



AUSTRALIA

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AUGUST 2021



An ode to renewable energy, 'Let there be light' by Wiert Mensinga, U3A Atherton Tablelands

This issue:

■ *Member reports:*

- 🔦 *Queensland picture perfect*
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From the Editor

Like that cover photograph, many of us are looking for a ray of sunshine as we are taken for another spin on the COVID Wheel of Misfortune. Uncertainty abounds as many of us go back to calculating venue capacity or on a personal level calculating whether our ears can support spectacles, hearing aids plus a mask. (When I leave the supermarket and flip off the mask, the other two items also tend to fly into space.)

Having been through it all before, at least we can revert to earlier coping strategies and perhaps improve on them from observing those U3As who were agile enough to embrace new methods.

In this issue we see two different approaches to marketing: online and traditional newspapers. You really didn't expect Victoria and NSW to do it the same, did you? WA and SA are bravely planning future face-to-face events, while Queensland and NSW are glad they got theirs over earlier in the year. Jean Walker explains how U3A Online is stretched updating all our details and undergoing its own update.

Anyone on the World U3A mailing list will know that the UK is also experimenting with a Virtual U3A. I received the link to one conversation group and intended to surreptitiously check it out. Logged on to find myself in a one-on-one with Tom Holloway as I had miscalculated the international time zone differences and logged on one hour early: quickly backed out shame faced rather than explain I knew nothing about the topic. No mention was made of costs but on further research I see a price of twelve pounds has been put on it. To this old penny-counter it seems a lot unless it advances from just Zoom chats.

Speaking of UK, the Third Age Trust has discontinued use of that block logo which caused a bit of a kerfuffle in recent years when we tried to formalise our casual adoption of it. As far as I know the UK didn't notify any groups who had signed agreements over its use. Not sure where it leaves us, but I hope everyone here continues to use it. It was an attempt to connect us all through an easily-recognized common logo just like Rotary's cog; the idea originating with Jim Hales, then president of U3A Sunshine Coast.

If lockdown has left you in need of cheering up, take comfort from the latest studies which show flavonoids have a positive effect in fighting dementia and cognitive decline. Yes, you can console yourself with dark chocolate and red wine knowing you are keeping dementia at bay. (If your supplies of them run low, blueberries, apples, pears, tea and celery are said to be effective, if not as much fun.)

Deadline for next issue of Bulletin is Wednesday 27 October. Start collecting photos now. Let's hope we don't have to rely on too many photos of Zoom screens.



Claire Eglinton
U3A Lower North &
U3A South Australia

P.S. The author of auto-correct has just died. His funnel is tomato.

From the Chairman

It is very pleasing to report that our organisation has some positive experiences to share in supporting our members keep engaged and the positive benefits the engagement is having on their health and wellbeing through another wave of COVID lockdowns.

Membership figures for 2021 being advised by our state networks are showing membership has reduced because of the suspension of face-to-face activities, access to venues and generally the fear of meeting face to face. We are however hearing reports that a number of U3As in each state have successfully transitioned to providing online classes and activities using the Zoom platform as well as face-to-face classes. A number of these U3As have grown their membership.

As an organisation we are getting better at telling our success stories and what membership of U3A has meant to individuals. The sharing of these successes is starting to draw attention from government, local government and our peak bodies that support seniors.

The U3A Australian Alliance delegates are meeting online with the co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness in early August to discuss the positive effect that engagement of seniors through U3A membership has on reducing loneliness and improving their general health and wellbeing. This is a further step towards lifting the recognition on a national level of the awareness of the U3A movement which in turn will benefit our U3As and their members.

It is also pleasing to report that our state U3A networks are sharing their experiences and knowledge with each other to build our advocacy of solutions for the needs of our U3As to better support their members. Issues such as accommodation challenges, access to digital devices, reduced costs of internet connectivity and data have been brought to the notice of Members of Parliament and service providers. The initial responses are encouraging and show the strength of speaking with a national voice.

