

U3A DUNEDIN Forum



No. 77 - April 2022

Take care of ourselves

Kia Ora koutou to our members. I hope you are all well and enjoying our very pleasant weather. The past three months have seen many changes and adaptations to our lifestyle. What is most important is how we take care of ourselves and how we look out for each other.

I am delighted to announce your Programme Committee met just over a week ago and has made the decision to run Series 2 and Series 3 this year. Of course, all the "rules" are not yet crystal clear but we do now have a mandate to gather and socialise. Stuart Strachan in this newsletter outlines the details of our forthcoming Series Two which will commence at the end of May 2022. We are, of course, very pleased to be able to substitute our planned Series One into August/ September this year as well.

Our high immunisation rates (well done to you all) have contributed to many of our new freedoms. But we will need to continue to take care, with any changes in our planning clearly communicated to members.

Our venues will continue to support only those vaccinated, at this time the numbers are likely to be 150 people for Otago Golf Club, but space dictates only 80 people at the Leith Bowling Club. Of course over the next month this may change. If we have more applications for courses than spaces available, our random

*The times they
are a-changin'*
(Bob Dylan)

'balloting system will take place.

Wellington collaboration.

I want to thank Barrie Peake and his team of Averil McLean and Lloyd Smith for ably managing the Zoom series in collaboration with Wellington U3A. For those who have enjoyed these varied presentations, thank you for supporting this series. However, U3A Dunedin would like to know why so many members do not join these meetings.

We know from previous experiences that members generally tend not to participate in formal surveys sufficiently for us to analyse the data received. So, as an alternative, here are some questions for those not attending; you may wish to send me informal feedback.

Do you not 'log in' to Zoom meetings because of: . . .

Timing, always 10:30am to 11:30am?

Day of the week, Tuesday and Fridays?

Interest in the topic?

Inability or difficulty using the Zoom technology?

Don't have a computer?

Prefer face to face lectures?

Because it is free, you don't make the same commitment?

Short notice of time and topic

We would really like to know your thoughts to help us plan..For example we may be able to assist those with technology challenges. Please email your thoughts to me at lindakinniburgh52@gmail.com.

Our AGM is scheduled for Thursday, 12th May 2022 and will be held at the Otago Golf Club. The meeting commences at 10:30am with tea and coffee. The formal part of the meeting will start at 11am. The Chairperson's report, financial report, and nominations for the 2022 Board are received and approved. Questions will be answered about any aspect of our business. A short presentation of our commitment to sustainability will follow. Those attending are invited to an informal light lunch provided afterwards at the venue. We will need a RSVP for catering purposes. Above all, we so look forward to welcoming all to this important meeting.

In general Our organisation continues to thrive. Interest groups meeting regularly, we are enjoying their regular newsletter; the Programme Committee is committed to providing you with high quality presentations and courses. We are exploring ways of recording these at a reasonable cost.

Take good care, Noho Ora, kia ora (stay safe and well)

**Linda Kinniburgh, Chairperson,,
U3A Dunedin.**

Third time lucky?

Well, will it be third time lucky after two cancelled series? We certainly hope so, as optimistic as ever' we have lined up for our Series 2 Winter season, May/ July, a full complement of six courses for members to enjoy. The one consolation for your committee in an otherwise most frustrating last few months is that we have been able to recycle courses from previous cancelled series. For the upcoming Winter series, we are bringing forward four courses from Spring last year plus two new ones, as follows:

Let There be Light—Aspects of the Spectrum. This comprises 12 lectures on various aspects of the electromagnetic spectrum and their application in many areas of physics, chemistry, astronomy, energy and food production and medicine, largely delivered by University of Otago and associated staff. One for the scientists among us!

Giving a Taste of Their Own Medicine. Health and medicine courses are always popular with members. Covered are ophthalmology, blood transfusion, colorectal metastases, structural heart disease, joint disease, and for something quite different the medical mind of Shakespeare. Again, we are indebted to the remarkable talent pool available to us in Dunedin.

