

National Conference of the Australian  
Screen Production Education and Research  
Association (ASPERA)

ASPERA  
CONFERENCE  
2008

July 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>

**RMIT University**  
Cnr Swanston and La Trobe Streets  
Melbourne

## WELCOME

RMIT University's School of Applied Communication welcomes delegates to the 2008 Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association (ASPERA) Conference.

This year's conference begins with a public event which explores the relationship of universities that teach film, television and video to the screen production industries their students wish to enter. This event will no doubt stimulate ongoing discussion throughout the conference as it covers topics such as new technologies and industry practice, screen production and research, post-industrial media and a diverse range of learning and teaching issues.

A number of RMIT staff will attend the conference along with delegates from ASPERA member institutions around Australia.

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## **ABOUT ASPERA**

ASPERA is the peak discipline body of Australian tertiary institutions teaching and researching film, video, television and new media as screen based production practices. It was established in 2004 at an initial conference at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne attended by 16 institutions.

ASPERA represents tertiary institutions offering degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including bachelor, master and doctorate in various screen production disciplines. It plays an active role in shaping quality education for those planning to or working in research and production for the screen. It addresses issues of concern to the sector, and is concerned with the status of screen production courses within the education sector. It addresses the relationship between the screen production education sector of the industry and the wider Australian screen industries. It aims to lift the profile of the screen based industries within the wider economic, social and cultural development of Australia.

### **ASPERA's AIMS**

- To produce a regular forum for exchange of ideas for tertiary screen production educators on matters of teaching, assessment, research, quality assurance and course design.
- To develop and foster research relevant to the sector.
- To promote quality professional education for creative artists and craftspeople in the screen industries.
- To develop policy and advocate on behalf of screen production courses within the Australian tertiary sector.
- To provide leadership to professional education, research and community service in screen production in Australian tertiary institutions.
- To liaise with industry, secondary and TAFE sectors on matters of mutual interest relating to screen production.

### **ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The Executive is elected at the AGM by and from members of ASPERA.

The Executive consists of:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Plus one member from a state or territory other than the above, where possible

### **MEMBER INSTITUTIONS**

The Australian Film, Television & Radio  
School  
Bond University  
Charles Sturt University  
Curtin University  
Deakin University  
Edith Cowan University  
Flinders University  
Griffith University  
Macquarie University  
Murdoch University  
Newcastle University  
Notre Dame University  
Queensland University of Technology  
RMIT University  
Swinburne  
University of Canberra

University of South Australia  
University of Technology, Sydney  
Victorian College of the Arts, School of  
Film & Television, University of Melbourne



## **2. Venue Information and Directions**



## VENUE INFORMATION AND DIRECTIONS

The 2008 ASPERA Conference is spread across a number of different venues. All the venues below are represented on the map opposite.

### Monday July 14<sup>th</sup> – Day 1

From 1pm: **Kaleide Theatre**.

5pm – 6pm: Drinks in **Courtroom 2** in the former Melbourne Magistrate's Court (Building 20, Cnr Russell and La Trobe Streets).

7:30pm: Screening of Postgraduate research films, **Kaleide Theatre**.

### Tuesday July 15<sup>th</sup> – Day 2

9am – 6pm: **Kaleide Theatre**.

7:30pm: Conference dinner, **100 Mile Café**, First floor, Cnr Swantson and La Trobe Streets.

### Wednesday July 16<sup>th</sup> – Day 3

9am – 5pm: **The Research Lounge**, Level 5, Building 28\*\*\*.

