



Extending Horizons

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## Advocacy and Extension

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In March this year APEN President **Jane Fisher** and myself were privileged to be part of the start of a new extension network in the Philippines. APEN and a small grant from AusAID have supported the establishment of the Philippines Extension Network (PEN).

At the "establishment workshop", with participants from academic, project, training and government extension groups, one of the first issues was to get an agreed view of what we were all talking about -

*What are the aims of an extension organisation in the Philippines?*

After much discussion this was boiled down to:

- Advocacy for the profession and for extension
- Sharing and information exchange
- Developing models for practical change
- Professional identity and professional development

The issue of **advocacy** was seen as very important in a country where extension has been devolved over the last 10 years to local government level, resulting in isolation of officers and a loss of a focus and training at a national or provincial (State) level. It also reflects the bureaucratic and political power in the Philippines that can reach down to the lowest

levels at times.

However these aims of PEN are just as applicable to APEN. While we have tried hard to share knowledge and promote professional development, a sign of our development and maturity as a professional organisation may well be a **greater level of activity to advocate for extension** as an integral element in our own country's development. This advocacy should not only be as an input to a focussed inquiry (such as the recent R&D Corporations project), but proactive and reactive inputs to discussions at various levels.

If we look at the range of physical and biological issues affecting land and water management (and impacts on people), what should we as extension professionals be saying? Do we have any agreed policies/ views on protection of biodiversity, efficiency of water use, catchment (as distinct from individual farm) management, Landcare and group approaches, environmental management systems, etc.

To advocate effectively we need the mechanism (and the information) in place to respond appropriately to relevant issues at national, State and local levels. The CoM, and maybe the upcoming international conference in Queensland should consider extension advocacy.

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## Advance Notice: APEN 2000 Annual General Meeting

See page 9 for details

**Have YOU registered for APEN 2001 yet?**

**APEN is pleased to acknowledge the support of:**



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## FROM THE CHAIR

**Jane Fisher**

APEN President

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## 2001 has been a very stimulating and progressive year for APEN

I am pleased to share with you the good news that **Horticulture Australia Limited** has agreed to sponsor *ExtensionNet* for \$7000 per year over the next two years, and **DRDC** \$4000 per year. The high regard in which this newsletter is held is a tribute to our editor, **Mark Paine**. Comments like "it is worth paying my membership to receive *ExtensionNet*" have appeared on membership renewal forms.

Mark has been indefatigable, chairing the editorial committee responsible for refereeing the papers for the 2001 Conference in addition to his *ExtensionNet* responsibilities. I would like to thank him very much for the thought, time and effort that he put into this process. Coordinating 70 papers and associated referees is quite a feat.

Our major event for the the year, the APEN 2001 International Conference is being ably organised by **John James** and his conference organising committee (see page 8 for an update).

The refereeing process introduced for the conference has begun a culture of peer review within APEN, giving our members, as authors and reviewers alike, experience in the art of writing for publication. The number of papers submitted indicates that extension-

ists need to share their thoughts and philosophies with a broader audience than mates in the office.

I am proud to have initiated the process of peer review at the 2001 Conference. The CoM believes that this step takes APEN well down the track to being recognised as an organisation committed to professional development and to having extension theory and practice recognised by funders as a science, with rigour and outcomes.

Other news: **John Stantiall** has left the CoM, his departure coinciding with him taking up a new job. John worked hard on the APEN strategic plan (see page 9), and his insight and energy will be missed. **Janet Reid** from Massey University has joined the CoM as the New Zealand representative.

**Paul Ainsworth** has coordinated production of a new membership brochure, which matches *ExtensionNet* in design. We are developing that all important corporate look.

I am looking forward to meeting many of you in Toowoomba. The 2001 Conference is an important one in the extension calendar. I wish the organising committee good luck with this event.

## FROM THE EDITOR

**Mark Paine**

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## A global electronic community – for better or worse!

A recent item on the national news reported that the Code Red virus spread at a rate of 250,000 new computer infections within the first nine hours of its release. We can imagine the disruption and personal distress this type of infection can create. This startling rate of spread also helps us appreciate the extent of connectivity most of us now share through our workstations. We are members of a global electronic community – for better or worse!

