

Squeezing a Right-hand Foot Into a Left-hand Shoe

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Abstract

The push to embed creative thinking and innovative design into all aspects of business activity—whilst strengthening existing and developing new “Creative Industries” (CIs)—has been a hallmark of government policy in Australia and the UK for the past ten years. These newly-defined creative and knowledge economies are seen by governments as the way forward in competing with the highly competitive manufacturing industries of the developing world. In both countries, significant amounts of money and effort have been spent on establishing creative industries precincts and associated facilities and in establishing advanced art and design programs under the CI banner.

Unfortunately, Australia is failing to follow through in the nurturing of these still embryonic developments by neglecting, through lack of proper funding, the people who will drive them into the future—our present generation of researchers, students and teachers. This is due to the failure of governments and universities to recognise the diversity, complexity and nature of creative research. This paper examines some of the strategies being implemented to close the gap between design education and research and the needs of the greater economy and suggests several ways in which some of the methodologies in use in the UK can be adapted and utilised to enhance the valuable contribution already being made by Australian art and design schools.

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Background

It is approaching twenty years now since the responsibility for art and design education at tertiary level was passed from the states to the federally funded university system following the release of the Dawkins 1998 white paper *Higher Education: a Policy Statement*.¹ It was a time of great turmoil and great change for the old art and design schools, since the new host institutions dealt with the mergers in a variety of ways, ranging from major closures and rationalisations to embracing the newcomers as valuable additions to their campuses. It would be unfair to suggest that only art and design colleges experienced turmoil as a result of the amalgamations that occurred—several academies of music, dance and theatre also found themselves in a similar situation.

A key challenge for the art and design schools in this new environment was that long established models of teaching and studying the creative arts (of all descriptions) suddenly found themselves placed in an environment where equally long held learning practices were also well entrenched. To academics familiar with traditional models of the academy, the sudden elevation of “college” level—formerly diploma standard—students to degree status represented a devaluation of university education and, more seriously, a further strain on already limited resources. This engendered not only widespread resentment in many cases, but lit the fuse on the still simmering debate as to what exactly constitutes “research,” since it is access to research funding and the subsequent status within the university system that this brings with it, that currently drives whole merry-go-round. There would be few artists and designers who have worked in the Australian university system who have not encountered some of this still remaining resentment—and attempts by some academics to minimise or downplay the value of creative research and creative outputs continue to this day.

To traditionally trained academics, research is easy to quantify—it’s measured by what you publish—either in a book or a journal article, preferably one with a rigorous peer-review process. Each discipline has a number of specialised journals associated with it, all of which are well known to the practitioners in that field and there is a well understood hierarchy within those journals. New researchers typically publish in the

lower rated journals and, as one becomes increasingly experienced and known within the discipline, so the status of the journals one publishes in also increases. This view is reflected by the ARC in its proposed research excellence indicators, describing Tier B journals as being “important outlets for the work of PhD students and early career researchers” and publication in Tier A and A* journals as demonstrating that the author has attained a level of “real engagement with the global research community”². The key to this system is that it is not necessarily what you do in the research process—it’s what you write about it and where it gets published that counts. This has two advantages. Since all educated people can read, the outcomes are obvious to (supposedly) anyone who cares to study the text and, most importantly, outcomes can be quantified on a sliding scale of excellence. This is one reason that the Australian Research Council (ARC) has been keen to formalise discipline-specific tiered outlet rankings as a key performance indicator in the present *Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative*.³ The difficulty arises in determining levels of merit in the non-traditional disciplines, for which there is little established precedent and a great deal of uncertainty. Whilst the ERA Consultation Document currently proposes twenty possible alternatives to the traditional outlets of journals, books and conferences, it remains to be seen how these will be weighted and how many will remain following the end of the consultation period.