Six Musical Journeys. Music is another perennial favourite. This time six classical musicians talk about their careers and instruments—a trumpeter, a cellist, a flautist, an oboe player, an organist, and a conductor—with examples of their music. All are resident and active in Dunedin.

Vision and Practice: Otago Architects at Work. Otago has a rich modern architecture, not just heritage, of all kinds—residential, commercial, institutional, and technical. Six architects with established bodies of work in Dunedin, Queenstown and Wanaka will present their design philosophies and practice, illustrated from their own projects.

Robert Louis Stevenson. It is always good to have a literature course. This time R. L. Stevenson, not only a novelist (*Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*), but also travel writer (*Travels with a Donkey*) and poet, features. This is four-session, eight-lecture course, instead of the usual six. Not every course can or needs to be stretched to six sessions.

Building Our New Hospital. This most topical of our six courses has been a challenge to put together, with so many competing perspectives: governmental, SDHB management, mana whenua engagement, clinical, patient, community health, and much else,



Stuart Strachan

including traffic management. Even though completion of the inpatient facility is not due till 2028, many members will definitely want to enrol for this course.

So, once more unto the breach, dear members, with fingers firmly crossed that this time we will be face-to-face again.

Stuart Strachan
Co-Chair, Programme
Committee

Beauty is truth?

Negative capability is a theory first articulated by John Keats about the artist's access to truth without the pressure of logic or science. Contemplating his own craft and that of others, in one of his letters to relatives, Keats supposed that "a great thinker is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."

A poet, then, has the power to bury self-consciousness, dwell in a state of openness to all experience, and identify with the object contemplated. See Keats's *To Autumn*. The inspirational power of beauty, according to Keats, is more important than the quest for objective fact; as he writes in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty — that is all I know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

U3A DUNEDIN CHARITABLE TRUST

Website: u3adunedin.org.nz

Address: **Secretary to the Board,**
U3A Dunedin, PO Box 6491,
North Dunedin, 9059.

Email: contact@u3adunedin.org.nz

Phone: 476-1848

Chair: Linda Kinniburgh, Phone- 473-8443

Registered Charitable Institution - #CC22345

Imagining brain's music in silences

When we listen to music, the brain attempts to predict what comes next. A surprise, such as a loud note or disharmonious chord, increases brain activity. To isolate the brain's prediction signal from the signal produced in response to the actual sensory experience, researchers used electroencephalograms (EEGs) to measure the brain activity of musicians while they listened to or imagined Bach piano melodies.

When imagining music, the musicians' brain activity had the opposite electrical polarity to when they listened to it -- indicating different brain activations -- but the same type of activity as for imagery occurred in silent moments of the songs when people would have expected a note but there wasn't one.

Explaining the significance of the results, Giovanni Di Liberto, Assistant Professor in Intelligent Systems in Trinity's School of Computer Science and Statistics, said:

"There is no sensory input during silence and imagined music, so the neural activity we discovered is coming purely from the brain's predictions e.g., the brain's internal model of music. Even though the silent time-intervals do not have an input sound, we found consistent patterns of neural activity in those intervals, indicating that the brain reacts to both notes and silences of music.

"Ultimately, this underlines that music is more than a sensory experience for the brain as it engages the brain in a continuous attempt of predicting upcoming musical events. Our study has isolated the neural activity produced by that prediction process. And our results suggest that such prediction processes are at the foundation of both music listening and imagery.

"We used music listening in these studies to investigate brain mechanisms of sound processing and sensory prediction, but these curious findings have wider implications -- from boosting our basic, fundamental scientific understanding, to applied settings such as in clinical research.

"For example, imagine a cognitive assessment protocol involving music listening. From a few minutes of EEG recordings during music listening, we could derive several useful cognitive indicators, as music engages a variety of brain functions, from sensory and prediction processes to emotions. Furthermore, consider that music listening is much more pleasant than existing tasks."

