Communication, Creativity and Global Citizenship: Communicating for Culture and Change

Terry Flew

The 2009 Australian and New Zealand Communications Association conference (ANZCA09), held at QUT in Brisbane from July 8-10, 2009, brought together 242 communications researchers from 20 countries. The ANZCA09 conference was held at the Creative Industries Precinct at Kelvin Grove, where university staff and facilities are co-located with media businesses, arts companies and residential accommodation, and attracted 200 papers and panel presentations over the three days.

The papers from the ANZCA09 conference that are in this collection have been subject to double-blind peer reviewing prior to inclusion in this volume. They bring together contributions across the full range of conference streams including:

- Advertising and Integrated Marketing Communication
- Communication and Pedagogy
- Communication Ethics
- Creativity and Communication
- Digital and Social Media
- Disability and Communication
- Entertainment
- Global Media and Communication
- Intercultural Communication
- Journalism and News Media
- Media and Citizenship
- Organisational Communication
- Political Communication
- Public Relations
- Radio-Audio-Sound Research and Practice
- Science and Environmental Communication
- Speech Communication and Rhetoric
- Visual Communication
One important feature of the ANZCA09 conference was the explicit incorporation of papers and panels that drew upon creative practice as a form of research, as well as non-text-based modes of communication. This was the first ANZCA conference to feature a dedicated Visual Communication stream, and the keynote presentation by Barbie Zelizer (Raymond Williams Chair, Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania) on the first day of ANZCA09 dramatically drew attention to the power of the visual in communicating images of death and impending death in news coverage, with particular reference to the “War on Terror”. In addition, a Radio-Audio-Sound stream took place for the first time at ANZCA09 that drew upon the growing fields of Radio Studies and Sound Studies. In addition, critical reflection on creative practice was a theme of the Creativity and Communication conference stream, as was critical reflection on oral communication in the Speech Communication and Rhetoric stream. Thanks to John Tebbutt, Kelly Hussey-Smith, Louise Grayson, Jillian Clare and Patsy McCarthy for their role in convening these conference streams.

A number of streams were convened for the first time at the ANZCA09 conference. These included Communication and Pedagogy, Entertainment, and Science and Environmental Communication. We particularly hope that these very timely emergent contributions to the field will continue in subsequent ANZCA conference, and thanks to those involved in convening these streams, including Ros Petelin, Alan McKee, Christy Collis, Maureen Burns, Alison Henderson and Joan Leach.

Philip Kitchen from the Hull Business School provided us with a ‘road map’ of how integrated marketing communication (IMC) has developed as a field marking out a qualitative shift in corporate communication practices. This helped to inform a range of papers engaged with contemporary questions and issues in corporate communication, as these were engaged with in the Advertising and Integrated Marketing Communication, Interpersonal and Small Group Communication, Organisational Communication and Public Relations streams. Thanks to the convenors of these streams – Gayle Kerr, Park Beede, Mary Power, Colleen Mills, Jennifer Bartlett and Amisha Mehta.

The ANZCA09 conference took place in the shadow of the financial crisis that engulfed the world after the collapse of Lehman Brothers in October 2008, and the widespread questioning of dominant economic and policy doctrines referred to under the umbrella category of “neo-liberalism”. The keynote presentation by Nick Couldry from Goldsmiths University of London picked up on questions of voice and listening as communication practices, and how these have sat in relation to dominant neo-liberal discourses. Themes associated with Nick’s presentation were taken up in streams such as those dealing with Communication Ethics and
Media and Citizenship, among others, and the contributions of Donald Matheson, David Nolan and myself can be noted in this regard.

The concept of “Global Citizenship” was intended to broaden the scope of presentations beyond those linked to Australia and New Zealand, and we were excited by the diversity of speakers the conference was able to attract from around the globe. Jack Linchuan Qiu from the Chinese University of Hong Kong provided an overview of his pioneering research into the “working class network society” as it is emerging in the urban centres of China in particular, and the new tensions and contradictions emerging in contemporary China between the “information have-mores” and the “information have-less”. Many participants were not familiar with this work, and Jack’s engaging presentation of it saw considerable feedback identifying this as a conference highlight. Global perspectives were particularly emphasized in the Global Media and Communication and Intercultural Communication streams, and thanks to Chika Anwanyu and Christina Spurgeon for their work in getting these together.

The intersections between new media technologies, emergent political forces, and shifting identities was another key theme of the conference, that was particularly developed in streams such as Digital and Social Media, Mobile Communication and Political Communication. Thanks to Axel Bruns, Teresa Rizzo, Gerard Goggin, Larissa Hjorth, Ingrid Richardson, Stephen Harrington and Wayne Murphy for getting these streams together. We were delighted to have Brian McNair from the University of Strathclyde with us as a keynote presenter, and his presentation on “Journalism in the Age of Dissolutions” encapsulated themes that emerged in the Journalism and News Media stream organized by Lee Duffield and John Cokley, as well as in other streams. Lee and John also arranged for Steven Gan, the founding editor of Malysikini.com to attend, as part of a lively panel discussion on citizen journalism.

