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### **Leadership in creative writing and the creative arts**

As a number of contributors to this Special Issue of *TEXT* note, ‘leadership’ is one of the current catchphrases of academic discourse. It is used as a descriptor in position descriptions, as a requirement to be met in appointment and promotion applications, and as an overarching term in institutional strategic and operational plans. I have used the word in all these ways myself and, even while doing so, been aware that, as a concept, the term ‘leadership’ has multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings. Even if it is clearly being used with the implicit meaning of leading others, this in itself has various shades of meaning—variously referring to being in charge of others or directing, guiding and/or mentoring them and their work practices.

Leaders in their fields are sometimes described as being the best, the most influential, the select few, the ‘cream of the crop’. However, it is increasingly common nowadays for a rhetoric to be mobilised that suggests that every individual can be a leader of some part of the institution’s work, in some way, sometimes. While I believe leaders in the higher education context (as in other fields) should promote collaborative and consultative work practices, they are also, to my mind, in positions of responsibility and should act as such. Interestingly, the only synonym provided for leadership in my online thesaurus is ‘management’, which is what all contributions to this special issue, without exception, reveal that leadership is not. The writers in this collection were, indeed, requested to provide an explication of how they are using the term in their articles and, when taken together, these expositions make a significant contribution to this subject in relation to current academic practice.

The first two articles in this issue address specific instances of leadership in writing in Australia. The first, by Nigel Krauth, takes an in-depth look at *TEXT* journal, and how aspects of leadership are mobilised in relation to co-editing this prominent academic journal. This is a task that Krauth has completed since 1996 and, moreover, completed so successfully that the journal has been recognised as a leader in its field, not least in its receiving an ‘A’ ranking in the recent Excellence in Research for Australia evaluation program. Krauth employs a series of personal memoirs to narrate instances when he learned about leadership, and combines these with reference to research, in an analysis of the principles and practices employed in the task of editing *TEXT*. Krauth also presents a schema of the types of leadership employed and examples of when these types have been used or subverted in his work with *TEXT*. In thinking about how best to prepare students in practice-led disciplines for professional life beyond the academy, Rosemary Williamson points to the need for graduates to possess skills that enable them to confidently transition between the academy and the creative industries, and that strengthen graduates’ prospects for continuing employability in fields in which the protean career is common. Williamson suggests that, of the necessary generic skills, written communication is central. In doing so, she

focuses on a form of academic leadership which is represented by the designing of curricula for, and teaching students in, practice-led disciplines in the creative arts. While these two iterations of leadership—in academic journal editing and curriculum design and teaching—may be less visible than others, both Krauth and Williamson show how these are central to academic practice in practice-led disciplines and even transformative for those who engage in them, as well as those who use their products.

The next three articles situate a discussion of leadership in a specific location: Gail Pittaway on the teaching of creative writing in New Zealand, Janie Conway-Herron on narrative and advocacy among Burmese women refugees on the Thai/Burma border, and Lynda Hawryluk and myself on our work with Central Queensland community writers. Gail Pittaway utilises Judith Ross' (2007) business-based model that identifies four characteristics of successful creative leadership in order to outline and discuss the important contribution of four academic leaders in creative writing programs in the New Zealand tertiary sector: Robert Neale, Bill Manhire, Albert Wendt and Witi Ihimaera. Janie Conway-Herron exposes the often hidden role narrative plays in leading people out of subjection. Using her own experiences of leading creative writing workshops with Burmese women refugees, Conway-Heron shows how narrative and advocacy are closely aligned to the kind of human rights capacity building that is supporting Burmese organisations who are fighting for a free and democratic Burma. Conway-Herron suggests that facilitating the writing of these refugee women is advocacy in action, and that in writing about their experiences these women express a distinct identity that has the potential to play a significant part in the future restoration of a genuine democracy in their country. Closer to home, Lynda Hawryluk and I report on the leadership aspects of the community creative arts based Resurfacing Stronger project, which we designed in response to the recent flood crisis in Queensland, Australia. The project combines creative writing workshops and the publication of community writing with a study of contemporary community writing to attempt to understand the social dimensions of flood preparedness and response.

The final three articles in this issue provide a series of discussions around three current leadership projects in writing and the creative arts in the Australian academic context. Marcelle Freiman writes of her involvement in the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) funded Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project, mounted to develop and define tertiary level program and course learning outcome standards in a selected group of academic disciplines that included the creative and performing arts. In describing the leadership processes of this project, Freiman reports on how these created a pathway for creative writing to both articulate benchmarking standards for bachelors and coursework masters degrees and explore its relationship to, and commonality with, other practice-led creative arts disciplines. In the second of this group of articles, Barbara de la Harpe, Thembi Mason and J Fiona Peterson reflect on their establishment of a network to strengthen the leadership of learning and teaching in the creative arts, the ALTC funded createEd project. In this article, the authors reflect on their attempt to implement a network for learning and teaching leaders in creative writing, visual art, performing arts, architecture and design, in the process highlighting the assumptions underpinning their approach and reflecting on how these were challenged, or not, in the process of conceptualising,

designing and developing the network. Finally, Jen Webb, Sandra Burr and I report on work to date on our current ALTC funded project, the Examination of Doctoral Degrees in Creative Arts. This is a leadership project as, although the creative arts disciplines constitute an important growth area for research higher degrees and have built a body of knowledge and a set of practices associated with research and research higher degrees, there is virtually no empirical work that investigate how creative arts' research thesis examiners arrive at the commentary presented in their reports. This article, therefore, focuses on current work in the project on assessment practices, processes and standards.

Together, these articles provide a snapshot of some of the leadership projects, activities, methodologies and processes occurring in writing and the creative arts in the academic context. They will, I hope, encourage current leaders to continue on in this important role—however they define it—as well as inspire others to take up the responsibility, challenge and satisfactions that leadership entails. I also look forward to the continued conceptualisation and interrogation of leadership practices and processes in both *TEXT* and other arenas.

A sincere thank you, too, to the peer reviewers involved in this and all issues of *TEXT*. Their generous leadership contribution to research and its dissemination is too often unacknowledged by our institutions and auditing bodies, but is always valued by authors and editors.

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