



Chinese 'Year of the Horse' bolts in for U3A

By the Editor

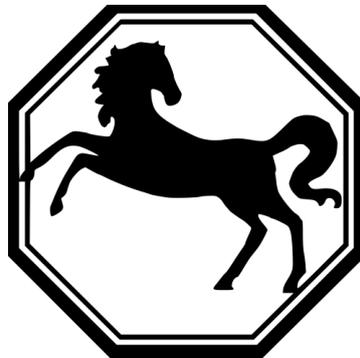
Six years ago this newsletter featured a tale about 'The Year of the Rat' beginning in the Chinese zodiac calendar, with a bunch of opinions. 2014 is 'The Year of the Horse,' so we thought we might trot along with a similar article, conducting a 'Gallop Poll'* [Oops! - see footnote p2] among some U3A Dunedin board members.

Chinese like the horse as a symbol of quick transport and reaching destinations, and we hope for speedy success for all members' plans — harness your energies! Our U3A has already been so successful that it had to cap membership at 500 people, has now expanded to take in another 100, but will still have a big waiting list.

While **Judith Cowley** hopes for more courses where there is an opportunity for discussion of issues and/or group members' participation, she also fears that 'with larger numbers of attendees there will be a loss of fellowship, less chance for discussion.' When U3A was formed, she points out, it was with the idea of active membership, 'the recipe for keeping our synapses snapping!'

But should it be 'don't spare the horses' — let them all run? **John Burton** thinks 'it is unfortunate that there are so many people wanting to join U3A that some have to spend up to three years on a waiting list before they are offered membership.

There are certainly others who have not applied because they know of the lengthy list.' John would like to see the development of one or more additional U3A groups in Dunedin. He is not alone in that — most Board members hope it will happen, and take pressure off our waiting list. But they believe new groups



will be unlikely to have our special character with a close relationship to the University of Otago which is worth guarding although it makes our courses more didactic in nature — most other U3A groups in New Zealand (including 23 in Auckland) and elsewhere are run in quite different ways, many with co-operative self-teaching groups.

Marjan Lousberg, Board member and Programme Secretary, hopes that U3A Dunedin will get 'some small interactive groups going, aside from the formal six sessions of two hours, rather than passive lectures.' (For Dunedin city Marjan also hopes 'that the DCC

This is the 40th issue of this newsletter since it began in January 2004. Its 10th anniversary will be celebrated with the 20th anniversary of U3A Dunedin later in the year.

takes over the public transport and introduces some imaginative measures, such as small buses that go further and more frequently.)'

Doug Holborow sees the remaining waiting list as still 'a very positive sign' as it means 'U3A is a desirable organisation to belong to and suggests we are doing things well.' While it frustrates those still waiting to become members, he is 'confident the Board will not simply let the situation stay as it is, but will continue to explore options.'

Doug's New Year resolutions include two 'biggies' (tidying his desk, tidying the study), travel and improving a golf swing. He sees an interesting and challenging time ahead for Dunedin: 'We have a council that has a number of new members. They will determine whether the city progresses over the next three years. I hope they will listen to many often conflicting views of their constituents and can balance those views and demands with centrally driven regulation in a manner beneficial to the city, whether accommodating cyclists within our transport system, accommodating visitors in proposed hotel megaliths, or accommodating drilling rigs in our waters.'

[Continued on page 2]

Our membership figures

Jane Higham, Membership Secretary, reported in early December that at that stage there had been 393 renewals of membership with Rodgers Law, 89 new members registered, and 120 people still to answer. The waiting list at that stage was down to 166.

Post-haste action required

Please post your application forms for the first term's courses smartly! Bear in mind that in the worst scenario there is, due to changes at New Zealand Post, a pessimistic timeframe of local mail taking up to three days to be delivered.

Your applications need to be posted much earlier than in the past in order to arrive at Rodgers Law by noon on Wednesday, 12 February. But to be safe, you should post no later than Friday, February 7.

Our new U3A members are warmly welcomed

I hope that everyone had a happy, safe and healthy Christmas and celebration of the New Year, and a good holiday. This year we start with an increase of 100 in the membership 'cap' and a warm welcome to those who are joining U3A for the first time in 2014.

U3A will reach two significant milestones in 2014; our membership is over 500 for the first time and U3A Dunedin has its 20th anniversary.

The Board remains committed to the ethos of a stimulating and interesting programme of three series for the year and, as you will see from the brochures enclosed with this newsletter, the 2014 courses in the first series cater for a range of interests.

Please ensure that you indicate more than one choice on your application form as you will appreciate that some courses may be oversubscribed.

Planning for the June/ July and Sept/ Oct Series in 2014 is well under way and the Programme Committee values the members' suggestions for courses

Chairman's message



By Brian Robinson
Chairman, U3A Dunedin

in the course evaluation forms. The success of our courses is dependent on the people who are willing to talk to us and on behalf of the Board I would like to thank sincerely those who presented and participated in the successful three Series of 2013.

For members' information, these figures (right) show the number of places in the courses (members taking up places are shown in brackets).

