successful New Guinea film.

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**SCIENTIST SHINES A LIGHT ON SCHOOLS**

Christmas is coming early for five lucky Victorian schools but it’s a scientist, not Santa, who’ll be delivering the goodies.

School of Biomedical and Health Sciences researcher Dr Nicoleta Dragomir will deliver $5,000 worth of bio photonics equipment to primary and secondary schools in Melbourne’s west and beyond.

“Twill visit each school and show them how to use the equipment, hopefully by Christmas," Dr Dragomir said. "That’s the fun part because students really enjoy seeing all the cool equipment – even if many of them have never heard of photonics.”
There is a group of 10 children using the Lab weekly and a waiting list of 40, including demand from interstate. Schutt says the Lab’s popularity, like the media attention, shows the demand for programs like this.

“It just hit a nerve and people instinctively realized that it makes a lot of sense: many kids with Asperger’s are into computers and the whole idea of moderated socialisation can help,” he says. “A program like this was just there waiting to be found.”

Next month Schutt will visit the University of South Australia to talk about setting up a similar program there. Meanwhile he is developing an online version of the Lab that would include modular electronics tutorials for the kids.

“Whether or not it makes them think about a career in science it eliminates the fear of high technology.”

The equipment has been paid for through a $5,000 education outreach grant from the SPIE international society for optics and photonics.

**RESEARCHER PROFILE:**
**DR STEFAN SCHUTT**

The Work-based Education Research Centre’s Dr Stefan Schutt has spent 2011 in the spotlight, but hasn’t let it distract him from his research.

Most of the hype has been around a technology club for young people with Asperger’s Syndrome called the Lab.

The award-winning researcher and educator has recently been filmed for ABC TV, spoken on ABC and RRR radio, been in the Age, local papers and industry magazines discussing his research.

To top it off the Lab has been nominated for a Maribyrnong Council community engagement award, to be announced in December.

The Lab offers one-to-one tuition by technology professionals in programming, 3D, digital design and gaming for eight to 16 year-old young people with Asperger’s Syndrome who enjoy computers.

While Schutt welcomes all the attention around the Lab, as a way of raising awareness of the need for such services, he measures the program’s success by its impact on those involved.

“The feedback from participants and parents on how the Lab has changed their lives is where it’s at,” he says. “We’ve seen kids making friends for the first time and others reduce anxiety medication by up to half.”

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Schutt says this *modus operandi* has taken his research “all over the place” from web-based systems for sharing life stories and virtual worlds for construction teaching to tailoring computer technology for the disabled.

“The one constant for me in my research has been the ‘tech’ side and applying that in meaningful ways,” he says. “As a researcher I find it a real privilege to be able to indulge your curiosity and to feel like you’re making a bit of a difference along the way.”

Prior to working at VU, Schutt established and ran Australia’s first Computer Clubhouse, an international skills initiative for disadvantaged young people. He has also worked as an internet industry producer and developer, and before that as a musician and copywriter. Indeed, one writing job saw Schutt writing and coordinating VU’s 1995 Annual Report.

**THE ‘US’ AND ‘THEM’ OF RECONCILIATION**

Non-Indigenous Australians overwhelmingly agree there is business to sort out with Indigenous people, according to a new study. But researchers say not enough has been done to resolve what that ‘business’ is.

Dr Tom Clark and Melissa Walsh in the School of Communication and the Arts found near-complete agreement on the need for reconciliation, beyond the 2008 apology, among non-Aboriginal focus groups.

Participants had varying degrees of understanding of Aboriginal cultural and political issues; with few having had contact with Aboriginal people.

There were also differing views on what reconciliation actually meant, or whether Aboriginal people should be included in the constitution as proposed for the 2013 referendum.
"All the participants used 'we,' 'us,' 'our,' and 'ours' to refer to all the non-Aboriginal people in the country and an equivalent set of pronouns – 'they,' 'them,' 'their,' and 'theirs' – to refer to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," Dr Clark said.

In arranging the pilot focus groups, researchers went out of their way not to prompt this phrasing.

Dr Clark said this language implied an idea of two parties meeting for negotiation, with an understanding that it would be sorted out along Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal lines rather than among all Australians as one group. Research in Canada has shown non-Indigenous Canadians using identical terms to discuss reconciliation in their country.

"If these pilot results are indicative of views across Australia, then it is a call for Australia’s reconciliation process to take urgent account of the points of common interest among non-Aboriginal Australians," he said. "It suggests the reconciliation process can only make headway once it makes sense of 'our' shared position."

He said this needed to be used as a starting point for non-Indigenous Australians to get to grips with their position before the 2013 referendum.