But why is it that exhibitions and performances of creative work, the publishing of books and novels and the production of designs, films and recordings—along with numerous other creative research outcomes—simply do not count when it comes to calculating research income at the present moment? There is no doubt that universities recognise the value and attractiveness of their creative arts and design related courses when it comes to signing up students and, particularly for some institutions, attracting significant government investment in infrastructure and equipment. Design and media/multimedia based courses in general have maintained their popularity for some time now and postgraduate numbers, particularly in coursework programmes, remain healthy. As well, governments and industry in Australia and the UK are coming to fully understand the benefits that the graduates of art and design schools bring to business, industry and the community, so there is a growing body of interest in supporting these programmes. Unfortunately, many old-school university academics still cling to a very 19th century view of what an art school is and would like very much to keep it that way.

Squeezing the right hand foot

It was the White Knight in Charles Dodgson's 1871 book *Through the Looking Glass* who described the dissonance felt by many working in the field of creative research in Australian universities today. In the poem *Haddocks' Eyes* or is it *A-sitting On a Gate* or perhaps even *The Aged Aged Man*, the gentle Knight recites these magical words:

“And now, if e'er by chance I put,
My fingers into glue,
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot,
Into a left-hand shoe...” (Dodgson 1871) ⁴.

Squeezing a right-hand foot into a left-hand shoe exactly describes the challenge facing practice-based artists and designers on a daily basis. We understand that what we are doing perfectly fits with the OECDs definition of research as “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge” ⁵. The kinds of studies and investigations we undertake, along with many of the outcomes we produce certainly fall well within the three definitions of research as put forward by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) in their 2008 Higher Education Research Data Collection specification document (page 7) and which are based on definitions originally formulated by the OECD in 2002 ⁶.

In addition, we read and study and practice within our fields of expertise, communicate with our peers and try our best to stay abreast of changes and developments. Some of our work comes to a dead-end and some of it leads on to new ideas, new methods and new outcomes. We have a long tradition of exhibiting, presenting, reviewing and benchmarking our work that predates the very universities we work in (and often many of the other disciplines within them) and, for what it's worth, our work is sometimes acknowledged to be a key element of civilization itself. And yet, after nearly 20 years—aside from a very brief period when DEST included the so-called “H and J” categories into the research quantum—we still do not really hit the research radar—and thus fail to bring in to our universities that most treasured of all commodities—funding. The shoe still does not fit, but it's not from want of trying. Unfortunately, some university administrators continue to take this lack of recognition as a justification of their own prejudices, a future means by which whole schools can be pushed toward the slippery path to “teaching only” status.

Given the historic tendency to revert to traditional benchmarks when the task of quantifying creative outcomes gets difficult, my concerns for the future are compounded when the ERA’s recently released first draft of journal rankings is examined². Coming from a Graphic Design and Visual Communication background, my area of expertise falls across two discipline codes: 19—Studies in Creative Arts and Writing (SCAW) and 12—Built Environment and Design (BED). In order to narrow down the field for this paper to cover only FOR subcategories relevant to the applied Art and Design field, the author went through both spreadsheets and deleted any subcategories that did not appear to be directly related. Thus, in the SCAW discipline code Journalism and Professional Writing, Performing Arts and Creative Writing and Music related journals were deleted. Foreign language publications were left in place. The spreadsheet was then sorted by rating with the A* placed at the top. Table One shows the resultant “A” list, which is comprised 20 of the 240 journals remaining. The same process was applied to the BED discipline code, with Architecture, Building and Urban and Regional Planning being removed (although some graphic design writings occasionally fall under the architectural umbrella) in order to simplify the review process. Whilst this is not an exhaustive survey of the proposed publications and may miss some of the less obviously titled journals, it does provide a quick overview of the field. Table Two shows the entire BED list following sorting. Text in Grey indicates that the journal has a potentially low relevance value to applied art and design practitioners seeking publication. As can be seen, the possibility of achieving an A ranked journal outcome is severely limited by the options presently proposed.

TABLE 1. ERA Code 19 “A” journal rankings following sorting for Art & Design relevance.

