The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Michael Spence, was Guest of Honour at the annual Academic Dinner at St Paul’s College on 7 April when 73 men were honoured for high academic achievement in 2008. These included three University Medals – Chris Croke (History), Tom Grujic (Physics) and Laurie Field (Mathematics) – and 16 First Class Honours degrees. Dr Spence spoke about the true meaning of genius as a gift, which carries responsibilities to use for the benefit of the broader society.

A number of students pursuing their studies overseas were also acknowledged: those going to Oxford include Nik Kirby (Rhodes Scholar) to read philosophy; Aaron Rathmell (Peter Cameron Oxford Scholar) will be taking the BCL; Tom Grujic (Clarendon Scholar) to read physics; Stuart Thomson, who is already at Oxford and in September will move into his doctoral program on the Patristic writings, has recently been awarded a Clarendon Scholarship; and Laurie Field has a fully-funded doctoral place at the University of Chicago to further his studies in pure mathematics.

The entry of the Academic Table was announced by a “Fanfare for an Academic Occasion”, composed for the event by Chris Williams, newly appointed Master of the Warden’s Musick, and brilliantly performed by Tek Chua, second year French Horn student at the Conservatorium.

Election to Senate

Nominations will be called in August for five graduates of the University to be elected to Senate for a term of four years.

This is an important opportunity for committed alumni to make a significant contribution to the governance of the University through their professional experience, management skills, vision and commitment. The University has a tradition of open, representative governance, which underpins its success as one of the world’s leading academic institutions.

There are approximately eight Senate meetings a year, and Graduate Senate Fellows are automatically members of the Alumni Council, which also has a busy schedule.

The University wishes to encourage all alumni who would like to meet this important and rewarding challenge to consider standing.

For more details, visit: www.usyd.edu.au/senate/Elections_semester2.shtml

For confidential enquiries, contact Lis Bergmann at L.Bergmann@secretariat.usyd.edu.au

The University of Sydney

Election to the Alumni Council of the University of Sydney

University of Sydney graduates are advised that an election will be held for the Alumni Council by and from members of the Convocation on 11 November 2009. Details are available at: www.convocation.usyd.edu.au.
Date with Domingo

Sydney Conservatorium opera graduate Valda Wilson (pictured) finished ahead of 760 contenders to claim a place in the line-up for Operalia, Placido Domingo’s World Opera Competition in Budapest, Hungary in July.

The finalists will be coached by Domingo before singing a role with the orchestra conducted by the great Spanish tenor.

Wilson, from Castlecrag, said, “Only 40 singers are selected for Operalia, so I am absolutely stunned and stoked.” She has been in residence since last October at the London National Opera Studio, one of the world’s leading opera schools, after winning the 2008 Opera Foundation Australia’s Rockend NOS Scholarship worth $82,000.

Wilson said her course at the NOS included performances directed by John Copley, a concert of operatic excerpts with the Welsh National Opera’s orchestra and concerts at the Barrandov Opera in Suffolk, Fulham Palace and at Harrogate.

“At our end-of-year showcase at the Hackney Empire in East London I will be singing Madam Silberklang (Der Schauspieldirektor) and a bit of Barbarina (Le nozze di Figaro). After this period of study I will audition for companies in the UK and Europe.”

Dysco nights

By John Sheldon

In the 1950s students of Classics at the University performed a play annually in Latin or Greek. On 4 July 1959 they staged the modern world premiere of Dyscolus (The Grumpy Old Man).

It was an historic occasion. Dyscolus, by the Athenian dramatist Menander (ca 342-291 BC), was only rediscovered in 1952 in an ancient monastery near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt.

Swiss millionaire industrialist and collector of Greek papyri Martin Bodmer had bought it and Victor Martin, Professor of Greek in Geneva, prepared the first modern edition for publication. I remember the excitement as we gazed for the first time on this treasure of ancient drama; and our joy to discover that it was full of interesting human situations, lively characters and humour. Just the stuff for a night of theatre.

The four lecturers in the Greek department at that time were Professor George Shipp, Dr Athanasius Treweek, Mr John Quincey and Dr Bill Ritchie, all of whom had an interest in Greek New Comedy, the genre to which Dyscolus belonged and of which it was the sole surviving complete example.

