VITTA – Leadership & Technical Conference

I was invited by the President of VITTA, **Philip Callil**, to attend and present at the Victorian Information Technology Teachers Association Conference (12-13 August). VITTA is an independent, not-for-profit organisation whose members comprise both primary & secondary teachers, specialist information technology & multimedia teachers, tertiary educators & people with an interest in emerging technologies & information communication technology education. The Conference was held at The Melbourne Racing Club - Caulfield Racecourse. The theme for the Conference was – '**Provoking Learning with ICT**'. This special edition newsletter is my summary of the Conference.

Michael Eggenhuizen | Director ICT

Conference Program

The **2-day Leadership & 1-day Technical Conference Programs** were jam-packed with sessions covering topics such as BYOD; ICT strategic planning; publishing; iPads; tablets; apps; challenge-based learning; eLearning; online tools; improving student engagement; augmented reality; multimedia; flip learning; gaming; learning spaces and more. **Download** Conference Program and Conference Overview.

Conference Welcome

Conference Welcome - Inga Peulich and Philip Callil

The Conference was opened by **Philip Callil** (President of VITTA) and **Inga Peulich** (Parliamentary Secretary for Education). Philip Callil spoke about the conference theme and how it explores ICT across all year levels to provoke thinking, innovation and collaboration. Inga Peulich spoke on behalf of **The Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips MLC** (Minister for Technology). Peulich spoke about how ICT impacts on business, community and social activities and how ICT transforms the way we work and interact. Peulich spoke about the need for an ever-increasing ICT workforce and the need to attract girls into ICT. **VITTA Conferences are run by teachers for teachers!**

Bruce Dixon – Keynote Speaker

Bruce Dixon (Founding Director of ideasLAB; Co-Founder of Anytime Anywhere Learning Foundation) is well-known as a keynote speaker in education circles. Dixon's keynote, '**Is it possible, that we are seeing the end of Schools as we know it?**', was a passionate plea for **schools to do more**. Dixon quoted John Dewey by saying, '**If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow**'. Dixon says that the current decade is one of disruption; of ubiquity; of pervasiveness (a connection for every student); of emerging web technologies; of conversations in social media (see the Conversation Prism); **where technology is part of the very fabric of our lives**. He asks, 'Now (almost) every student has a laptop, has anything changed?' Dixon says that schools and teachers keep on looking back. We say students are engaged, but is that the best we can do? He says that for decades schools have been plagued with low expectations of students; that schools just don't understand the modern world of work where workers no longer work 9-5 at desks; **that contemporary pedagogical insight comes from a better understanding of the realities of the modern learner's world, and how they learn**. He says that we must look forward; that we must look to the way our young people are living in the modern world and how this impacts on how they learn and the relevance of their schooling; that schooling is in an age of abundance and exponential change; an age of autonomy and personal networks; an age of complexity and big data. Dixon points to Stager's work on the makers' revolution; fabrication and addictive manufacturing; on inventing to learn; making things (remember **Sylvia Todd**, the 11 year old whiz kid behind Sylvia's Super-Awesome Maker Show). Dixon says that schools are losing the race; that **it's not about new technologies, but rather what the technologies now make possible for modern learners and the new context which the students are radically influencing**. Schools and teachers must seek to better understand how young people are learning in a technology-rich world rather than locking young people's potential up inside 20th Century notions of curriculum. **It's not about delivering curriculum to students, but rather discovering curriculum with them**. Dixon says that schools and teachers should focus on new pedagogies & mastery **through deeper learning**; **that modern technologies provide students with the potential for experiences of unprecedented breadth, depth and complexity**. **Schools must expect more!**

Leadership Master Class

L-R Mary-Anne Williams; Don Collins; Mary Fitzgerald; Bruce Dixon; Elisabeth Lenders

Dynamic leadership involves whole school communities embracing digital technologies in all aspects of student learning across all areas of ICT. **The leadership master class panel of experts shared their vision for 'provoking learning with ICT.**

Mary-Anne Williams: Director MagicLab & Associate Dean Research in the Faculty of Engineering and IT at UTS. Disruptive innovation changes the game; critical that Australia prepares students for the ICT skills gap; **schools should start preparing students from K-12 for technology innovation and ICT skilled workforce**; robots are leaving factories and moving into homes/cars; robots are beginning to use big data; schools/parents must realise that employers want **team players with a softer natured personality; and that investigative, problem-solving ICT skills are required**.

Don Collins: Principal Coburg Senior Secondary College. MacBook School + BYOD; students articulate learning in their own way; **libraries are a thing of the past – why do students need to leave the classroom to find/research information?**; make the technology disappear in the background; **if your teacher is still at the front of the classroom then STOP!**; small steps necessary when promoting change; **context, purpose, audience are important when considering change in schools**; learning management systems reinforce the past – get rid of them!

Mary Fitzgerald: Principal Mater Christi College Belgrave. 1:1 MacBook school; run MYP program in middle years – international big questions focus program; providing technology and applications for teachers important; technology is never static; opening up to BYOD and smartphone use; **it's not the device it's about connecting students to the real world**; leaders need a sense of humour; **schools should promote and foster collaboration**; VCE (HSC) - real blocker!

Bruce Dixon: Founding Director of ideasLAB; Co-Founder of Anytime Anywhere Learning Foundation. **Schools can do more – will, courage, mindset, leadership is what is needed – nothing to do with money!**; role of teacher is to create the conditions for invention rather than provide ready-made knowledge; teacher is more important than ever; **shift in control from teacher – student skills threaten teachers**; teachers are afraid of letting go; schools should start from scratch – how do students learn?; **schools should be encouraging project-based, personalised and self-directed autonomous learning**.

