

Association Essays

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Taking History On-Line

By Laurence Brown

Greetings and welcome to the inaugural issue of *Access: History*, a joint production from the University Of Queensland History Department and the History Graduates' Association. This issue has been many months in the making and has only come to fruition due to the time and effort of many people and not least the generosity of many of the final-year Undergraduates and the Honours students from the history department. This Journal contains a selection of the best scholarship coming out of History subjects run by the Department in the first semester of 1997. In selecting the articles for this issue the editorial advisory board was conscious of providing both a wide cross-section of subject material and a clearly high standard of historical scholarship. On balance, with topics spanning historical theory, radio, sports, historiography, historical films, Queensland history and historical-religious pieces, the selection has proven to be a truly eclectic collection—as is somewhat traditional in historical circles.

Journals such as this one are important for a number of reasons, and I would encourage any history, (or other), department from around the world to consider producing their own. Currently, there are very few journals which are in their complete form on the World Wide Web. The Internet has provided a unique opportunity, in this time of shrinking departmental budgets, to expand our scholastic boundaries without the usual expansion in cost. Furthermore, a project such as this has made possible the dissemination of a collection of excellent and thought-provoking scholarship which would otherwise have simply gathered dust in the author's desk draw. As it is, this journal has provided the chance for this scholarship to be reviewed by students and other historians all over the globe.

This kind of journal is the sort which can make a significant contribution to the growing community of Social Science sites on the World Wide Web. Through H-Net and other organisations, such journals and other sites of academic interest can find a unified home. Because the largest problem with information collected from the Internet is that it is of a questionable quality, such refereed sites, when collected together through one or a few central hubs, can serve to reclaim some of the territory which has been lost since the Internet became a popular entertainment medium. This is not to say that the World Wide Web should be censored, but if we are to maintain our credibility as historians and social scientists, we must be prepared to apply the same standards of scrutiny to this new and dynamic medium. It is my hope that in producing *Access: History*, we will have taken a small step towards making this form of education more accessible. It is already becoming clear that a number of students, from high school and upwards, are using the Internet more and more in their research. If we are to avert the decline in critical thinking and high standards of scholarly research which have also accompanied this shift from the less-interactive texts, we must employ our tried and tested methods to this new medium—if for no other reason than that students are and will use it anyway.

The idea of the use of the Internet to make available some of the best scholarship which the world would never otherwise have seen, first occurred to me in my second undergraduate year (1994) at The University Of Queensland. As such, this project has been many years in the making and could never have been a going concern without the establishment of the History Graduates' Association. Special thanks must

go to Dr Bill Richmond, the Director of Graduate Relations; Dr Ross Johnstone, the immediate past Head of Department; Dr Martin Stuart-Fox, the current Head of Department and the members of the Editorial Review Board (listed below), who are all PhD Candidates within the History Department. Without the support of these people, *Access: History* would not even exist. Your support as well, is gratefully received. Please feel free to e-mail us with any comments or suggestions.

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History Graduates Association Newsletter

January 1997

By Peter Schembri



*Association President
Peter Schembri*

History graduates are a pretty mixed bag: those who have studied more or less 'history' in courses offered by the History Department, and/or some other departments; those pursuing or who have completed doctorates and masters degrees who have studied, researched and written more history than they can (or care to?) remember; professional historians who actually make some money writing history; and those who teach it. And there are some people who may not fit a category, whose contact with the History Department, and 'history' in a formal sense, is limited but who have an inherent interest in historical issues, the evolution over time of institutions and practices and the role that people have played in that evolution. They are both young and old, and somewhere in between.

The UQ History Graduates Association welcomes all of you, and indeed anyone who is interested in its objectives. In broad terms these are to allow those with an interest in history and in the activities of the History Department at The University of Queensland to maintain contact with each other and with the department.

The inaugural gathering will be held on 20 February: an invitation to this event is enclosed with this newsletter. We hope you will join us. It will be an informal meeting although we will ask those present to ratify the committee which has taken things thus far, and to invite any other interested people to nominate for the committee. The principal task of the committee in the coming months will be to decide the types of activities which will be of interest to members. Office bearers and the committee are listed below together with some information about coming events, including those which are being organised by the History Department, and some news about people and activities.

