

## ZOOMing into the future

Some U3ANR tutors are taking their groups into cyberspace now that the coronavirus has forced us all to stay isolated in our homes, suffering from boredom and social distancing.

Four classes have led the way. They are Spanish language, SMUG (Senior Mac users group), Advanced French and ... Dancing ! Others such as Photography and the 500 card group are likely to follow shortly, and a number of other tutors have expressed interest and will be consulting their class members for their opinions.

Any U3A member with a digital device and a viable Internet link can join a virtual class where participants can see, hear and interact with fellow students and the tutor. They can even pass private notes to one another, just as they did back in school.

This is possible using a free video conferencing programme called Zoom.



Tutors use it to replicate a class meeting in a real room.

Each participant appears in a small “live” window on the screen of their laptop, tablet, desktop or smart phone.

As people join a study or discussion group, each person’s screen becomes a chequerboard of different faces, something like the virtual choirs you may have already seen on TV.

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*The Independent Age* comes in two parts this edition.

Part 1 is the same as usual, though no classes are listed.

Part 2, which you may not want to download to save data, is topical cartoons to cheer you up.

Ros (Editor)



## From the President

Well, what interesting and challenging times we do live in. This newsletter is being circulated to let

you know that you are not forgotten. We are not printing any hard copies as there are no venues remaining open in which to place them.

The Committee Meeting held on 16 March decided to suspend all term 2 classes. However a number of classes took the initiative of starting up internet meetings via Zoom and a number of others are investigating this possibility, so many of us may find ourselves involved in this digital world, despite our misgivings, sooner than we expected.

Some positive things to report on in the first three months of this year.

Open Day was, as usual, very enjoyable, sociable and very busy. We enrolled about 56 new members who are now most probably wondering when they will be able to enjoy what U3A has to offer. Janelle Saffin made time during her busy schedule to visit on the day.

During Seniors Week we held our Seniors Day celebration at St. Paul's Church Hall in Keen Street. It was an excellent event attended by more than 80 members and was a day of music,

dance and drama. The Conservatorium, Lismore Theatre Company and our Dance Class convenor Miriam Torzillo were all involved. We were treated to a short play written by Bette Guy. There was also an exhibition of Irish Dancing and a presentation of violin music by the head of the string department at the Conservatorium. Jenny Dowell was our MC on the day. Margaret Bruce our Social Co-ordinator, ably assisted by Peter Wiblin and a number of willing ladies, did a wonderful job of catering. Members were provided with morning tea and lunch.

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 3 March. Sadly, this was not very well attended with only 37 people there including committee members. Our Regional Representative, Roger Curren, came down from Brunswick. Afternoon tea was provided. The new Committee appears on the back page of this newsletter as usual.

Please everybody, stay safe, observe the safely regulations but most importantly, please keep in contact with each other by phone, email or home visits. There will be many members who will be adversely affected by the loss of their usual classes and contact with others.

Regards,  
Jean Cook

## As usual, we all had a great Open Day



## Open Day continued





## 80+ enjoy Seniors Day

More than 80 people attended Seniors Day on 18 February this year.

Jenny Dowell, U3A member was MC for the day – a day which started with a very distressed call from the first presenter, Imogen Wolf, saying she had woken with a severe migraine and could not get out of bed. Jenny was desperately looking for someone else to take the first session and fortunately Anita Bellman, Executive Director of the Northern Rivers Conservatorium, was able to drop everything else and attend.

Anita started by letting the audience know that everyone can sing and proceeded to get us doing just that. Imogen managed to get out of bed and came about halfway through the session and took over. What a performance – it sounded so good with everyone participating. We even sang a few rounds like *Row, row, row your boat*.

Jenny then led a panel discussion with six older volunteers from Rochdale Theatre, Bette Guy, Vilma Giacomini, Ian McCauslan, Sylvia Clarke, Joc Wright and Gray Wilson (actors, writers and stage, theatre and costume managers). It was very interesting to learn the intricacies involved in getting a production together.