		Journal Title		Brief Description from Journal Website if available.
7564	A*	<i>Renaissance Quarterly</i>	SCAW	Art, literature, and history of the Renaissance for the academic audience.
7648	A*	<i>Scan</i>	SCAW	Journal of media arts and culture. Macquarie University.
9853	A*	<i>Biuletyn Historii Sztuki</i>	ATC	Polish art in its European context since medieval times, as well as foreign art history.
9851	A*	<i>Art Bulletin of Victoria</i>	VAC	The annual journal of the National Gallery of Victoria.
6934	A*	<i>Camera Obscura</i>	VAC	Journal of Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies. Duke University.
9974	A*	<i>Goya</i>	VAC	No information found
10031	A*	<i>Journal of Visual Art Practice</i>	VAC	Fine Art (or Art and Design) education at postgraduate level.
7012	A	<i>Criticism-a Quarterly for Literature and the Arts</i>	SCAW	Canvassing textual, visual, and performative practices, the journal publishes rigorously argued work that explores (or transgresses) the

				limits of disciplinarity.
10413	A	<i>Kunsthistorische Sammlungen in Wien Jahrbuch</i>	SCAW	No information found
10058	A	<i>Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz</i>	SCAW	Obscure. At least one edition appears to be on microfische.
8462	A	<i>Journal of Canadian Art History-Annales d Histoire de l Art Canadien</i>	ATC	Canadian art history, architecture and decorative arts; Inuit and North American Native art from the eighteenth century to the contemporary period.
10175	A	<i>Source-Notes in the History of Art</i>	ATC	Listed in the British Humanities Index from 2007. Not listed in ProQuest. Published by the <i>Ars Brevis</i> Foundation.
9940	A	<i>Diskurs Film</i>	FT&DM	No ISSN number. Appears to be a yearbook, published irregularly.
10292	A	<i>Ceramics-Art and Perception</i>	VAC	Quarterly magazine on ceramic art featuring articles, color pictures on every page, functional and sculptural work, useful information on events and reviews. [Not peer reviewed].
9975	A	<i>History of Photography</i>	VAC	Peer reviewed quarterly devoted to the history, practice and theory of photography.
10051	A	<i>Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin</i>	VAC	"Quarterly, these attractive and lavishly illustrated publications present articles about objects in the Museum's collections or related to the Museum's exhibitions. Members receive the <i>Bulletin</i> as one of their membership benefits".
10469	A	<i>NKA-Journal of Contemporary African Art</i>	VAC	Triennial: edited by two leading scholars, art critics and curators actively engaged in the field of contemporary African art. Cornell University.
10119	A	<i>Papers on Surrealism</i>	VAC	Web-based journal produced by the AHRB Research Centre for Studies of Surrealism. University of Essex. Peer reviewed.
10577	A	<i>Womans Art Journal</i>	VAC	Semiannual, addresses women's art heritage and contemporary issues as they relate to women. Peer Reviewed, Rutgers University.
10591	A	<i>Arts of Asia</i>	MULTI-D	Asian Arts and Antiques Magazine.

The A List: Creative_Arts_and_Writing. 20 / 240 after editing (8.3%).
A* = 7/240 (2.9%) A = 13/240 (5.4%).

ARC Draft Journal Ranking List: A* = top 5% of journals in discipline. A top 6-20%, B top 21-50%, C journals not in the top 50% < <http://www.arc.gov.au/era/indicators.htm>> (accessed 30 June 2007).

FIELD OF RESEARCH CLASSIFICATIONS. **SCAW:** Studies in Creative Writing; **ATC:** Art Theory & Criticism; **VAC:** Visual Arts & Crafts; **FT&DM:** Film Television & Digital Media; **MULTI-D:** Multidisciplinary—Social Sciences & Humanities.

TABLE 2. ERA Code 12 journal rankings following sorting for Art & Design relevance.