If you have been sent this newsletter you are probably already recorded as a member after indicating your interest in some way at an earlier time. If you know of anyone else who might be interested, or want to confirm your membership—or indeed if there are any questions or comments you would like to direct to the committee, please contact the Association through the University's Graduate Relations Office on 3221-6621 or e-mail gradrels@mailbox.uq.edu.au. Membership is free as the Association functions with the support of the University's Graduate Relations Office and the History Department. Information about the Association and its activities will be posted regularly on the Association's home page on the internet: http://www.uq.edu.au/access_history/graduates.html.

Steering Committee

President:	Peter Schembri (BA(Hons) 1981, DipEd 1985)
Vice-President:	Laurence Brown (BA Hons 1996)
Secretary:	David Kerr (BA Hons 1996)
Committee:	Andrew Blythe (BA 1995) Bill Deacon (BA Hons 1985, MLitSt 1992) Sonny Lee (BA 1995) Mondalmi MacDonald (BA 1995) Lisa Sanderson (BA 1987, LLB 1995) Bernadette Turner (BA 1982, PhD 1993) Michael Vaughan (BA 1974, MsocSc 1995)
Ex Officio:	Head, Department of History Associate Professor W Ross Johnston (after January 1997 – Associate Professor Martin Stuart-Fox)

Departmental Publications

Timeline

Coordinated by Dr Rod Fisher, Director of the Applied History Centre, this newsletter is published every two months and details forthcoming exhibitions, seminars and conferences around Brisbane and other areas, as well as departmental information. The publication also provides an update of references, journal articles, books, and academic works in progress. For submission advice and more details, please contact the production manager for this newsletter, Serena Bagley, on 3365 6320.

Proceedings of The University of Queensland History Research Group

This document is produced twice a year and provides a forum for research-in-progress. Contents include transcripts of papers and talks delivered to the Department's Staff/Postgraduate seminars, and other materials relevant to departmental research and interests. All papers, notes correspondence and requests for issues should be sent to: The Editor, Professor Paul Crook, History Department, The University of Queensland 4072. Enquires should be directed to the coordinator of this publication, Suzanne Lewis, on 3365 6320.

Associate Professor Martin Stuart-Fox



Dr Martin Stuart-Fox, Reader in History, has been appointed Head of Department. He received his Bsc from The University of Queensland then worked overseas for twelve years. During much of this time he was a journalist in Asia and Europe, covering among other events the war in Indochina. He joined the staff of the History Department in 1976. Dr Stuart-Fox brings to his academic position a background in science, political journalism and philosophy. His books include *The Murderous Revolution: Life and Death in Pol Pot's Kampuchea*; *Laos: Politics, Economics and Society*; *Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State: The Making of Modern Laos*; and, with R S Bucknell, *The Twilight Language: Explorations in Buddhist Meditation and Symbolism*. Dr Stuart-Fox is currently working on a general history of Laos, an evolutionary theory of history, and a biography of the Buddha.

Events Diary

SURF! SUN! SPORTS! SOAPS!

Popular Culture: Australia and the World

A one day public seminar on 22 March 1997 in the Abel Smith Lecture Theatre, The University of Queensland, raises some vital issues. Just why is Australia the soap opera capital of the world, and how did the Sydney Mardi Gras become a national institution? Our popular culture informs our every move; fast food, movies, magazines, the footie, the beer, the beach; and from 9 until 4 you can listen to cultural historians/writers/commentators talk about these issues, as we face the mirror.

Speakers at the seminar will include Dr Graeme Turner, Professor and Head of the English Department, who will speak on Australia's cultural identity. Assoc. Prof. Clive Moore, Dept of History, will take up the issue of the Mardi Gras and Carnival, while Assoc. Prof. Kay Saunders, Dept of History, will address the sobering area of surf, sand and sexual stereotypes. Dr Barbara Garlick, Department of English, will examine popular women's fiction, and Prof. Stuart Cunningham, Head of the School of Communication, QUT, will discuss Australia's TV image abroad. Gordon Kidd, Lecturer in the Department of History, will look at popular culture since the 1980's, and Dr Ray Evans, Reader in History, will preview the forthcoming *Everyday Wonders* Conference to be held in June 1997.

