通訊及合作：實踐中的歷史

與Winthrop教授Susan Broomhall的訪談

In early 2012, Crystal Abidin and Rukmini Pande had the opportunity of interviewing Susan Broomhall, Winthrop Professor of History at the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Western Australia. Prof. Broomhall is a historian of early modern Europe who specialises in the history of women and gender, as well as the role of scholarly histories in heritage tourism and arts industries. She is also one of the Chief Investigators at the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions.

We were very pleased to have the opportunity to interview Prof. Broomhall for this issue for a number of reasons! First, in keeping with the theme of the issue, she has had a long association with the notion of collaboration, both in terms of her academic work and publication history. Outside of these activities, however, she is currently engaged in organising the very exciting ZEST festival, an event exploring the nature of collaboration in very different and perhaps more applied ways. Her background as a former member of the Limina collective also led to an interesting discussion of how this forum has evolved and how it shaped her personal postgraduate experience. Her views on how to maximise the benefits of collaboration both within the traditional bounds of academia as well as more informal avenues are surely going to be very interesting to postgraduates everywhere.

Hi Susan, thank you very much for talking to us today. Could you tell us what being a Professor at UWA entails? Give us a sneak-peek into a day of your life!

It seems to change over the year as I shift between different projects, but right now, we are gearing up for the first Zest Festival in Kalbarri in June this year. This means researching and writing up varied small texts for the exhibition catalogue, interpretive signage, and for the local school’s newsletter; preparing the layout of the Festival booklet with our designer Erika von Kaschke, and organising and editing the contributions of others involved, with my fellow editor Rebecca Millar; and liaising with the other curators and industry partners who are contributing activities to make the Festival a success. The communication for something like this is immense: I seem to be making endless phone calls or emails!

Reading my postgraduate students’ work and talking with them is an important aspect of my current work and takes up a fair proportion of my day, especially as I seem to have trouble sticking to just the one hour of our scheduled meeting! I’m also working on finishing up a monograph on Scottish police courts at the moment so I try to make sure I give some solid time
to that every day.¹ When I’m losing focus or lacking inspiration, I try to keep moving along with some papers for overseas conferences later this year, and organising the practical details of archival research I’ll be doing while I’m there. There are always some journal articles and book proposals to review for publishers and, of course, meetings and workshops I need to attend.

It really is very varied and I tend to work across a lot of projects at once, although each one will come to the fore in turn and require more sustained focus as its deadline gets closer. But I find that way of working suits me well. I’m not sure that I could say that this is in any way typical of a professor at UWA, although everyone is probably juggling 50 things at once!

_You completed your BA and Ph.D at UWA, which means you must know UWA very well! How has the intellectual climate of the school changed over the years?_

This is quite a tricky question to answer, first because I’ve moved from student to staff member so you see different aspects from those two perspectives, and second because there was no School of Humanities when I started as an undergraduate in 1992, but a Department of History and a Department of French Studies. I took a double-major across both, as well as studies in Music, Italian and Japanese. From the perspective of learning, I thought French and History (and the others) had quite distinct identities as disciplines, in terms of their questions, sources and methods. Although they have now merged into a wider School, I suspect this has not altered the teaching focus to a great extent and that this would still be the student experience today.

At a second level, what has changed in my view quite rapidly is the focus and expertise within the disciplines. Taking History, for example, I think the profile of the area looks very different in its research and teaching interests from when I started, as staff have retired and new members joined. But this renewal of the program is very important, you want staff to be passionate, teaching and researching what they love, because that’s surely more likely to engage and inspire students.

Looking in from the outside, I feel as though the postgraduate community now has created a lot for itself as a group, both within its disciplines but also across them - organising seminars, movie nights, guest speakers and generally making sure that the social side of postgraduate life has meaning and provides support. I think this helps guard against burn-out and to avoid any potential competitiveness that students may feel among them. Maybe this just reflects my own experience. I worked at a supermarket and as a tutor in both French and History while I was doing my PhD so I wasn’t always very connected to wider activities going on for postgraduates. I think I know more about these now as a staff member than I did as a student! I had a relatively small group of friends, we swapped our chapters and had quite an intense experience providing feedback until we knew each other’s topics pretty intimately - for which I’m very grateful. I have

to say too that I was very shy, and I always thought I wasn’t as smart as everyone else seemed to be. Actually, that’s where being involved in Limina helped, as it brought me into contact with other people and helped me realise that, while some people could articulate their ideas with such clarity (alas, not me!), there were other aspects of doctoral research and writing at which I was quite ok. We all had different talents to share, which you don’t see when you are working on your own.