	2012	2013	2014
Series 1	420 (369)	450 (435)	500
Series 2	370 (354)	450 (395)	
Series 3	400 (339)	450 (315)	

Although the increased places have been achieved by using the larger venue for four courses we will still cater for, and subsidise, small class courses. Study Groups can always be organised by U3A members outside of our formal programme and the Board will continue to investigate other options.

The Board recognises that electronic banking is now widespread. It is investigating, with Rodgers Law, how this might be adopted. U3A Dunedin is fortunate to have a legal office, Rodgers Law, prepared to handle the banking, membership and course mailing activities and oversee our operation as a Charitable Trust. In particular, we are grateful to Sue Keith and April Cooper for their on-going work on behalf of U3A. The Board wishes all members a prosperous and healthy 2014.

'Year of the Horse' bolts in — thoughts about 2014

[Continued from page 1]

Although **Rosemary Hudson** gave up New Year resolutions years ago like most people, 'realising that I never carried any of them out,' the Year of the Horse has reminded her that she enjoyed horse-riding for several years when she lived in Auckland and she had intended for some time to volunteer to help Riding for the Disabled. '2014 would seem a good year to make a resolution to actually do this.' Rosemary has no particular fears for U3A but hopes 'that University staff will continue to give generously of their time and expertise. . . This

seems especially important with the growing emphasis on class size so as to accommodate the increasing membership.'

For Dunedin, she hopes 'that the new CEO will be as effective as her predecessor, that councilors will show more financial responsibility than some of their predecessors, and will work effectively together to make Dunedin one of the world's greatest small cities.' But Rosemary does not want too many people from elsewhere to discover 'what a great place Dunedin is to live in.'

U3A's Treasurer **Bill George** stated: '2013 was a challenging year on several fronts for U3A, and some of those will carry over into 2014, but we are not alone. The Year of the Horse looks to be challenging worldwide. Britain is involved in a serious debate over which kingdom to rebury Richard III in — he had a problem with a horse. Angela Merkel has to knock her coalition into shape. The leaders of Thailand, Argentina et al have troubles with their power bases. Greece, Italy, the US have trouble keeping their bank managers in the style to which they have been accustomed. . . Rudyard Kipling had it right when he said: "Four things greater than all things are — Women and Horses and Power and War."'

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*PS: Gallup polls have a trot

'Gallop Poll' (that was frivolously mentioned in a pun-ishing way on page 1) is not to be confused with the real Gallup Poll — famous in the US and other countries after George Gallup founded Gallup Inc in 1935. In 1988, four years after he had died, Selection Research (SRI) purchased the company from its heirs, and continues to make Gallup polls. *Wikipedia* says Gallup now conducts 1,000 interviews per day, 350 days out of the year, among both landline and cell phones across the US for various surveys.

Pick and choose from our six courses

It is not long now to the start of our Series 1 courses, beginning in March. We have *The Artist in Venice*, *History as Witnessed by the Family from 1450*, *Saintly Lives*, *Founded on Gold: Dunedin's Legacy of 19th Century Industrial Enterprise*, *Plants that changed the World* and *Peace and Conflict*. I think that it is going to be difficult to choose just one course?

Planning for the rest of 2014 is in its early stages, but we have firm proposals for both Series Two and Series Three for several interesting courses. I will write more about them closer to the time.

Although the Editor has written [page 1] about the need to post early, please can I also emphasise this point to you. Applications need to be in by **12 noon on 12th February** 2014. To be sure that yours gets there in time, I would suggest posting it on the Friday before. You can post it on the Monday with a Fastpost sticker (and appropriate stamps) and it may get there. Alternatively, if all else fails, you can deliver it by hand to Rodgers Law before 12 noon on Wednesday, 12th February.

Showtime from a U3A

Congratulations to the Aughton and Ormskirk U3A Musical Theatre Group in the UK. It now has over 40 members. In addition to musicals it also presents 'Showtime' cabaret evenings showcasing the many and various talents of its members.

After writing three musicals in three years (each containing up to 18 totally original songs and dances) writer/producer Tony Crimlisk is having a short rest, but has plans for a brand new Christmas musical for the end of 2014.

'My biggest problem,' he says, 'is finding suitable story lines and especially lyrics, so if there are any would-be story and especially lyric writers reading this who would be interested in collaborating on future shows please get in touch with me at: tonycrimlisk@mac.com.'

A selection of music from all three musicals can be found by following the link in his website at: www.crimlisk.com and more information about the group can also be found by visiting www.aughton-ormskirk-u3a.co.uk

Looking ahead



Sue Cathro
Programme Co-ordinator

Please keep sending us your ideas. Some of you will see that we do take notice e.g. *Saintly Lives*, *Dunedin's Industrial Heritage* and *Plants that changed the World* have been developed from suggestions by members. Suggestions can be made at any time and not only via the Evaluation Forms, so please get in touch with a Board member so that he/she can bring it to our meetings.

Conference in Nepal

The U3A Asia Pacific Alliance fifth International Conference will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal, in October 2014.

