

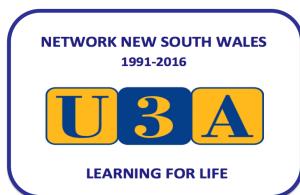
# Newslink

September 2020

*Be Part of the Wider U3A Community*

Newsletter of the U3A Network NSW Inc.

[www.nsw.u3anet.org.au](http://www.nsw.u3anet.org.au)



## Also in this issue –

- ❖ **President's Column**
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- ❖ **Creative writing competitions**
- ❖ **Apocalyptic Fiction**
- ❖ **Birdwatching**

## And more ...



*Wattle Day September 1*

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## U3A keeps calm and carries on

We are now into our sixth month since the COVID -19 pandemic forced U3As to cancel face to face meetings and classes in Terms 1 and 2. In the last issue of *Newslink*, useful information about how to access and use Zoom enabled many U3As to continue to offer classes and lectures online.

There are many stories inside this issue from U3As which illustrate how they continued to operate in the early months of the pandemic, and how they have adapted where circumstances have permitted to resumption of some activities in Term 3.

U3As have shown resilience and creativity in adopting online technologies and other methods to maintain contact with their members, and to continue some of their classes and other activities.

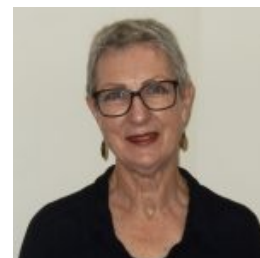
Several committees have also taken the opportunity of 'down time' to review their administrative procedures and to plan ahead Term 3, detailed COVID Management Plans were prepared and instigated to ensure social distancing, sanitisation and other precautions.

Regular ( fortnightly, monthly, even weekly) newsletters have been a popular method of maintaining connectedness. Newsletters often include puzzles, contributions from members, jokes and short articles of general interest, as well as important information on administrative matters. Central Coast (NSW) U3A has created a special newsletter called *The Silver Lining*, which is an excellent example – [*I recommend you have a look at it – Ed*]

U3A committees, course co-ordinators, tutors and newsletter editors are to be congratulated on their hard work to ensure that their members continue to enjoy U3A activities as much as possible, and above all, stay connected.

### *From the President's Desk*

We all miss our casual freedom enjoyed before COVID-19 but most of our U3As have created new ways of delivering their classes be it in restricted “face to face” groups or by virtual means. I am impressed by the number and ways U3As are creating effective means to support their members and I believe the members are impressed and thankful with the efforts of their Committees. Talent has come to the fore and the benefits are felt widely. Committees are continually striving to find alternative means of remaining relevant to their members in these restrictive times.



If a U3A Committee finds they are technically challenged in digital course delivery the Network may be able to help. Please contact us by email. Our Web Administrator is regularly updating the Networks Website with various posts providing information and resources for your benefit. Committees considering some limited return to “face to face” courses may benefit from the regular updates for considering a safe environment in conducting events.

I have been told some U3As are experiencing a growth in membership. This certainly shows that U3A is still valued and when the message is shared via word of mouth or through the media then the future is bright. Let us continue to share the experiences enjoyed by membership of U3A. By supporting each other we are stronger and will survive this pandemic with renewed energy.

Sincere thanks to the many Member U3As who participated in the recent SGM. This support ensures that the Network can comply with the law in all circumstances.

I recently read some wise words that I feel reflect U3A : *Every year trees lose their leaves but when the season changes they are once again covered in new growth.* This is the energy and commitment of Member U3As - to weather the current situation and then recreate a bright future.

Best wishes , *Laurene Mulcahy*

### **U3A Network NSW Executive Committee contacts**

President, Laurene Mulchay, [president@nsw.u3anet.org.au](mailto:president@nsw.u3anet.org.au)

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Secretary, Geoff James, [secretary@nsw.u3anet.org.au](mailto:secretary@nsw.u3anet.org.au)

**Welcome to new Treasurer,** Denise Challis,

[treasurer@nsw.u3anet.org.au](mailto:treasurer@nsw.u3anet.org.au)



**Congratulations to Nepean-Blue Mountains U3A**, this year celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year , and to **Lake Macquarie U3A** this year celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> year - in absentia, but no doubt they will follow through as soon as practicable. (Just couldn't let those achievements pass without acknowledgement.) .