"It will take a genuine, concerted, and increasingly urgent effort to study that question on a national scale," he said. "But currently the only alternative to such an effort is to push ahead with a referendum and hope for the best."

Dr Clark will convene the Oral, the Written and Other Verbal Media conference from December 12 to 14, which will include a keynote address and roundtable discussions on reconciliation.

NEW RESEARCH HUB

Academics from the Social Sciences and Psychology have formed a new research hub.

The Community Identity Displacement Research Network will go online December 12 with a focus on migration, trans-nationalism and the role of memory in community identity.

Research coordinator Associate Professor Christopher Sonn and colleagues from the school will use the public network for arranging conferences, engaging community groups and promoting research outcomes.

"This hub will foster a research culture and collegiality within our school and indeed our university," Associate Professor Sonn said. "But through an emphasis on research in Melbourne's west it will also build community engagement and local relevance."

Associate Professor Sonn said the network would also build the school’s research capacity and presence with opportunities for researchers and postgraduate students to organize seminars and deliver conferences – the first from November 21 to 23 in 2012.

He said that, over time, the Network would include other strands of research and eventually connect with and complement the new Centre for Cultural Diversity and Wellbeing.

AUSTRALIAN LIBRARIES ENGAGING

Australian rural libraries are leading the way in community engagement, according to one School of Social Sciences and Psychology PhD researcher.

Roziya Abu is investigating how libraries engage with their communities to identify improvements for rural public libraries in Malaysia.

"Rural libraries in Australia are much more than books on shelves and really act as community hubs," Mrs Abu said. "Through the ever-changing range of cultural resources on offer they have become a social and cultural institution."

She said story-reading session for children, book clubs, homework assistance and other activities for teenagers, as well as visiting authors and local history talks were all examples of relevant programs in Australian libraries that were absent from Malaysian rural public libraries.

"In Malaysian rural public libraries there is an abundance of tension and frustration at the lack of suitable programs and the same old outdated books," she said.

She said the lack of variety in books and relevant programs meant rural libraries remained underutilised in Malaysia.

"Rather than acting as community and social development centres for people of all ages, rural Malaysian libraries are being used almost exclusively by school students," she said.

"Their potential to act as a community development hub is not being tapped because the community is not involved in deciding what programs are offered."

Mrs Abu said it was important to engage Malaysia’s largely rural population in public libraries to help improve their situation and not get left behind.

She said the Malaysian rural public libraries needed to move their focus away from school students to provide the range of community services similar to those in Australia.

"In many developing countries a literacy campaign is incomplete, and will fail, without the backdrop of an effective public library service to develop and carry on from where the school leaves off," Mrs Abu said.

She said the Malaysian government was trying to expand rural library services and going to remarkable levels to engage readers with many alternative programs such as door-to-door programs.

She said the study 'The role of the rural public library in community development and empowerment' would help focus efforts on issues of service relevance.

Preliminary findings were recently published in the International Journal of the Book.

Mrs Abu recently spoke about the research live on ABC Radio’s Bush Telegraph, which she described as a great opportunity.

"I really thought I’d just do my research and hope someday I could share it with other people," she said. "But this was my chance to share my findings and thoughts with so many people."

It was her first radio interview but program producer Keiren McLeonard was impressed.

"Roziya was a natural, warm and with a great laugh to boot," Ms McLeonard said. "She really was good!"
Video game addiction could have serious effects on the mental health and relationships of gamers, according to one School of Education researcher.

PhD student Daniel Loton is conducting a global study on the issue of video games and health to answer the contentious question of where to draw the line between a healthy hobby and something more damaging.

“Video game addiction may be a serious problem, but researchers are not yet sure how much of a problem, or even exactly how to define it,” Mr Loton said.

His study will measure the impact of video game play on life satisfaction, as well as mental and physical health in adult gamers over a nine-month period.

“The goal is to establish the effects over time, as well as which comes first – video game play or associated problems,” Mr Loton said.

He said participants would complete an initial 20-minute survey then follow-up 10-minute surveys each month.

"It will be like a diary that records your video game playing and general health," he said

Only adults are being asked to participate at this stage, with those completing all nine surveys going into the draw to win $500 dollars.

Mr Loton's previous research looked at whether people with social difficulties were more vulnerable to excessive play, and whether excessive play then exacerbated social difficulties.

**BOWEL DISEASE RESEARCH**

Dr Kulmira Nurgali has been awarded a prestigious National Health & Medical Research Council grant for research into inflammatory bowel disease.

Dr Nurgali recently received the $333,000 grant for three years.

Inflammatory bowel disease includes two main pathologies – Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis – that affect more than 60,000 Australians. Currently there is no cure for IBD.