Nevertheless, the text showed the ravages of time with many small gaps and copyists’ mistakes. Our learned preceptors were busy correcting the text so, just when you thought you had your part right, along came a change or, worse, attribution of your lines to another character. It had one long-lasting benefit for the play: the discovery that an entirely new character, not mentioned in the Dramatis Personae, was needed to make sense of it. In most subsequent editions of Dyscolus this character – the Mother of Sostratus – is included, acknowledging Sydneienses.

Our producer was the late David Ferraro, a clever student and a fine actor. He also played the lead of the Grumpy Old Man. The late Carol Manners was his long-suffering maidservant. Among others taking part were Peter Garnsey, now Emeritus Professor of the History of Classical Antiquity at Cambridge, as the hero’s father; and our two prompters, the late Ron Emmerick, for many years Professor of Iranian Studies in Hamburg, and David Clines, until 2008, Professor of Biblical Studies in Sheffield.

Bruce Marshall of New England and Macquarie Universities and, among other things, long-serving secretary of the Australasian Society for Classical Studies, took the role of the slave Pyrrhias.

As usual in New Comedy the “chorus” was mute, but John Gordon, the legendary University carillonist, provided the dancing girls with original music. A live sheep also appeared and it was my task, as Sicon the cook-cum-butcher, to drag her onstage, cursing her recalcitrance, which was unfair as the sheep behaved impeccably.

We later discovered that Dyscolus has been staged in Geneva a month before ours, but disappointment was dispelled somewhat when we learned that the performance had been in French. We could still claim the modern world premiere in the original language.

A commemorative event is planned for 17 September in the Nicholson Museum. All welcome. Info: Dr Alastair Blanshard @ alastair.blanshard@arts.usyd.edu.au.
Changing of the guard

In February this year, Dr Barry Catchlove (MBBS ’66) stepped down as President of the Alumni Council after three distinguished years at the helm, handing over to David Turner (BArch ’71 MDesScHons ’97).

On Dr Catchlove’s watch much has been achieved. His first act was to re-badge the former Standing Committee of Convocation as the University of Sydney Alumni Council. In itself, this achieved an enormous leap in exposure to the University and alumni community. From that new beginning he worked with Tracey Beck and the Alumni Relations Office to develop a strong alumni advisory role for the Council, resulting in a vibrant, collaborative approach to alumni programming.

Under this new model, the Council has provided significant input into the development of alumni priorities. Barry has also been tireless in his support of these and hopes to make a contribution to the governance of the University when he stands for Senate as an Elected Graduate Fellow later this year.

David Turner FRAIA is an architect who has served on the Architecture and University Alumni Councils for three years. He was a Senior Lecturer and Deputy Head of the School of Marketing in the Faculty of Commerce and Economics at UNSW from 1992 to 2002, and also managed the MCom degree, in which he initiated a social engagement program for thousands of overseas students. A feature of his teaching was the involvement of industry guests and alumni in classes to reinforce academic theory with real world experience.

His first act as President has been to ensure that at least one Councillor attends every graduation to welcome new graduates to the alumni family. Looking ahead, he would like to explore ways for alumni to become more closely engaged with the intellectual life of the University and assist it in its philanthropic endeavours.

David Turner looks forward to meeting as many alumni as possible, as well as the wonderful staff and volunteers who contribute so much energy and commitment to alumni life.

More than 130 research centres and institutes. Innovative solutions and techniques in science, medicine, sport, business, education, art and culture – benefiting our world, benefiting our society. Continue this tradition today by including the University in your will. Contact us to find out how your wise decision now can have a lasting impact for generations to come.

One wise decision. One lasting legacy.

Bequest Office: Ms Wendy Marceau, Senior Development Officer (Planned Giving) The University of Sydney NSW 2006
T: +61 2 8627 8492  F: +61 2 8627 8819  E: bequests@usyd.edu.au
Bassoonists in Beijing

Professor Kim Walker, Dean and Principal of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and an internationally celebrated bassoonist, was recently invited to China to open and take part in the Beijing Bassoon Festival, an extraordinary, week-long gathering of great exponents of the instrument.

The Beijing Central Conservatorium of Music, like the Sydney Conservatorium, is regarded as one of the top ten music schools in the world. They have done a great deal to stimulate the current explosion of interest in China in playing and listening to Western classical music. For the Bassoon Festival in the second week of May, they challenged every bassoonist in China, amateur and professional, students and teachers, to become involved.

Specially for the occasion, they formed the Universal Bassoon Ensemble, consisting of Professor Shi Li from the Vienna Conservatory, Professor Valery Popov from the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatorium of Music, Magnus Nilsson, Principal Bassoon with the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, Mor Biron of the Berlin Philharmonic and Professor Walker from Sydney.

