

2008 'Year of the Rat' and its best resolutions?



By the Editor

With the Chinese New Year this February we enter The Year of the Rat in China's zodiacal calendar. It should be a year in which plans come to fruition and we will soon see our Chinese Garden opened (senior beneficiaries concession \$5 or a \$10 pass for the year). — and how U3A Dunedin copes with its growth.

Research shows that in China it is deemed an honour to be born in a Rat Year and a privilege to be associated with a Rat. Rats apparently know where to find solutions and can take care of themselves and others without problems.

Without ascribing any rodent-like characteristics to U3A Dunedin, I undertook an unscientific survey of some members to explore their New Year Resolutions and probe thoughts on the future and plans. A selection of findings.—

Resolutions: Don Feist would 'like to get to one course in each series in some field that is totally new to me.' Elizabeth Timms wants to find more time for reading, particularly in completing *The Human Past — world prehistory and the development of human societies* bought following last year's course 'From Taiwan to Easter Island.' Honor Anderson is going to again attempt to read all six volumes of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. An anonymous member of our Board vows to continue writing his memoirs — 'which promise to be lurid and libellous in places.'

Hopes for U3A Dunedin: Chairman Feist hopes that 'a group of people, whether members or not, will take the bull by the horns and start another U3A.'

Michael Andrewes hopes 'that a bit more of the easy-going fellowship of the early days . . . returns, with less anxiety over membership issues and lesser consequent need to manage members' right to attend their courses of choice.'

Honor Anderson: 'to offer us a wide range of interesting courses, without classes becoming congested or impersonal.

Sketch plan of Dunedin's Chinese Garden

Fears for U3A Dunedin: Most board members queried seemed to have few fears, other than a natural concern how the introduction of a larger venue in 2008 will work.

Thoughts about Dunedin in 2008: Don Feist would like to see the City Council 'deciding that a bigger and better Library would do more for the city than a bigger and better Carisbrook.'

Elizabeth Timms wanted 'firm plans for an up-to-date, moderate-size theatre.' The call is echoed by Michael Andrewes: 'That the city definitely commit to building a new fully-equipped, medium-sized (700-seat?) theatre for the community good.'

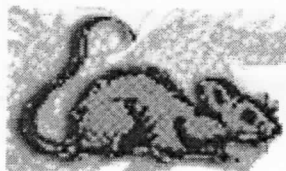
Secretary Judith Gray would like to see 'the purchase by the DCC of the currently available property on the Otago Peninsula, near Harbour Cone, and the demise of the dreaded 'Stadium Project.'

Honor Anderson hopes that this year Dunedin residents 'are spared the disturbing antics of a few immature students who in the past have occasionally disrupted our normally pleasant life-style in this city.'

Ring in the new: a course Don Feist would like to attend this year would be 'a really elementary Music Appreciation for Dummies.'

Elizabeth Timms would like to participate in 'any course by Colin Gibson — I haven't yet managed to attend one.'

Tailpiece: If The Year of the Rat should become notable for a decision to ditch the famed Carisbrook and build an expensive roofed stadium in Dunedin (with Otago University support) should it in future be known as The Year of the Rates?



Realising the benefits of collaboration between U3As

By Donald Feist, Chairman

Recently, Brian O'Rourke sent on to me an article about the U3A movement. I learned from this that it began in France in response to a realisation that it was a radically new thing to have a substantial section of a population between the "Second Age" in which people are fully involved in employment and [for many] raising a family, and the age dominated by moving towards death.

'... For the first time in history, a combination of compulsory retirement, pensions and increased longevity resulted in the great majority of older people in industrialized countries spending many healthy, active, and potentially self-fulfilling years in their Third Age. ...'

In 1973 Toulouse University of Social Sciences ran a course exclusively for retired people – and U3A was born.

In France, it continued to have close links with universities, but:

'U3A underwent a substantial change when it reached Cambridge in 1981. Rather than relying on university goodwill the founders of the British model adopted an approach in which there was to be no distinction between the teachers and the taught. Members would be the teachers as well as the learners and, where possible, members should engage in research activities. The "self-help" ideal was based on the knowledge that experts of every kind retire, thus, there should be no need for older learners to have to rely on paid or unpaid Second Age teachers.'

I learned also that the first U3A in New Zealand was set up in Remuera in 1989 – less than 20 years ago. There are now 53 New Zealand groups with a total membership of about 9000. Further on, the writer, Rick Swindell, the

ADMINISTRATION

Return the brochures

By Judith Gray, Secretary

Welcome to U3A 2008. The brochures for Series 1 courses are enclosed with this newsletter, along with the course application form. The deadline for applications is noon on Wednesday, 7 February, and we hope that responses will be sent out from Rodgers & Associates by the end of the following week.



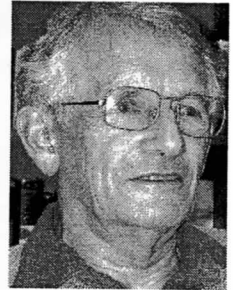
Judith Gray

As you will see from the brochures, the offerings for Series 1 include two smaller groups. We are using the Leith Bowling Club in Duke Street for the "Every Picture Tells a Story" course. This is a repeat of Ross Grimmett's earlier and very popular course, and there should be room to accommodate all those who did not attend the previous sessions.