Technological advances in medium like the internet can at times divert our attention for the subtleties of human interaction that are the primary concern of extension workers. These new technologies can be treated like a panacea if we attribute more features to a medium than that of an information conduit. Perhaps more importantly, extension needs to ensure it is considered more than an information conduit – something that can be readily displaced through advanced technologies.

The articles in this issue of *ExtensionNet* discuss some projects that are contributing to a profession that is using new approaches to work with people in the field. **Ruth Beilin's** discussion of photo-elicitation provides a useful review of the method while also illustrating the approach using a catchment study. **Kate Roberts** outlines the diverse evaluation studies undertaken by her group to indicate the role and contribution of evaluation to extension projects.

The past few months have been very busy for the editorial committee with the refereeing of papers submitted to the APEN 2001 International Conference. An impressive range of projects and achievements are reported in these papers. I strongly recommend people make the effort to attend the conference to engage with these authors and learn more about the work operating in this country and overseas.

*The Editorial Committee is seeking feedback and suggestions for improvement, so please send me any comments, no matter how brief, and indicate whether you want your comments published. If you have any articles for publishing please contact me.*

# Using Participatory Approaches in Extension Research

This article describes a photo-elicitation method adapted from within a visual sociology tradition for use in a land conservation study. Visual sociology, based on an ethnographic foundation, encourages the integration of photograph and commentary. This process of qualitative interview and narrative explanation is called 'photo elicitation' (Collier, 1967; Harper, 1987). The photograph, and not a researcher's question, becomes the focus of the discussion (Harper, 1986). The responses of the informants extends the possibility that the researcher can build on proffered answers to approach a more meaningful understanding of the areas under discussion. The act of collaborative research is strengthened through the listener's participation (Forester, 1989). The narrator of the photographic 'story' is encouraged by the images to explore previously 'taken for granted' understandings, which can be quite confronting for the subject as well as the researcher (Harper, 1994).

## The study referred to here

The study referred to here, mainly involved dairy farms, and particularly Landcare farmers. The larger question underlying the study was how farmers interpret and manage their landscapes for conservation. Governments are necessarily anxious to know whether programs, like Landcare, lead to changes in farm management. Researchers often struggle to find appropriate and reasonable ways of understanding the effect of government policies at a local level. The method described here offers just such an insight into the decision-making process at the individual farm landscape level. In analysing their images of Landcare, participating farmers discussed the decision making process and their management strategies.

Landscape studies have commonly used photography as a tool for explaining research, analysing management changes, and to encourage public participation in validating particular landscapes for preservation or creation (Emmelin, 1996; O'Riordan, et al., 1993; Whitmore, et al., 1995). Brandenburg and Caroll (1995) use landscape photographs to review citizen responses to resource manage-

## The Case for Photo Elicitation

ment issues. Moore (1997) uses farmers' photographs to 'provide immediate and efficient access to place'. The examples describe the visual reality of seeing. Ethnographers and anthropologists have yearned to unlock that which is not seen, but implied; that which is evoked in memory and symbolised by that same physical representation.

MacDougall (1994:265) is concerned with 'signs of absence'. We look at photographs for an indication of what is no longer there or what used to be. MacDougall (ibid) links photographs to memory, both at a personal and community level. He suggests that at a representational level, this is a social narrative. 'The photographer's gaze' say Lutz and Collins (1994:363), in a study of photographs from America's *National Geographic*, turns the landscape and the photograph into objects. They explored the power of the photographer's position through a consideration of the ways in which it allowed readers as outsiders to look in on 'the foreign'. Modell and Brodsky (1994) used existing photographs from historical archives and personal family albums to elicit oral histories. In pursuing photographs and informants suggested by other photographs and informants, they created a web of interconnectedness. Their process mirrored the integration of larger social and economic issues inherent in the politics of a mill town at a macro level, and with the personal histories of its citizens at a micro level.

