

Report on The Australian Institute of Medical and Biological Illustration 17th Biennial Conference, Melbourne, 3-6 May 2007

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The Australian Institute of Medical and Biological Illustration (AIMBI) held its' 17th Biennial Conference in Melbourne, 3-6 May 2007. Our last Conference was held in 2004¹ and the three year gap was, in part, due to the Third World Congress on Medical Imaging in 2005². The first Australia-wide conference of the Medical Photography Institute of Australia was in Melbourne in 1974 and in Adelaide in 1976 at the 2nd Convention, a national body was discussed and it was decided this would happen before the next convention. The name changed from MPIA to AIMBI, and in Brisbane in July 1978 the National Body was officially formed. Since that time, membership reached a hiatus of 200 but now hovers around the 70 mark.

A Conference requires a "critical mass" of delegate numbers to be viable. For the first time we joined with like minded imagers and we collaborated with the Photo Marketing Association of Australia (PMA). Each year the PMA holds a convention to showcase the latest imaging products but also acts as an umbrella organisation for the Photo Imaging Education Association (PIEA) and the Institute of Photographic Technology (IPT). This years AIMBI meeting became a trial of all groups getting together and swapping ideas and networking and promised to be an exciting new event with the three organisations coming together. Concurrently, the Australian Institute of Professional Photography (AIPP) held its annual meeting along with the annual judging of the Professional Photographer Awards. In addition, there was also a chance to attend the extensive photographic trade show, all under the one roof. All of this constituted a new approach to gather and exchange information whilst maintaining our own identity as a scientific/medical group of imagers and Associate Professor Gale Spring and Co-Convenor Danielle Edwards are to be congratulated for this bold move into uncharted conference territory.

Another positive for attracting quality speakers to the meeting was the location of Melbourne, home to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). RMIT is the only institution in Australia offering tertiary qualifications in scientific imaging with the opportunity of specialising in medical or ophthalmic disciplines. Professor Robin Williams³, was our opening speaker with a talk entitled "Back to the Future" 100 years of photographic imaging. Well known to us all, Robin took us through the various image breakthroughs including his time as Head of Department at Charing Cross Hospital and finishing with some evidence that we may be able to directly wire visual stimuli into the visual cortex for image recognition. This contentious view of the future certainly lived up to Robin's controversial views of how our industry will move towards the next century and gave us all something challenging to leave with.

Picking from the highlights, David Tatnall enthralled us all with his talk: Mysterious beauty – the pinhole photograph⁴. This low-tech approach to large format imaging showed us how some of the less trendy techniques can still produce wonderful images, particularly when apertures of f300 are used.

The event: An evening with a photographer: Mr Jason Edwards, was an outstanding talk. Jason took us through the trials and tribulations of a nature photographer shown against a background of his images published in National Geographic. His down to earth discourse and stunning imagery left us all in awe.

Kylie Robertson from Ish Media showed us a new product using multimedia. Girl Friday is a short format interactive comedy series specifically designed for mobile telephone downloading in combination with an interactive website. So how do you make a programme of ten minute duration that leaves the viewer willing to pay for the next download? This innovative and engaging comedy did all of this with audience members asking how they could subscribe to see more episodes. Is this the future? Certainly this product will find a niche market and Kylie's talk left us all wondering how multimedia will expand with the ever increasing uses of these new technologies.

Other presentations of note were Chris Sprod from the Women's and Children's Hospital, Adelaide: E-Learning – a team approach. Greg Gorman: The Power of Imaging, looking at variants of Adobe Photoshop™ technique and how to look at them from a different perspective. Of course there were many other high quality presenters but space dictates a shortened overview here.

Concurrent photographic displays, the AIPP open judging and exhibition of the latest imaging products plus a full and informative programme was certainly worth attending. The meeting was a rich and full experience for me and it will be interesting to hear what the rest of the delegates thought of this experimental format for future meetings.

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