Cultural history is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, and this seminar will attract and absorb an eclectic crowd. Much the same as the Mardi Gras really. For more information contact Sarah Ferber on 3365 6668, or Serena Bagley, telephone 3365 6320.

Shanghai Past and Present

From Friday 28 March to Sunday 30 March 1997 in the Steele Lecture Theatre 26, The University of Queensland, a forum of international scholars and business professionals will address a range of topics on contemporary Shanghai business practices and culture. These issues will include a history of business in Shanghai, the Stock Market, Banking, contemporary Shanghai Enterprises, Technology Transfer, and International Trade. These sessions may be attended on either a full weekend or daily basis, and concessions are available. Both students of Chinese history and business people with an interest in current and emerging business practices in Shanghai and China in general are urged to attend. The enclosed brochure details speakers, topics, and registration information; the closing date for registration is March 21, 1997.

Everyday Wonders. Popular Culture: Past & Present

From 9-13 June, 1997 at the Carlton Crest Hotel, Brisbane, the Department of History will host the Tenth International Conference on Popular Culture. It will be an integrated academic and performance-based event which concentrates on the prosaic as opposed to 'high' culture. Artists, academics, sporting and entertainment personalities combine to investigate popular wonders in everyday life. Conference themes will encompass the bush, beach and suburbia, the electronic media, communication and the arts, literature, print and design, sport, music, performance, and the Circus.

Keynote speakers will include Phillip Adams; Glenn Baker (Rock Guru); Prof. Ray Browne, American Popular Culture Association; Sir James Hardy; Ian Kiernan, (Clean-Up Australia Campaign); Lonnie Lee; Little Pattie; and Olympic Gold Medallists including Marlene Matthews, Suzie O'Neill and Mike Wendon. The Ashton Circus family will join us; in 1998 they celebrate 150 years in the business.

Dr Clive Moore on 3365 6337 will help you with more information and a registration form. Concessions and day registrations are available.

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Telephone: 3221 6621

The History Department: The Decade in Review

by *W. Ross Johnston*
Head of Department 1993-1997



*Associate Professor
 W. Ross Johnston*

Welcome to the newly formed History Graduates Association. This initiative has been sparked by Dr. Bill Richmond, the University's Director of Graduate and Corporate Relations, and made possible by the interest and enthusiasm of History graduates who formed the steering committee for this organisation.

History graduates are a broad and disparate group. Some are very recent graduates; others may have graduated ten, twenty, ... even sixty years ago, and it is the aim of our Association to provide opportunities for professional and social interaction for all these former and ongoing students.

In 1986 Professor Malcolm Thomis was Head of Department, and along with Professor Damodar Singhal, and 22 staff at different levels, formed the academic body. Peggy Burke was administrative officer for the department, Mavis Little was departmental secretary, and there were four other general staff. In teaching terms the Department handled the equivalent of 2950 student enrolments in History subjects and at the end of the year we graduated six honours candidates.

In 1993 I was appointed Head of Department, following Associate Professor John Moses and Professor Geoffrey Bolton in the position. By 1996 there had been some considerable reduction in personnel, and the academic body now comprises Professor Paul Crook, and 16 academic staff. Mavis Little is administrative officer, Judith Morgan departmental secretary, with Serena Bagley and Suzanne Lewis providing administrative support. Such reductions in history establishments have been happening all around Australian universities in these times of significant economic rationalisation. While we have escaped some of the severe dislocations that have occurred elsewhere, we are certainly now doing more with less. In 1996, despite the smaller teaching body, the department handled the equivalent of 3340 student enrolments in history subjects and graduated 20 honours and 6 postgraduate students.

There are significant reasons for the department's success. One factor is the continual review of our subject offerings, so that while there are some subjects that a student of 1986 would find familiar, there are also many subjects which have kept apace with contemporary developments in historical research. For example a very successful new first year subject, coordinated by Tom Poole, is *Towards the 21st century*, which looks at current vital issues such as the technological superhighway, the population explosion and tribal warfare in Europe. Students of 1986 will remember our gateway European subject *European civilisation 1100-1748*, taught by Noeline Hall. In 1996, this subject was renamed *Europe 1200-1800*, and while superficially similar in title, has been totally overhauled by Marion Diamond and Sarah Ferber and attracts over 200 enrolments every year - as does *Towards the 21st century*. It is important that we monitor students' interests. In the late 1980s Australian history seemed to be commanding prime attention, doubtless tied up with the bicentennial celebrations. Throughout the 1990s, however, most interest has centred

on European affairs, and of course medieval history remains a consuming passion for many students.