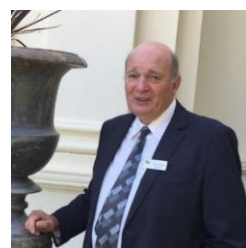
What does this mean for the U3A movement in Australia? A stronger recognition of the U3A organisation, its services, and the benefits it provides to seniors in our community will contribute to sourcing additional support to grow our organisation.

As our population ages the market for U3A activities is growing. I believe our movement is responding positively to this opportunity. Our organisation's long-term relevance has a dependency on listening to seniors and encouraging them to express their interests. We as an organisation are very good at listening to the needs of our members and providing classes and activities that meet those needs. Discussions with each of the State network members has provided some very good summaries of the benefits achieved by listening. Some of these successes have been included in articles in this Bulletin.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the good work of our U3As in each state and the positive way in which they have responded to the needs of members during the pandemic restrictions. I have been inspired by the stories of the role U3As played in engaging with members during this time.

Let us all look forward to the future with optimism and enthusiasm.

Glen Wall
Chair,
U3A Alliance Australia



QUEENSLAND

The U3A Network Queensland State Conference was held in Stanthorpe on 12 and 13 May. It had a varied program with speakers, workshops on grant writing and copyright, release of a new strategic plan and announcement of winners of a hotly contested competition.

The keynote address was by Mike Hayes [right, photo courtesy Tribune Daily], a Queensland winemaker with an Australia-wide reputation. Of particular interest was Mike's research conducted on a Churchill Scholarship and continued during university studies. He said that he has come to realise that the wines of the future will be different to those we have enjoyed for years.

This research has led Mike to establish a 'Vineyard of the Future'. Mike is now an academic and he and his students are working on strategies to climate-proof the Australian wine industry.

Another session focussed on the link between deafness and dementia. University of Southern Cross academic Dr Louise Horstmanshof outlined her research, which is very pertinent given recent press releases suggest a strong link between the two. Louise is currently working with Dementia



Inclusive Ballina Inc. to further her study through trial practice. This has the potential to yield enormous health and economic benefits for Australians.

STRATEGIC PLAN

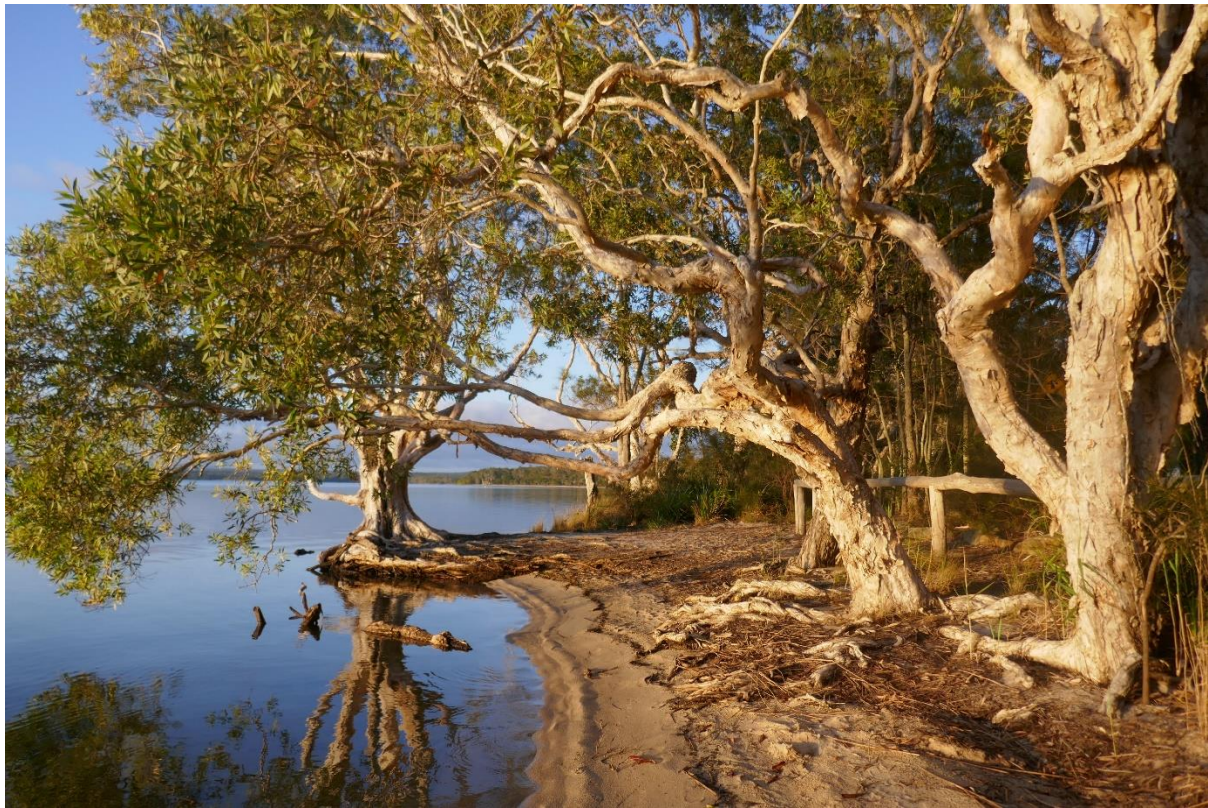
During the conference the Network released our new Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025. A copy can be found on the U3A Network Queensland website www.u3aqlld.org.au.