## Regional News

### **Covid-19 prompts first cross-border U3A class**

In what is believed to be a first for U3A in Australia, members of classes in Northern NSW and Queensland met together recently to learn from one another in a virtual classroom. The online meeting using Zoom involved members of both Northern Rivers and Brisbane U3As.

Although fewer than 20 members were involved, all found the virtual meeting stimulating, specially as Covid-19 risks mean normal face-to-face classes have been severely restricted or postponed for months.

The Zoom meeting was first suggested by a member of both U3As, John Reid, who was originally a member of the Lismore-based U3A but recently moved to Brisbane.

John arranged for a guest speaker for the Northern Rivers group but also suggested that Queensland members be invited. The group's co-ordinator, Graeme Eggins, agreed.

"The whole Zoom session went like clockwork," Graeme said. "Our speaker discussed modern monetary theory challenges and took questions from members in both States.

"His presentation with Q&As took up virtually all the first free 40-minute Zoom session but we moved effortlessly into a second session to discuss other topics.

"These included biotechs, pandemic themes such as Bunnings benefitting from people carrying out more DIY home improvements, and market momentum.

"Everyone was really energised by the joint meeting," Graeme added. "It is really great to have new blood come into an established group and also to see how

different classes learn about the same subject, in this case investing in retirement.

"One of the many advantages of meeting on Zoom is that effectively any number of people can attend so we did not have to worry about venue size and, of course, absolutely no hand sanitising or social distancing."

*From U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore)*

At **Ballina/Byron U3A**, members are staying connected via their Facebook page, which provides members with an avenue to upload photos, share jokes and recipes, but also for sharing important information.

- Cryptic crosswords are mailed out weekly;
- Birdwatchers are receiving 5 pictures of unnamed birds with information about where the pictures were taken, members then have to identify the birds;
- The Exploring Books and Creative Writing classes are circulating members reports and writings for comment;
- The Italian class is receiving exercises by email;
- The Poetry group contribute poetry for group discussion (by email) on a regular basis. All poems are collected in a folder for eventual printed distribution when our U3A recommences classes.

**Oberon U3A** 's Beginners Ukelele group receives a weekly email containing a YouTube link for the next online session. The "bigger" ukulele group has members offering suggestions for instructional videos to extend their skills, and recently had the opportunity to participate in an online 'jam session' run by members of the Sawtell Ukelele group.

## Hawkesbury U3A

Of its fifty four classes, U3A Hawkesbury resumed thirty one in July with many members keen to become involved and have a break from social isolation. As well as a Covid 19 Safe Policy, a cleaning regime was introduced and has proven to be very successful with all class members assisting.

Three classes are being held in two separate groups to satisfy the venue limits. Our *Shibashi Tai Chi* group meets at a council reserve and enjoys the ambience of the outdoors. Our *Birds of the Hawkesbury* and *Photography for Fun* have continued with their 'classroom' Zoom meetings to allow the whole group to participate. Both these groups also hold a field trip each month.

*Below – Birdwatching group at Yarramundi Reserve (in the fog)*



A number of classes continued to meet through Zoom; many continued by email, phone and mail, the cost of mailing being met by the committee from the saving on rent. Tutors and Convenors also kept in contact with vulnerable class members.

As our office was still accessible, the phone was diverted to the secretary's mobile and the office computer was networked to the secretary's home computer. What a blessing this was. Work continued and new members were taken who were keen to join Zoom classes.

Our office opened for one morning a week in June to allow members to borrow jigsaw puzzles or books from our extensive library shelves. This has been extended to our regular three mornings a week in July.

**U3As which have film appreciation groups** have organised for their members to watch designated movies on SBS On Demand or on YouTube, and to then join a Zoom discussion at a later time (usually the previous film group time.) – **Coffs Harbour and Northern Illawarra U3As** are two such groups.