**\*\*\*You enter Building 28 through Level 5 of Building 8, around to the left from the library entrance.**

### **3. Conference Schedule**

## 2008 ASPERA Conference Schedule

### Monday, July 14, 2008 (Kaleide Theatre)

- 13:00 Registration in Kaleide Theatre foyer
- 13:30 Eric Clarke from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support and Liaison Unit welcomes ASPERA members and other guests and invites us to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land.
- 13:40 Welcome to RMIT from Acting Vice-Chancellor Jim Barber
- 13:50 Introduction from Conference Convenor, Leo Berkeley
- 14:00 **Panel Session 1 – Who is the filmmaker of the future?**
- Chair: Stephen Huxley - Director, School of Film & Television, Swinburne University of Technology.
- Panel: Paul Baiguerra (Catfish Films, Forget the Rules)  
Ewan Burnett (Producer, 'Animalia', Film Victoria Board Member and RMIT Adjunct Professor)  
Monique Schaffer (Digital Media Producer, Fremantle Media Australia)  
Brad Giblin (Technical Project Officer, Film Victoria)
- 15:00 Afternoon tea in Kaleide Theatre foyer
- 15:30 **Panel Session 2 – The University and the screen production/media industries – do they need each other?**
- Chair: Mark Poole (Australian Writers' Guild)
- Panel: Geoff Brown (Executive Director, Screen Producers' Association of Australia)  
Gillian Leahy (Filmmaker and Associate Professor, University of Technology Sydney)  
Christine Rogers (Filmmaker and Lecturer in Media (Screenwriting), RMIT University)  
Steve Warne (Documentary Manager, Film Victoria)  
Tim Thorpe (ScreenMark, New Zealand Screen Council)
- 17:00 Post panel drinks – former Melbourne Magistrates' Court
- 19:30 **Screening showcase in the Kaleide Theatre**

## Tuesday, July 15, 2008 (Kaleide Theatre)

9:00 Introduction to Day 2

9:15 ASPERA President's Address – Nicholas Oughton

### 9:30 **Session 1: New Technologies and Industry practice**

Chair: Leon Marvell

John Cumming, Rachel Wilson, Dominique Sweeney, Bill Mousoulis – Digital Archiving, Distribution and Access (external panellists sponsored by Deakin University)

David Price – The HD experience at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA)

Nicholas Oughton – A safety induction 'blue card' for the film, television and new media industry in Queensland and Australia.

11:00 Morning tea

### 11:30 **Session 2: ASPERA Issues #1**

Chair: Lisa French

Innovation review (Ian Lang)

ERA (Nicholas Oughton & Rachel Wilson)

Carrick Institute/ALTC Briefing (Jenny de Reuck)

13:00 Lunch in Kaleide Theatre foyer

### 14:00 **Session 3: ASPERA Issues #2**

Chair: Alison Wotherspoon

Gillian Leahy – Screen works as Higher Research Degrees; is benchmarking needed for examination?

Peer Review for Screen Works (Leo Berkeley)

15:30 Afternoon tea

### 16:00 **Session 4: Issues in Production and Research**

Chair: Jenny de Reuck

Leo Berkeley – A Good Take: the process as a site for screen production research

Kathryn Millard – Writing and improvising the Digital Essay Film: 'The Boot Cake'

Jenny Stokes – Micro-budget film production

John Hetherington – A Case Study: producing the non-linear documentary, 'A Satellite Solution'

18:00 Sessions end

19:30 **Conference Dinner at 100 Mile Café**

## **Wednesday, July 16, 2008 (The Research Lounge)**

### **9:00 Session 5: Teaching and Learning – Issues and Innovations**

Chair: Michael Sergi

Paul Ritchard and David Carlin – Encouraging Critical Practice in Media Students: the Digital Dossier Initiative

Stephen Huxley – Swinburne Film & Television: Professional Learning

Pat Laughren – Talking with Dinosaurs? – Teaching documentary production in an era of its impending obsolescence.

10:30 Morning Tea

### **11:00 Session 6: The Networked Future**

Chair: John Cumming

David Carlin, Glen Donnar, Seth Keen, Adrian Miles, Paul Ritchard, Allan Thomas, and Rachel Wilson - The Post-industrial Media project

Chris Caines - Lets take this outside: Narrative models for locative media

12:30 Lunch in The Research Lounge

13:30 RMIT facilities tour

14:30 ASPERA Annual General Meeting

15:30 Afternoon tea

16:00 ASPERA Annual General Meeting

**17:00 ASPERA Conference 2008 closing drinks sponsored by Victorian College of the Arts, School of Film & Television, University of Melbourne.**

## **4. Annual General Meeting 2008**

# ASPERA Annual General Meeting 2008 Agenda

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association will be held on Wednesday, July 16, 2008 at RMIT University from 2:30pm. The minutes from the 2007 AGM are contained in the pages following the agenda.