An operational plan for 2021 has been developed and approved by the management committee. Team coordinators will develop strategies that support the actions linked to each of the objectives. The coordinators have been appointed from within the Network committee and they in turn will appoint teams from member associations. Each team coordinator will report regularly on progress within their area of responsibility.

PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

A photography competition with the theme of Mother Nature attracted 70 entries. The contest was so tight that the two judges could not reach agreement regarding the winner, and two were declared. Wiert Mensinga, U3A Atherton Tablelands, was the photographer of

Let There Be Light [front cover] featuring the local landscape. The other winning photograph, of Lake Cootharaba [below] in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, was taken by Maureen Harvey from U3A Brisbane.



HONOURS AWARDED TO THREE U3A QUEENSLAND MEMBERS

Rhonda is president of U3A Toowoomba. She is a past president of U3A Network Queensland and of U3AAA and is currently a member of the governing board of AIUTA, the international association of Universities of the Third Age. In 2019, Rhonda and her husband David were honoured as citizens of the year in the Toowoomba region for their wide-ranging contribution to their community. Rhonda's AM was awarded for significant service to aged persons' education and to the community of Toowoomba.

Wendy Sanders was until recently, vice-president of U3A Network Queensland. Wendy is also president of U3A Caboolture and a long-term tutor there. Wendy has had a very long association with cycling in Queensland and her OAM was awarded for services to cycling.

Martin White, a tutor of music appreciation classes and astronomy over the past twenty years at U3A Bribie Island was founder of the Bribie Island orchestra. He has been a director of the orchestra since 1993. Martin is a current member of the Rotary Club of Bribie Island and a former host of film night fundraisers. Martin's OAM was awarded for service to the community of Bribie Island.

Gail Bonser
President
U3A Network Qld Inc

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

U3A SA is starting a trial of online sharing of courses under the leadership of our talented webmaster John Travers. When the idea was first mooted it no longer seemed a priority but now COVID restrictions have tightened yet again it couldn't be more timely.

Even before the current lockdown, running a COVID-compliant social activity stretched imaginations. As a drive in the picturesque Adelaide Hills to admire the autumn colour is always a popular outing, U3A Adelaide Hills' answer to the problem was a treasure hunt by car. There was a scenic route through local townships, 20 questions to test observational skills and no time element so no need to speed.