Apart from a wide range of European and Australian offerings the department maintains its strength in Asian and American history. At the same time, we are not locked into a geographical-territorial approach, but present a wide range of thematic studies, concentrating especially upon social history. History unfolding through themes of gender, race and ethnic relations, sexuality, the natural and built environments, medicine and health, popular culture and so on, ensure students' involvement in cutting-edge issues. Postgraduate students have become a very significant aspect of life in the department and their enrolments consolidate our healthy functioning. This year we have been supervising 52 doctoral and 33 masters candidates. While many of their research topics are Australian/Queensland centred, there is also a wide global and thematic sweep—from a study of Thamrin, an early proponent of Indonesian nationhood, through to Christian evangelization in early Europe. Developments in the postgraduate school will be discussed further in a later newsletter.

The department has also embraced the cause of Applied or Public History, training students to apply their skills in the market place, for the general public. This is looking beyond the study of history as primarily a training field for prospective teachers; it acknowledges that there are market needs and job prospects in areas such as heritage surveys, environmental impact assessments, forest studies, museum work and so on. Dr. Rod Fisher is director of the Applied History Centre and he can be contacted on 3365 6407. This centre, along with the newly approved Centre for Asian Business History, will also be discussed in later newsletters.

A major change in the Department from 1986 until the present time is its location on the University of Queensland campus. In 1986 the History Department graced the main strip of the Forgan Smith building. In the bicentenary year we moved - some felt we were moved—to new quarters in the Gordon Greenwood building, between the Schonell Theatre, the Playhouse Daycare Centre for young children, and the Sports and Recreation Centre—an appropriate locale? The department occupies parts of the third to sixth floors; the office is situated in Room 427, phone 3365 6320, fax 3365 6266.

The History Graduates Association offers its former and postgraduate students an opportunity to share in both the academic life of the department, and its interaction with the broader community. Another way of keeping in touch with Departmental research and issues is through the *Australian journal of politics and history*, produced by this department in conjunction with the University's Department of Government. This journal is now in its forty-first year; it covers a wide range of historical and political issues and is not confined to the Australian scene. A regular feature is the "Political Chronicles"—an easy way for you to find out what happened in Queensland (or Australasian) politics this year - or twenty years ago. For inquiries, contact me, as co-editor.

This is one of my last acts as Head of History, and I wish the History Graduates Association every success. Dr Martin Stuart-Fox takes over imminently, and will continue with news updates about the department and the state of history generally.

Report: *Popular Culture: Australia and the World*

By Mark Dash

So often when scholars have sought to define a society and the forces that have and continue to shape it, they have concentrated on elements that have little relevance for the ordinary inhabitant of that society. Yet the everyday and perhaps even mundane activities of the 'common' person tell us more about a particular society than many experts would care to admit. From the food we eat, to the music we listen to, to the television programs and films we watch and the clothes we wear, this—*popular culture*—as it is now termed, provides a window for the examination of Australian society and what makes our culture 'tick'. It was to this theme that *Popular Culture: Australia and the World*, the one-day conference hosted by the History Department on March 22nd 1997, was addressed. Through the discussion of various aspects of popular culture, a number of speakers from the University of Queensland, and other academic institutions, emphasised the importance of the activities and objects we often take for granted in determining our cultural identity.

Following the welcome by the Head of Department, Dr. Martin Stuart-Fox, Mr. Gordon Kidd discussed the changing nature of popular culture since the 1890s. Defining popular culture as an exchange between producer and consumer, Mr. Kidd attributed its origins to the social changes wrought by industrialisation. These social changes created a greater amount of leisure time that came to be filled by sport, mass circulation newspapers and music halls, and then later by television, radio and the cinema. Once treated with disdain, popular culture, since the 1890s, has gained increasing public acceptance—thus helping to erode the barriers between 'higher' and 'lower' forms of culture. Consequently, culture today is much more of a seamless web, helping to create, as Mr. Kidd proposed, a sense of community and a feeling of inclusion.