AGM Chair: Nick Oughton  
AGM Secretary: Rachel Wilson

## Agenda

1. Welcome to AGM 2008
2. Confirmation of minutes from AGM 2007
3. Business arising from previous minutes
4. President's address: Nick Oughton
5. Secretary's report: Rachel Wilson
6. Treasurer's report: Alison Wotherspoon
7. Vice-President's report: Leo Berkeley
8. Review of Constitution: Role of Advisory Council
9. Appointment of outgoing ASPERA President to Advisory Council
- 10. Election of Executive for 2008-09**  
The positions vacant will be Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and one ordinary member. The President for 2008-09 will become Leo Berkeley. The new Vice-President will host the 2009 Conference. In the event of a contest for any position, election will be by secret ballot.
11. Any other business

## Agenda Business

### Motion 1

It is proposed that a new clause be put into the ASPERA constitution to more clearly recognise the role of the *Advisory Council*. This clause should be placed in Part 1, Definitions, (1) in the rules after *Executive Committee*.

*Advisory Council*- Sub-Committee appointed by the Executive Committee and directed to carry out specific tasks on behalf of the Executive Committee. Members are appointed by the Executive Committee as referred to in rule 14 (5) of section 3.

Motion proposed by Nicholas Oughton.





## **5. Annual General Meeting 2007 Minutes**

## **7. ASPERA President's Report**

## President's Report: Conference 2008

This has been an active year for ASPERA, mainly precipitated by a change in Government and a review of the role of research in Australia and its Universities. The RQF has become the ERA and it remains to be seen if there are any advantages in this transformation for our Association. One immediate disadvantage has been the exclusion of 'Impact' (included in RQF) from the new, ERA schedule of research indicators. ASPERA advocated strongly for the retention of impact in any new iteration, arguing that it succinctly defines a measurable outcome for screen production work - measurable in our terms and by our peers.

The ERA Consultation round provides a vehicle for ASPERA members to advocate our Association's policy. Happily, our discipline, *Film Television and Digital Media* has been recognised in the ERA and is located in the *Humanities and Creative Arts* discipline cluster. This cluster will be reviewed through consultation with stakeholders from July to October 2008. It will provide an opportunity to recommend those indicators that have already been highlighted in the ASPIRI index. Usefully, exhibition and performance (e.g. cinema, festival, broadcast, web-based and other forms of dissemination) are recognised in the *ERA Consultation Paper* as valid indicators of success in 'applied' research. Some have argued, however, that ghettoising our production outputs in only the 'applied' domain will make us discountable, and the poor relation of those disciplines recognised as generators of 'pure' research.

It appears that ERA consultation is more likely to recognise inputs from Universities than discipline based associations and professional bodies such as ASPERA. Therefore, we should act decisively and vociferously to broadcast our policy and wishes within our home institutions. If we convince our research managers/leaders of our worth (which should be self-evident), we have a good chance of getting our message through to the ARC and ERA. Of course, ASPERA has an important role to play too by collectively developing a cohesive research policy for its members to advocate, as well as widely agitating for the adoption of our preferred research position.

In many respects, this journey has begun with excellent work contributed by Dr Jocko Petkovic with his successful application to the ALTC for 220,000 dollars, with which to conduct a three-year study of assessment and reporting regimes for post-graduate screen productions. This research project involves seven ASPERA film schools. In addition, Professor Ian Lang has provided an erudite and persuasive submission to the *Innovation Review* on behalf of ASPERA, while a number of members have made public comment on the *Screen Australia Bill*. ASPERA has also become associated with an ARC funded research project into the psychosocial hazards of arts industry practice and workplaces.