## Ways to analyse the photographs

There are several ways to analyse the photographs. Usually these involve some type of content analysis. Content analysis is defined as the quantification of the various elements seen in photographs. Questions are developed based on what stands out to the evaluator as being significant about those photos after the quantification of elements (Collier & Collier, 1986). Examples might be: Who is in the photo?

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The narrator of the photographic 'story' is encouraged by the images to explore previously 'taken for granted' understandings .....

Landscape studies have commonly used photography as a tool for explaining research, analysing management changes, and to encourage public participation in validating particular landscapes for preservation or creation

What location is it? What are they doing? Based on the content that emerges, categories are developed to reflect what is seen. The elements within the categories are counted and comparisons made across photos. In this model, the researcher is usually the photographer. Photo elicitation can also occur using existing images and content analysis. No new photographs are produced for the research project. The content analysis is applied to 'found' or existing images. For example, existing historic photographs or cultural/recreational ones from the Shire. The photos are content analysed and explanations offered for the resulting data. The photos can be analysed by the researcher alone or by those involved with the site and not authors of the images (Modell & Brodsky, 1994).

A third type of photo elicitation involves researched-produced photos and content analysis. The subjects of the research project take photographs specifically for the research project. The expectation is that different photographs and photographers focus on different aspects and by analysing those differences in content, a better understanding of the site is gained by the researchers and the researched. Visitor-employed photography surveys at zoos, national parks and similar tourist sites, use this model (Chenoweth & Gobster, 1990), though not all of them involve the users in the analysis.

### **Landscape photographs and photo-elicitation combined**

In the study that is the subject of this article, landscape photographs and photo-elicitation are combined and content analysis is organised around farmer derived themes. As Landcare is a participatory program, the 'photographer's gaze' is necessarily that of the farmers themselves. To assist in ascertaining levels of significance in the series of twelve photographs taken by each farm family, a modified form of personal construct theory was used (Kelly, 1955; Dalton and Dunnett, 1990). This involved farmers sorting their photographs into groups. The groups were then given a thematic name by the farmer, such as 'production', 'vermin', 'things I'm proud of...'. The farmers were asked to explain

why the photographs belonged in each group and what the significance of the theme was to the overall series. The farmers indicated which group was most significant to them. Then each farmer was asked to order the photos within each group. Once again, each farmer explained why the photograph was ranked in this order and why it formed a part of the theme. In this way, a laddering process occurred that allowed the farmers and the researcher to understand the significance of each photograph within the overall context and with reference to particular detail.

#### **Photograph 1. Feel good farming/ animals**

Marvin and Stan, a father-son farming partnership comment on a photo of cows in the paddock.

**Marvin:** "It shows the animals grazing and each cow knows where to go. They have their favourite spot in the paddock and they all head into that one spot. That is the other landslip which is more of a problem to our dam than the one up the top. They do stabilise. If this winter is not as wet, it might stabilise."

**Stan:** "...there are individual trees that we planted. The dirty area around the hayshed...is where we feed out the hay in winter and it gets very chewed up. This is a feel good shot for me. It is the one that gives me a good feeling. This is our farm...The sun was going down. I knew that I was going to take a photo from there, but I just had to get the right night...I planned it with the cows and the hill and the tree. You see the colours every day. I see the sun setting with the beautiful colours...you see the beauty that people don't see when you look at it every day."

This is an inter-generational farm inherited by Marvin from his father seven years ago, when Marvin was 50. Stan is Marvin's 27-year old son. Father and son are the only workers on this 180 ha farm with 240 dairy cows. The farmers took 6 shots each. They ordered and described all 12 each. Marvin put this photo in the category 'animals' and it was number 10 of the 12. Stan took the photo. It was number 2 of the 12 for Stan. Both farmers talk about the photo in relation to what is seen and what is not visible. Marvin says, the cows 'know where

to go' to settle, and to be in the sun. He notes the erosive character of the land, suggesting the slip might not develop any further. He does not sound convinced. Stan has been travelling around the world, has come home to farm and he deliberately took this photo to indicate his farming dream. He analyses the photo as a positive. He notes the feeding out area as part of the necessary landscape of production. It's ugly but the overall outcome is good. He deliberately waited for sunset and the warm glow of soft light to capture the importance of the scene. This photo is a confirmation of his personal identification with the work and the place.

