

# **Report on Melbourne Humboldt Kolleg**

## **Introduction**

The following is a report on the Humboldt Kolleg/Joint Symposium entitled “Celebration of German Contributions to Australian Science and Victorian Scientific Institutions - Past and Present.” The event was organised jointly by the Australian Association of von Humboldt Fellows (AAvHF) and the Royal Society of Victoria (RSV) and was held at the Royal Society of Victoria, 8 La Trobe Street, Melbourne, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2014.

The Humboldt Kolleg evolved from an initial approach to the AAvHF by Professor Lynne Selwood, Immediate Past President of the RSV, in mid-2013. Initial meetings involving Professor Selwood (representing the RSV) and Professors Gabrielle McMullen and Jeff Malpas and Associate Professor Trevor Finlayson (representing the AAvHF) set the various goals for the event and appropriate advertising commenced to potentially interested researchers.

The initial plan for the Joint Symposium was for an opening Public Lecture to be presented by Professor McMullen with a subsequent discussion forum and reception. This was to be followed by two days of invited Plenary Lectures and a series of contributed presentations on areas of current research, consistent with the theme of the Symposium. During 2014, as interest in the Symposium expanded, it became obvious that two full parallel sessions of contributed presentations would be necessary, to accommodate all presentations which were submitted as brief abstracts and accepted by the Programme Committee. These abstracts were representative of many areas of scholarly research (both past and present) consistent with Humboldtian ideals and with the advertised theme.

## **Humboldt Kolleg/Joint Symposium Programme Committee**

The Programme Committee personnel and their respective discipline areas were as follows:

Dr. Matthew Digby – Zoology and Biochemistry  
Associate Professor Trevor Finlayson (Secretary) – Physics  
Professor Rod Home AM – Humanities  
Dr. Doug McCann – Earth Sciences/Geology  
Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM (Chair) – Humanities  
Professor Paul Mulvaney – Chemistry and Pharmacology  
Professor Lynne Selwood – Zoology and Botany

The above committee met four times during 2014, in March, June, August and September. A small subset of the above (namely Finlayson, McMullen and Selwood) met on a fairly regular basis to discuss and review the overall planning for the event.

## **Humboldt Kolleg/Joint Symposium Programme**

The attached Programme for the Humboldt Kolleg was the final result. The Public Lecture and nine Plenary Lectures (and invited lecturers) were as follows:

- “Noted Colonial German Scientists and Their Contexts” – Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM (Mary Aikenhead Ministries, Bondi Junction, N.S.W. and President, Australian Association of von Humboldt Fellows).

- “*Entwisleia Bella*, Hobart’s Wollemi Pine” – Professor Timothy Entwisle (Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne).
- “James Peter Hill and the Australian Mammal Fauna: Monotremes and Marsupials in the Embryological Collection in the Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin” – Dr Peter Giere (Museum für Naturkunde, Leibnitz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Berlin).
- “Malaria: the Plant Connection” – Professor Geoff McFadden (School of Botany, University of Melbourne).
- “From Economic Botany to Ecology: Ferdinand Mueller’s *Select Extra-tropical Plants Readily Eligible for Industrial Culture and Naturalisation*, 1871-1929” – Dr Sara Maroske (Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne).
- “From Marsupials to Medicine: Discovery of Treatments for Heart Disease” – Associate Professor Laura Parry (Department of Zoology, University of Melbourne).
- “Lamont’s Seed – Georg von Neumayer’s Interest in Magnetism, Meteorology and Astronomy” – Professor Dr Cornelia Lüdecke (Centre for History of Science and Technology, University of Hamburg).
- “Playing with Colour – The World of Quantum Dots” – Professor Paul Mulvaney (School of Chemistry and Bio21 Institute, University of Melbourne).
- “Quantum Reality Bytes – The Dawning Age of Quantum Information Tehnology” – Professor Lloyd Hollenberg (Centre of Excellence for Quantum Computation and Communication Technology, University of Melbourne).
- “Nobel Laureate, Rudolf Mössbauer, and Subsequent Australian Science” – Professor Dr Gerhardt Wortmann (Department of Physics, University of Paderborn).