		Journal Title		Brief Description from Journal Website if available.
13416	A*	Applied Ergonomics	DP&M	applied ergonomics in the design, planning
30535	A*	Computer Aided Design	DP&M	collect and disseminate information on computer aided design
20963	A*	Design	DP&M	research papers in all fields of design
10354	A*	Grey Room	MULTI	theorization of modern and contemporary

				architecture, art, media, and politics
30516	A	International Journal of Co-Creation in Design and Art	DP&M	principles, procedures and techniques relevant to collaboration in design
3668	A	Ergonomics	DP&M	Journal of the Ergonomics Society
20979	A	Harvard Design Magazine	DP&M	Graduate School of Design magazine
20883	A	Journal of Design Research	DP&M	interdisciplinary journal, emphasising human aspects as a central issue of design
30531	A	Research in Engineering Design	ENG	design theory and methodology in mechanical, civil, chemical engineering
30544	B	Design Research Quarterly	DP&M	peer-reviewed research papers in all areas of design
3472	B	Design Studies	ENG	Design Research in Engineering, Architecture, Products and Systems
3593	B	Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing	DP&M	Physiotherapy and occupational therapy in Production and engineering management
3679	B	International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics	DP&M	understanding of the role of humans in today's systems and the interactions thereof
9864	B	Arts of Asia	MULTI	Asian Arts and Antiques Magazine.
10004	B	Journal of Arts Management Law and Society	MULTI	marketing, intellectual property, arts policy, arts law, governance, and cultural production
10116	B	Oriental Art	MULTI	MULTIDISCIPLINARY - SOCIAL SCIENCES/HUMANITIES
10253	C	Art Design and Communication in Higher Education	DP&M	the development of research with a learning and teaching focus for art, design and communication within higher education
10321	C	Design Issues	DP&M	MIT. Examines design history, theory, and criticism,
22168	C	Ergonomics Australia	DP&M	discussion of any topic related to ergonomics—online journal
13509	C	Ergonomics Sa	DP&M	Journal of the Ergonomics Society of South Africa
9963	C	Fashion Theory-the Journal of Dress Body & Culture	DP&M	'fashion' as the cultural construction of the embodied identity
20875	C	International Journal of Design Computing	DP&M	Web journal now archived by the NLA
7309	C	Journal of Design History	DP&M	Design, crafts and applied arts history and visual and material culture
3546	C	Research Journal of Textile and Apparel	DP&M	promote the dissemination of research ideas and applications at an internationally recognized academic level
10522	C	Scandinavian Journal of Design History	DP&M	arts and crafts, decorative arts, industrial design, graphic art,
10214	C	Working Papers in Art and Design	DP&M	the business of research in art and design
10349	C	Forum (Edinburgh)	MULTI	Postgrad journal on culture and the arts
21627	C	Pacific Arts	MULTI	visual and performing arts of the Pacific region

The Built Environment and Design List.

A* = 4/28 (14.3%). A = 5/28 (17.8%). B = 7/28 (25%). C = 12/28 (42.9%).

ARC Draft Journal Ranking List: A* = top 5% of journals in discipline. A top 6-20%, B top 21-50%, C journals not in the top 50% < <http://www.arc.gov.au/era/indicators.htm> > (accessed 30 June 2007).

FIELD OF RESEARCH CLASSIFICATIONS.

DP&M: Design Practice and Management; MULTI: Multidisciplinary-Social Sciences & Humanities; ENG: Engineering Design.

Fortunately, it's not all doom and gloom, but there is a hitch. The appointment of a six member creative arts sub-committee within the ERA Indicators Development Group in August 2008 is a clear recognition of the need to acknowledge research outcomes in the creative arts—although the sub-committee's work will certainly be cut out for them when it comes to changing preconceived notions and challenging the *status quo*. Not only must it be formally acknowledged by the bureaucrats controlling the funding of research that the work being done in our creative faculties is important and of significant value at many levels (indeed it has the power to change the world) but it must also come to be recognised as such within the broader community of our own universities. As can be seen from the above tables, the key indicators in the proposed model for rating research outcomes in the print domain do not at present give a high priority to journals and publications that deal with practice based research. This not only disadvantages present academics working in the creative arena by limiting their publication options, but also the options for future generations of honours and postgraduate students. Recognition of alternative “publication” options is welcomed, but it is essential that these are not undervalued or accorded a lesser status or ranking because of their unfamiliar nature.