This work was supported by funding from the European Research Council. Professor Di Liberto performed the work while completing postdoctoral positions at ENS Paris and Trinity, with Professor Shihab Shamma (University of Maryland and ENS Paris) and his student Mr Guilhem Marion (ENS Paris). *Source: {Trinity College Dublin.}*

Brain a busy-body during sleep

We sleep on average one third of our time. But what does the brain do during these long hours? With an artificial intelligence approach capable of decoding brain activity during sleep, scientists at the University of Geneva, Switzerland, were able to glimpse what we think about when we are asleep.

By combining functional magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and electroencephalography (EEG), the Geneva team provides unprecedented evidence that the work of sorting out the thousands of pieces of information processed during the day takes place during deep sleep. Indeed, at this time, the brain, which no longer receives external stimuli, can evaluate all of these memories in order to retain only the most useful ones.

To do so, it encourages an internal dialogue between its different regions. Moreover, associating a reward with a specific information encourages the brain to memorise it in the long term. These

The results, to be discovered in the journal *Nature Communications*, open for the first time a window on the human mind in sleep. In the absence of tools capable of translating brain activity, the content of our sleeping thoughts remains inaccessible. We however do know that sleep plays a major role in memory consolidation and emotional management: when we sleep, our brain reactivates the memory trace built during the day and helps us to regulate our emotions. During deep sleep, the hippocampus in the temporal lobe, which stores temporary traces of recent events -- sends back to the cerebral cortex the information it has stored during the day. A dialogue is established which allows the consolidation of memory by replaying the events of the day and therefore reinforce the link between neurons.

WORD Wonders

by John Hale

Some words are obviously weird and wonderful. Marzipan, camouflage, flabbergasted. I like them, and I like more ordinary words too, that need a little digging to recognise they are weird or wonderful.

Here come some.

Offhand, offhanded, etc

Offhand made no clear picture, till I read it came from the 1690s. Pistols often missed their target unless you balanced them on your hand and took careful aim. It meant “unplanned,” “unprepared,” “hasty” and so forth.

Backhanded

This is more clearly visualising, of things done figuratively “out of the back of your hand.” Retaliating, bribing, sly or oblique as in a backhanded compliment.

Cackhanded

As for “cack-handed,” does it originate mid-19th century, from cack- meaning “excrement,” as in French caca? Or in an English dialect word keggy, for

lefthanded, awkward? In golf-talk a cackhanded grip on a club can make the ball do a loop you actually want, rather than merely mean you have smashed a clubhouse window (again).

Agog

Does the prefix -a crop up so often that it is an understood thing, and you could make up your own specimens and be understood— by which I mean, understood naturally, not so as to be classified as a word-freak, weird but not wonderful? I don't quite believe it. Usage is licensed by itself. Aglow sounds olde, aglitter sounds made-up, alongside ablaze (or alongside). What about abuzz? Usage is fickle, which itself suffices to keep wordsmiths agog to follow the ins and outs, and wonder why some endure. Meanwhile, this fickle survival of Anglo-Saxon delights me in its own way, because it shows continuity with the root-stock, the hidden vitality of English. Research project: Do these a-words help make dictionary entries for A- the most numerous?

Some laughs for oldies

A man told his neighbour: ‘I just bought a new hearing aid. It cost me four thousand dollars, but it's state of the art — perfect.

“Really?” answered the neighbour ‘What kind is it?’

“Ten thirty.”

An old man shuffled slowly in an ice cream parlour and pulled himself slowly, painfully, up onto a stool... After catching his breath, he ordered a banana split.

The waitress asked kindly: ‘Crushed nuts?’ ‘No,’ he replied, ‘Arthritis’.

I'm so old that I remember when the Dead Sea was just a bit poorly.

Patient: “The problem is that obesity runs in our family.” Doctor: ‘No, the problem is that no-one runs in your family.’

I told my wife that a good husband is like a fine wine; which gets better with age. She took me at my word and locked me up in the cellar!

Among those whom I like or admire, I can find no common denominator, but among those whom I love, I can -: all of them make me laugh. — W. H. Auden

Letter to Editor

I enjoyed reading Forum - thank you. Just want to respond to John Hale's article on “Quirky Words” and in particular Akimbo. It immediately brought to my mind that I first heard of this in my childhood (5-11 years of age) through Highland Dancing. We had a position called Arms Akimbo — I.e. arms extending from hips before bowing at the beginning and ending of dances.

