



Summary and Objectives

Edited from the original Research Network Application 2004

The initial disciplinary base of the Cultural Research Network (CRN) will be in cultural, media and communications studies. From this foundation the Network will build collaborative links with researchers from cultural history, cultural geography, cultural anthropology, and creative industries to develop the capacity for innovative research into media and cultural technologies, cultural literacies, cultural histories, geographies and identities.

Humanities disciplines have increasingly directed their attention to the analysis of the production and consumption of culture, interacting with other disciplines in order to research the complex local and global situation of culture. Cultural studies led the way towards exploiting the interdisciplinary potential this represents. Here it provides a broad intellectual and theoretical base upon which to construct an extended multi-disciplinary research network which will host common discussions of method and principle, foster young academics working across disciplines, improve opportunities for resource sharing, and enable collaboration on projects of national and international significance.

To facilitate interdisciplinary exchange, the CRN will establish virtual connections, web-enabled databases, travelling masterclasses, seminars and symposia, as well as bursaries and internships for postgraduates and early career researchers. The CRN will circulate people as well as ideas and information, bringing together the most distinguished researchers in media and cultural studies in Australia with an outstanding group of early and mid-career researchers working in cultural history, cultural geography, cultural anthropology, and creative industries to build collaborative research strengths and pursue international linkages.

Network Aims:

1. To enhance interdisciplinary exchange between researchers from cultural studies, media, and communications studies, and researchers contributing to emerging trends in cultural geography, cultural history, cultural anthropology, new media, and creative industries.
2. To apply the benefits of such exchanges to developing multidisciplinary approaches to research projects on cultural literacies, cultural technologies, cultural histories, geographies, and identities.
3. To establish networks of communication and exchange to maximise the influence, capacity and collaborative potential of innovative cultural research in Australia, and to assist the professional development of early career and postgraduate researchers.

4. Over the five years of the funding period, to develop focused programs of collaborative cultural research projects for which external funding can be sought.
5. To build on existing transnational links in order to internationalise the CRN.

Background

Research in cultural studies, media studies, and communications studies has been the pre-eminent growth area in the humanities in Australia over the last decade. Furthermore, Australian researchers have led international developments in cultural studies, creative industries, new media and new technologies, and cultural policy studies. We also have long-standing strengths in cultural studies of Asia, cultural geography, and cultural history. However, many Australian researchers tend to work alone or within the remit of their individual institutions. Especially at the level of Early Career Researchers (ECRs), research concentrations in one city tend to have little to do with research concentrations in another, meeting only through annual professional associations rather than pursuing project-based collaboration. Many of the participants in this proposal, however, already have a strong record of local, intra-disciplinary, or interdisciplinary collaboration within media and cultural studies. The CRN will build from these beginnings to generate interdisciplinary collaboration on a national scale: bringing research groups from one city, for example, into sustained and productive interaction with researchers around the country. The CRN will provide a base for building on existing strengths, overcoming these structural limitations and enabling the emergence of new kinds of collaborative research.

In particular, collaborations between the critical traditions of cultural studies and more empirical methods and approaches are still relatively rare, although gradually increasing. By focusing on connections with cultural geography, cultural history, and cultural anthropology—and by including participants who have already begun to investigate the links between these disciplines and cultural studies—the network will directly address this situation and accelerate this trend.

At a practical level, the resources gathered by particular modes of cultural research for specific projects—publishable personal interviews, databases, or media recordings for instance—tend not to be shared or even available to other researchers. Where possible, the CRN will seek ways to disseminate information about the existence of such data as well as the means of archiving them in web-enabled databases for more widespread academic use.

The network will be founded on existing interdisciplinary associations, using them to extend the benefits of collaboration, in particular to the younger researchers and postgraduates who have been poorly served in the past. The current barrier to this kind of enterprise, institution-specific research cultures, can be overcome by a national network directed towards collaborative, interdisciplinary, and inter-institutional relationships. The intellectual pre-conditions for this already exist; the network will provide a way to put it into practice.

In summary, the CRN will:

- Exploit the intellectual and interdisciplinary opportunities provided by the conceptual centrality of culture as the shared focus for interdisciplinary humanities research;
- Connect younger researchers and postgraduates to the best and most innovative work in their field, no matter where it is based;

- Distribute the benefits of senior expertise nationally to help researchers take advantage of the opportunities provided by existing funding organisations and the available linkages with public sector institutions and private industry;
- Build on the strong international reputation cultural studies, cultural policy studies and creative industries research in Australia enjoys by developing a more collaborative and multi-disciplinary research culture for the humanities nationally and internationally.
- Facilitate project-based collaboration within thematic nodes, with a view to developing integrated programs of cutting-edge interdisciplinary cultural research.
- Disseminate information about the existence of cultural research resources as well as the means of archiving them in web-enabled databases.
- Establish a specific support program for postgraduates and ECRs.
- Address national needs for a more integrated approach to complex social, cultural and technological change.

For more information please consult the CRN website: www.uq.edu.au/crn