Supplemented by distinguished Chinese guest artists on oboe and piano, they played concerts to capacity audiences at the Concert Hall of the Beijing Conservatorium. Professor Walker conducted two days of master classes then performed as soloist to a full house in the Gala Concert at the National Centre for Performing Arts.

On returning to Sydney, Professor Walker reflected: “It was an extraordinary event, made possible not simply by the Chinese having greater resources, in terms of musicians and money, but by them being courageous enough to commit those resources to an international festival on such a grand scale.

“We in Sydney will have the chance to show we can do the same in April and May next year, when we will host musicians from 50 countries to perform 20 concerts of contemporary music all around Sydney in the World Music Days Festival. Also in April 2010, our Research Symposium will bring leading scholars and performers from leading Asian music institutions to Sydney for a major international conference on the theme of Preserving Tradition and Facing the Future in Asian musical and visual cultures.

“On a personal note, it was great to see so many of my past pupils now accepted among the elite of international bassoonists.”

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The Con has launched a public search to locate almost 2000 musicians and music teachers who studied there before 1990, when it became part of the University of Sydney.

Since 1990, music graduates have received degrees conferred by the University. Predecessors who received Diplomas in Teaching or Performance, Bachelors of Music or Music Teaching and other qualifications from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music also have the right to be officially recognised as alumni of the University of Sydney.

Problem: The Con has the names of all those who gained Diplomas in Music Teaching and Performance since its foundation in 1915, but only a few of addresses and telephone numbers are available.

All pre-1990 students are warmly invited to make themselves known by phone, email or letter:

Mick Le Moignan, The Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia
Tel: +61 2 9351 1385; email: m.lemoignan@usyd.edu.au
Get the best. First.

When you talk to SydneyTalent, you get early access to many of the University of Sydney’s best students.

Get them before they’ve graduated, before other companies have a chance to snap them up. Get the brightest talent of tomorrow, today, trained and matched to your business needs.

Talk to SydneyTalent today.

To find out more, visit our website: www.sydneytalent.com.au or call us on (02) 8627 8000

---

Great Hall
150th Anniversary

Son et Lumière
25-27 September 2009

A spectacular show of sound and light, marking the anniversary of the University’s Great Hall in Sydney.

Mark your diary!

For more information:
email: rsvp@usyd.edu.au
phone: (02) 9036 9278

The University of Sydney
Madagascar: Development disrupted

Paul Porteous (BEc ’85 LLB ’88), subject of the Autumn 2008 cover story on Madagascar, analyses the current post-coup situation

In 2002, after disputed elections, Madagascar faced six months of political turmoil, which shut down virtually all public services. Critically, and to its credit, the military did not intervene – the Generals at the time favoured the Malagasy way of solving issues through dialogue. A successful businessman, Marc Ravalomanana, won that election and embarked on major development of the nation. Despite opposition claims of commercial conflicts of interest, he was re-elected in 2006 with almost 60 per cent of the vote, and reaffirmed with elections to the Senate in 2008.

Late last year, Antananarivo (Tana), the capital of Madagascar, was buzzing – hotels were full, streets were humming, construction and small businesses were booming. The guiding map for development, the Madagascar Action Plan [Porteous was one of its authors] had achieved remarkable progress in key areas of health, education, family planning, environment and responsible governance, with the full support of the international community. However, in January 2009, tensions began to mount as the international economic crisis resulted in soaring food and fuel prices, exacerbated by severe cyclones and drought.

The opposition exploited these tensions but its call for strikes failed and protest rallies quickly dwindled to a few thousand people out of a population of 20 million. The turning point was not mass protest but the intervention by a renegade military group. The origins of dissatisfaction in the military related to the successful side of development – their salaries had not been increased and their status and power in the country had been downgraded, with redirection of funds towards development.

This eventually led to the ousting of the government in a military coup in March. Now, in contrast to just a few months earlier, demonstrators clash daily with military and police, Parliament has been sacked, a half billion dollar tourism industry is ruined, tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs, many businesses have been looted, national parks are being pillaged and ethnic divisions are resurfacing.

The new “President”, Andry Rajoelina, an ex-DJ and marketing man, may have got what he wished for but now is in serious trouble. The Achilles heel of his “popular and democratic revolution” is that it is not very popular and not at all democratic. The international community has responded by widely condemning the coup and suspending non-humanitarian development assistance. The potential for civil war is high and the infrastructure of government is collapsing at a time when 250,000 people are in desperate need of food aid, due to floods and drought.