This theme of community was elaborated on by Professor Graeme Turner of the English Department at the University of Queensland in his discussion of Australia's Cultural Identity. Through the medium of film, Professor Turner showed how perceptions of Australia's cultural identity had changed over time. In the 1970s, films such as: *Sunday Too Far Away* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, defined Australia through the confrontation of civilisation and landscape. This contrasts with the Australia of the 1990s, where, through such films as, *The Heartbreak Kid* and *Strictly Ballroom*, the nature of urban culture is popularly viewed as the sign of 'Australianess'. The diversity of Australian society has thus, brought about the realisation that Australia's cultural identity does not have to be singular.

Professor Turner was then followed by Dr. Kay Saunders and her presentation entitled, "Surf, Sand and Sexual Stereotypes". Through the effective use of a series of slides, Dr. Saunders detailed the evolution of Australia's love affair with the beach, which began at the turn of this century. Indeed, this affinity had become so great by the inter-war period that the 'lifesaver' had usurped the 'drover' and the 'shearer' as the dominant stereotypical image of 'the Australian'. The factors behind the elevation of this figure in the public mind however, went beyond the simple enjoyment that Australians had for the beach. The image of the young, fit and able-bodied lifesaver was antithetical to that of the maimed and incapacitated returned soldier of the First World War. According to Dr. Saunders, the 'lifesaver' image became dominant

during this period because Australia could not, or did not want, to face up to the devastation wrought by the Great War.

Perhaps the highlight of the conference was the address by Professor Stuart Cunningham from the School of Communication at the Queensland University of Technology. Professor Cunningham argued in his address, entitled “Australia’s Television Image Abroad” that the success of Australian television programs overseas has challenged myths held by the peoples of countries about Australia. The success, for example, of suburban ‘soaps’ such as *Neighbours* in the United Kingdom has called into question their stereotype of Australia as an ‘outback’ nation. Similarly, the popularity of the *Flying Doctors* in countries such as the Netherlands has exemplified Australian social values and patterns of system liberalisation as well as demonstrating the ‘seriousness’ of Australian culture. Professor Cunningham concluded with a discussion of Australian television programs aired in New Zealand, where the high profile of these programs has prompted trans-Tasman industry critics to equate Australian commercialism with American commercialism. Interestingly however, the debate over Australian content has raised little disquiet amongst the New Zealand viewing audience.

In the next presentation, Dr. Ray Evans detailed the comparatively recent emergence of the study of popular culture as an important component of social history in his preview of the conference, *Everyday Wonders. Popular Culture: Past and Present*, to be hosted by the History Department in June 1997. The conference was then brought to a close with discussions by Dr. Barbara Garlick on Popular Women’s Fiction and Dr. Clive Moore on the historical foundations of the Mardi Gras and Carnival.

Although the number attending the conference was not as great as had been originally hoped, this did not detract in any way from the success of the conference—as those present were given new insight into how the activities of our leisure have shaped society. Furthermore, the organisers of the conference must be commended for highlighting the benefits this type of conference has for the History Department and the study of history. With the funding ‘squeeze’ currently facing universities throughout Australia, many academic disciplines are being forced to prove their worth in terms of their ‘usefulness’, economic or otherwise, to society. For a discipline such as history this can be difficult because its ‘usefulness’, for many, is not so readily apparent. Accordingly, those who seek to promote the study of history need to become more imaginative and inventive than those in other disciplines in order to succeed in this task. In this regard, the organisers of *Popular Culture: Australia and the World* demonstrated outstanding ability. Indeed, the success of this one-day conference highlighted the benefit that this type of event has in informing the public as to the activities of the History Department and the effectiveness of studying history. Many of those who attended had no connection with the ‘Department and went away with a new appreciation of what the ‘Department does and its ‘worth’. The perpetuation of this type of conference and the creation of other new and inventive ways to promote history can only serve to secure the future of history departments in universities throughout Australia and thus, most importantly, the discipline itself.