Also a comment about “Happiness is good for you”. I enjoy happiness through Laughter Yoga! Sadly, we haven't been able to meet at our Dunedin Club during Covid but I have been signing in often to a Zoom event coming from Dr Madan Kataria in Mumbai, India. He is the originator of Laughter Yoga.

Cheers. Heather Hay

U3A Email Directory

Sending email correspondence to U3A Dunedin? Using addresses below will take your messages to the appropriate person and have quicker attention.

General information:

contact@u3adunedin.org.nz

Courses:

courses@u3adunedin.org.nz

Membership:

membership@u3adunedin.org

Forum: newsletter@u3adunedin.org.nz

U3A Phone Directory

To discuss any problem with U3A Dunedin please phone the right person:

Chairperson: Linda Kinniburgh
473- 8443

Board matters Richard Highgam
476-1848

Membership : Lynda Jackson
473-6947

Programme:Committee
Stuart Strachan 482-2339

Discussion Groups: Trish Irvine
482 1651

Courses: Phyll Esplin 467-2594

Favourite Books about Language

by **John Hale**

Word-death

I've singled out C.S. Lewis's *Studies in Word* before, so here goes just a short excerpt, on "Word-Death." He is saying that normal or exact usage dies when the word is hijacked from its original, etymological usage for ideological or commercial purposes. In choosing he instanced liberal and conservative, which once meant opposites but not now next door in Aussie politics. What can be done? Only "We cannot stop the verbiages. The most we can do is not to imitate them."

Iona and Peter Opie

Like a dolt I have mislaid my copy of the Opies' immortal *Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, but found this on the Net, on how to play the murder game. It's a child's own submission to them. "Near Sheffield. Slips of paper are handed round. On one D is put for Detective, M = Murderer. The Detective goes out of the room. The murderer and Victim keep their title secret. The lights are put out and the murderer touches someone. The person touched lies down. The detectives come in and try to find the murderer." This record of the old game is intensely moving. It comes from a whole heritage of children's lore and language that would be lost to us but for the Opies.

'The Grammarians' (2019)

Cathleen Schine's novel tells of twin sisters whom language-learning and language-exploration first unite, then estrange. One ends up as a copy-editor, the other as a creative writer. "The last time we spoke she [Lauren] called me [Daphne] a prescriptivist! You know what that is? A person who cares about proper language usage. A person who cares about the rules of grammar.." "But you do care about that. That's what you write about. What's wrong with that?" "Nothing. But she says it the way you say a dirty word. Or...or 'Nazi.'" Compulsive reading throughout because language-issues generate such feeling, between two who remain so alike.

Long Live Latin (2016)

Nicola Gardini owes so much to Latin that he

that he writes a book about it, with one to come about Greek as well! Latin helped him find a career, and emerge from poverty and obscurity. But this is *Pleasures of a Useless Language*. He charts those pleasures, author by author. I scratched my head. What pleasure can you find in the antique Latin of Ennius.

Living with a Dead Language (2017)

This feisty and personal book is well complemented by Ann Patty's, written from the standpoint of a late learner of Latin. Read her blog: *Finding and Teaching Latin Later in Life: A Memoir*. She says that at her age, like her pupils, all seniors too, she has "nothing better to do," and this is praise. The two books make a fantastic pair, I mean for anyone who cares about Latin. But does their appearance signal the imminent final death of "useless" Latin study? It is a long time a-dying. It has many uses and pleasures for me, and a beauty "felt in the blood and felt along the heart" as when you sing it, in the liturgy. Hundreds of years become as nothing when you enter inside the beautiful syllables, their rise and fall in plainsong and polyphony.

Codecracker!

Meanwhile, for those who choose to start the day by doing Codecracker in the ODT, but miss a day, fear not. Simon Shuker has reached volume 18 of the book version, and stays firm to wake the mind up each morning.



Singing in the brain

Neuroscientists have identified a population of neurons in the human brain that respond to singing but not other types of music, says the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. .