#### **Photograph 2. Mixing pasture and trees**

Colin and Jayne are conservationists and birdwatchers. They are in their sixties and have a small beef herd on the undulating plains. They have planted extensive shelterbelts across their farm.

**Colin:** "I love that big tree. I think it must be about 75 years old. And I'd like to think that in another 50 years he still is there. But I guess he won't be unless I put a fence around him, or sell these cattle."

Colin is determined to plant trees. He helped clear the last of the trees and scrub in this neighbourhood in the 1960s. They consider the future landscape one in which old trees are part of the scene. But they ruefully note that everyday routines counter that likelihood. Cattle will graze under, rub against and trample the root area. Landcare is not addressing the management issues arising from the location of conservation zones in production landscapes.

#### **Photograph 3. Things we have done**

Campbell and Isobel have owned this property for 10 years and described it as a 'green desert' when they first arrived. Now it is about 20% covered by revegetation zones.

"...and you can see beyond it (this farm) and it all looks bare. Beyond our property you can see there are very few trees and you can see the creek is a drain...if we were up close, you could see...that cattle have been allowed to get into this area (from the other neighbour's land). And it is about 30 feet deep. They haven't wanted to fence it out. They actually burned what was left of the *Melaleuca ericifolia* to let



Photograph 1. Feel good farming/animals



Photograph 2. Mixing pasture and trees



Photograph 3. Things we have done

the water get through faster, and it roars!...The area is such a contrast. They're not Landcare members. And we still have a problem because their cattle can get across the creek in summer."

This photograph emphasises landscape transformation. On Campbell and Isobel's side of the creek the plantings are lush. Their farm is singular in the wider landscape context. Their farm represents a commitment to Landcare ideals and the wider landscape speaks to the voluntary character of Landcare where 70% of farmers do not belong or necessarily share their goals. Campbell deliberately took this photograph from on top of his shed in order to make this point. He used the photo elicitation method to illustrate their frustration with neighbours and with government. The participatory character of the study empowers farmers to speak about Landcare through the photographic narrative and because the voices and pictures are theirs, the reader has insight into the everyday reality behind these scenes.

### A landscape sociology

The photographs provide a landscape sociology of farming in a difficult and highly degraded terrain. As farmers analyse their photographs, they define 'conservation' on their farms. The photographs clearly identify the overwhelming production mandate of the hills and plains. They emphasise the 'look of the land' and management responses. The sub-text in the wider study addresses issues such as roadside planting, fencing out creeks, zoning areas to agroforestry and recognising the importance of the individual in creating new landscapes.

The landscape is not an object 'out there' for us to gaze at and accept as an apparently static fact. By contrast, the landscape is a construction that in the context of this study, using photo elicitation offers an insight into policy at the farm landscape level.

### References

The comprehensive list of references is available from the APEN Secretariat, or the author.

# A Profile of Evaluation in Action

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*In this article I introduce the Evaluation Unit and then describe a cross section of projects that illustrate a diversity of approaches used in evaluation studies. The particular approach to evaluation depends on the context and issues under investigation.*

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the evaluation unit at the Rural Extension Centre is :

- To deliver evaluation information to clients;
- To carry out and be involved in evaluation training
- To be up to date and leaders in the field of evaluation research

The Rural Extension Centre is jointly funded by the University of Queensland and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries. It is located on the Gatton campus of the University of Queensland and is largely a training centre for extension and rural community development.

Since the evaluation unit was formed in 1998, it has secured 18 projects. Most projects were of short duration but four were over a three year period. To date, these projects have resulted in 55 reports, 8 workshops and 6 conference presentations.

## A profile of some of the projects

### Bestprac

The Bestprac program is a national program and in its third year of evaluation. It terminates at the end of 2001. Bestprac is the name given to woolgrower, best practice, benchmarking project that uses a modified process of action research for bringing about continual improvement.