Lunch was ably catered for by Margaret Bruce with assistance from

Peter Wiblin and several willing volunteers.

We were then entertained by a short play, *The Last Party* written by U3A member Bette Guy with seniors Vilma Giacomini and Ian McCauslan playing the two roles.

Jack Claff then sang and played guitar, followed by an energetic demonstration of Irish dance featuring a local school student and introduced by teacher Glenys Ritchie

Michael McCabe, head strings teacher from the Conservatorium played violin for us.

The last segment was dance by Dr Miriam Torzillo, U3A dance teacher. Just about everyone was on the floor for that segment.

U3A Northern Rivers (Lismore) Inc had received a grant from NSW Seniors Festival Grants to help offset costs.

Joy Smith

Note: Several people have since joined Miriam's dance class. Thanks go to Jenny Dowell and to Miriam Torzillo for putting the program together, plus Jean Cook, Margaret Bruce and Pat MacLaren-Smith in making it all happen and Peter Wiblin for catering support for Margaret.

## New committee members elected at AGM



At the Annual general Meeting held on Tuesday 3 March, the president thanked all committee members for their work during the year, and paid tribute to some retiring members. John Zaat and Jan Arthur are retiring, Tim Challis and Kerren Leahy resigned during the year and John Marchant has left the position of treasurer. The committee for 2020 is listed on the last page of this newsletter.

New members are Peter Sandstrom (Treasurer), Lyn Sandstrom (Minutes secretary), Jan Halpin (Membership Secretary) and Stuart Montgomery (Webmaster).



Joy Smith

Liz Marshall

Jan Halpin

Stuart Montgomery



Peter Sandstrom

Lyn Sandstrom

Jean Cook

## Tuesday with U3A

**Zenith Virago**, an educator, facilitator, consultant. She has co-authored a book titled *The Intimacy of Death*.



**Clara Hilscher**, spoke about her years with David Jones as "A Lady in Black", travelling the world as a buyer of some of their exclusive products.



## Tuesday with U3A

**Heather Marshall** talked about the significance of **Quality of life** stressing the importance of joint mobility, the reduction of musculoskeletal pain and the reduction of excess oedema (swelling), whether the cause is vascular or lymphatic.



Alan MacLean presented a brief history of Royal NSW Lancers and NSW Scottish regiment.

The **NSW Scottish Regiment** formed in 1885 with six companies in Sydney and three on the Northern Rivers in MacLean, Lismore and Mullumbimby.

The **Royal NSW Lancers** was one of the most highly decorated units in the Australian Army.



## Safety in a time of Virus

The best portal for reliable, detailed, wide-ranging up-to-date information on the COVID-19 pandemic, is the **Federal Health department**. [health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au). It is worth checking often.

Another good source is **StaySmartOnline**: <https://www.staysmartonline.gov.au/get-help>. To stay up-to-date on the latest online threats and how to respond, sign up to the [Stay Smart Online Alert Service](#). More information is available on their [Get Help](#) page .

**Scammers** are taking advantage of the current crisis. The basic rules are

- never give your details or sign up for anything that you were not expecting or planning
- don't click on any links or open attachments from people you don't know, even if they look genuine.

For more information, check the government's [cyber crime site](#).

## Why people treasure U3A

When Linda Laos appealed for help on USANR's online message service E-board, she was overwhelmed by the support of her "new family."

This is her letter to U3ANR:

*Dear all,*

*I am so grateful. My request for help with grass cutting promptly received seven offers of advice and assistance, and it will be done soon.*

*I came here to take care of my mum, who sadly passed away last year after a fall (she was 92 and wouldn't have minded going quickly). All of my family is in Melbourne, and so too far away to help me.*

*However, I feel like I have found a new family. In these crazy times that is no small thing.*

*Thank you to you all. You are a wonderful group of people and I am so happy to have connected with you. I wish that I had joined you earlier.*

*If I can help anyone else with anything, I would love to help others in return. I have always been involved with community groups.*

*Eternally grateful, and feeling much less alone,*

*Linda*

## Well done, Robyn

Congratulations to Robyn Gray, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia 'For Service to Community History' in the Australia Day Honours. Robyn is a U3ANR member and was for some years convenor of Intermediate Italian.

