



NEW CENTRE'S RESEARCH WILL SUPPORT WA RESOURCES

A new Centre of Excellence in Applied Organic Geochemistry (CEAOG) will be established at Curtin, with State Government funding of \$1.2 million.

A collaboration between Curtin, UWA, Woodside Energy Ltd and the Water Corporation, the Centre will conduct organic geochemistry research primarily in the fields of petroleum exploration and water quality. CEAOG research will ultimately help WA to better manage its resources for a sustainable future.

Under the leadership of Professors Robert Kagi and Robert Alexander, both from Curtin, and Professor Bob

Gilkes from UWA, the Centre will have a core staff of 12 experienced academics and up to 20 graduate students. It will develop strong industry and government links.



PROFESSOR ROBERT KAGI

OFFICE OF R&D NEWS

Staff News

Dr Rodney Thiele, who has been working part-time as Deputy Director of the Office of R&D, will now occupy the position on a full-time basis. Dr Thiele will assist primarily with the development and management of research centres and institutes. He can be contacted at R.Thiele@curtin.edu.au.

COS Database

The new Community of Science (COS) expertise and research funding databases have replaced the publication *R&D News* as the primary source for up-to-date funding alerts on relevant local, national and international funding schemes including grants and fellowships. The take-up rate for Curtin staff on COS stands at about 12 per cent. Researchers are encouraged to maximise the use of this excellent resource by registering at research.curtin.edu.au/g&f/COS/html. To arrange an information session, contact Robert Roche at cos@curtin.edu.au or on 9380 3702.

Human Research Ethics Guidelines

To expedite the approval of research involving humans, the Human Research Ethics Committee is introducing a two-tier system in 2003. This will involve the creation of a second tier in Schools or Divisions, whose appointed ethics reviewer or coordinator will have the authority to approve 'minimal risk research', using a new and simplified application form. The second tier will be most effective at the level of undergraduate research. Academic staff interested in taking on the roles of reviewer or coordinator can contact Tania Lerch on ext 2784. Training will take place in March and April.

Curtin Researchers Join ARC Committee

Three Curtin staff have been appointed to the ARC national expert advisory committee for CRCs. Congratulations to Peter Cawood, Vera Mackie and Dong-ke Zhang, who will undoubtedly represent Curtin well on the committee.

DVC ACTIVITIES

CHANGES IN ACADEMIC WORK: WHO MOVED THE CHEESE?

The recent report *Changes in Academic Work* by Anderson, Johnson and Saha reveals a tale of largely disenchanted academia, citing student:staff ratios reaching unprecedented levels, pressure to raise funds, change from collegial to managerial management styles, increasing use of casual staff and decline in relative status, salaries, prestige and general attractiveness as an academic. Pretty gloomy stuff overall, and I can certainly relate to all of it, though I couldn't but help to smile when I read the Senior Lecturer in Engineering's characteristically succinct comment on university administrators: "They have no ***** ideal"

However, looking beneath the obvious appeal of having apparently identified a real decline in things that we hold as important (Is research important? Have resources declined? Is there less time for scholarly writing? Is this a bad thing?), the report seemed to me to bear an uncanny resemblance to the opening chapters of that lovely little book by Spencer Johnson, M.D., called *Who Moved My Cheese*.

In the book the story is told of four mice that have learned where to go in a maze to find some cheese. Then one day the unthinkable happens: the cheese has gone! Will it reappear some time, has it gone elsewhere or is there just no more cheese? Some mice simply accept that the cheese has gone and begin to explore other

places, while others keep going back to the same place hoping that the cheese will reappear, miserable about their lot in life, blaming those who have taken it away, and so on. The remaining chapters follow the fortunes of the four different mice, with those that were willing to accept change inevitably coming out the better.

Now, while I wouldn't want to further upset my academic colleagues by having the temerity to liken our predicament to that of a fictional group of mice, I do want to suggest that the whole business is really about resistance to change. Yes, there are more pressures, less time, reduced status and all of the other things found in the report. But are we just going to go back to the same old place in the maze where

the 'good times' were or are we going to accept that change has occurred and move on? Let's start looking forward rather than backward and start writing the next chapters of our book in which things are indeed different but not necessarily for the worse.

Incidentally, the Johnson book is a great quick read and I highly recommend it to everyone.