The major evaluation activities are:

- Continual evaluation of the Bestprac steering team effectiveness;
- Annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the groups, the Bestprac process and what is required from continual improvement; and
- Annual evaluation of the activities of facilitators and coordinators.

## Working In Groups (WIGs)

WIGs workshops were provided to beef and sheep meat producers across Australia to improve the effectiveness of their group activities. The invigoration provided by the trainers is evident from participants' comments. Analysis of data from post workshop questionnaires, an annual impact survey and an annual report are ongoing activities.

## Dairying BEYOND 2000

This series of workshops throughout Queensland was provided for dairy farmers facing deregulation of the dairy industry. The intent of the workshops was to provide farmers with projected scenarios about what could happen and give them skills to deal with the uncertainty. Farmers were invited to a series of four workshops dealing with various aspects of change management.

Evaluation activities centred on assessing the effectiveness of the content and process for the audience. Effectiveness was assessed at two levels – facilitators and participants and opinions from these two groups were compared. Facilitators were asked to keep a diary which was divided into the categories of the action learning cycle. Facilitators were asked to report against these categories of – action, observation, reflection and planning and participants completed post workshop questionnaires.

## Subtropical Dairy

The evaluation project with Subtropical Dairy is for three years. Subtropical Dairy is a regional development program funded by the Dairy Research and Development Corporation and defined by dairying from Malanda in North Queensland to Kempsey on the mid north coast of New South Wales. Subtropical Dairy supports seven subregional teams and these teams together with Subtropical Dairy carry out research and development projects in the areas of feed systems, holistic farm management and animal health.

Evaluation of Subtropical Dairy centred on an assessment of the suitability of its structure,

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that is delegating responsibility for research and setting research direction to the subregional teams. An assessment was done by:

§ Conducting evaluation workshops with the subregional teams to determine what those members knew and thought about the structure;

§ A survey of dairy farmers and other individuals associated with the dairy industry about their knowledge and opinion of the activities of Subtropical Dairy; and

§ An assessment of the value of having an annual forum where subregional team members can share information.

### Capacity Building for Natural Heritage Trust Facilitators

This evaluation project was similar in content to evaluations carried out for the *Working in Groups* workshops. It was also similar in process to the evaluation for the *Dairying Beyond 2000* workshops in that facilitators were asked to keep a learning log.

The aim of the workshops was to provide training nationally for prospective and current Natural Heritage Trust facilitators to build their regional networks, provide them with skills to work with people and deal with their regional issues.

### Greening Australia – Measuring attitude change

This project was small in financial terms but by far made the greatest impact on an external audience. Greening Australia received many requests for the report.

A survey was conducted of landholders in South West Queensland who had been involved in a Bushcare project. The questionnaire was developed by Greening Australia staff in that region with advice from the Evaluation Unit. Landholders were asked about what changes in thinking and practice they had made as a result of their Bushcare projects.

### Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers

The Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers held an information day – *Growing for Profit* at Gympie in November 2000.

The intention was to provide information in many different areas. Growers would then choose where they needed more information and follow-up events would be organised.

Evaluation involved participant observation at the event. Photographs to assess what participants found most useful were also used to support findings.



### The beef nutrition workshops

An evaluation of the delivery of the Northern Nutrition package for the Queensland Beef Industry Institute and Meat and Livestock Australia began as a small one-off event. More evaluations were asked for as the package evolved through its various drafts and was delivered to producers.

It continues to be an intriguing package to evaluate because of the assumptions made about the needs of producers when it came to delivery. The softer, facilitated approach to learning, which is current practice, was passed over in favour of high percentage of content in the delivery followed by vigorous discussion.

### Conclusion

Evaluations have been of a variety of learning programs within a number of rural industries. Most, but not all, of the learning programs have centred on measuring the effectiveness of action learning or action research. All involved an assessment of effectiveness to meet learner needs which were not just defined by content and process but by social and economic factors as well.

The softer, facilitated approach to learning, which is current practice, was passed over in favour of high percentage of content in the delivery followed by vigorous discussion.