Poems had to be composed inspired by scavenged items depicting the colours of autumn. Many chose to finish with a picnic lunch in Willunga rose garden reserve. Plenty of space to socially distance but also opportunity to be introduced to partners and even family dogs who don't usually attend U3A.

Being homeless is no fun, be you an individual or a community group, and for both finding a permanent home can change fortunes. U3A Strathalbyn began in 1999 and evolved over the ensuing years to become quite a vibrant and active organisation despite never having had a physical permanent home. A filing cabinet in a hall, storage space in an unused shower recess, a post office box and meetings held in various homes and rental spaces around town was their modus operandi.

When the Strathalbyn Neighbourhood Centre opened its door in 2015 in a small, two-roomed cottage a mutually useful relationship was established. For a modest service fee, the Centre offered a drop off and collection point for U3A, space for that filing cabinet and the use of a meeting room. Eventually the cottage was sold and over a year was spent in unsatisfactory temporary accommodation while a permanent solution was being developed.

In September 2020, U3A Strathalbyn moved with the Strathalbyn Neighbourhood Centre into new premises. The U3A now has space in the foyer with a drop box, brochures, and program details and, as many of the Centre volunteers are members of the U3A, the information about events and activities is shared with enthusiasm.

The Centre has a large well-equipped hall which is ideal for exhibitions and AGMs, three meeting rooms and a commercial kitchen, computing facilities and a community garden so there will be opportunities to expand the U3A program. The U3A logo has been added to the signage in front of the building, establishing their footprint in the community. Although the facilities at the Centre are ample, U3A Strathalbyn still has some groups meeting in private homes and in various other facilities around town as suits their specific needs.



The new offices attached to the existing hall in Strathalbyn.

The U3A Strathalbyn belly dancers performing at the Expo held as part of the 'Flourishing on the Fleurieu' activities sponsored by the region's Positive Ageing Taskforce.

Wherever you are in SA, we hope you are planning to spend a day or more at our biennial Rendezvous (5-7 October) hosted by U3A Tea Tree Gully who deserve to be rewarded for taking on the job during a pandemic. They too were once in humble premises (a condemned transportable double-classroom displaying signs of termite and arson attacks). For some years now they have had possession of a former school, with a block of 10 classrooms and associated offices which saw their membership skyrocket to become one of SA's two largest U3As. Smaller U3As could learn from the simple way some of their groups are run utilising TED talks and YouTube videos rather than local tutors. Governments could learn that to create a thriving U3A they need only provide good premises. Members do the rest.

Claire Eglinton
Secretary
U3A South Australia



NEW SOUTH WALES

The U3A Network NSW is celebrating its 30th anniversary. The first U3A established in New South Wales was Shoalhaven (Nowra) in 1987. By 1989 there were 10 autonomous U3As in NSW (plus five groups under the umbrella of Sydney U3A) and the idea of interested groups forming a state-wide organisation to share experiences and ideas began to develop.

A steering committee to develop the concept was formed. Eventually, on 23 July 1991, a draft constitution for a NSW U3A Council was adopted. Freda Whitlam of the Chifley Penrith U3A was foundation chairperson of the Council. In 2006, the NSW U3A Council changed its name to U3A Network NSW, as a more accurate expression of its evolution from a council to a body providing a range of services to its member U3As.

About 100 members attended the 2021 conference, including interstate guests Glen Wall (chair, U3AAA), Gail Bonser (president, U3A Queensland) and Susan Webster (president, U3A Victoria). The conference was hosted by Wagga Wagga U3A.

Welcome to Country by Wiradjuri elder and NSW Senior Australian of the Year, Auntie Isabel Reid.

Don Gilbey of Charles Sturt University enlivened the conference dinner with an entertaining discourse on literature and the concept of rekindling the autumn of the mind, and what lies beyond the yellow submarine – metaphors urging us to escape from our cocoons and learn new things.



