



Postgraduate recipients of Faculty Research funding with Heads of Schools and Departments, faculty supervisors and members of the Faculty Research Management Committee at a reception in the Elwym Lynn Conference Centre. 1-r: Rod Milgate, Alan Krell, Jill More, Allan Walpole (behind) Carol Longbottom, Angela Dawson, Linda Johnson, Liz Ashburn, Andrew Frost, George Barker, Kerry White, Robyn Bannon and Penny McKeon. photo: R. McMillan.

Reports of inaugural Faculty Research grants, 1991

The College of Fine Arts Faculty Research Management Committee has received reports from recipients of the 1991 round of Faculty Grants. Printed below are extracts from reports by Eric Gidney, senior lecturer in the School of Media Art and Virginia Coventry, lecturer in the School of Studio Art. Reports were also received from George Schwartz, Sylvia Ross, Idris Murphy, Paul Atroshenko and Richard Dovey with Allan Walpole.

A reminder: notification of the next round of Faculty Grants will be in February, 1993. Application forms and booklets will be available at that time. Postgraduate research students are invited to apply; applications will close in early April.

Report by Eric Gidney

Multimedia telecommunications constitutes a comprehensive new medium which can facilitate visual collaboration over distance.

It raises new issues, e.g.

- what sort of users will multimedia networking assist?
- how will real-time visual collaboration work?

The most intensive uses are likely to come from visually creative industries. The media arts have an important, if neglected, research contribution to make in developing applications for such users.

The Arts generally tend to ignore the important role they can play as equal partners in scientific research involving visual

production. However, since 1989, CREATE has been vigorously pursuing research possibilities in visual computer communications. With Annmarie Chandler, I co-founded the CREATE group, an interdisciplinary team based at the School of Humanities at UTS and at COFA, UNSW, funded by the OTC, to examine the possibilities for collaboration, and the interface requirements of visually-based end users. This line of creative interdisciplinary research is unusual and the systems we are working with are as technically advanced as anything currently available.

CREATE is linking the two university campuses with a basic version of the OTC desktop multimedia system, using ISDN. Major objectives are to understand how computer-supported cooperative work environments assist artists and film directors to work together over distance, to improve the system's user-friendliness and to research new applications. A second stage of the project will forge national and international connections with universities interstate and overseas involved in multimedia research such as Monash in Victoria, Carnegie-Mellon in Pittsburgh and Loughborough's LUTCHI Centre in England.

With the support of the COFA Faculty Research grant, I was able to reduce my teaching load by 4 hrs. This permitted me to carry out task-analysis in a range of production design areas, such as theatre, opera, film and computer graphics. Methodologies and hierarchies in these areas are idiosyncratic, and communication intermittent. However, there are common factors, such as the need for good and easy-to-use drawing and photo-retouching software and interfaces. I am currently

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surveying Paintbox software and user-interface design for visual communication as the first stage of the deliverables for the current OTC contract. With the help of the grant, I was able to write a paper on "Interfacing Multimedia Telecommunications", describing the research work of CREATE, which was presented at the Ergonomics Society's OZCHI 91 Conference, UNSW, in November 1991. The paper was published in *People before Technology*, the conference proceedings. I also attended CHISIG workshops on User-Interface Design.

In August, I attended an ARC Grant seminar and an AFTVRS lecture on computer software for movie production. I revised our proposal to the OTC R&D Board for 1992 funding, subsequently approved. In October, I attended the official launch of OTC's R&D work, and discovered that our group's project had been written in to the 1991 Annual Report! I attended two Unix computer fairs and the Macworld conference, a useful introduction to computer/video production. I later discovered that my ARC application for a small grant to pursue Macintosh-based visualization development work had been approved for 1992. I also began preparation of an application for a major (\$75,000) ARC Collaborative Grant in conjunction with OTC, UTS and the University of Wollongong, which has been submitted to fund additional video infrastructure so that we can examine the value of adding videoconferencing to multimedia systems. Whilst some earlier research has found the value of live video difficult to quantify, there are undoubtedly qualitative benefits. These benefits are more obvious in tasks related to production design, such as discussion of visual design problems.

As a result of my efforts last semester, OTC has now provided funding to set up a basic multimedia communications system between UTS and COFA, and to implement interactive production projects which experiment with creative visual input and remote collaboration, which will provide feedback on user interface factors. This has already led us to employ two postgraduate students on a short-term basis as research assistants.

The initial goal is to develop an interactive production design system for directors working with designers over distance. If artists and designers can work together over distance, advanced visual telecommunications can provide systems for collaboration at a national level. They also have the

potential to provide a means of access for international production companies to artists and designers based in Australia.

Report by Virginia Coventry

The Project undertaken was a reading program in contemporary artists' comments on their painting and / or drawing practice, as published between 1970 and 1985. The research has involved locating, photocopying and filing the source material, reading and notation, and indexing the information. A survey was made of the following Australian journals: *Art and Australia*, *Art+Text*, *Artlink*, *Art Network*, *Arts Melbourne* and *Lip*; and the following international journals: *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Flash Art*, *Heresies*, *Parkette* and *Studio International*.

In looking for artists' "direct speech" about their own practice, I invariably found critical essays on painting and drawing which were of interest to me both as a practitioner and as a lecturer. I have photocopied and filed this material for my own use, and have compiled an alphabetically-ordered index to enable wider access. The index lists artists in alphabetical order, and indicates name and date of the publication. The particular relevance to painting and/or drawing is also indicated. Although I spent an average of 8 hours per week for the 15 weeks of the semester with additional time since then, there has not been enough time for me to review the collected material according to areas of particular professional interest.

I had hoped to cross-reference the interviews and statements as follows: representation of the body; landscape as readable form (especially as regards Australian artists); the use of words in paintings and drawings; abstraction. Perhaps paradoxically, the alphabetical index orders the material into a random collection. In fact the research has charted the issues, attitudes and language of American, English and to a lesser extent Australian and European painting/drawing practice over the period studied.

The research has been useful in preparing for my classes this semester. I am convinced it will provide a more detailed critical base in responding to student work, and in developing future courses. Already I have been able to match some of my material with individual students' interests. Currently I am able to either lend my copy to a student on the spot, or the student can follow-up the particular artist-reference through their own research.