Please remember to ensure that your course preferences are clearly marked on the application form. This saves the staff at Rodgers (and me) from guessing your intentions.

Would you also please exercise consideration when parking on site at Knox and Salmond Colleges, avoiding blocking access for staff and students, and remembering that service vehicles are wider than your car!

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Donald Feist

president of U3A Online, enthuses about the benefits of collaboration between U3As. He thinks some (at least in Australia) have become too resistant to change, and that, in order to attract people now in their 50's, when they retire, U3As need to be open to change, including doing more about networking and either setting up or using existing Internet websites.

Perhaps there are some pointers here for how a second U3A in Dunedin might distinguish itself from us.

I wish you all a 'healthy, active and ... self-fulfilling year' with U3A, and good luck in getting into all the courses you hope to attend.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Sue Cathro
Programme Co-ordinator



Sue Cathro

Presenters, topics, places and times are all in place for the first series in 2008 and you will be able to make your choice from *Mozart's Milan Operas*, *Every Picture Tells a Story*, a series of lectures from the Department of Human Nutrition, *The Printed Word*, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Book Plates*.

Your Board is now actively pursuing topics and presenters for the second series. Likely at this stage is a series on Women in Society and Digital Photography, with other interesting topics yet to be confirmed.

The Policy Group has been looking at suggestions made by you on your evaluation forms – some are already in train – others will be pursued. Thanks to Bill George for his work on cataloguing these ideas – he has turned them into a valuable resource.

Clothes with feeling are branded

Marks and Spencer's, the British clothing chain store, has pleaded guilty before a Birmingham Magistrate to misleading the public. Inspectors found that many garments of the 'Italian' range of clothes were made in Egypt or India. The firm said: 'We use this branding to create an Italian feel. ... We apologise to customers but reassure them that it was never our intention to mislead them.'

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE CHARITABLE TRUST, DUNEDIN

Address: C/o The Secretary,

PO Box 117, Dunedin, 9054

email: graysinn@clear.net.nz

Chairman: Donald Feist ph: 476 3268

Secretary: Judith Gray ph: 471 9913

From here to where? — the World Ahead



Christchurch was the venue for a U3A International Conference from November 19-21 last year. Four members of U3A Dunedin — Chris and John Burton, Mayford Dawson and Elizabeth Timms— thoroughly enjoyed the event. Its theme was 'The World Ahead — From Here to Where?'

The organising committee was drawn from five of the 10 U3As now operating in Christchurch. Preparations over the past two and a half years bore fruit with 12 excellent, mainly local speakers, and a spacious venue, the Canterbury Horticultural centre, South Hagley Park, close to the centre of the city. The size of the main hall allowed coffee/tea and buffet lunch to be served conveniently in the rear, with plenty of space to mingle. After November days of wintry weather in the south, the sun returned and lunch plates could be taken outdoors to the balcony, or seats on the steps and wall, as well as the adjacent park.

From the list of participants, many people were able to find others they knew in other connections — 'I didn't know *you* were in U3A.'

Of the 196 participants, 80 came from Christchurch, more than 50 from the Auckland area, 26 from Australia (Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Northern Territory), 10 from around Wellington, with representatives from Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Tauranga, Whangarei, Wanganui and Blenheim as well as Dunedin. A most friendly atmosphere prevailed, with an eagerness to exchange ideas. The most common opening exchange was: How does your U3A operate?'

Each day's programme covered a different theme: the environment, social issues, and the arts — a human response to a changing world. For each broad topic a plenary session was followed by two concurrent speakers, one of whom used a second smaller lecture room in the same building. A 10-minute question time after each speaker was allowed.

Delegates are welcomed to last November's U3A International Conference in Christchurch. Photo: John Burton.

The first day with six speakers, including a welcome from the newly-elected Mayor of Christchurch, taxed the concentration of those of us who are now unaccustomed to attending day-long conferences. However on Days 2 and 3 the sessions were in the mornings with various tours arranged for the afternoon (Art Gallery, Museum, walking tour of central Christchurch, Botanic Gardens, historical bus tour, Antarctic Centre.)

Late on Tuesday afternoon the conference room was quickly converted for the conference dinner, where we were entertained by a quartet and then by a Maori group who skilfully enticed members to participate with poi (women) and haka (men). A farewell dinner on the final night was held in the same venue.

Highlights among the lectures included a stimulating and thought-provoking keynote address by Marion Hobbs MP on 'The World Ahead' that was punctuated by spontaneous applause.

A meeting of representatives of the participating U3As to exchange views, arranged for 8am on the second day was attended by eight groups, including Dunedin. It was all too short, but hopefully will lead to more communication in the future. (We already exchange newsletters with two other groups.)

The success of this conference was largely due to excellent sponsorship, which significantly reduced the registration fee. (Christchurch City Council, Kiwi Bank, NZ Lottery Board, Odyssey Travel, Public Trust and Sentinel.)