These neurons, found in the auditory cortex, appear to respond to the specific combination of voice and music, but not to either regular speech or instrumental music. Exactly what they are doing is unknown and will require more work to uncover, the researchers say.

Best recipe for longer life?

Studies representing nearly two million adults worldwide show that eating about five daily servings of fruits and vegetables, in which two are fruits and three are vegetables, is likely the optimal amount for a longer life, according to the American Heart Association's flagship journal 'Circulation.'

Diets rich in fruits and vegetables help reduce risk for numerous chronic health conditions that are leading causes of death, including cardiovascular disease and cancer. Yet, only about one in 10 adults eat enough fruits or vegetables, according to the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

For this analysis, researchers also pooled data on fruit and vegetable intake and death from 26 studies that included about 1.9 million participants from 29 countries and territories in North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. Analysis of all studies, with more than 2 million participants, revealed

Diet & exercise — for happiness

New research led by the University of Kent and University of Reading has found that fruit and vegetable consumption and exercise can increase levels of happiness.

While the link between lifestyle and wellbeing has been previously documented and often used in public health campaigns to encourage healthier diets and exercise, new findings published by the 'Journal of Happiness Studies' show that there is also a positive causation from lifestyle to life satisfaction.

This research is the first of its kind to unravel the causation of how happiness, the consumption of fruit and vegetables and exercising are related, rather than generalising a correlation. The researchers, Dr Adelina Gschwandtner (University of Kent's School of Economics), Dr Sarah Jewell and Prof Uma Kambhampati (both from the University of Reading'), used an instrumental variable approach to filter out any effect from happiness to lifestyle. It showed that the consumption of fruit and vegetables and exercising makes people happy and not the other way round.

1. Intake of about five servings of fruits and vegetables daily was associated with the lowest risk of death. Eating more than five servings was not associated with additional benefit.

2. Not all foods that one might consider to be fruits and vegetables offered the same benefits. For example: starchy vegetables, such as peas and corn, fruit juices and potatoes were not associated with risk of death from all causes or specific chronic diseases.

3. Eating about two servings daily of fruits and three servings daily of vegetables was associated with the greatest longevity, and .reduced risk of death.

4. On the other hand, green leafy vegetables, including spinach, lettuce and kale, and fruit and vegetables rich in beta carotene and Vitamin C, such as citrus fruits, berries and carrots showed benefits.

Findings demonstrate that the ability of individuals to delay gratification and apply self-control plays a major role in influencing lifestyle decisions, which in turn has a positive impact on wellbeing. The research also shows that men appear to exercise more, and women eat more fruit and vegetables.

Lifestyle diseases are a leading cause of ill health and mortality worldwide, these findings could have significant implications for public health policy.

The ability of individuals to apply self-control plays a major role in influencing lifestyle decisions, which in turn has a positive impact on wellbeing. Lifestyle diseases are a leading cause of ill health and mortality worldwide, and the UK has one of the highest obesity rates in Europe — these findings could have significant implications for public health policy.

If a better lifestyle not only makes us healthier but also happier, then it is a clear win-win situation. (Science Daily)

Largest family tree in the world

The past two decades have seen extraordinary advancements in human genetic research, generating genomic data for hundreds of thousands of individuals, including from thousands of prehistoric people. This raises the exciting possibility of tracing the origins of human genetic diversity to produce a complete map of how individuals across the world are related to each other.

Until now, the main challenges to this vision were working out a way to combine genome sequences from many different databases and developing algorithms to handle data of this size. However, a new method published today by researchers from the University of Oxford's Big Data Institute can easily combine data from multiple sources and scale to accommodate millions of genome sequences.

Dr Yan Wong, an evolutionary geneticist at the Big Data Institute, and one of the principal authors, explained: "We have basically built a huge family tree, a genealogy for all of humanity that models as exactly as we can the history that generated all the genetic variation we find in humans today. This genealogy allows us to see how every person's genetic sequence relates to every other, along all the points of the genome.