The life of a research student is often described as a particularly lonely phase in one’s academic life. Do you think that a greater emphasis on collaborative research rather than competitive publishing would make a difference to this situation?

Certainly, some aspects of collaborative research are a really useful way of connecting postgraduates, to see parts of their own study in a new light or through a new theoretical angle by their interactions with others. But I also think your time as a postgraduate is one where you also need to get a sense of the kind of researcher you want to be, how you will approach your work, what theoretical lens are meaningful to the kinds of analysis you want to conduct and so on. Not that these are fixed for life from this period, but it seems that this is a really critical time for self-reflection and self-knowledge, and I think that needs to develop first before you can come to a collaboration with knowledge to share, debate and adjust. A sense of self as a researcher, and a deep knowledge of your discipline at a content, theoretical and methodological level are necessary, I think, to enter collaboration.

At a practical ‘cv’ level, I think having a portfolio of articles or contributions in whatever form is appropriate to the discipline, where your particular contribution is clear (for History or Literary Studies, this might be the single-authored article, for example), is also very important to your professional scholarly identity. Does this have to mean competitive publishing as the alternative though? I’d hope publishing is about reporting new ideas to a field, when you have them fully thought through, not trying to get more lines of texts on a cv than someone else! No job committee is impressed by how many pieces of work have been published, it is their quality that counts every time.

So, to me, the answer here is about ways and means. Perhaps something as ambitious as a jointly-authored article might occur at the end of the PhD thesis-writing phase, where one is fairly confident about one’s knowledge base. But other forms of collaboration and exchange of ideas can be occurring in all sorts of ways along the way – by attending seminars and conferences and enquiring about the research of others and having them provoke your thinking by their questions in return, participating in a collaborative team environment such as Limina, or by teaching undergraduates or community courses where people also have insights and questions that push you to consider your views. These provide both vital socialising opportunities but also times to reflect and consider other ways of thinking.
We gather from your profile that you have a very extensive list of publications, many co-authored with other academics. Could you explain what the process of such collaboration is like? What are some of the advantages and rewards of such collaboration? Did you encounter any difficulties, and if so, how did you resolve these conflicts?

That’s funny because I think of myself as largely a lone researcher who sometimes collaborates. I like to do both, studying something in depth on my own to work out my own ways of thinking, but also to do collaborative work to test that thinking with others, and to push myself to work though new ideas, themes, theories and methods.

My time as an Australian Research Council post-doctoral fellow was quite independent, it gave me a lot of freedom to work at my own pace, to my own schedule and to explore my ideas. I was grateful that previous to that appointment, I had worked in an office as a Co-ordinator of Community Programming for UWA’s University Extension. This taught me how to develop and pitch ideas for all sorts of public education courses and measure their traction with the community who pay for them. I was able to sit in and learn from professional presenters delivering courses in a wide range of fields, and also just to organise myself in a team office environment. Those skills have been very useful to me as an academic and I was able to see the university from an outsider’s (or at least semi-outsider’s) view and reminded me not to lose sight of the communities out there who could be interested in or benefit from my research.

Intellectually, emotionally and practically, scholarly collaborations and relationships are important to me. They stimulate my thinking, they help me avoid getting in a rut, being too isolated or reverting to shyness, and they force me to get on and finish up work when I know someone is waiting on it. You have to be prepared to risk a bit of your self and hope that the other person or people enter into it in the same spirit. I try to develop a new collaboration through something small, perhaps a jointly-authored conference paper or article, so that you can test how well you can get on together, whether you can understand each other’s way of work or style of writing. There are probably times when each of you is frustrated, and when the patterns of other commitments create ebbs and flows so that you can’t always engage with the work at exactly the same time. A collaboration with commitment and understanding from each side can overcome these issues. The whole process can be quite hard and challenging, and it usually takes more time than it would to write on my own, but the rewards are well worth it.

How would you explain collaborative research to a lay person? What does it mean to you?