## Technical Dinosaur Faces the Music

*From Glennis Brooking, Shoalhaven U3A*

In a bid to further support the members of U3A Shoalhaven, tutor Denis Simond came up with a novel idea to bring Rock'n Roll music into their lounge rooms during the lockdown without contravening social distancing laws! *'A Stroll Down Memory Lane'* was one of the 20 Zoom courses organised by U3A Shoalhaven in response to the lockdown to provide courses and activities to alleviate loneliness, and isolation and keep in touch with their members.

Denis describes himself as a "technical dinosaur", however he has made a dramatic move from organising historical Banjo Patterson poetry tours, and has now mastered putting PowerPoint slides up on the screen and at the same time playing a wonderful selection of music from the 1950's into his Zoom presentation. Grateful members tuned into Zoom each Thursday evening for six weeks to learn all about the singers, the song writers and reminisce with each other about the many songs they love from the 50's.

So, stuck at home amid the pandemic, creative retirees are finding new ways to use videoconferencing software like Zoom that once was confined to just the home office and their children.

Denis has another project for Term 3 – he’s now going to present a 1960’s ‘stroll down memory lane’, and have people singing the old Beatles songs and reconnecting with ‘*House of the Rising Sun, The Twist, and She loves You, Yeah Yeah Yeah*’!

Another new activity organised just before lockdown, the weekly U3A Shoalhaven Coffee Group which had in Term 1, ‘tried and tested’ the good coffee spots in Nowra, needed to find ways to meet up during Term 2. With their social life going rapidly going down the drain, (no) thanks to the coronavirus outbreak, organisers Sue and Glennis decided to amalgamate the two coffee groups and offer a BYO coffee session on Zoom. The technology was a bit challenging initially for the socialites however they adapted to sharing and caring “on screen” two mornings each week, and as one participant said “*I live alone so it was either stay here in hibernation or learn to be an online dynamo.*”

The new challenge for the U3A coordinators is to continue to encourage more of their members to ‘have a go’ at using the technology and get online in Term 3. As President Eric Courtney., who was the main tech ‘go to’ for members said, “We have two initial major challenges 1) mastering the online enrolment, and then 2) ‘logging into Zoom’. We are concentrating our efforts for this term on getting more of our members who have little or no experience with computers or tablets through those processes so they can be connected and continue learning”.

## **Hobart U3A**

*From Jane Monaghan*

What to do when our beloved U3A Drawing class had to be suspended during the Sars Covid-19 crisis? Go online of course!

Our class had bonded three years ago when our teacher had to leave early in the term and a replacement could not be found. With some fabulous help from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery guides and a strong desire to keep our class going, we found by organising ourselves we got to know each other better, we could form a very supportive place to draw and with help from the resources on the internet we could provide an interesting and stimulating program of activities.

When lockdown happened it was not surprising we would find a way to continue. A What’sApp group was formed and the majority of the class joined. Those who could not are kept connected via email. We have continued with each week’s activity posted online. We sit down in our homes on Wednesday afternoons, our usual class time, and draw. The results are photographed and posted online. A flurry of comments follow about our work and there is much pleasure in the shared posts.

Such is the keenness of class members that there are often further drawings completed before and after our regular class time. These are posted too as are other art related resources found by our group. As well as more traditional drawing activities such as practising perspective we have also done activities reflective of this time such as self portraits, a view from one of our windows and drawings expressing life in Covid-19 lockdown.

Class members comment regularly on the support offered by our What’sApp site. The continuation of a much loved activity and the opportunity to immerse oneself in drawing have been so valuable for our mental health at this time. Mind you we are all eagerly waiting for the time when we can be back together in our U3A classroom.



Thankyou also to **Tuggerah Lakes, Cygnet, Southlakes and Port Macquarie Hastings U3As**, for their reports on the adoption of similar methods of maintaining connectedness with their members, and the resumption of some classes in Term 3.

### **Northern Illawarra U3A**

Our group cancelled all on-site activities in March and for Term 2, when the venues in which we meet also closed. However, several small groups continued meeting by email and Zoom, for which the Committee purchased a subscription which will remain available until next January.