Since individual genomic regions are only inherited from one parent, either the mother or the father, the ancestry of each point on the genome can be thought of as a tree. The set of trees, known as a "tree sequence" or "ancestral

An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.

~ M.K. Gandhi

27 MILLION ANCESTORS

recombination graph," links genetic regions back through time to ancestors where the genetic variation first appeared.

Lead author Dr Anthony Wilder Wohns, who undertook the research as part of his PhD at the Big Data Institute and is now a post-doctoral researcher at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, said: "Essentially, we are reconstructing the genomes of our ancestors and using them to form a vast network of relationships. We can then estimate when and where these ancestors lived. The power of our approach is that it makes very few assumptions about the underlying data and can also include both modern and ancient DNA samples."

The study integrated data on modern and ancient human

genomes from eight different databases and included a total of 3,609 individual genome sequences from 215 populations. The ancient genomes included samples found across the world with ages ranging from 1,000s to over 100,000 years. The algorithms predicted where common ancestors must be present in the evolutionary trees to explain the patterns of genetic variation. The resulting network contained almost 27 million ancestors.

After adding location data on these sample genomes, the authors used the network to estimate where the predicted common ancestors had lived. The results successfully recaptured key events in human evolutionary history, including the migration out of Africa. - (*Science Weekly*)

'Super black hole' find

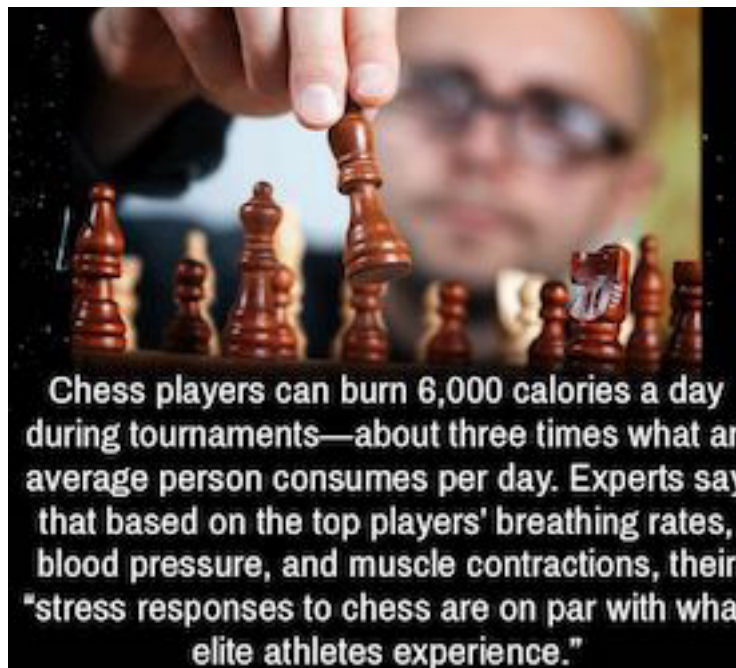
The European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope Interferometer (ESO's VLTI) has observed a cloud of cosmic dust at the centre of the galaxy Messier 77 that is hiding a supermassive black hole.

Active galactic nuclei (AGNs) are extremely energetic sources powered by super-massive black holes and found at the centre of some galaxies. These black holes feed on large volumes of cosmic dust and gas. Before it is eaten up, this material spirals towards the black hole and huge amounts of energy are released in the process, often outshining all the stars in the galaxy.

By making extraordinarily detailed observations of the

centre of the galaxy Messier 77, also known as NGC 1068, Gámez Rosas and her team detected a thick ring of cosmic dust and gas hiding a supermassive black hole. This discovery provides vital evidence to support a 30-year-old theory known as the Unified Model of AGNs. According to this, any difference in appearance between AGNs results from the orientation at which we view the black hole and its thick ring from Earth.

"A friend told me my house was haunted. He's talking rubbish – I've never seen a ghost and I've lived here for 170 years."



OUR WEBSITE
u3adunedin.org.nz

Forum Editor: Geoff Adams
Phone: 467-2278
Email: hgadams@slingshot.co.nz