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Editorial

The Digitisation and Knowledge conference framed its agenda in the following terms:

The conference initially posed the question as to what are the relationships between digitisation, knowledge formations and cultural productions? Digitisation and Knowledge aimed to open this question for examination through a range of papers, presentations and demonstrations which focused on and explored issues around new media technologies and the "knowledge society".

The still recent emergence of digitised knowledge systems and the global proliferation of technologies of visualisation information systems based on digitised processes were seen to present an opportunity to profoundly question the role of knowledge and visuality in the construction of our understanding of the real.

This panoply of technologies, generically referenced as "New Media", opened a space for negotiating once again the relations between technology and cultural productions.

Thus the aim of the conference was to delineate the problem field posed by digitisation for renewed considerations of our modes of knowing.

The conference established a series of thematic groupings of papers, and three of these groupings are represented in this published selection. These are 'Digital Resources', 'Digitisation and Society', and 'Virtuality and Space'.

Each of these themes focuses on a vital arena of concern regarding the widespread implementation of digital technologies. Digital Resourcing is addressed here in papers that focus on two key institutional sectors, each paper emphasising the extent to which rapid change in information technologies leads to crucial issues of equity of access.

Steve Knight from the Digital Initiatives Unit at the National Library of New Zealand examines recent initiatives in digitising collections, and measures taken for establishing national standards for digital archiving.

Ruth Lemon, multimedia coordinator at AUT's Te Ara Poutama, a School of the Faculty of Arts (now Applied Humanities) focusing on Maori cultural and language studies, discusses the impact of new media on Maori culture and belief systems and addresses current initiatives in working with web-based technologies.

A broader framework of analysis is taken with the theme of 'Digitisation and Society', as concern moves from the specific and local institutional milieu to broad philosophical consideration of the political economy of digital technologies.

Via an analysis of the institutional configuration of the university, Sharon Harvey assays the impact of digitisation on the constitution of knowledge in the information age. Harvey, the

Associate Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Arts (now Culture and Society) at AUT, explores two specific case studies of "virtual" universities, those of the Universitas 21/Thomson Learning joint venture and the Malaysian Multimedia University.

In this analysis, Harvey references the important work of Jean Francois Lyotard on knowledge economies and questions whether either of these two emerging models of the new university adequately addresses the politics of social equity.

Brian O. Cusack, from the Faculty of Business at AUT, approaches the issue of the current "knowledge revolution" and, like Harvey, draws on the resources of Lyotard. Cusack argues for a radical "dis-aggregation" of scientific knowledge in order to recognise relations that subtend social spaces and the self other than those inferred by techno-science paradigms.

This concern with the self's relation to, and formation by, social spaces, while constituting a key concern for Cusack, is radically extended by the contribution of Elizabeth Grierson, from the School of Art and Design at AUT. Grierson's paper, "From Cemeteries to Cyberspace" poses a series of fundamental questions about the constitution of self in virtual environments. In doing so it begins to draw parallels and fine distinctions between the cemetery as space of occupancy and digital space as architecture of inhabitation.

The paper draws significantly on the writings of Michel Foucault, a philosopher who continually emphasised the intimate relation between knowledge formation and spatiality.

The final thematic, 'Virtuality and Space' is addressed by the contribution of Mark Jackson, also from the School of Art and Design at AUT. This paper addresses directly the contributions currently being made by a range of design theorists and practitioners to the field of architecture and cyberspace.

The paper questions some of the more radical claims currently being made in this field, particularly with reference to new modes of subjectivity afforded by virtual reality and the uneasy imbrication of information technologies and building systems in what is termed "pixel architecture."

Two further papers are included from the Digitisation and Knowledge conference.

In a plenary session address, Brian Opie, from the School of English, Film and Theatre at Victoria University, Wellington, and also President of The Humanities Society of New Zealand (HUMANZ), presented a wide-ranging paper that addressed each of these thematic arenas.

The paper, "The Knowledge Society: Innovation, Multimedia and the Postmodern City", examines the broad impact of digital technologies in defining our cultural lifeworld, processes of change and our contemporary forms of knowing.

As with those addressing resourcing, the paper emphasises the issue of equity with respect to rapidly changing configurations to access of knowledge. This is explored with respect to everyday and ongoing practices in the context of constructing our social spaces of

habitation. With this analysis, relations are established between innovations in technologies of information, knowledge formation and access, and the design of social space.

This latter aspect of design and social space is the focus of the final paper included in this inaugural issue of *Working Papers in Communication*.

Jonathan Woodham, Director of the Design History Research Centre, University of Brighton, gave the concluding plenary at the conference. Woodham's paper, "Designing Design History: From Pevsner to Postmodernism" details the close relation between the disciplinary emergence and formation of "Design History" and the institutional and economic imperatives that steered its development.

The paper outlines the contemporary impact of digitisation on the field of Design History, particularly with respect to initiatives for the construction of image databases, and the availability of such resources. Woodham's address coincided with the conference launch of the New Zealand Design Archive, a web-based research initiative of the School of Art and Design at AUT, under the direction of Frances Joseph.

This selection of papers is indicative of the breadth of analyses that begin to approach the impact currently being made by technologies of digitisation. Yet, while the thematic issues of digital resourcing, institutional sites and socio-political implications have been addressed here, the theme is hardly exhausted.

Working Papers in Communication will continue to publish on this and related concerns, and welcomes submissions from researchers in a broad spectrum of disciplines who may further the debate on the proposition of a future driven by cybernetic systems.

Editor: Mark Jackson