Dr Gordon Murray, a retired plant pathologist and current Wagga Wagga U3A member, gave a presentation entitled Curiosity sparked by investigating DNA, based on his own professional experience in studying genetics and his curiosity as a U3A member to learn more, hence undertaking further research into the discovery of DNA for personal interest, with the aim of presenting a four-week course on the topic to his U3A (an approach that U3A encourages).

The Annual General Meeting saw the election of a new executive: president Robert Birrer (Kempsey Macleay Valley U3A); vice president Denis Simond (Shoalhaven U3A); treasurer Denise Challis (Hawkesbury U3A); secretary Helen Matthews (Macarthur U3A).

The theme of the conference, Rekindling the Spirit, was well chosen to revitalise U3A in New South Wales. There were several reasons why U3A has suffered malaise since the last AGM held in May 2019. Primarily, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have affected the ability to conduct U3A activities, attendances, and several U3As found their membership numbers declined. Some went into hibernation altogether, while others found ways to maintain connection through the use of Zoom and regular newsletters on websites or by email. The 2020 conference was cancelled. In coastal and alpine areas, bushfires and later floods devastated local communities.

In the earlier stages of the conference, three workshops offered a stocktake approach to a number of issues: establishing the nature of current problems, promoting U3A to potential new members, and supporting U3As. A forum session conducted by Victorian U3A network president Susan Webster offered suggestions for reaching out with technology. A fourth break-out session conducted by facilitator Steve Morton invited suggestions for the future.

Preceding the conference, Shoalhaven U3A conducted a four-day study tour entitled A Taste of the Riverina, offering an opportunity to socialise as well as to learn more about what regional NSW has to offer. U3A members from three South Coast U3As attended the course, which commenced from Goulburn, and proceeded to learn about regional heritage through Junee, Coolamon, Ardelthan (the home of the Kelpie), Barellan (the Big Tennis Racquet), Griffith, Leeton, and Narrandera before concluding at Wagga Wagga. Along the way, the group sampled local produce including chocolate, cheese, fruit, preserves, pasta and wine.

In Griffith, the group was met by U3A members, president Brian Alty and local historian Anne Gribble. Anne gave an introduction to the history of Griffith, which started as a Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) township and soldier settlement area known as Bagtown, before being upgraded to become the town of Griffith in 1916, designed by Walter Burley Griffin. The group then visited the Gribble rice farm, where harvesting was in progress, and the Catania Fruit Salad Farm (a somewhat eccentric but fruitfully abundant place).

On the following morning, the group visited the IOOF Park, where in 2016 seven international sculptors created the Centenary Stone Sculptures, celebrating the centenary at Griffith.

'River' by Lui Yang (from China), stone sculpture at the IOOF Park, Griffith.

Next the Griffith Pioneer Park Museum, which preserves many original pioneer buildings, as well as the Italian Museum, and finally to the De Bortoli winery at Bilbul for a wine tasting.

From Griffith to Leeton, where the group was met by local U3A member Pam Herman, who took them on a walking tour of Leeton's art deco heritage. These 1930's buildings include the Hydro Motor Inn (where the group stayed overnight) and the Roxy Theatre (currently being upgraded as Leeton's Centre of the Performing and Cinematic Arts): both magnificent examples of the art deco style. In the evening, local historian Wendy Senti gave a talk on the history of Leeton and the time that Henry Lawson stayed there in 1915.



The 2022 Network Conference & AGM, 4/5 April, Orange Ex-Services Club, hosts U3A Orange. [See back page for regional advertising innovation.]

Ainslie Lamb
U3A Network NSW newsletter editor

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

U3A Armadale president Sheila Shenton has announced that Armadale is ready to step up and, in conjunction with the WA Network, take on the organising of a State conference in October 2022. This will be the first since the Mandurah conference in 2018. One was planned for 2020 in Busselton but had to be cancelled along with much else last year. Sheila is optimistic that 2022 will be a better year. We sincerely hope so and wish the group good luck.