PAUL ROSSITER
DVC, R&D

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS

» A new Centre for Fuels and Energy, directed by Professor Dong-ke Zhang, was launched late last year by the Deputy Premier, the Hon. Eric Ripper. Working collaboratively with industry and government partners, the Centre will conduct research into sustainable energies. The Centre will form an important node of the CRC for Coal in Sustainable Development, and is located in Curtin's Brodie-Hall Building in Technology Park.

» Iain Murray and student Chris Moore, from the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, received \$13,000 from Mitsubishi Electric to develop assistive technology for the blind and vision impaired, including a braille display, braille printer and tactile image maker. They also won an \$18,000 Lotteries Commission grant to develop a course to teach network administration and design, using the technology.

» In December 2002, Curtin and Core Laboratories Australia signed a licensing agreement to commercialise the LNG Micro-Cell technology, developed by Professor Robert Amin. The agreement establishes Cool Energy Ltd, the new spin-off company that will continue to test, develop and commercialise the Micro-Cell technology both nationally and internationally.



Professor Dong-ke Zhang with the Hon. Eric Ripper, Deputy Premier.

CURTIN RECEIVES SIGNIFICANT CRC FUNDING BOOST

Curtin is now a leading university in Australia's Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) program, following Federal Science Minister Peter McGauran's announcement of more than \$478 million in funding, to be distributed to 30 CRCs. Curtin is a participant in 10 of these centres.

Curtin is expected to receive about \$15 million over seven years in funding across all five Divisions and its regional campuses from its involvement in the new Centres.

The University now participates in 17 CRCs, including the new Australian Biosecurity CRC, the CRC for Sustainable Tourism and the Desert Knowledge CRC.

"The University looks forward to contributing to research in these important areas, which will bring significant benefit and return to the University and WA during the next seven years," said Professor Paul Rossiter, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, R&D.

GRADUATE STUDIES NEWS

- Following an external review, the position of Dean, Graduate Studies, has been extended for a further three years. It will be filled by Professor Léonie Rennie, who will continue in the role, 0.8 time, from January 2003. This position will allow the Dean to make a significant contribution to graduate studies in 2003 and beyond.
- The Curtin University Postgraduate Students' Association (CUPSA) has a new full-time Research Officer, Paul Niesler, who is located in CUPSA's new office in Building 106 in the Guild Courtyard. Leah Dowsett, the previous part-time Research Officer, will remain in the Office of R&D in the area of Graduate Studies.
- The ATN-LEAP project online modules, 'Leadership and Communication' and 'Public Policy', are due to begin on 3 March 2003. Students have expressed a great deal of interest in participating in the project and both modules are fully registered. The next opportunity to participate will be in April.
- During O-Week, three information sessions for both coursework and research postgraduates were held. The highly successful sessions introduced students to a range of essential services available to assist them. It also set the scene for postgraduate study and provided tips for surviving the first year at Curtin.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ENRICHING POSTGRADUATE TEACHING AND LEARNING SEMINAR SERIES

The Office of R&D – with support from LIS and the Learning Support Network – will continue to present its popular monthly seminars for research students and staff. Semester 1 seminars include:

- Preparing the Candidacy Application and Research Proposal (March)
- Research Involving Humans: What You Need to Know About Ethics (April)
- How to Pass Your Thesis With Flying Colours (May)
- Supervising Postgraduate Research Students: The Role of the Thesis Committee (June)

For further information and online registration visit lsn.curtin.edu.au/seminars/

RE-SEARCHING RESEARCH AGENDAS: WOMEN, RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Research conference presented by the ATN Women's Executive Development Program

25-27 June 2003

Contact Barbara Groombridge on ext 3980

or visit www.uts.edu.au/oth/wexdev

PUBLICATIONS

A shorter, published version of the Research Management Plan 2001-2005 will be available in the near future from the Office of R&D.



IN THE NEWS

- Dr Deidre Coombe's research on Glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) received coverage in *The Australian*. Dr Coombe, with funding from Meditech Research Ltd, is attempting to isolate and understand complex carbohydrates in the body for use in the development of a new class of carbohydrate-based drug therapies.
- Curtin's increase of about \$700,000 in Research Training Scheme (RTS) funding was noted

in the Higher Education supplement of *The Australian* as a significant increase for the University. The RTS funds research higher degrees and is based on institutional performance, particularly a university's share of successful student completions.

- *Business News* ran a story on Tinnitech, the Curtin spin-off company created to commercialise innovative tinnitus technology developed by former Curtin PhD student, Dr Paul Davis.

For more information on the activities of the Office of R&D call ext 7863. <http://research.curtin.edu.au>