Behind the international headlines are underlying issues of poverty, hunger and the cultural origins of the conflict. Chief among the complaints of protestors is the proposal to lease to the South Korean conglomerate Daewoo, up to half Madagascar’s arable land for growing food to be exported back to South Korea. For a nation suffering food insecurity, this is explosive. Even more important is the symbolic injury of leasing land to foreigners. Malagasy identity is deeply connected to ancestral lands in the same way Aboriginal Australians’ attachment to traditional lands is essential to their identity. On the other hand, the deal reportedly would have created 45,000 new jobs and $2 billion in investment in Madagascar.

The international community really has not come to terms with balancing the impact of such deals as more nations seek to secure their food sources through leasing large tracts of land in poorer African nations.

As Madagascar implodes and political and military force replaces the development imperative, there is a rush to seek solutions. Resolving conflict has often targeted either the lowest common denominator (focus on what we have in common) or offered technical solutions to complex problems (new forms of consultation, building understanding and confidence). In the right circumstances these can be effective. However, anyone who has felt the heat of national conflict knows that passions and emotions can spin out of control at critical times. Forces they can scarcely control buffet political groups. Factions lose sight of their original purpose and either lash out at their opponents or disintegrate through mistrust and conspiracy theories. Simplistic solutions (“You are either with us or against us”) and demands to “prove” loyalty (“can we really trust you?”) replace the hard work of making progress on the real issues.

Similarly, in avoiding the key issues of poverty and hunger, political parties in Madagascar have preferred to focus around polarising personalities. The result is that people are now divided but are not sure what they are divided about. Having worked in some of the worst drought- and flood-affected areas of Madagascar, I have seen the remarkable resilience and strength of the Malagasy people. Tragically, however, the long-term consequences of the coup will be severe. The challenge now is for the leadership to ensure that Madagascar, with all its human and resource assets, doesn’t become the land of perpetually missed opportunities.
The play’s the thing

By Alana Valentine

When I was at Sydney University in 2000, studying for a Graduate Diploma in Museum Studies, the traditional Muslim headscarf, or hijab, was noticeable around the campus. So were ill-fitting tracksuit pants and impossibly high heels and the ubiquitous never-washed denim jackets. In Australian universities, students have the freedom to wear pretty much whatever they like.

In 2006 I began interviews with Australian Muslim women about their experience of living in Australia. One rainy night in Auburn, above a Turkish Delight shop, I was in the offices of the intercultural organization Affinity, where I met a young Afghani-Australian woman. She told me an incredible story about her family’s escape from Afghanistan through Pakistan to Australia; of her schooling and university studies and now, of her decision to wear the hijab. It had split her family and had been vehemently opposed by her aunts – all highly educated professionals. But she had persisted and gradually, after many tears, the family had begun to accept her decision.

Almost a year later Emma Buzo contacted me. She wanted to commission a companion piece to her father’s late-’60s play Norm and Ahmed. Alex Buzo mentored me in 1985 during the production of my first play, Multiple Choice, at the Australian Theatre for Young People. We met at the Red Rose Cafe in Macquarie Street, I ordered pie and chips and he had a packet of peppermint blizzards. He told me that if I wanted an actor to emphasise a certain word I should simply underline it. I told him I’d been instructed that acting was a subtle art form and I should not try to dictate the way a line was spoken.

“Nah, underline it where you think the emphasis is,” he said. He also advised me not to use direct address to the audience in my first stage play. I did so despite his warning and he came up to me on opening night to say he was “quite wrong” and that it had worked a treat. To me that is a measure of courage – this gifted and experienced writer willing to be surprised and revise his judgment of an opinionated upstart. So I welcomed Emma’s invitation to conceive a “response”, of sorts, to Norm and Ahmed.

My mind returned to Auburn. I resolved to speak to the “other side” of the story and conducted interviews with the aunts as well as many other Muslim women, young and old, who had a diversity of perspectives and opinions on the wearing of the scarf.

Shafana and Aunt Sarrinah took up the investigation, elucidated by Buzo in Norm and Ahmed of “acceptance” on other’s terms, leapsfrogged ’80s multiculturalism, and lands us in the early 21st century. Here Australian-born children of migrants are seeking to reconnect with their spiritual heritage in opposition to their more assimilationist elders.