The research will involve studies on an animal model of intestinal inflammation to investigate potential novel treatments for inflammation-induced gut dysfunction.

“Identifying the extent to which we can extrapolate findings in animal models of intestinal inflammation to humans is crucial in developing new therapies for IBD and inflammatory enteric neuropathies,” she said.

Dr Nurgali’s research program has already been funded by three NHMRC grants and several competitive grants from other external bodies. To date, her research has attracted more than $1.5 million in external Category 1 funding and $100,000 of internal funding.

Dr Nurgali took up her VU appointment as lecturer at the School of Biomedical and Health Sciences in March 2010 and has established her lab at Sunshine Hospital’s Western Centre for Health, Research and Education.

**SUCCESSFUL ARC DISCOVERY GRANT**

Researchers will investigate student aspirations and access to education in Melbourne’s west through an ARC Discovery grant.

Project leader Dr Lew Zipin said the grant of $180,000 of three years would fund research into school completion, higher education access and richer life pathways for traditionally disadvantaged groups.

“We are thrilled to have a Discovery project focussed on, and serving, learners and their schools, families and communities in western Melbourne,” he said.

He said they wanted to better understand how students’ aspirations took form.

Second chief project investigator Professor Marie Brennan said VU was one of the few universities to make education a research priority.

“The new Discovery rules in 2011 that required evidence of institutional priority certainly worked to our advantage here,” she said.

She said it was a strong team of investigators on a project with important policy implications.

Partners include Deakin University’s Professor Trevor Gale and University of Queensland’s Dr Sam Sellar.

Meanwhile Professor Pauline Stanton received $120,000 over two years for a Discovery Project through the University of South Australia.

**RETURN FROM VIENNA**

Victoria Law School student Chindar Teo has just returned full of praise for a United Nations internship in Vienna.

The DBA candidate is completing a thesis on international bank insolvency law and was selected to visit the United Nations Commission of International Trade Law – a legal body with universal membership specialising in commercial law reform.

“Without hesitation, I seized this opportunity of a lifetime,” Ms Teo said.

**RESEARCH WEEK HIGHLIGHTS ONLINE**

Selected keynote abstracts and reports from this year's Western Health Research Week are now available online.

The November 7-11 event showcased research undertaken by Western Health and partners Victoria University and University of Melbourne.

It featured workshops and presentations from VU’s Professor Glenn McConnell and Dr Alan Hayes, alongside keynote addresses by Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Dawkins and Victorian health minister David Davis.
During the internship, Ms Teo completed a comprehensive research note forming the basis of a paper for the UNCITRAL’s insolvency working group. She also attended meetings with UN delegates from around the world including international lawmakers, experts and academics in cross-border insolvency law.

“The opportunity has enabled me to exchange ideas and information, discuss the latest developments, and share knowledge in respect of the most critical legal issues with leaders in this field,” she said.

“The totality of this experience has made me a better researcher as it has opened my mind and eyes to new knowledge, possibilities and innovations for the thesis.”

She said her research was now aligned with the latest progress in cross-border insolvency law and the momentum of the field post GFC.

She thanked her supervisors and the Victoria Law School for supporting her research development.

“Professor Houghton’s study Costs and Benefits of Data Provision was commissioned by the Australian National Data Service.

ANDS is building the Australian Research Data Commons: a cohesive collection of research resources from all research institutions, to make better use of Australia’s research outputs.

**A RUBBERY HISTORY**

A new book on rubber has received rave reviews and even inspired an America stage show.

The Devil’s Milk: a Social History of Rubber by the School of Social Sciences and Psychology’s Dr John Tully received a 5 star rating on Amazon, where it was described as a “splendid social and economic history”.

The book will now be used as the basis for University of Akron Theatre Arts Company’s performance about Akron’s historical connection to rubber and the labour movement. The middle-sized American city in Ohio featured in several chapters of Dr Tully’s book.

**ERÁ 2012 UPDATE**

Preparations for next year’s ERA are well under way in the Office for Research.

Researchers have had the opportunity to code their publications and a picture of the likely disciplines to be assessed is beginning to emerge.

Office for Research’s Dr Melanie McGuire said discipline panels would meet in coming weeks to discuss strategies and start selecting items to nominate for peer review.

She said as a result of the 2010 ERA process staff had a good understanding of the system and were confident of an even stronger submission in 2012.

For more information contact Dr Melanie McGuire: 9919 4704 or melanie.mcguire@live.com.au

**DILEMMAS OF PRACTICE**

A new published collection of case studies written by pre-service teachers from across Australia is about to hit the shelves.

Dilemmas of Practice is edited by the School of Education’s Dr Mary Weaven and includes six contributions from VU education students.