To maintain contact with other members not involved in those groups, we developed a telephone tree and issued a fortnightly newsletter sent to all members by email (and in some cases, by mail). The newsletter contained information, short newsy articles, book reviews, jokes and puzzles but also invited contributions from members, for example, art and craft work produced during lockdown.



*Galahs by Jeanette Southam*

As our venues re-opened in Term 3, we have been able to resume some of the small group meetings – Australian Studies, Arts Hub, Brain Games, Balance and Bones, Current Affairs, Reading Aloud, Painting and Drawing Table Tennis, and the Walking Group. Some groups preferred to continue with Zoom meetings. The regular newsletter continues to ensure that all our members stay connected.

### **Coffs Harbour U3A**

*From Coral Johnson*

The French Conversation class members have been writing a story every week based on one word I sent to them via the internet. Subjects covered have been - my favourite painting, rainbows, cubby houses, island, a joke, light, tree, travel, favourite city, egg.

The word "light" produced stories about lighthouses, a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, and a novel. The word "garden" produced stories of gardens around the world, - Monet's garden, the gardens at Versailles, members' own gardens. The word "egg" produced stories about - chickens, spiders, Easter, conception, Faberge and a plea to buy only free range eggs.

Many people included a picture or photo to add interest to their story. I then email the group everyone's story. They are invited to return a comment on stories, which are again shared with the group. It is quite difficult to choose a "word" each week, but I am constantly amazed at the stories our group comes up with. For our group this has been an acceptable and effective way to maintain interest and keep our group together.

*"The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity... and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself."*



— William Blake

## For Creative writers – Upcoming Writing Competitions:

### Odyssey House Victoria Annual Short Story Competition

**Closing date: Friday 13 November 2020**

This competition is open to writers of all ages and experience. Each submission must be no more than 1,500 words and follow the theme “Isolation”. It will need to make a reference to alcohol and/or drugs. There is a limit of three entries per person, and the entry fee is \$10 per story.

First prize is \$1,000 and a one year membership to *Writers Victoria*; 2nd prize is \$100 and 3rd prize is \$50. For more information or to download an entry form, go to [www.odyssey.org.au/short-story-competition-2020/](http://www.odyssey.org.au/short-story-competition-2020/)

*The money raised from this competition will go towards the work of Odyssey House Victoria. Since its inception, Odyssey House Victoria have provided a supportive drug-free environment for people and their families affected by problems associated with drugs, including alcohol.*

### Lambing Flat FAW Writing Competition - Closing date 16<sup>th</sup> October

The 38<sup>th</sup> annual Lambing Flat (Young, NSW) Fellowship of Australian Writers writing competition is now open for entries. The competition is open to all comers. There is no set theme so let your fancy and pen fly. Writers of fiction, family history, romance or articles are invited to enter. And don't forget the poetry; traditional rhyming or free verse is most welcome. Entry fee \$5 per entry.

Short Story word limit 1500. – 1<sup>st</sup> Prize \$200, 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize \$50  
Poetry 50 lines. – 1<sup>st</sup> Prize \$200, 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize \$50

Full details on the entry form which can be obtained from  
Ted Webber 0459707728 or  
Email [lambingflatbranchfaw@hotmail.com](mailto:lambingflatbranchfaw@hotmail.com)



### ***Do you or someone you know use a Motorised Mobility Device?***

If the answer is **YES** would you consider participating in a government sponsored research project about motorised mobility devices (MMDs)? Or invite anyone who does use one, to participate.

The University of Wollongong and Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia (ATSA) are collaborating on a project on everyday mobility and motorised technologies. The research aim is to improve the life for those reliant on a motorised mobility devices by better understanding their everyday mobility experiences.

You can read more about the research on our website here:  
<https://www.letsmoveitogether.com.au/>

People who use a motorised mobility device are invited to complete a short survey. The survey aim is to collect insights to how they see a future of inclusion drawing on their experiences of being out and about.