The play tells the story of Shafana Ransari, an Australian-born Muslim, for whom the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City were the catalyst for study and seeking answers from the religion of her heritage. She emerges from her investigations with a deep experience of faith, a transforming encounter that takes her beyond the rituals of her Afghani culture into a deep and sustaining spiritual life. Emblematically she decides to wear the hijab. This deeply troubles her family, particularly her Aunt Sarrinah who is vehemently opposed to it. Shafana and Aunt Sarrinah is partly a plea for understanding, partly a bellow of rage from Muslim Australian women about the ignorance and misunderstanding that surrounds the wearing of the hijab.

I made Run Rabbit Run (2004) as a pure verbatim play because one of my intentions was to surprise audiences with the lucidity, philosophy and courage of people who might stereotypically be dismissed as uncultured footy fans. I made Parramatta Girls (2007) as “massaged” verbatim because I wanted audiences to bear witness to the brutalisation of the Australian nation in its almost continuous history of incarcerating children; and to puzzle over the adults it produced – some of the toughest, funniest, most loving women you could meet. I hope Shafana and Aunt Sarrinah will surprise audiences with its portrait of Afghani Muslim women who are articulate, highly educated, deeply spiritual and enraged by the way Australian and global media paint them as oppressed, meek, and silent.

To be part of a project where Buzo’s theme and concerns might be reignited through a new work, to a time and place where the very notion of “otherness” inherent in his play has shifted fundamentally is genuinely exciting. In effect, it allows the “conversation” to move into a third dimension: not just Buzo speaking anew to the 21st Century, but Buzo reflected and responded to through the voice of a contemporary playwright. It’s a vision of Australian theatre as a historical continuum, to speak not only to the past and the present but to engage with the future.

In an Adelaide Review article in November 1998 entitled The Narrowing of Theatre in the 1990s, Alex Buzo wrote, “The most common road sign in Australia is form one lane’. During the 30 years I have earned a living as a professional writer I have learned one thing, The theatre will recover and become an art form again. I am sure of it. No longer will everything come from one lane.”

See the Diary (page 40) for details of Alana Valentine’s Sydney Ideas lecture and the Seymour Centre season of Shafana and Aunt Sarrinah.
SICILY AND THE ISLANDS
OCTOBER 2009  FROM $8,990 INCLUDING AIR TRAVEL*
Known as the ‘jewel of the Mediterranean’ Sicily’s many highlights include Greek temples, Byzantine mosaics, Arab architecture and Baroque streetscapes as well as beautiful volcanic scenery. This 18-day tour explores Sicily’s rich cultural and natural heritage and includes three days in the Aeolian Islands and a trip to the summit of Mount Etna.

GRAND TOUR OF ITALY
OCTOBER 2009  FROM $9,250 INCLUDING AIR TRAVEL*
Take the classic tour of Italy in style, commencing with the world of the Roman Republic and Empire then moving on to the Middle Ages and the glorious world of the Renaissance. Travelling at a relaxed pace the itinerary includes the Bay of Naples, medieval Umbria, Florence, Ravenna, Venice and Rome, where we enjoy a private viewing of the Sistine Chapel.

THE FABULOUS BAY OF NAPLES
OCTOBER 2009  FROM $8,100 INCLUDING AIR TRAVEL*
Join us for a celebration of the distinctive landscape, history and culture of the Bay of Naples. Our itinerary includes Pompei and Herculanum, the spectacular Amalfi coast, the islands of Ischia and Capri, Ravello, the Greek ruins at Paestum and an in-depth look at the vibrant renaissance and baroque culture of Naples itself, Italy’s southern capital.

ISTANBUL AND VENICE
OCTOBER 2009  FROM $8,500 INCLUDING AIR TRAVEL*
This tour explores the shared history and outstanding physical beauty of these two great medieval cities. Spending a week in each we enjoy the history, art and culture that blended influences from East and West creating unique and unforgettable destinations that captured the imagination of early travellers and continue to dazzle visitors today.

* Does not include taxes and fuel surcharges.
Mentoring is widely recognised as one of the most worthwhile and satisfying ways in which the more experienced can help the younger or less experienced. Not only does the recipient gain invaluable insights and knowledge but also, mentors find it immensely rewarding to help someone make good decisions about their professional development.

Now University of Sydney alumni have the opportunity to become online mentors to University students, through our new alumni online community. Previous mentoring experience is not necessary, simply a desire to help a student, plus the time to spend – decided mutually between you and the student but normally about an hour a week for as few or as many weeks as suits.