Professor Geoff McFadden, University of Melbourne,  
One of the Plenary Lecturers at the Humboldt Kolleg.  
(photograph courtesy of Professor Lynne Selwood)

Each of the above Plenary Lectures was scheduled so that all registrants could attend each lecture. Complementing these Plenary Lectures were two complete parallel sessions of Contributed Papers, initially 36 in all. However, just before the Programme went to the printers, one Contributed Paper, offered by a DAAD alumnus, was withdrawn, and was therefore deleted from the Programme, making a total of 35 Contributed Papers embracing the research areas of Botany, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Colonial German History, Ecology, Geology, Library Science, Materials Science, Mössbauer Spectroscopy, Neuroscience, Observational Astronomy,

Pharmacology, Quantum Physics, Vision Science, Volcanology and Zoology. To the extent that was practicable, these papers were grouped into discipline sessions, consistent with the topic of the relevant Plenary Lecture.

The Humboldt Kolleg was officially opened on the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> October by the visiting Deputy Ambassador, Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Joseph Reichhardt. Following “words of welcome” by the Presidents of the RSV, Dr. William Birch, and the AAvHF, Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM, the evening proceeded with the Public Lecture presented by Professor McMullen and a discussion forum, chaired by Professor Rod Home AM, with the other panelists being Drs Tom Darragh and Doug McCann and Professor McMullen. The reception which followed set the scene for the following two days of research papers.

Unfortunately, during the week prior to the Humboldt Kolleg, Professor Dr Cornelia Lüdecke had to cancel her travel to Australia for the Humboldt Kolleg on account of the death of her mother in Germany. At the time, her Plenary Lecture had been prepared and she negotiated with her colleague, Professor Rod Home AM who presented her lecture from her presentation file which Professor Lüdecke sent to him.

Also, rather suddenly in the early morning of 1<sup>st</sup> October, Associate Professor Trevor Finlayson was admitted to hospital, following a stroke. His presentation file had already been uploaded to the RSV Technical Website on 29<sup>th</sup> September and his Contributed Paper entitled “The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation: Outcomes for Australian Science and Scholarship,” was presented by Associate Professor Kay Double, the Humboldt Ambassador in Australia.



*Professor Rod Home AM, presenting his paper, “Ferdinand Mueller and the Royal Society of Victoria.”*

*(photograph courtesy of Professor Lynne Selwood)*

The AAvHF has been quite overwhelmed by the messages from many presenters and participants, expressing their congratulations on the Humboldt Kolleg/Joint Symposium programme organisation, content and quality of the presented papers and the productive discussions which often followed. Three most interesting comments are worth reporting here.

The first, from a recently returned Humboldt Fellow, Dr. Jared Cole, indicated how much he was pleased to have the opportunity to explain aspects of his research on quantum technology to an historian, as the result of a question following his Contributed Paper. The second came in an email from a former Lynen Fellow (and as from June 2014, a MacDiarmid Fellow), based at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, Dr Eva-Maria Anton. Associate Professor Finlayson had facilitated a visit to the School of Physics, University of Melbourne, for Dr Anton on the morning of Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> October, where she also presented a research seminar on her work on Spintronics to members of the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Quantum Computation and Communication Technology, of which Professor Lloyd Hollenberg is Deputy Director. An outcome of this interaction is to be a collaboration between Dr. Anton and researchers in the Centre. The third comment came from Professor Walter Bloom whose Contributed Paper was concerned with the work of two particular German numismatists, which he has been pursuing during recent visits to Germany. An outcome of discussion following his presentation was to be introduced to the work of the noted colonial German artist, Eugène von Guérard who was also known for his contributions as a numismatist.

### **Advertising and Funding**

Advertising was principally in the form of a series of circulars (five in all) which were sent to group email lists comprising: (a) all members of the AAvHF (~170 addressees); (b) all non-member Australian von Humboldt Fellows (details provided confidentially by Ms Catherine Khazarian, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation) (~340 addressees); (c) a supplementary

group list of other interested persons, which evolved with time (~30 addressees); together with advertising via: (d) the RSV Membership Newsletters (~570 members); (e) the New Zealand Association of von Humboldt Fellows (NZAvHF); (f) the Royal Society of New Zealand; (g) the Sydney Office of the DAAD; (h) the Goethe Institute, Melbourne Office; (i) Victorian National Parks Association; (j) the Royal Historical Society of Victoria; and (k) the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria. Advertising was also done via the websites of the RSV, the AAvHF and the NZAvHF.

An application for a Humboldt Kolleg was submitted by Associate Professor Trevor Finlayson in February, 2014 and this was awarded in late July, 2014. Thereafter, all advertising for the event described it as a Humboldt Kolleg/Joint Symposium.

Financial support for the event was also sought as follows:

- (i) The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Professor Glyn Davis AC, specifically to enable a reduced registration fee for all Early Career Researchers wishing to attend;
- (ii) The State Government of Victoria, to sponsor aspects of the Joint Symposium;
- (iii) Siemens Australia, specifically to sponsor travel to Melbourne by one German invited speaker;
- (iv) The German companies, Bayer Australia, Mercedes Benz Australia and Audi Australia.