This was the first ANZCA conference in which the Christopher Newell Prize was presented for the best paper dealing with Disability/Equity/Social Justice and Communication. Christopher Newell has been one of Australia’s leading thinkers and activists around issues related to communications access, particularly with reference to disability, and to social justice questions more generally. He had been an active contributor to many ANZCA conferences, and in both his individual work and in collaboration with authors such as Gerard Goggin, a pioneer in publishing on disability and communication. The ANZCA Executive decided at its 2008 meeting that, in the wake of Chris’s untimely death, a prize should be developed that both celebrated and built upon his work. We were honoured to award this prize to Kate Holland from the University of Canberra for her paper “Suicide and the Media: Identifying Some Blind Spots”, and the Executive committed at the 2009 conference to
continue this prize, working with Chris’s family. Kate’s paper was one of a number of presentations around the theme of Disability and Communication, and we acknowledge the work of Gerard Goggin and Fiona Kumari-Campbell in bringing this together.

One of the great pleasures of an ANZCA conference is the opportunity to award prizes for the best papers in various sections. In addition to the inaugural Christopher Newell Prize awarded to Kate Holland, there is the Grant Noble Prize for the best postgraduate paper. This prize has been awarded at ANZCA conferences since 1999, and recognises the contribution of the late Grant Noble to the founding of communications studies in Australia. This year the award was given to Lyn McGaurr from the University of Tasmania for her paper “Putting the Globe in the Sphere: Climate-change Scientists in the Public Sphere”. It was particularly pleasing to see the award go to a contributor to the highly successful Science and Environmental Communication stream. We also saw this year how the Grant Noble Prize can be a stepping stone to bigger things, with the 2004 winner Louise North launching her book _The Gendered Newsroom_ at the conference, and 2003 winner Kerry McCallum hosting next year’s ANZCA conference in Canberra. We thank the School of Arts at the University of New England for its ongoing commitment to the Grant Noble Prize, and were pleased to find out from Dugald Williamson that UNE has chosen to continue to support the award for another three years.

Other prizes that were awarded at the ANZCA09 Conference were:

- Best paper in the Public Relations Stream (sponsored by the QUT School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations): Lynette McDonald and Wina Widaningrum, “Muddy Waters: Lapindo Branta’s Response to the Indonesian Mudflow Crisis”
- Referee’s Choice Award: David Lloyd and Angela Blakely, “Justice Denied”
- Referee’s Choice Award (Highly Commended): David Nolan, “Rethinking Journalism Culture and Authority: Beyond ‘Professionalism’”
- People’s Choice Award (voted for by conference participants): Mark Andrejevic, “Visceral Literacy”
- President’s Award for Best Overall Contribution to ANZCA: Donald Matheson, University of Canterbury.

The future of any academic or professional association rests with those who are today postgraduates and early career researchers. It was therefore particularly pleasing to have people of the caliber of Lucy Morieson and Diana Bossio engaged as ANZCA postgraduate representatives. With the support of the ARC Cultural Research Network (CRN), and the
assistance of CRN members Gerard Goggin and myself, Lucy and Diana were able to run a
pre-conference event particularly targeted at postgraduates, where they received mentoring
and critical feedback on their work from senior academics. CRN provision of bursaries meant
that there were 21 participants from 14 Australian universities from all six states and the
Northern Territory, who received mentoring from the following people: Margie Comrey,
Anne Dunn, Caroline Hatcher, John Hartley, Christy Collis, Gerard Goggin, Tom O’Regan
and Gay Hawkins. As all of these gave their time voluntarily, their contribution is greatly
appreciated, and the activity has received very positive feedback as an event for future
ANZCA conferences.

I hope that you find this collection of papers illuminating, engaging and insightful. I would
conclude by thanking the 2008-2009 ANZCA President Dr. Jocelyn Williams and the
ANZCA Executive for their support for the conference, and note others who enabled the
conference to happen through their contributions:

- Creative Industries Faculty, QUT;
- School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations, QUT;
- Professor Peter Coaldrake, QUT Vice-Chancellor
- International Communications Association;
- School of Journalism and Communication, University of Queensland;
- School of Journalism and Communication, Chinese University of Hong Kong;
- School of Arts, University of New England;
- The Oxford Internet Institute, and Marcus Foth and Jean Burgess as organizers of the
  OII Summer Doctoral program that occurred at QUT alongside the ANZCA
  conference;
- ARC Cultural Research Network;
- Ingrid Volkmer from the Media and Communications program, University of
  Melbourne;
- ANZCA09 Conference Executive: Jennifer Bartlett, Caroline Hatcher, Christina
  Spurgeon and Yunxia Zhu;
- QUT continuing and Professional Education: Carley Chapman, Rachel Mortimer and
  Jason Thomas;
- ‘Those who worked with me on ANZCA09: Kelly Hussey-Smith, Xin Gu, Mimi
  Tsai, Adam Swift and Mark Ryan.
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1 The presentations from the panel session on the future of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), which involved Bruce Meagher and Valerio Veo from SBS as well as Stuart Cunningham and Gay Hawkins, has been included in Media International Australia, No. 133.

2 Mark Andrejevic’s paper is not included in the ANZCA09 Conference Proceedings, but will appear in a forthcoming issue of the journal Culture Unbound as "Reading the Surface: Body Language and Surveillance."

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