The survey is available on this link [Qualitative Survey and Invitation to Participate](#). Any information that you supply will be deidentified and your privacy will be protected. if you are interested in participating in a follow up conversation please provide your contact details. A \$50 shopping voucher will be provided to those who choose to participate in the follow-up conversation. If you have trouble accessing the survey or would like further information please email Dr Theresa Harada at the University of Wollongong [tharada@uow.edu.au](mailto:tharada@uow.edu.au) or phone 0423 383 113 and leave a message.

## Apocalyptic fiction helps us deal with the anxiety of the coronavirus pandemic

Katherine Shwartz, *The Conversation*, March 19, 2020

Masked people standing six feet apart. Empty shelves in the supermarket. No children in sight outside the school during recess.

The social upheaval caused by COVID-19 evokes many popular dystopian or post-apocalyptic books and movies. Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 crisis has sent many people rushing to fiction about contagious diseases. Books and movies about pandemics have spiked in popularity over the past few weeks: stuck at home self-isolating, many people are picking up novels such as Stephen King's *The Stand* or streaming movies such as Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion*. [Also V for Vendetta, set in year 2020 – Ed]

Yet no one seems to fully agree on why reading books or watching movies about apocalyptic pandemics feels appealing during a real crisis with an actual contagious disease. Some readers claim that contagion fiction provides comfort, but others argue the opposite. Still more aren't totally sure why these narratives feel so compelling. Regardless, stories about pandemics call to them all the same.

So what, exactly, does pandemic fiction offer readers? My doctoral research on contagious disease in literature, a project that has required me to draw from both literary studies and health humanities, has taught me that a contagious disease is always both a medical and a narrative event.

[The author relates specific aspects of the book *Station Eleven* as illustrations of her argument. These are removed from this extract. For reasons of space constraint – Ed.]

### Art reflects life

Pandemics scare us partly because they transform other, less concrete, fears about globalization, cultural change, and community identity into tangible threats.

Representations of contagious diseases allow authors and readers the opportunity to explore the non-medical dimensions of the fears associated with contagious disease.

Pandemic fiction does not offer readers a prophetic look into the future, regardless of what some may think. Instead, narratives about contagious disease hold up a mirror to our deepest, most inchoate fears about our present moment and explore different possible responses to those fears.

### Fear of outsiders

A virus crosses the boundary of your body, invading your very cells and changing your body on an incredibly intimate level.

It is unsurprising, then, that scholars see a strong relationship between contagious diseases and community identity. As anthropologist Priscilla Wald puts it, contagious disease “articulates community.” Pandemics emphasize how our individual bodies are connected to our collective body.

Left unchecked, the rhetorical implications of these narratives can lead to discriminatory behaviour or racism.

Contagious diseases — both in fiction and in real life — remind us that the social and cultural boundaries we use to structure society are fragile and porous, not stable and impermeable.

Although these works of literature cannot prophecise an imminent post-apocalyptic future, they can speak to our present.

So if reading a book about a pandemic appeals to you, go for it — but don't use it as an instructional manual for an outbreak. Instead, that work of fiction can help you better understand and manage how the virus amplifies complex, diverse and multi-faceted fears about change in our communities and our world.

*You know you've read a good book when you turn the last page and feel a little as if you've lost a friend.*



## Birdwatching increased tenfold last lockdown. Don't stop, it's a huge help for bushfire recovery

Ayesha Tulloch, *April Reside*, Geirgia Garrad, Monica Awashy, *The Conversation*, July 9, 2020 . ([www.theconversation.com/au](http://www.theconversation.com/au))

When Australians first went into lockdown in March, the combination of border closures, lockdowns and the closure of burnt areas from last summer's bushfires meant those who would have travelled far and wide to watch their favourite birds, instead stayed home.

Yet, Australians are reporting bird sightings at record rates – they've just changed where and how they do it.

In fact, Australian citizen scientists submitted ten times the number of backyard bird surveys to BirdLife Australia's Birdata app in April compared with the same time last year, according to BirdLife Australia's Dr Holly Parsons.

But it's not just a joyful hobby. Australia's growing fascination with birds is vital for conservation after last summer's devastating bushfires reduced many habitats to ash.

