



AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL ASIA PACIFIC FUTURES RESEARCH NETWORK

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ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network

PROJECT SUMMARIES

First Round 2006

PA10605

Applicant: Associate Professor Kathryn Robinson
Affiliation: Australian National University
Project Title: "Innovative research practice on new forms of sociality and digital media: Australian-Asian connections"
Awarded: \$ 3400

This workshop brought together international specialists and Australian postgraduate students to explore the challenges and possibilities for social science research on new forms of sociality associated with contemporary digital communications technologies. It developed out of ongoing research on internet mediated marriage between Southeast Asians and Australians with a decided focus on scholarship in the areas of sociality and digital media, users of such media, commercial providers and regulators. It addressed two key questions: What are the possibilities, limitations and ethical considerations for social research in cyberspace? And can commercial and academic research combine to enliven public debates about social futures and address community anxieties about emergent forms of social relations associated with new information and communication technologies? With social scientists slowly building methodologies for the research of important issues such as ethical conduct, privacy and confidentiality in the context of digital social relations, this project produced a statement on research and ethics protocols relevant to social research on new information technologies. The statement was initially published on Associate Professor Kathryn Robinson's internet marriage project website.

PA10606

Applicant: Dr Alison Tokita
Affiliation: Monash University
Project Title: "Media and popular cultural flows in East Asia: Transnational flows of mediated narratives in comics, cinema and TV dramas"
Awarded: \$ 5500

This project was established within the context of North East Asian socio-economic development over the last decade to investigate and analyse the effects of transnational flows of information and mediated cultural texts between Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan. It specifically aimed to examine the roles of Seoul and Tokyo as cultural traffic nodes, with the potential of a shared popular culture for overcoming of certain security and diplomatic tensions in the East Asian region. It also scrutinised the role of audiences and fans of this shared popular culture, the relationship between the transnational consumption of popular culture and official discourses of soft power, the use of cheap accessible popular media

such as Internet blogs and comics for unofficial hate discourse, and the growing exchange between academics of these nations working towards a shared intellectual framework of cultural studies and media studies and their reception in the region. This project utilised the bilateral agreement between the Korea Research Foundation and ARC to generate applications for future international research projects and published a volume of papers, providing postgraduates and early career researchers with ample opportunities to network, work and publish with significant foreign scholars in their field.

PA10609

Applicant: Dr Nicholas Thieberger
Affiliation: University of Melbourne
Project Title: "Communicating collaborative research in Vanuatu since Independence"
Awarded: \$7500

This conference explored and enhanced collaborative links between international researchers of Vanuatu society, its language, history and indigenous counterparts. It focussed upon the activities of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VKS), with its unique and highly innovative Film and Sound Unit and "fieldworkers program", to draw in participants from VKS, Vanuatu and Australia, from the University of the South Pacific to the Vanuatu government and public sectors, NGOs and other locals. Together they addressed key questions pertaining to the significance of the collaboration between international and indigenous researchers in Vanuatu, whilst presentations and subsequent discussion scrutinised the way social, linguistic, archaeological and historical research on Vanuatu impacts upon or benefits local communities. Discussion also focussed upon how these benefits might be enhanced, how research on Vanuatu might be more effectively communicated to local audiences (in publications, film, exhibitions, school curricular or otherwise) and what new initiatives, strategies and institutional linkages might be developed to further enhance research that is both effective and socially relevant. The conference was timed to fall between the annual VKS women's and men's fieldworkers workshops, offering individual researchers the opportunity to make presentations involving their ni-Vanuatu collaborators. Postgraduate students and early career researchers were also encouraged to network with inter-disciplinary experts at all stages of during this event.

PA10613

Applicant: Professor Andrew Vincent
Affiliation: Macquarie University
Project Title: "The Journalist and Islam: Competing Agendas, Political Correctness and the War on Terror"
Awarded: \$ 5500

This conference addressed the challenge of scrutinising the media in its reporting of Islam and the 'war on terror'. It brought together academics from a range of discipline areas, including history, politics, linguistics and journalism, with professional journalists and media commentators. Papers exploring the following concerns were invited and solicited: the study of various news genres with respect to issues such as 'objectivity' and 'bias', the effect of linguistic choices and the development and maintenance of stereotypes in news stories, and the political, economic and time-related constraints which effect the range and types of news stories. The project also focussed upon the potential for the media to reflect the complexity of current military, religious and social conflict in the Middle East, the reporting of local stories with Islamic/Muslim content, reporting the Middle East from a Middle East perspective, and the methodological study of media discourse. Because of its importance in shaping popular debate and democratic decision-making processes, the role of the media is under particular scrutiny during times of war. Yet crucial standards in evaluating the media remain remarkably ill defined and difficult to operationalise. This

project tackled the problem from an interdisciplinary point of view to provide journalists and academics with tools for appreciating the complex facets to a news story and understanding the context, including the pressures, in which news is produced. Postgraduate and postdoctoral students were also encouraged to present papers or posters at the conference and meet like-minded academics and other members of the wider community who are exercised by the growing tension between Islam and the West.

PA10614

Applicant: Dr Alan Rumsey
Affiliation: Australian National University
Project Title: "The poetics and politics of sung narrative genres in Highland Papua New Guinea"
Awarded: \$ 6500

In parts of Highland Papua New Guinea there are flourishing traditions of epic-like sung narratives or "chanted tales". Often dealing with relationships between people and land, these are a highly valued cultural resource and, from the perspective of comparative poetics, they are one of the clearest known examples of measured verse that has developed independently of alphabetic or syllabic writing. This project brought together a team of investigators to analyse the wide range of styles in which these narratives are performed, and to further the understanding of their implications for cross-cultural study of verbal art and the politics of land ownership in present-day Papua New Guinea (PNG). It drew together expertise ranging across the disciplines of sociocultural anthropology, linguistics and ethnomusicology to pioneer the detailed study of these various sung narrative genres and to convene a workshop, held at the Kefamo Conference Centre in Goroka, PNG. Scholars and several others working on chanted tale traditions from around the PNG highlands met at the workshop to present and discuss the latest research results, and developed comparative analysis with respect to the issues mentioned earlier. Two ANU PhD scholars on the project were also able to attend the workshop and worked intensively with senior scholars, with the unique opportunity of meeting face-to-face with the PNG-based cohort.

PA10615

Applicant: Associate Professor Caroline Turner & Dr Claire Roberts
Affiliation: Australian National University
Project Title: "Artists Communicating Beyond the Wall"
Awarded: \$ 6000

The theme of the Great Wall has engaged many artists throughout China's history. This initiative thus intended to cross disciplinary barriers and involve scholars and postgraduate students from a number of disciplines such as art, art history, history, cultural studies, Chinese studies, archaeology and international relations. In the context of contemporary artistic responses to the Great Wall, the aim was to convene a scholarly workshop, designed to run in conjunction with an exhibition of contemporary artistic work complementing the major historical exhibition of Chinese archaeological treasures: *Great Wall of China* (a joint project of the National Museum of China, and the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney). The workshop focus upon the treatment of the Great Wall in art was accented by an exhibition of artwork on simultaneous display, by Guan Wei *Another History*, curated by Claire Roberts. A further, separately funded, aspect of the project engaged the community through a related education program to create a more sophisticated understanding by the Australian public, school children and other exhibition visitors, of China's history, culture and dynamically changing contemporary society.