Elizabeth Timms

Future conferences in Australia .. p4.

Chinese zodiac



'Rats!' you say? But the doctrine of the 12 signs of the zodiac emerged during the Han dynasty which makes it more than 2000 years old. The signs of the zodiac are also widespread in China's neighbouring countries.

First in the cycle, Rat years begin the sequence of the Chinese zodiac and recur every 12th year. The 12 animals in the cycle derive from a legend about Buddha who invited all the animals to join him for New Year's Day.

Only 12 animals went to see Buddha. As a reward he promised to name a year for each one in order of their arrival, these were the rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, cock, dog and boar. (The ox would have been the first to arrive but the rat sat on his back and jumped off just before they arrived to become first.)

Another legend has it that Buddha invited the animals on the day he was to leave the earth and only 12 animals showed up.

Literary Competition

U3A Central Coast (NSW) Inc is holding the 14th Australia and New Zealand Literary Competition 2008 for U3A members only. There are prizes of \$200, \$100 and \$50 in two sections — for a short story (fiction) or article (non-fiction), both from 500 to 2,000 words in length.

The closing date is 8 August 2008 and entry forms are available from our Secretary. Entry fee is A\$5 per entry and winners will be notified by 31 December 2008.

In the 2007 competition the major prizes were all taken by Australians but entries by two New Zealanders in the articles section were highly commended: *Walking With Bushmen* by Myfanway von Hoffen, Auckland (about a week in a primitive camp in the Zambesi Valley amid prolific wildlife) and *From 'Chateau Cardboard' to Chateau Petrus*, by Charles O'Hara, Auckland (a well-researched beginner's guide to wine-making — why the fermented juice in a bag-in-a-box is a world away from the top wines.)

No score

Did you hear that a football match between priests and imams was arranged by the Norwegian Church to promote better understanding between religions? Apparently it turned into an unholy mess.

A few days before the game, the imams heard that the Christian team included women priests; they called off the match in protest. But undeterred and wanting to promote 'better understanding,' the Christians then decided to field a team only made up of male priests.

When the women priests found they were to be excluded from playing, they then made their protest. This move was so effective that their male colleagues, pleading solidarity, refused to play. The game was finally abandoned.

Quotes to ponder

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.

~ Charles Darwin

The human brain starts working the moment you are born and never stops until you stand up to speak in public.

~ George Jessel

Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.

~ Scott Adams

Australian conferences

Those who attended last year's Christchurch Conference (report page 3) are fired with enthusiasm for later similar events. It's not too early to seek information on some to take place in Australia.

1. Darwin, 19-26 August 2008: at Travelodge, Mirambeena. Other accommodation also available if desired. Lectures will be held from Wednesday to Friday, with weekend free for many suggested activities. Organisers suggest going up or returning on the Ghan from Adelaide and meeting with members of U3A Alice Springs. Early bookings needed! Write to U3A Darwin Conference 2008, P O Box 42451, CASUARINA NT 0811, Australia. Visit web page at www.u3adarwin.org.au or email yvonne.forrest@nt.gov.au

2. Melbourne, May 2009: U3A Network-Victoria Conference. To be included on conference mailing list email u3anet@vic.net.net.au or write Anne Thompson, Convenor, Marketing and Publicity, Ground floor, 341 Queen St, Melbourne, Vic 3000, Australia.

3. Woolongong, 10-13 March 2008: a U3A gathering with the theme 'A Journey for Further Learning – Enriching the U3A Experience.' Information at <http://nsw.u3anet.org.au>

Senior stereotypes found in Walt Disney characters

The Journal of Ageing Studies has reported findings in a study at the University of Utah. It analysed 93 Walt Disney characters who appeared to be elderly (55 or older) from 34 Disney films going back 70 years.

Consensus from the researchers: the majority of older characters, such as Gepetto (Pinocchio's father) had been portrayed as kindly.

However a 'significant minority' were portrayed negatively. The evidence was 25% shown as grumpy, 12% evil or sinister, 8% helpless, 3% senile or crazy, and 2% the object of ridicule.

The nasty characters include Madam Mim in *The Sword and the Stone* and the Wicked Queen shown as an old hag in *Snow White*. Then there was Smee in *Peter Pan* and Cruella de Vil in *101 Dalmations*.

Comment in Britain's *Oldie* magazine: 'Have we found the root cause of age discrimination in our society?'

Whose zoo?

Shanyang Zoo in the province of Lianing, China, tried to hide a dearth of more uncommon animals by painting a white pony with black stripes. It was renamed as an 'African zebra.' Visiting families can photograph their children sitting on this animal. They seem to enjoy the opportunity. The 'zebra' is realised to be a fake, but it's still regarded as more interesting than the real animals.

Edited by Geoff Adams

Phone: 467-2278

Email: hgadams@slingshot.co.nz

Elizabeth Timms — U3A Board liaison.

U3A Dunedin is grateful for assistance from Dr Claire Matthewson (Director, Summer School and Advisor, Distance Learning and Continuing Education, University of Otago) in producing this publication.