Australia's native plants and animals are on the slow path to recovery after the devastating fires last summer. In our research that's soon to be published, we found the fires razed forests, grasslands and woodlands considered habitat for 832 species of native vertebrate fauna. Of these, 45% are birds.

But citizen scientists play an important role in recovery too, in the form of monitoring. This provides important data to inform biodiversity disaster research and management.

Birdwatchers have recorded numerous iconic birds affected by the fires while

observing COVID-19 restrictions. They've been recorded in urban parks and city edges, as well as in gardens and on farms.

*Gang gang cockatoo on road sign in Canberra*



Reporting of iconic birds impacted by the recent bushfires has increased. The increased reporting rates of fire-affected birds is good news, as it means many birds are surviving despite losing their home. But they're not out of the woods yet. Their presence in marginal habitats within and at the edge of urban and severely burnt areas puts them more at risk. This includes threats from domestic cat and dog predation, starvation due to inadequate food supply, and stress-induced nest failure.

There are several tools available to the public for reporting and learning about birds.

*iNaturalist* ([inaturalist.ala.org.au](http://inaturalist.ala.org.au)) asks you to share a photo or video or sound recording, and a community of experts identifies it for you.

*BirdLife's Birds in Backyards* program ([www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)) includes a "Bird Finder" tool to help novice birders identify that bird sitting on the back verandah. Once you've figured out what you're seeing, you can log your bird sightings to help out research and management.



## A Trip to Norfolk Island

*From Grafton U3A Jabber Journal, June 2020*

After reading an invitation to U3A members to attend the 230th Anniversary of the Wrecking of the HMS *Sirius* on Norfolk Island, we registered by email with the Norfolk Island Travel Centre. They sent back details, which included our flights, accommodation, a car, and an interesting program for the week in March 2020.

We flew out of Brisbane on Saturday 14th March, and after a two-hour flight arrived mid-afternoon where we were met and taken to our accommodation. A second group from Sydney arrived the following day. On Sunday morning we were given a half-day tour of the island, which covers an area 8 x 5 kms. It was also a chance to meet others in our group who came from many different places.

The picturesque island was green and hilly with a steep rugged coastline and impressive stands of Norfolk Pines. We were also warned of an approaching cyclone on Monday and advised that the shops and schools would be closed. Fortunately, it blew over by mid-afternoon so we headed out in our hire car to see some of the amazing rugged coastline and bays, including the Old Whaling Station site off Cascade Bay.

We had a tour on Tuesday morning of the three Norfolk Island Museums along the historic Quality Row, in the convict settlement in Kingston, laid out in 1825. As an extra activity, we had booked a tour of the Norfolk Whey Goat Farm and sampled their cheeses. This was followed by an impressive Welcome Dinner on Tuesday night. Wednesday morning was the *Sirius* Museum tour where there were many relics, which had been recovered from the wreck and been restored. Relics included one of the enormous anchors, and two powder guns or carronades, as well as the bas-relief bronze sculpture of the *Sirius* on the outside of the Museum, given by the people of Mosman NSW, in 1990.

Thursday was the Anniversary Lunch in a huge marquee set up on the waterfront near the wrecking site.

This then allowed plenty of time to explore the Island ourselves. This included Kingston Pier and the Salt House, built in 1846, where sea water was boiled off, leaving salt – their only means of preserving meat - also coffee, at the Golf Club Coffee Shop overlooking the ocean, in the former Stipendiary Magistrate's home, built in 1845.

A workshop was held on Friday which consisted of several guest speakers and lunch. This was followed by the Norfolk's famous Fish Fry Dinner in the evening after which we were entertained with dancing by some of the young local girls.

Saturday afternoon was our flight home and into COVID-19 isolation.

*John & Robyn Higham, June Blackadder.  
Grafton U3A.*



**Footnote -** HMS *Sirius* was the flagship of the First Fleet, which set out from Portsmouth, England, in 1787 to establish the first European colony in New South Wales, Australia. In 1790, the ship was wrecked on the reef, south east of Kingston Pier, in Slaughter Bay, Norfolk Island

*Thankyou to all U3As which contributed to this issue of [Newslink](#).*