Item (i) resulted in a grant of \$2,800 from the University of Melbourne. Items (iii) and (iv) which were pursued following advice regarding appropriate contacts from the Secretary, German Chamber of Commerce (Melbourne Branch), resulted in no support and indeed no replies from those companies in (iv). The initial approach in item (ii) gave rise to a couple of ongoing meetings with representatives of the State Government of Victoria which, in the end, sponsored the final evening of the Humboldt Kolleg that, given the date of 3<sup>rd</sup> October, was a celebration of the Day of German Unity. This event was co-sponsored by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany and hosted by the Honorary Consul General for Melbourne, Mr Michael Pearce SC.



*(Left) The Honorable Matthew Guy, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and (right) Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM welcome guests to the Celebration of the Day of German Unity. (photographs courtesy of Professor Lynne Selwood)*

Both the RSV and the AAvHF provided significant “in-kind support” towards the administration of the Humboldt Kolleg/Joint Symposium.

### **Humboldt Kolleg Attendance**

As is summarised in the attached *pro forma*, there was a total of 80 full registrants for the Humboldt Kolleg/Joint Symposium, with this number comprising 22 Australian Humboldtians, 19 Australian Junior Researchers, 31 Other Australian Researchers, three New Zealand Humboldtians, one Other New Zealand Researcher and four German invitees. There

were two others, Drs Tom Darragh and John Jenkin, as well as eight partners of full registrants, who have been included in the attached *Teilnehmerliste*, who registered only for the opening evening. In addition, Mr Joseph Reichhardt and Dr Anne Braun from the German Embassy in Canberra attended the opening evening and it was an honour to have Mr Reichhardt officially open the Humboldt Kolleg. Mr Reichhardt had other business in Melbourne during the following two days, but rejoined the Humboldt Kolleg for the final function to celebrate the Day of German Unity. (See below.) It is worth noting that amongst the 25 Humboldtians, four of them (three Australians and one New Zealander) could still be classified as “Junior Researchers”, according to an ARC definition of an “Early Career Researcher.” Unfortunately, as has been mentioned above, Professor Dr Cornelia Lüdecke had to cancel her trip to Melbourne during the week preceding the event and Associate Professor Finlayson could not attend. However, both of their papers which had been completely prepared by the respective authors, were presented to the Humboldt Kolleg by colleagues, as mentioned above. For this reason Professor Lüdecke and Associate Professor Finlayson have been retained as full registrants and entries in the *Teilnehmerliste*.

### **Final Humboldt Kolleg Function – Celebration of the Day of German Unity**

It was fitting that such an important date on the German calendar should be recognised within the Humboldt Kolleg and from early in the programme planning, the Honorary Consul General for Melbourne, Mr Michael Pearce SC, was keen to host an appropriate function to celebrate this anniversary and to bring the Humboldt Kolleg to a fitting conclusion. As mentioned above, the evening celebration was generously supported financially by the State Government of Victoria and the German Embassy, Federal Republic of Germany. It was held in the Sir Redmund Barry Room, Level 46, 55 Collins Street, Melbourne, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all present. It was also a most appropriate opportunity for the *Verdienstkreuz am Bande des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* to be presented to the 2014 recipient, Ms Catherine Jane Gosling, by the Deputy Ambassador, Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Joseph Reichhardt. The final attendance list of 146 included 83 registrants and some partners from the Humboldt Kolleg/Joint Symposium, 16 representatives from the State Government and some local industries, the Honorary Consul General and his guests (36) as well as Ms Gosling and her 10 invited guests.

### **Published Papers from Humboldt Kolleg**

An opportunity was advertised to all contributing authors at the Humboldt Kolleg to submit a manuscript based on their presentation, for peer review and subsequent publication in a special issue of the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*,



*Picturesque Melbourne from Sir Redmund Barry Room – 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2014.  
(picture courtesy of Mrs Kate Denmead)*



*Ms Catherine Gosling is awarded the “Verdienstkreuz am Bande” by Mr Joseph Reichhardt and Ms Bettina Nasser,  
(photograph courtesy of Mr Michael Pearce SC (right))*

scheduled for publication in June, 2015. This issue is currently evolving and a copy will be sent to the Foundation once it has been published.

### **Acknowledgement**

The financial support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in the award of a Humboldt Kolleg for this Joint Symposium is gratefully acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T.R. Finlayson', written in a cursive style.

Trevor R. Finlayson  
10<sup>th</sup> November, 2014