As many of us contribute to scholarly journals, the ranking of these journals is of great importance to us. We are able to submit recommendations regarding the provisional rankings provided by ARC until 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008. Institutions and scholarly societies (e.g. ASPERA) are invited to make suggestions for addition, deletion, promotion and relegation to the rankings.

Minister Kim Carr (Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) was invited to attend this year's conference as keynote speaker and initially indicated that he would do so. Unfortunately, other matters interceded and we have missed an opportunity to press our case to him in person. He is now, however, very much aware of our existence.

Over the past year ASPERA members, particularly the hard working executive have participated in many events. These include: *Innovation Review* consultation sessions held in a number of states; the Arts and Innovation workshops provided by CHASS; HASS on

the Hill; RQF Discipline Workshops; ERA briefings; meetings with government advisors to Minister Kim Carr and; meetings with ACUADS and many others groups. In addition the executive committee have conducted a number of face-to-face meetings as well as tele-conferences.

I believe that this year, ASPERA has further established itself in the Australia landscape of recognised professional associations. The ASPERA name is on more lips and considered in more councils than ever before.

One of several ways forward is to promote the value of the ASPERA brand within our own institutions. Our most powerful allies may be our own Universities. Other allies are the professional organizations associated with our discipline cluster such as ACUADS and ASDA.

A further way is to argue that 'new knowledge', linked to applied research outcomes provides a meaningful, robust and measurable strategy for assessing research performance, and that ASPERA are best placed to define the meanings, provide the robustness and establish the metrics for the screen production discipline.

We have advanced some way since our genesis in 2004, but must go further to establish ASPERA as one of the most recognised and respected professional associations in Australia.

I would like to thank those people, especially the members of the executive committee, Leo Berkeley, Rachel Wilson, Mick Broderick and Alison Wotherspoon, who have made a contribution to ASPERA's distinctive progress throughout this past year.

*Nick Oughton*  
*ASPERA Conference 2008*



## **8. Conference Paper Abstracts**

# **Digital Archiving, Distribution and Access**

**(sponsored by Deakin University School of Creative Arts)**

Leon Marvell, Rachel Wilson, Dominique Sweeney, Bill Mousoulis and John Cumming

Through the AARNET and VERnet consortiums institutional networked infrastructure is continuing its rapid development within the Australian university system. These developments present both challenges and opportunities for screen educators. This panel will discuss a number of archiving initiatives and pose the question: how do we ensure that our needs are met by these networks and technologies into the future?

Leon Marvell is Associate Professor in Film and Video at the School of Communication and Creative Arts, Deakin.

Rachel Wilson lectures at RMIT where her PhD project is the Establishment of the ASPERA online archive/repository.

Dominique Sweeney works for the Museum of Democracy in Canberra and has just completed the film 'Masked Corroborees of the Northwest' as a Phd project at ANU.

Bill Mousoulis is the founder of Melbourne Independent Filmmakers (MIF), a website currently representing the work of 76 Australian independent filmmakers.

John Cumming lectures at Deakin and is working on the development of a repository for Australian independent film and video that is not otherwise in distribution.

External panellists sponsored by Deakin University



# A Safety Induction 'Blue Card' For the Film, Television and New Media Industry in Queensland and Australia.

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Failures to manage occupational risk competently and comply with occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation can jeopardise the attainment of business objectives, limit or negate profits, and inhibit an entities sustainability. Enterprises and individuals failing to manage occupational risk appropriately may also incur financial or custodial penalties. Some businesses may even be curtailed as a result of enforced closure or costly and ongoing litigation.

It has been widely demonstrated that the health and wellbeing of workers are important contributors to the success of any business. As Queensland and Australia's film, television and new media industries engage in a fiercely competitive global marketplace, the development of a flourishing OHS culture and high levels of workplace morale will deliver valuable competitive advantages to the industry.