If the old system is broken, as I argue it is, then we must push for radical reform. It is clear that industry and government appreciate the value of innovation and creativity and the need to stay ahead of the lightning-fast pace of technological change (see for example the 2005 *Imagine Australia* Report,⁷ the Queensland Government's *Creative Industries Program 2007-2008*⁸ and the Victorian Government's *The State of Design: Future Directions*⁹ initiative)—but if art and design schools are to engage as equals within the universities in which they are now based, as well as engage professionally and as equals with industry and business in pushing forward these agendas, it must be seen as a two-way process for all of the parties involved. Until this is achieved, our students will not receive the same level of funding as is typically provided to those in the science, business, health and engineering disciplines and they will continue to be seen (in some universities) as merely a convenient source of enrolment based income. Fortunately, the benefit that creative research brings to the economy is now well understood in the UK and Europe and is being increasingly recognised in Australia, and this informs the second part of this discussion.

External Drivers changing the nature of design research and practice

It is only in the past decade that we have seen governments and business organisations around the world come to fully appreciate the competitive edge that the work of talented artists and designers, producing high-quality and innovative design gives to the success of products and services in today's highly-competitive global economy. This acknowledgement has not occurred for altruistic reasons, or as a result of some newly acquired sense of aesthetics amongst the general population—it has come about as the result of hard-nosed economic and political reality. In both Australia and the UK, governments have been pressed hard to find alternative ways of responding to the growing challenge presented by the rapidly industrialising “BRIC” economies (specifically those of Brazil, Russia, India and China) and it is now widely recognised that only through the creation of dynamic and responsive post-manufacturing economies that the former economies will continue to thrive and prosper into the future. Whilst Australia is presently enjoying an economic boom based on the mining and export of raw materials (mainly to China) it is clearly understood that this source of wealth is both finite in terms of resources and is highly subject to external economic influences. Consequently, both Australia and the UK have sought to identify, develop and strengthen alternative and more sustainable businesses and industries. That good design and creative thinking not only value adds to existing products, but also that it leads to innovation and new ways of doing business (as well as new types of business) is now considered self-evident.

That these newly defined creative and knowledge economies are seen as the way forward in competing with the rapidly expanding and highly competitive manufacturing industries of the developing world is clearly recognised. According to the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation 2006 Annual Report (p.10):

Australia faces a crisis in innovation in the sphere of economic development and policy. It is over-dependent on science, engineering and technology and undervalues the dynamic services, consumer and creative sectors of the economy. As a result, Australia's 'creative innovation' system is embryonic at best. We need to develop a better understanding of the basic dimensions, trends and dynamics of the creative economy.¹⁰

Whilst a significant amount of investment to this end has been made in terms of physical infrastructure, industry sponsorship and operational funding, it is only more recently that the role of art and design education, underpinned by creative arts based research, has started to become recognised as a critical component of the process. In

the Australian context, it is widely acknowledged that research funding in the creative and design fields is particularly difficult to come by. Noting the difficulty faced by researchers in the Humanities in particular, Ang and Cassity (2004) point out that participation by Humanities and Creative Arts researchers in the ARC Linkage Projects Scheme still continues to remain small, especially in contrast to the much higher success rate enjoyed by Science, Engineering and Medical projects¹¹. Although the value that design research and (consequently) design education can contribute to the future economy is fully recognised at many levels of government and well understood by design educators, there is still a reluctance to invest in actually funding it. Interestingly enough, the parallels between Australian and UK higher education policy seem to consistently emulate on the part of the Australians, with roughly a five year gap between the UK introducing a policy and the Australians following it. For example, the Australian Quality Assurance Agency (AUQA) is very closely modelled on the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) whilst a more recent initiative (albeit now cancelled) and nominally called the Research Quality Framework, bore an uncanny resemblance to the UK's unpopular and time consuming Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).