Dr Weaven said contributors reflected on their own professional practice, their mentors and the experiences gained during the practicum component of their study.

“Self-study is prominent in these vignettes, forming a valuable lens through which to view the practice of classroom teaching,” she said.

“All contributors demonstrate the ability to negotiate their emerging professional identities and at the same time are learning how to critique existing practice.”

She said the energy and enthusiasm in the stories made them worthwhile reading to a wide audience.

The book was published by Pearson and will be available in the VU library and bookshop soon.

**COSTING DATA PROVISION**

A study has measured the costs and benefits to organisations, people and the economy of making public sector information freely available.

Centre for Strategic Economic Studies researcher Professor John Houghton said freeing the information appeared the way to go.

“What this study demonstrates is that the direct and measurable benefits of making Public Sector Information available freely and without restrictions on use typically outweigh the costs,” Professor Houghton said.

“When one adds the longer-term benefits that we cannot fully measure, and may not even foresee, the case for open access appears to be strong.”

Professor Houghton’s study Costs and Benefits of Data Provision was commissioned by the Australian National Data Service.

ANDS is building the Australian Research Data Commons: a cohesive collection of research resources from all research institutions, to make better use of Australia’s research outputs.

Akron was the world’s leading centre of rubber manufacturing from 1900 until the ‘rustbelt’ years of 1980s. Several of the world’s first multinational corporations – BF Goodrich, Goodyear and Firestone – originated in the city.

During the 1930s, the rubber mills were hit by a wave of sit-down strikes and the city became a bastion of the new mass unionism. During World War II, Akron’s enormous industrial capacity led to it being labelled ‘the arsenal of democracy’.

Dr Tully is currently writing another book, specifically about Akron.
Members of the Sport and Culture Group in SES have celebrated the launch of *Sport, Culture and Society: Approaches, Methods and Perspectives*.

The peer-reviewed anthology is an eclectic mix of the latest research from across a range of disciplines in the broadly defined field of sport and culture: from military training methods in ancient Ireland to elite sport in Pakistan.

Drawn from collaborations between a critical mass of 23 scholars and postgraduate students, this volume is part of a series of publications by Victoria University’s Sport and Culture Group.

It was edited by Dr Michael Burke, Dr Clare Hanlon and Dr Carl Thomen and published by Maribyrnong Press.

**TO WRAP OR NOT TO WRAP?**

Shoppers need to think twice before giving naked gifts this Christmas according to research on the etiquette of wrapping.

Elizabeth Porublev from the School of International Business has completed a PhD on the ways wrapping is used, or not used, and what it says about the status of a relationship and the gift giver.

In her study ‘Unwrapping the relevance of gift wrapping’ she identified three types of gift wrappers: passionate wrappers, conventional wrappers and detached wrappers.

“Passionate wrappers believe gift wrapping is highly relevant to gift giving,” she said. “They believe they are more than capable of wrapping a gift and will often take risks with gift wrapping techniques and styles as a source of personal creativity.”

This type did it more for themselves as a form of creative expression than for the receiver.

The conventional wrappers may have had less flair but respected gift wrapping as a social norm.

“These people believe gift wrapping contributes to social bonds between the giver and receiver,” she said. “They wrap because it is expected and as receivers, they like to receive wrapped gifts.”

But the third group, detached wrappers, felt gift wrapping was of limited relevance and only bowed to pressure on special occasions.

“They will only wrap gifts when they feel it is required and are the most likely to outsource gift wrapping to a third party,” she said.

Poor awareness of gift-wrapping norms meant detached wrappers were often judged for falling outside acceptable standards by the other groups – but not as much as non-wrappers, who were socially unacceptable by choice.

“People have come to expect that a gift should be wrapped,” she said. “A naked gift can indicate the low worth of relationship or that the giver has an unwillingness to personally invest in the gift.”

Ms Porublev said whatever you decided to do, it was important recognise the power of wrapping.

“Just as we remove price tags to remove all commercial aspects of the gifts, so wrapping extends that process of turning a commodity into something sacred,” she said.

As the first part of the gift to be seen, wrapping can set the mood for a gift and also heightened the element of surprise and drama of the event.

Gift wrapping in its present form was first developed in 1917, when the Hallmark Brothers in Kansas City began to offer envelope liners from France as a way to wrap gifts for Christmas as they had run out of tissue paper. According to Hallmark the worldwide retail gift wrap industry is now worth over $2.9 billion per year.

Ms Porublev’s interest in gift giving and gift wrapping started with a year-long stay in Japan where she said gifts were presented beautifully, some even with several layers representing different blessings on the gift.