Elisabeth Lenders: Principal Kingswood College Box Hill. iPads Years 4-9 and BYOD Years 10-12; **provide the best possible opportunities for the students now and in the future**; created pedagogy fabric on how learning should be organised – view LATTICE (Learning And Teaching Through Innovation, Collaboration and Engagement); real-world school is a jigsaw puzzle; using a quote from Gandhi, Lenders challenges leaders to '**be the change you seek**'.

Mary-Anne Williams – Keynote Speaker

Professor Mary-Anne Williams is Director of MediaLab & **Associate Dean Research in the Faculty of Engineering and IT at UTS**. Professor Williams says technology is her passion; she looks after fifteen PhD students studying robotics at UTS. Williams says that **schools need to motivate & engage students**; the pace of IT change is extremely fast; that you learn more if you have an expectation rather than just absorbing information; she says that the future will be the Internet of Everything (IoE) – the intelligent connection of people, process, data and things; **the skills Australia will need moving forward include soft skills (communication), team work (collaboration) and problem solving (innovation)**; Williams asks **what are schools doing to cultivate innovation?**; Williams sees big data and robotics as becoming more important in the future; her team at UTS designed robots to strip lead-based paints off the Sydney Harbour Bridge – see BBC Report; Australia is leading the world in some of the robotics fields but **we need people with the skill sets to continue this work**; Williams says that **schools should be teaching students to program from an early age**; Williams works in the field of social robotics and says that the iPhone is more robot than phone; Williams introduces Romo a small robot produced by Romotive (watch video of Romo); **Williams says that schools should encourage students to be creative, original and focused through engaging experiences**.

Lowanna College – Gippsland Victoria

Cameron Nicholls (Music Teacher and Leading Teacher Curriculum) and **Matthew Robinson** (ICT Manager) at Lowanna Secondary College in regional Victoria **spoke about the challenges of providing 1:1 mobile devices to students in a low socio-economic area**. What was immediately apparent in their presentation is that both Cameron and Matt **are passionate & focused on providing the very best they can for the students and teachers at Lowanna Secondary College**. They spoke about their innovative approach to a sustainable 1:1 program **using a mixture of parent co-contribution, school rollover funds and vendor pricing/funding models**. Lowanna College uses Dell laptops.
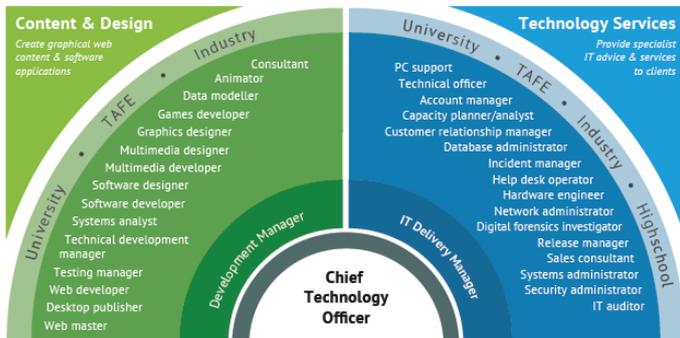
Adam Elliot – Keynote Speaker

Adam Elliot, **Oscar winning director and world celebrated animator**, gave the VITTA audience a humorous account of his life. Elliot struggled through private school and was on the dole prior to his first big break. Elliot wrote & produced a 6-minute Claymation animation called '**Uncle**' whilst in film school. **This was the start of bigger things to come!** After a further two short-film animations called '**Cousin**' and '**Brother**', Elliot produced an epic (3-years in the making) 22-minute Claymation animation about an ordinary man seemingly cursed by bad luck. The animation, '**Harvie Krumpet**', won Elliot an Academy Award beating the likes of Pixar, Disney and Fox. For almost a decade, his films have been viewed by millions of people around the world and have participated in hundreds of film festivals. His movie length animation, '**Mary and Max**', was a world-wide blockbuster. **Elliot talked about his animations and how digital technology** (hardware and software) **has helped to reinvent the dying art of Claymation**. Elliot said that computers are giant pencils and that creativity comes from the people driving them! Adam Elliot Pictures; Harvie Krumpet; Mary and Max

VITTA – Student Careers Forum

VITTA is keen to see the involvement of students in the Conference Program. The **Student Careers Forum** consisted of a panel of representatives from industry organisations, universities and TAFE who spoke about different opportunities for young people to access a range of courses and careers that are ICT focused or ICT inclusive. School students were invited to attend this forum. **Find out more about ICT jobs at** Youth Central **and** Australian Computer Society.

'Selling' ICT to the School Community

I presented the topic, 'Selling' ICT to the School Community, to both leadership & technical conferences. The presentation looked at how **school leaders and ICT managers often struggle with inappropriate budgets, low staffing levels, ad-hoc ICT policies, aging technologies and rapidly changing teaching and learning needs of the school community**. The presentation showed that, if marketed well, these 'pain points' could help turn things around for the school community. The presentation **highlighted strategies that the leader or manager could use to 'sell' ICT to the school community**.

ICT Strategic Planning

I presented the topic, ICT Strategic Planning, to the leadership conference. The presentation looked at how **ICT strategic planning helps a school to focus its energy and resources and adjust the school's direction in response to a changing teaching and learning environment** - that ICT strategic planning is not an option for school leaders and ICT managers, it is a necessity! The presentation **highlighted ICT strategic planning initiatives that can help the school leader & ICT manager in developing their school ICT strategic plan**.