A recent OHS study, *Film and Television Production: A Risky Business* (2005),<sup>1</sup> and the interim report *A Systematic Occupational Health and Safety Management Framework for Queensland's Film, Television and New Media Industry*<sup>2</sup> (2007), suggest that a number of challenges face Queensland's film, television and new media industries. These studies show that OHS risk is currently not appropriately managed in broad areas of the industry. Indicators of this failure are:

- A general lack of understanding of OHS legislation and standards. Fifty-six per cent of those working in the industry have no, or very little, knowledge of OHS regulations and standards;
- A failure in many cases to implement a recognisable OHS program in workplaces. Sixty-four per cent of workers say that they are not aware of an OHS program operating where they work;
- A failure to conduct risk assessments and workplace inspections. Only 28 per cent of workers reported carrying out risk assessments on a 'regular' basis and only 21 per cent of workers 'regularly' inspect their workplace for hazards;
- A limited dissemination of OHS information, and minimal and non-continuous training, with 46 per cent of workers report never having received OHS training;
- Low workforce morale in relation to OHS. A worker commented: 'the carnal nature of this industry militates against safe practice. People are unprepared to ask for safe conditions in case they do not get employed again.' Another worker commented paradoxically: 'There are no health and safety procedures [at work], but we do work in a healthy and safe environment'. Other respondents expressed similar sentiments.

Research indicates that similar conditions persist in other States

The 'Safety Induction Blue Card' introduced into the Construction industry in many states throughout Australia has proved to be successful. This initiative provides basic OHS competencies for all those working in the building and allied industries and must be attained by all workers. This OHS intervention is improving safety performance industry wide, and increasingly protecting the wellbeing of workers. With the adoption of national certification, OHS inductions in the construction industry will be harmonised across all states providing consistency, uniformity and integration.

This paper examines the notion of introducing a Safety Induction Blue Card certification into the Queensland film, television and new media industry as a pilot project and precursor to national implementation. This strategy will assist address the OHS deficiencies noted above.

# A Good Take: the process as a site for screen production research

Leo Berkeley

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Screen production as an academic research discipline is struggling to establish itself, both within the broader higher education sector and in relation to the film and television industry. The lack of conceptual and analytical frameworks with which to understand screen production and which resonate with the experience of professional practitioners contributes to this. This paper will argue that a focus on the production process may be the best chance for screen production research to define itself as a distinct field of study. Drawing on my experiences making a micro-budget feature film called How To Change The World, the paper will offer some examples of elements in the production process that reward close scrutiny and may have some wider application.

# Talking with Dinosaurs? – Teaching Documentary Production in an Era of Its Impending Obsolescence.

Associate Professor Pat Laughren

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This paper reflects on the role of the documentary in screen production education and the implications for Australian screen educators of current debates about the form's place in the audiovisual schedule.

The first films made in Australia were documentary productions and, arguably, it is the documentary that provides the thread of continuity running through more than a century of Australian filmmaking. Today, our national documentary sector is considering its future and negotiating a landscape marked by the reorganisation and consolidation of the federal funding agencies, shifts in investment and taxation regimes, and technological challenges to accepted patterns of production, distribution and exhibition. As documentary makers stand at the crossroads between the state and the private sectors, national and international imperatives, divergent technologies, and the potentially conflicting goals of entertaining, informing and instructing, the paper asks: Is it time to reconsider the place of the documentary in the screen curriculum?

Topics broached include: What is it? Who makes it? Who pays for it? How does it reach its audience? And how is technology transforming it? But the key question remains: Why teach it?

# Writing and Improvising the Digital Essay Film : 'The Boot Cake'

Associate Professor Kathryn Millard

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How can insights from music and the performing arts inform film making processes and story structures? How can we establish the 'rules of the game' for filmic improvisations? What is the appeal of silent film techniques for contemporary filmmakers? This presentation reflects on these questions as they relate to the writing and production strategies for Kathryn Millard's recently completed feature-length essay film about the ghosts and reincarnations of Charlie Chaplin's Tramp in India: *The Boot Cake*.