In both countries, considerable pressure is being brought to bear to increase university-industry engagement at the higher degree level, with the present *ARC Linkage Projects* scheme¹² and the Carrick Institute's (now the Australian Learning and Teaching Council) *Discipline-Based Initiatives Scheme*¹³ building on earlier models (such as the moderately successful *National Teaching Company Scheme*) in order to further influence research culture and industry engagement in Australia. In the U.K., the 2005 *Cox Review of Creativity in Business*, produced for HM Treasury¹⁴ and the associated *Creativity, Design and Business Report* produced for the Department of Trade and Industry¹⁵ concurrently emphasised the need for closer industry-education links in order to increase the benefits that the creative disciplines in institutes of higher education could bring to industry and thereby provide greater awareness in students of the context in which their skills will be applied. A similar paper produced for Australian government, *Imagine Australia: The Role of Creativity in the Innovation Economy* (2005) produced by the Prime Minister's Science Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) came to similar conclusions, noting on page six: "If we are to compete and excel in the global economy of the future we must move now to build a more innovative economy that recognises the key importance of creativity and design"⁷. Clearly, the pressure for industry and university co-operation has never been stronger in either country, especially in the fields of design and creative process. This is certainly not a bad thing—by any stretch of the imagination—and it promises

mutual benefit for educators, students and business alike if approached and implemented properly, with due caution, adequate planning and realistic funding.

Lessons from the UK: Broadening Areas of Practice

During the latter half of 2007 the author had the privilege of taking up a visiting fellowship at the University of Leeds under the mentorship of Professor Thomas Cassidy, Chair of Design. This fellowship provided an excellent opportunity to observe at first hand some of the ways in which the University of Leeds, a member of the Russell Group of research universities, was able to manage some of the challenges facing design and creative arts programmes in what is, even by Australian standards, a highly competitive funding environment.

Perhaps the first thing that one notices in visiting the north of England for the first time is the overwhelming presence of relics from the industrial revolution. Derelict cotton mills standing side-by-side with the smokestacks of the long silent steam engines that once powered them, empty warehouses, endless canals and long defunct but beautifully constructed railway viaducts that once serviced this massive infrastructure are everywhere—all bearing mute testament to the speed with which even the world's greatest economies can be overtaken by cheaper labour and even cheaper resources. The Brits have not forgotten this, but it was a lesson they had to learn the hard way. The closures of the coal mines in the 1970s and the overhaul of the printing industries just a few years later are still bitter memories and constant reminders of the need to lead and drive technological change and not merely follow.

The School of Design at Leeds University was originally set up as a School of Textiles by donations from a number of cloth worker's guilds in the 19th century, establishing from the very beginning a close and mutually beneficial relationship with industry. To this day many of these connections remain, though they have been proactively broadened to establish and maintain connections with all of the areas of creative and design research with which the School now engages. Importantly, given its history of, and commitment to, applied research, it is able to promote itself as an equal or greater partner in knowledge transfer with its industry partners, offering expert opinion as well as openly receiving it. Of particular interest from the Australian perspective is the

fact that postgraduate design qualifications can take the form of either an MA or an MSc in Design as well as a PhD, this approach being intended to encourage students with a science background (generally BSc Hons) to undertake design studies. This is in direct response to the recommendations of the 2005 *Cox Review* and the DTI's *Creativity, Design Business Performance Review* and represents a very profound initiative in the author's opinion. The strategy of linking creative research to science and technology based projects has also opened up a number of mutually beneficial research opportunities and, consequently, access to new avenues of research funding.

Perhaps the most significant difference at postgraduate level is the extent to which students are proactively encouraged to develop projects that cross over traditional boundaries. The fact that the School has a long connection with industry obviously helps in maintaining the research momentum in this regard, but the lessons to be taken from this direct connection to science and industry and the consequent integration of theory and practice is particularly relevant. For example, postgraduate design students from within the School of Design were working on projects co-hosted with the Faculties of Science and Medicine, investigating the design, production and use of non-woven fabrics in constructing frameworks for cell growth in the production of cartilage and other prosthetic body parts such as heart valves and arterial replacements and, at the other extreme, designing patterns, packaging systems, dyes and colour schemes better suited to more eco-sensitive manufacturing, cleaning and recycling processes in conjunction with the Science and Engineering Faculties. At all levels of research, emphasis on the practical engagement between creativity, design and industry was strongly emphasised and, indeed, supported by government and university policy. Importantly, the university is committed to ensuring all postgraduate design students are educated in environmental and sustainable design practice. For this reason, all students are required to undertake a course in sustainable design and must address ecological and environmental issues along with providing a product lifecycle analysis in any design project undertaken. Although this is a developing trend across the EEC, Leeds is amongst the first in the UK to make it a requirement of study.