Pandering to viewers

A live feed of the pandas at a Giant Panda Breeding Base in China can be seen at <http://en.ipanda.com/live>. With cameras on about 80 of the furry animals there is usually some sort of action to be seen — eating, sleeping or rolling about.

Humour corner

Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.

Atheism is a non-prophet organisation.

The soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.

In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.

When some cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.

What's in a name?

Britain's *Oldie* magazine has highlighted the way some companies "make utter twits of themselves" on the World Wide Web. They noted some unfortunate choices of website names that could prove embarrassing. There is a company called Who Represents that takes visitors to celebrities' agents — its address was unfortunately www.whorepresents.com. A children's clothing firm surely didn't mean to be www.childrenswear.co.uk? And then there was a therapist in Sydney who has a sinister note in www.sydneytherapist.com.

We've replaced the saying 'The older you get, the sicker you get' with the more accurate 'The older you get, the healthier you've been.'

~ Dr Thomas Perls



Stay sharp in your retirement

The more you want to use your brain --and the more you enjoy doing it -- the more likely you are to stay sharp as you age. This is according to findings recently published in the *Journals of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences* by a team of Concordia University researchers.

The new study has three major findings that can help forecast cognitive ability in one's golden years:

- 1.The more one seeks out and enjoys cognitively demanding activities, the less likely one is to experience cognitive decline later in life.
- 2.Doing a variety of different cognitive activities helps boost brainpower post-retirement.
- 3.People who exhibit even mild signs of depression are more likely to show a decline in brainpower once they leave the office for good.

First author Larry Baer explains that, "retirement usually occurs right around the time when normal age-related declines in cognitive function come to the fore. So it is important to understand what is happening to

Value of DIY or gardening

A spot of DIY or gardening can cut the risk of a heart attack/stroke and prolong life by as much as 30 per cent among the 60+ age group, indicates research published online in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* last year.

These routine activities are as good as exercise, which is ideal for older people who don't often do that much formal exercise, say the researchers.

They base their findings on almost 4000 60-year-olds in Stockholm, Sweden, whose cardiovascular health was tracked for around 12.5 years.

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'If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.'
~ Marcus Tullius Cicero

'I've been married to a communist and a fascist, and neither would take out the garbage.'
~ Zsa Zsa Gabor

brainpower during this period and to identify risk factors for mental decline, as well as factors that will help protect against it."

This study has far-reaching implications. Says Baer, "it is my hope that these results will influence the design of future interventions aimed at maintaining the cognitive health of retirees. This can be done by focusing on getting people to intensify their engagement in a variety of cognitive activities even if they have lower levels of motivation to do so. It is equally important to address symptoms of depression to help fight against cognitive decline."

Many benefits of Internet use

The common stereotype is that older people have no interest in computers and the internet. Surveys do show that the younger population is more involved with the internet, and social networks in particular, but the trend is shifting. Each year, increasing numbers of older people are becoming wired.

What are the benefits of this involvement? Galit Nimrod from the Centre for Multidisciplinary Research in Aging, Ben-Gurion University, Israel, examined the contents and characteristics of messages exchanged by seniors' online communities. Data from 14 leading online communities, was examined, including over 700,000 messages. During this one-year period, the level of activity constantly increased. The major points of discussion included, from highest to lowest: fun on line, retirement, family health, work and study, recreation, finance, religion and spirituality, technology, aging, civic and social relations, shopping, travel.

Participation in an online community is a leisure pursuit involving social interactions, intellectual challenges, and creativity. . .

On-line communities can provide social support and self-preservation; they can serve as an opportunity for self-discovery and growth.

[From: "Seniors' Online Communities: A Quantitative Content Analysis" by Galit Nimrod, *The Gerontologist*, 2010.]



Learning new skills

Older adults are often encouraged to stay active and engaged to keep their minds sharp, that they have to "use it or lose it." But new research indicates that only certain activities -- learning a mentally demanding skill like photography, for instance -- are likely to improve cognitive functioning.

Psychological Science, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, reveals that less demanding activities, such as listening to classical music or completing word puzzles, probably will not bring noticeable benefits to an aging mind.

'It seems it is not enough just to get out and do something -- it is important to get out and do something that is unfamiliar and mentally challenging, and that provides broad stimulation mentally and socially,' says psychological scientist and lead researcher Denise Park of the University of Texas at Dallas.

'When you are inside your comfort zone you may be outside of the enhancement zone.'

Free on-line courses

Since 2008, Academic Earth (academicearth.org) has worked diligently to compile an ever-growing collection of on-line college courses, made available free of charge, from some of the most respected universities. It believes that everyone deserves access to a world-class education.

To facilitate this goal, it has formed links to over 750 online courses and 8,500 individual on-line lectures, giving students of all ages unparalleled access to college courses they may otherwise never experience. Whether supplementing existing coursework, or learning for the sake of learning, anyone with an internet connection has the freedom to learn at their own pace from world-renowned experts, without the burden of rising tuition costs.

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