# Lets take this outside: narrative models for locative media

Chris Caines

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Networked and locative media displayed using either browsers or handsets are characterised by being granular and context aware in nature. Video must be navigated when included in these formats echoing the associative narrative structures and editing strategies of the experimental cinema tradition made manifest now by mouse clicks, layout juxtapositions and by the very personal cinema inherent in carrying specific media into specific locations. While these mediums go far beyond being mere empty vessels in the delivery of video, to the point of breaking traditional ideas of the moving image as time based media, they also utilise some of the aesthetic strategies of cinema in the construction of new hybrid narrative models.

In this paper I will provide examples of three related networked media projects, a locative phone piece, a web based video doco and a GPS driven online work and examine how they operate as narrative screen works and how they relate to a historical lineage of cinematic techniques. In particular documenting the narrative models utilising the particular resonance of place, both virtual and actual, in locative storytelling. This paper will provide a framework for thinking about locative and online media as granular and embedded forms and relate them to the granular forms contained within the screenbased media forms that precede them.

# Producing the Non-linear Documentary: 'A Satellite Solution'

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The documentary, *A Satellite Solution*, is a case study investigation into how digital communication technologies (primarily satellite TV) have impacted the quality of life of a rural community comprising 270 households in south east Queensland (Australia) between 1999 and 2006. The research describes a community-mediated process by which 50 households adopted and then responded to receiving free-to-air TV services for the first time. The author, instigated and facilitated the project in the community and as well, recorded and produced all the material contained in the documentary. The paper will highlight the production components of the research set against the context of this participatory activity.

This online documentary is a web site containing research materials (policy documents, significant correspondence and reports) video interviews and location sequences, maps and technical information such as, how to install a satellite system, where to find free to air satellite services, what broadband incentives are available etc.

Importantly it also represents innovation in film and television and particularly, the researcher's selected art form, the documentary.

This paper, will document the production of the web site and how this new form impacts on the production style of traditional linear productions and as well, what filmmakers working in this emerging non-linear form may need to plan for.

As a secondary outcome, this scholarly site represents a hybrid written and audio visual domain, that addresses many academic concerns over the rigour of arts projects, by being able to provide research validation, in a similar manner to traditional text based forms.

Authentication of research findings and sources can be assessed, as if it were published text, either on screen or via printed hard copy.

# Encouraging Critical Practice in Media Students: the Digital Dossier Initiative

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In a fluid and rapidly changing media landscape, today's screen production students more than ever require skills in 'critical practice' to enable them to play leading roles in tomorrow's screen culture and industries. It is extremely difficult to find pedagogical approaches that facilitate student learning of creative and technical production skills and at the same time place these within a critical and theoretical context that encourages the questioning of and experimentation with existing production and aesthetic paradigms. Two second-year undergraduate screen production courses at RMIT Media have introduced 'digital dossiers' as part of an attempt to foster a learning culture of 'critical practice'. These digital dossiers, when embedded within a structure of process-based learning, may play an important role, we argue, in helping students identify and challenge assumptions they bring to their understanding of screen practice.

How to encourage critical practice in media students? This paper outlines the introduction into two second year Media subjects at RMIT University of what we call Digital Dossiers, containing annotated clips and short films relevant to each subject. We will first contextualise this initiative within our overall approach to the pedagogical goal of encouraging our students to develop skills in critical practise. We will then outline: what we used to do before the digital dossiers; how the digital dossiers work; what other versions of such collections of clips for teaching purposes have been put together elsewhere and in what contexts; how our dossiers are produced and how we and the students use them. Finally we will open up some issues, challenges and questions we are thinking about with regard to further development of this initiative.

# **The Post-industrial Media Project**

Post-Industrial Media (PIM), RMIT

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The Post Industrial Media project is a collaborative project undertaken by staff within the RMIT Media program. Post industrial media is a term that we have adopted to refer to the changes in media production, design, distribution and use that are the consequence of distributed networks, digitisation, and social software systems. The project specifically deals with media education in the tertiary sector and describes the teaching and learning experiments undertaken within the Media program to develop appropriate teaching methods and curriculum content for graduates who intend to enter the post industrial media landscape.