Peter Alcock (Network president) with Sheila Shenton (Armadale president and Network VP) at recent U3A Armadale Open Day. The owl is part of a lectern made for wise U3A Armadale members.

CRAIG CHALLEN DRAWS A RECORD CROWD DESPITE COVID 19

It was a stormy, wintry day and masking was still required but the crowds turned out earlier this month for Dr Craig Challen's talk on the 2018 Thai cave rescue. Craig had been scheduled twice before and each time Covid restrictions had intervened. We were going to get him this time come hell or high water! Some 85 people attended. The story, of course, is well known but to get it straight from one of the principal actors in the drama brought it to life in a way no other telling could.



Sign of the times: all masked up at U3A North Coast (Hamersley) for a talk on the Thai cave rescue

Dr Craig Challen SC OAM

U3A MANJIMUP TO FOLD

Manjimup in the deep south-west of the State has been the home of a small U3A group for many years. Unfortunately, members of the group are getting older, recent recruitment of new members has been unsuccessful and the group has decided to wind up.

It is always sad to see an established U3A group disappear, but it is bound to happen from time to time. Let us hope that Manjimup's renowned reputation for re-inventing itself as industries have come and gone in the region will result in a new group in a year or two.

It is difficult in smaller towns in isolated areas, but the Network is busily promoting new groups wherever some interest is evident.

Peter Flanigan

WA Network

VICTORIA

ADVENTURES IN ONLINE MARKETING

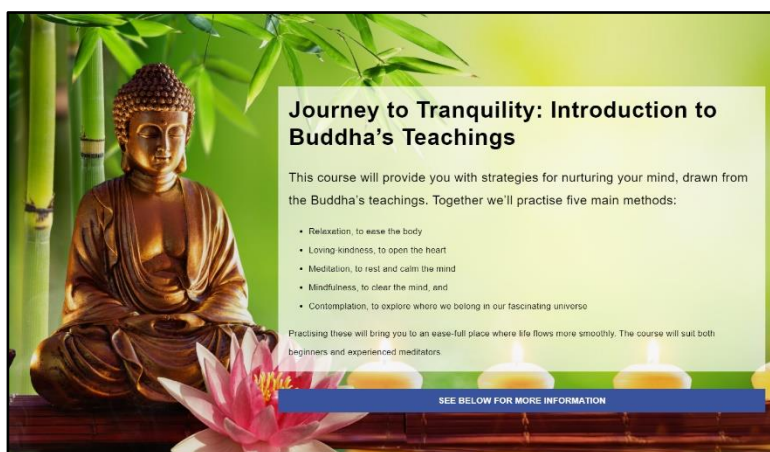
With Victoria's experience of lockdowns, at times it seems as if offering online activities is the best strategy given the pandemic's impacts on the way people can meet and mingle. Online activities require online marketing, so we tested an online marketing campaign via Facebook to see what was possible.

On 8 June, a Facebook ad for a free online meditation course offered by U3A Mornington was trialled, targeted at a potential audience of 800,000 people, aged 50 and older who live in Victoria. In one day, more than 1,900 people had seen the ad and started to click through to the webpage on our site about the program.

Click on this link to see the 30 second Buddha's Teachings campaign on Facebook: <https://fb.me/1FLcOfdTkpClig0>.

We created a specific webpage on Network's site that people landed on when they came from the Facebook ad. 187 people looked at this page in the first seven days, directed there from the Facebook ad.

Screen grab [right] of part of the landing page for the Journey to Tranquility: Introduction to Buddha's Teachings.



Click here to view the landing page: <https://www.u3avictoria.com.au/journey-to-tranquility-introduction-to-buddhas-teachings>

Within three days, 20 people had enrolled in the course. Luckily U3A Mornington was able to put on a second course because there was a lengthy waitlist. Ultimately, two courses of 49 participants each commenced at the start of the third term.

Many of the participants were new to U3As. They are being targeted in terms of joining a U3A towards the end of the programs.

