Following the recent - out of character - industrial actions, we are often asked by worried friends and relatives “What is going on at Sydney Uni?” Despite the headlines, we can remain optimistic, confident in the strong core values embraced by our Institution.

We all appreciate to be part of an Institution which has Mutual Accountability as the key core value guiding consultation processes and strategic planning. Mutual accountability emphasizes the need for individual members as well as their academic units, to be accountable to one another for their contribution to the University academic and financial health. Importantly, this concept determines how we seek to achieve our various missions, and has implications for how USyd approaches decision-making. One of these implications is that decision making must involve negotiation, good faith and transparency. Alleluia!

Following the traditional STUVAC break, when students either consolidate their learning or face in sheer panic the extent of their ignorance, our undergrads have once again entered the stressful mid-year examination period. As Virgil once said in one his famous poems: “forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit.” ... perhaps one day it will give you pleasure to look back on all these things.
Better than Baywatch

From USIMS Maddie Rosenthal. June 2013 marks the completion of phase two in the ongoing development of the Sydney Harbour Observatory. The Sydney Harbour Observatory at USIMS provides real time monitoring of one of Sydney’s most valuable assets. Thanks to USyd ICT, an array of integral data and real-time hydrodynamic and climate modelling, relating to Sydney Harbour and its surrounding estuaries, will be accessible for interaction by the scientific community, the public, stakeholders and the industry.

The process of applying real time weather observations to drive hydrodynamic codes was automated under the guidance of Edwina Tanner and Professor Ian S.F Jones. The initial stages of the project were built on the research of Dr Serena Blyth Lee and Dr Gavin Birch. Read more at: www.sydney.edu.au/usims and on facebook: www.facebook.com/sydneyharbourobservatory

Oceanographer Edwina Tanner at the office.

SUCCESS

12M$ for Big Data

Big Data Knowledge Discovery Project: The School of Geosciences EarthByte Group teams with NICTA, SIRCA and Macquarie University to unearth ‘big data’ insights for the natural sciences. This $12M, 3-year research project will advance fundamental mathematics and statistics to provide a framework, methodologies and tools for data-enabled scientific discovery. It is supported by $4M from the Science and Industry Endowment Fund (SIEF) and $8M from the research collaborators. It will combine NICTA’s world-class machine learning capabilities and SIRCA’s expertise in big data software engineering with three of Australia’s leaders in natural science:

• Geosciences and Earth dynamics and tectonics led by Prof. Dietmar Muller
• Terrestrial Ecology led by Prof. Mark Westoby at Macquarie University
• Physics and Mathematics of Complex Laser Systems led by Prof. Deb Kane at Macquarie University

**IN THE NEWS THIS month**

**Great stuff can be found anywhere** ... Personally, I never miss an issue of the *Innovation* catalogue. This bible of lateral thinking, which land too infrequently in my mailbox, is packed with innovative ground-breaking products to help us with our busy life. Consider for example the double-sided pet grooming glove, which allows you to groom your pet as you pat. A fine piece of engineering, with on one side flexible nodules for gentle massage, while the other has a special fiber to shine the coat. I don’t have any dog, but I am considering buying a pair for myself as it works just fine on long and short hair.

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**Success for space**

*Space SyReNS* led by Iver Cairns from Physics, and involving Geo members Ana Villa Concejo, Eleanor Bruce, Patrice Rey, Dietmar Mueller and Jonathan Aitchison (all pictured on the left) has been one of the successful 6 in the *Sydney Research Networks Scheme* with funding commencing in 2013. *Space SyReNS* will link and extend the University’s multi-disciplinary, School and Faculty capabilities into the nation’s premier university space research program. More details at: [http://sydney.edu.au/news/research_support/2379.html?newscategoryid=215&newsstoryid=11733](http://sydney.edu.au/news/research_support/2379.html?newscategoryid=215&newsstoryid=11733).

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**Talented PhDs**

*Phrom Phill McManus.* The School of Geosciences was represented by Stephanie Duce, Dong Xing (in action on the photos) and Liping Yan at the Geographical Society of NSW’s (GSNSW) *Three Minute Thesis Talk* on 17 June. This inaugural event attracted participants from UNSW, UWS, Wollongong, Macquarie and the University of Sydney. The chance to present a three-minute summary of a PhD thesis was both engaging and challenging. Postgraduate students met each other and chatted with geography academics from a number of universities. A wide spectrum of geography research and interests were on display, with all of the presenters from the University of Sydney doing very well and, importantly, enjoying the occasion. For those who missed out this year – the good news is that the GSNSW were very pleased with the event and will be organising another one next year.

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**In the News**

PhD candidate Daniel Marks published an op-ed in the *Bangkok Post*, last Friday. The article discusses green growth policies in Thailand. It emphasizes that the government has mostly paid lip service to green growth while implementing "brown growth" policies. It gives a number of examples of such policies. Nice work Daniel!

GEO news editor in chief was all over the news this month, as his paper on the formation of precious opal in central Australia, with reference to Mars geology, went - appropriately - ballistic. In less than two weeks this paper became the most downloaded of the *Australian Journal of Earth Sciences*, a success made possible by USyd Marketing & Communication Division, as well as the Marketing Division of AJES's publisher Taylor & Francis Group. The paper is in free access here:

http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/taje20/current#.UbJXX4Wzps8

Our restless EiC is now tackling another Australian icon in his new project: *Understanding Vegemite*.

Dr Sascha Brune, from the GeoForschungsZentrum in Potsdam, has joined the Earthbyte Research Group for a period of 2 years. Sascha's research aims at adding a lithosphere to global mantle circulation models. Sascha in on a 3-year postdoctoral fellowship from Germany. Welcome to our School!

John Connell is currently on the second leg of a medical tourism conference shared between Wageningen in the Netherlands and Leeds in England. A few hours from giving his keynote address at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park - which is now part of the Yorkshire Sculpture Triangle - he reflected that when he was growing up this location was merely the Yorkshire Rhubarb Triangle - a fine example of what human geographers have been known to call the post-productivist country side.

Well that's all from the GEO news desk. Until next time ...

It's hard to guess that these two landscapes are 300 million km away from each other. On the left, the flat plain of the Great Artesian Basin north of Coober Pedy, on the right a landscape from the Gusev crater on Mars.