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It can mean a whole range of things and have a lot of different outcomes. Perhaps at the more traditional scholarly end is something like a jointly-authored paper or article. In most cases, we would talk through an idea of the piece we plan to write, one of us writes up a skeleton structure or overview working out who can contribute what, and then someone has to write the first draft aspects of it. There will be lots of to-ing and fro-ing as we add in text and ideas and then there will be a final smoothing-over process to make sure it hangs together as a whole. This process gets smoother and quicker as you work more with the same person or people, you start to understand their shorthand, see how their mind works, and feel more confident to be able to write in things like “Help, can you kind of see where I’m going here?” or “I’m pretty sure there’s a point in all this, can you see what it is?”

The Zest Festival is quite another kind of collaboration, really something more like reflective practice research of curating a community festival about historic and present emotions. It involves many different partners and stakeholders and its outputs will be many, from historically-informed performances to the analytical research papers.

How has collaborative research evolved over the years? What are some of the future expectations of collaborative research?

I think people are much more thoughtful in the ways that they engage with collaboration, making sure that everyone understands who is doing what right from the beginning and how the work to eventuate will be credited. Those conversations are critical to avoid misunderstandings and make sure everyone comes out happy. They also need to be reviewed along the way, as things do often change. This doesn’t have to make it a hugely formal thing, but it’s not a bad idea to have this discussion on email so there is a record of it.

I think we are also moving to different forms of collaborations, not only two researchers with finished ideas on their respective projects coming together to merge them, but also research built from the ground up by the team, looking at the same sources perhaps together or separately, sharing ideas as they read along the way. One of the most stimulating collaborative research moments I’ve had with my colleague Jacqueline Van Gent, with whom I’m finishing up a book for Ashgate on gender and power in the princely Nassau-Orange dynasty during the early modern period.3 As we were both in Europe at the same time, we were able to meet up and visit a range of archives, material objects and buildings together. It was fascinating to see how we could both look at the same thing but see quite different aspects, but also to be able to compare ideas on the spot and re-examine our ideas about the text or object together.

With the growth of digital research, many budding researchers and academics are now picking up collaborative research methodologies. Do you have any advice for them?

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3 Sue has previously worked with Jacqueline Van Gent as editors of a collection, Governing Masculinities in the Early Modern Period: Regulating Selves and Others, Ashgate, 2011 and their monograph Gender, Power and Identity in the Early Modern Nassau Family, 1580-1814 is forthcoming with Ashgate in 2013.
Certainly digital technologies have made some aspects of these processes much easier. A number of colleagues with whom I’ve worked have been interstate or overseas so websites where we can store the working files, scans of texts or images and background notes as a central database that we can each access have been really useful.

I haven’t used Skype so much as yet, I tend to work via email and phone. Perhaps sometimes that’s easier than being face-to-face, as it gives you a chance to pause and reflect before you answer, and perhaps also to address issues or problems where they arise without the confrontation of the face-to-face environment. My very first collaborative book was with an American literary scholar, Colette H. Winn, a major specialist in sixteenth-century women’s writing. She approached me after reading an article I’d written and asked if I’d like to work on an edition of the text I’d worked on. It was a major leap of faith for us both, but perhaps especially for her. There were so many unknowns but we had read each other’s work and knew we were both passionate about creating better access to women’s writings. As it happened, we ended up writing two books before we ever met in person, and now we are working on our third, having only ever met twice in person to date.\(^4\) I’m not sure I’d really advise taking on such a big endeavour first up like that though!

**Much of your work looks at women, masculinities, and gender issues. What insights on these areas could collaborative research bring?**

I think this is an area in which a lot of collaborative work has occurred among scholars, certainly that’s been my experience. At the time I was writing my PhD, one of my supervisors, Patricia Crawford, was just completing her *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998) with Sara Mendelson and was working with Laura Gowing on a sourcebook, *Women’s Worlds in Seventeenth-Century England* (Routledge, 2000). I was tutoring in her units and we integrated teamwork and collaborative exercises for undergraduates. So I’ve always had a model of that kind of practice and expectation that I would do the same, I suppose. In fact, when Stephanie Tarbin and I were planning a festschrift for Patricia, the theme of ‘community’ seemed a natural fit for both the research Patricia had conducted as well as the way she worked to build the field.\(^5\)

Another area of my research concerns the history of emotions as part of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in the History of Emotions (Europe 1100-1800) where we are exploring how emotions were understood in the medieval and early modern period, how they shaped identities, lives and events, how they were performed and expressed in music, art and on


\(^5\) Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (eds), *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, Ashgate, 2008.
the stage, and how they shape the modern world. Here I think collaboration can play a key role. One of the current challenges in the field is for scholars, within their disciplines as well as across them, to talk the same language so that research about emotions in the past and their meanings for the present can be usefully shared and built upon. Creating a conceptual and theoretical model for interdisciplinary, historical emotions study would be a powerful tool for the field.