This campaign ran for four weeks and cost \$290. It reached 18,057 people and drew 1,166 people to our website. We are planning two more campaigns in 2021 and are intending to have 10 campaigns from February to October in 2022.

Tracey Swadling

Administration and

Operations Manager

U3A Network Victoria



Network Victoria
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

U3A ONLINE

At the last Alliance meeting, we discussed the directory of U3As which U3A Online holds on its webpage. It became clear that not everyone understands that it was placed there in 1998 when U3A Online was launched and it was the only place it could be hosted.

We have continued to do so, although it is not our core business and we do not have the people or money to track changes of all local U3As details. As there are over 250 in Australia, and committees and other details may change every year, it would require full-time attention which we do not have the capacity to provide. That is why we need your U3A to send any changes you may have, as they arise, and our web administrator will then edit them. In fact, it is a good idea to give one committee person the task of sending updates after every AGM.

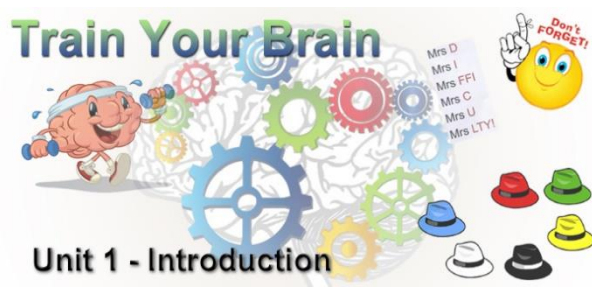
We are also considering, linking to State networks for updates but this is still at the discussion stage.

As you will probably understand, we cannot give editing access to the directory to all and sundry, as we would lose control of it and not necessarily know what had been changed. A thank you in advance for understanding and helping us to keep it up to date.

U3A Online is a very complex website that needs to be in full working order all the time and requires more than just a web administrator. We do have glitches from time to time, as all web pages do, but our IT company, Catalyst, does its best to deal with them. This is a very costly business and our Moodle [Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment] software, which has to support over 1,000 members, who may log on at the same time, is about to be updated as the previous one will not be supported. This shouldn't involve any lengthy shutdown but there will be a notification on the home page if needed.

Another way you can promote U3A Online is by letting members who are leaving your U3A due to health or age, know about us - give them a brochure as they may be able to continue learning at home if they are not able to attend local groups.

Here are a couple of our popular courses:



Jean Walker
President
U3A Online



NSW Group Regional Advertising opportunity

In an innovative piece of teamwork, five U3As in the Hunter and Central Coast Region have banded together to advertise in the regional newspaper to raise the U3A profile and help drive new enrolments.

Kit Craig, from Southlakes U3A, retired to the Lake Macquarie area after a career as a marketing manager. While developing an enrolment campaign for Southlakes, he learnt that the Newcastle Herald was about to produce a glossy publication called Forever Young. Distributed with the Herald, it would target over-55s with a focus on the lifestyle, resources and services on offer in the Hunter.

The Newcastle Herald has a print circulation of about 75,000 people, and digital audience of just under 480,000, of whom nearly half are aged 65 or older. It covers a distribution area that is far too large to be addressed by a single U3A.

The total cost was just over \$200 for each participating U3A, including licensing a stock image. If the promotion works, all seven U3As in the region will repeat it in the summer edition of Forever Young, published in November.

We look forward to hearing their assessment of its usefulness but \$200 per U3A seems a very reasonable investment.

Meet new friends in courses and activities for Seniors



Find your local U3A:

Cessnock cessnockcity.u3anet.org.au

Port Stephens portstephens.u3anet.org.au

Singleton singleton.u3anet.org.au

Toronto lakemacquarie.u3anet.org.au

Morisset & Cooranbong southlakes.u3anet.org.au

There are also U3As in Newcastle, Tea Gardens, Maitland, Muswellbrook, East Lake Macquarie, Tuggerah Lakes and the Central Coast