This alumni-student mentoring process is intended to focus primarily on career development, and will complement any academic mentoring students receive from tutors and lecturers.

To become a mentor, you will need to pass a very simple online test, fill in an online profile that details your qualifications and your areas of expertise, and then wait for an invitation from a student whose needs meet your skills.

For example, a third year female law student might seek advice on work/life balance from the experience of a woman who graduated 10 years ago; a business student going on exchange to Toronto or Hong Kong could benefit from an alumnus in one of those cities with advice on accommodation, or the cultural aspects; how to manage your career in a major organisation, and so on.

We need significant numbers of alumni to volunteer as mentors before we can offer this service to students, so please register your interest now by emailing alumniadmin@vcc.usyd.edu.au. It is a wonderful way of giving back to the University and to a new generation.
The present Fisher Library opened in 1963 and it remains the largest and most recognisable library in the University of Sydney library system. This system, made up of various branch libraries, has undergone many changes over the years. In recent decades, it has been rationalised, with smaller libraries merged to create more efficient spaces. The number of libraries has been reduced from 24 to 13. These changes affect the way users interact with the library and its staff.

University Librarian John Shipp believes the role of university libraries has been transformed in recent decades, particularly by technology. “I think the concept of libraries has been just big storehouses full of books,” says Shipp. “I think those days are long since gone.” Electronic publishing and online full-text journal databases have resulted in major changes to the accessibility of information and the work of librarians.

In 1996, the Scholarly Electronic Text and Image Service (SETIS) was developed making electronic publishing, digital library conversion and accessing full-text databases possible. “We’ve put a lot more emphasis on electronic access, because that’s the way things are going and print in some disciplines will eventually be faded out,” explains Shipp. “But we’re still buying lots of books, as many as we can.”

The ever-increasing availability of electronic texts has transformed university libraries from storehouses to information nodes. This affects the number of students using the library as a physical space, with many able to access information at home at any time. “We’ve seen a reduction in academic staff and post-graduates, particularly from the sciences and medicine, coming into the library,” explains Shipp. But he asserts libraries remain integral to the university infrastructure. “The popularity of the library, as a place to study, has increased enormously, particularly by undergraduate students and coursework students,” he says.

Amelia Dale, a fourth year Arts student, who is undertaking English honours this year, is a frequent user of campus libraries. Her experiences reflect the need for both print and electronic collections. “I probably use electronic resources at home more than books in the library, but I still go and borrow two to four books each essay,” she says. “I think it’s good to have books as well as electronic journal articles.”

The university libraries have also been revised to meet the various study, research and socialising needs of users. “We’re really trying to repurpose the libraries as, not exactly community centres, but as a place where students go to study, to interact with their friends,” says Shipp. In this vein, rules about eating, drinking and using mobile phones are being relaxed.

The design of the new SciTech Library reflects the changing role of the library. There is less emphasis on book collections and more on study space. Shipp suggests there are plans to update Fisher in this way. “We’re looking at taking out of [Fisher] the really low use materials, so we can use that space for more reader places and different sorts of facilities,” he says. Shipp is also considering the possibility of creating a new library at the Western end of campus, integrating the Badham, Bosch and, perhaps, the Nursing libraries. Dale welcomes the merging of smaller campus libraries. “I like the way merged libraries mean there’s more chance of getting all your information in one place, rather than having to run across campus,” she says.

The shifting role of the libraries has seen the services they provide continue to diversify. “We do have to provide that mix of environments, ranging from lounges, through to group study rooms to private study,” says Shipp. The multifaceted nature of the libraries is reflected in Dale’s experiences. She has used them for tutoring, group discussion and independent study. “I like visiting the libraries to study,” she explains. “They are a good place to just study by yourself, the Fisher stacks especially.”

Another development is the increased level of interaction between librarians and library users. “Librarians used to sit at a desk somewhere in Fisher, now they’re going out into the faculties. They teach research and information skills and are generally more proactive in reaching out to people,” says Shipp.

He believes university libraries are central to students’ university experience and as such should adapt to their changing needs and expectations. His ambition is to provide spaces that are not only functional for research, but also safe and inviting.

“I think one of the things my staff and I are really trying to push is that the library is part of the student experience,” he says. “A lot of it’s about trying to provide services that meet the needs of the user, rather than what we, the librarians, think they need.”