Dr Kim Kirsner

‘Communication Science’ is necessary but not sufficient

Tuesday 4 August, 2015 at 1.00pm

Room 1.81, Anatomy, Physiology & Human Biology Building North
The University of Western Australia (off Hackett Entrance No. 2)

The Seminar: The benefits associated with the development of powerful training programs in Science Communication (SC) are acknowledged. The author would undoubtedly have been better placed to meet and defeat the performance challenge that descended on him and the Finding Sydney Foundation (FSF) during and after the search for the wrecks of Kormoran and Sydney had he received a SC preparation.

The presentation will unfold in four phases. The first phase concerns the scientific solutions that John Dunn and the author applied to the search, a search unique in the annals of wreck-hunting because of the scale and the chaos of the reports from the survivors. The second phase will include a brief summary of the recognition problem. The third phase consists of a brief review of the critical texts in the SC literature. In brief, the case for SC is largely built on what I am going to politely refer to as science disasters, problems that have unfolded against the best interests of society and in favour of commercial interests. The fourth phase comprises a case for the creation of a National Agency for the Defence of Science.

The Speaker: Kim was born in Melbourne. He was awarded Bachelor degrees from the Universities of Melbourne (B.Comm) and London (BSc), and a PhD in Cognitive Psychology from Birkbeck College, University of London. He subsequently completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship under Professor Ben Murdoch at the University of Toronto (1971-72) and joined the School of Psychology at The University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1972. Kim has published approximately 90 articles in refereed journals in Cognitive Psychology, Language Production, Bilingualism, Memory, Human Factors and Naval History. He has also co-authored one book and co-edited a further three in a variety of areas.

Kim was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Science (Australia), appointed to the position of Professor at UWA, and appointed an Honorary Associate to the West Australian Maritime Museum in 1997. He retired from his position in Psychology in 2007 but continued to supervise doctoral students as a Professor in the School of Animal Biology (UWA) until 2014. He also contributed to the design of a new Speech Pathology program in the School of Psychology at Edith Cowan University, and performed occasional duties as an Adjunct Professor to the School of Medicine at the University of Notre Dame Australia (Fremantle).

Following a period as Director of the HMAS Sydney Foundation Trust (1996-2001), he occupied two roles with the Finding Sydney Foundation; as a Director on the Board from 2001 to 2004, and as a Member of a notional Management Committee from 2001 to 2011. Together with his long-time colleague John Dunn, Kim specified the position of the HSK Kormoran to an accuracy of 2.7 nm at a time when David Mearns was unable to distinguish between four candidate positions at distances of 14 to 46 nm from the critical wreck.

Kim has been reading Naval History since 1947 and has an article on the loss of HMAS Sydney in press.