As in Australia, direct linkages with the creative industries are actively encouraged, although the nature of these industries makes engagement sometimes difficult (for many reasons) with business related time constraints and project deadlines being consistently cited as a major limitation. This observation was very much in accordance

with observations and statistical evidence presented in the *Cox Review*. Furthermore, in terms of attracting postgraduate students and experienced sessional staff from within industry, the salaries paid to top creative professionals, along with the workloads typically encountered in these industries, were seen as a positive disincentive to taking up postgraduate study or in actively contributing to teaching and research. To a large extent, postgraduate qualifications are not seen as being relevant to career advancement in those industries where successful and continual creative outcomes are the main determinant of long-term success or promotion. Consequently, postgraduate qualifications at Master's or higher level are seen more as an entry point for the design profession rather than as an aspiration for existing practitioners. Whilst university linkages with relevant industries are actively encouraged in both Australia and the UK, the very nature of the creative industries in fact makes engagement more problematic than in other fields, to the detriment of both parties in the equation. To counter these difficulties, the UK government provides financial support initiatives, political pressure and tax incentives to encourage and support industry-university engagement—to a much greater extent than any of the initiatives presently put forward by the various State and Federal governments in Australia. The UK government's policies, along with the centralised and far reaching influence of the British Design Council, are thus instrumental in driving the development of stronger university-industry interactions.

In Australia, the Design Institute of Australia (DIA) and the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) are the major industry organizations involved with professional practice and industry representation in the visual communications field. Both have an educational role as part of their mission statement, although neither is as large or as well funded as the UK's Design Council. In the UK, the Design Council is a major focus of industry and educational connections and is now a major supporter of the *Design Skills Advisory Panel* (DSAP), a government funded and industry led initiative aimed at improving the level of design skills in both schools and universities. It is presently involved in setting up a network of practicing designers and creatives from a wide range of "creative industries" who will work with and visit schools and universities and who will be supported and assisted in this role by the Skills Advisory Panel. In support of this initiative, the DSAP is tasked with the setting up of a national design skills academy to establish industry standards in professional practice and provide opportunities for educators and advanced level students to undertake

professional development and access specialised curriculum resources¹⁶. This is considered to be particularly important in the light of the increasing recognition of the blurring of boundaries between the traditional disciplines and the increasing demands of an ever-changing technology. The need to maintain a balance in the research and learning equation by bringing industry into the university is of particular relevance to Australian design education, which shares many of the same challenges as the British education system—but which has the additional challenges of distance and regionalism—is one way in which some of the imbalances inherent in the creative industries/university relationship can be addressed.

Based on these all too limited observations, it is clear that both governments and universities have come to recognise the role that creative research will play in maintaining Australia's future prosperity. However, if successful industry linkages are to be developed and maintained, it is also clear that universities (and their graduates) must be seen as valued and equal contributors in the transaction. For this reason, it is only by strengthening the ability and developing the capacity of creative arts researchers and students to push boundaries, develop and explore new concepts and ideas and feed these back into industry and society that this partnership can become one of equals and thus work in the way intended. It is also clear that there is a distinct need to identify, clarify and properly recognise the activities that constitute research in the creative arts/creative industries, so that practitioners and researchers can be given access to the support and funding to do the work for which their skills are so vitally needed. Until we can get over the “starving in a garret” image long associated with creative practitioners that still seems to pervade the attitudes of many powerbrokers in the sector, it may be quite a while before we get our right hand shoe and the balance of a nicely-fitting pair.

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