I’d like to see the dynamic work scholars are doing on gender and emotions more fully integrated in over-arching and expansive historical metanarratives. So in addition to working with like-minded researchers, collaborative work with historians interested in other questions, approaches, and time periods, seems important to make sure that gender and feminist analyses and interpretations do not go missing as we write up our field’s metanarratives, encyclopedia and student texts.

I’d say the same for historical interpretations which are produced outside the academy too. This was something I examined in a recent book with co-author, Jenny Spinks, which looked at where, how and why gender research about the early modern period was used in the museum, tourism, heritage sector aiming at general public audiences. Further collaborations between scholars and public institutions and relevant industries about the production of new research and writing for these domains would be really exciting to see. I had a research project which looked into how academic scholars could engage more with fields like educational tourism a few years ago. I think these kinds of collaboration help us understand each other’s contexts and constraints, and become better able to produce the sort of writing in the formats needed there that can convey intelligent content to the interested broader audience.

You are involved in a number of very interesting projects currently, including the ZEST Festival, 2012-2016, which seems like it is going to involve a high degree of collaboration, not just involving people, but of disciplines and methodologies as well. Can you tell us a bit about that and your hopes for the project?

Yes, I’m really excited to be involved in this project, which is to create a five-year cycle of festivals for the Coral Coast, centering on Kalbarri. 2012 marks the 300th anniversary of the wreck of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) ship, the Zuytdorp, and 2016 the 400th anniversary of Dirk Hartog’s landing in Shark Bay. This is a unique opportunity to look at the heritage of the Dutch and VOC contact along our coast and its continued meanings for the communities who live there. We are focussing on the Dutch in 2012, and then will follow other regions linked by their relationship to the VOC, South Africa in 2013, India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia in 2014, China and Japan in 2015, and back to the Dutch in these wider contexts and relationships in 2016.

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For this year, researchers from the Centre for Emotions have been particularly involved in developing historical music and dramatic performances, working with Kalbarri District High School to integrate historical research into the curricula, and an exhibition Still Life / Our Life: Emotions across Time, Art and Place in which community members created art about their lives today in response to Dutch still life paintings and objects from the Dutch shipwrecks on the coast. The Festival brings together the Shire of Northampton and the Kalbarri Development Association with the WA Museum, the Dutch Embassy and, through the Centre, associated creative industries such as Perth Baroque, Shakespeare WA and the Rijksmuseum.8

It is a test of putting what I believe into practice, and I guess others will judge whether I’ve made a good job of my contribution to it. That assessment will take place outside of the academy as much as in it, as a lot of the activities and writing is designed for the community, rather than academic audiences.

We are very excited to be interviewing a former member of Limina! Could you tell us what your experience as a member of Limina was like?

Great! I loved reading others’ essays and finding out what people were working on, but of course the reviewing and editing process provided valuable insights into how refereeing works, what a reviewer and journal readership need to know and even quite simple things such as how to provide a report as an author on what changes you’ve made in response to reviewer feedback.

I should also add that my first refereed article was with Limina.9 It was a chapter of my honours dissertation, and it was fantastic to have such careful reading and suggestions from the Limina editors as well as the reviewers. As Limina has a broad readership across a wide range of time periods and disciplines, it really taught me how to contextualise my work, the scholarship, and the contribution I was trying to make, to make sense to people beyond just my own field.

From your observations, how different is Limina today compared to the older Limina? Do you have any advice for current and future Collectives?

When I was in Limina, I think it was dominated by those in English and History, but I think now you have a far broader participation of editors across disciplines in the faculty, and that shapes the way you present the journal. At the period I was involved we were just branching out from being a very UWA-based journal, to going refereed, online, and developing a more substantial submissions base across Australian universities.

These days, you are also running a conference and have been, successfully, for several years now. A lot of academic work is about organisation, co-ordination and so on, so these organisational and negotiating skills are a fantastic addition to the scholarly ones you are developing through your thesis writing.

Any Final advice?

Well, as I’m in the Centre for the History of Emotions, I’d say, find joy in what you do, have passion, and don’t be afraid of a challenge!