## Treat yourself to some comfort food

Chocolate cake in a mug: the easiest dessert for one



### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons self-raising flour
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 egg
- 2 1/2 tablespoons caster (superfine) sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

microwaveable mug (of at least 350 ml/12 fl oz capacity)

### Method

- Put the flour, sugar, cocoa and egg in the mug.
- Whisk.
- Add the milk and vegetable oil. Stir until smooth.
- Microwave on high for three minutes.
- Serve dusted with icing sugar if you like.

## How do you look your best on screen?

A video meeting, even though you may be alone, replicates a public meeting. So behave as if you had suddenly replaced your favourite news reader on TV.

These tips apply not just to Zoom but to all video conferencing programmes.

### Set the scene

Where you put your laptop or phone makes more difference to how you'll look on camera than what you're wearing.

Try and put your computer/tablet/phone near a window. Natural light is preferable to artificial.

Ensure your face is always evenly lighted, not in shadow on one side.

Position your device's camera at or just above eye level, if necessary by putting it on a **stable** pile of books. Move yourself slightly further away from it so that your features are not distorted.

Never position your device so that it is looking directly up your nostrils. Apart from this not being an attractive sight, the tilt-up position also emphasises your neck and chin. You also might cause a lens flare by showing a ceiling light.

Check what's behind you. You don't want to accidentally broadcast private or sensitive details in your background.

Zoom allows you to drop in a background of your choice - e.g. a beach. One U3ANR member dropped in a fake background of toilet rolls.

Check the foreground as well before logging in. No want wants to see your messy lunch plate.

### Act like a news reader

Wear whatever you would normally wear to a U3A gathering. Ladies should know that spots, stripes and brightly patterned tops do not show up well on camera. Stick to neutral colours.

Same rule applies to men. Do not wear a formal shirt with footy shorts and thongs. Sure, people can't see that when you are sitting down, but what happens if you have to get up to answer the door?

Remember, people are watching you. Try not to eat, drink or attend to personal hygiene on camera. Wait till after the meeting.

And of course, don't ever touch your face!

## Why does Coronavirus spread so fast so suddenly?

We've been hearing a lot about how the speed of spread of the virus depends on geometric progression. What exactly is geometric progression?

An example:

A lily pond has a clump of leaves which float. Every day the clump doubles in size. By day 30 it covers the entire surface of the pond.

Q: On what day does it cover half the pond?

*Answer on page 16*



## Let's embrace what we have

**Going outdoors NOT CANCELLED**

**Music NOT CANCELLED**

**Family NOT CANCELLED**

**Reading NOT CANCELLED**

**Friends NOT CANCELLED**

**Singing NOT CANCELLED**

**Laughing NOT CANCELLED**

**Hope NOT CANCELLED**

### **ZOOM continued**

Zoom is very easy to use.

The meetings are controlled by the class leader, called the host. The host books a virtual room in cyberspace then emails students, inviting them to attend and giving them a link to click on and a password (for use only on that day).

When students click on that link, they are prompted to download Zoom to their own device if they have not already done so. Next, the student's

screen changes to reveal the faces of all the other students.

Everyone attending can see, hear and talk to all the others - although meetings don't have to be visual: you can have audio-only discussions.

Tutors who want to try it can ask for assistance from other members. U3A is a self-help organisation, after all. We are all ready to share what expertise we have.

*Tutors, see pages 14-15*

## Tips for Tutors

Zoom is a computer program which enables you as a U3A tutor to stay in touch with your group virtually.

By using a computer or tablet screen you can see and hear your class in real time, send them documents or photos and even text an individual member.

Each person appears in a small “live” window on the screen of their laptop, tablet, desktop or smart phone.

As people join a study or discussion group, each person’s screen becomes a chequerboard of different faces, something like the virtual choirs you may have already seen on TV.

U3As who are using Zoom find it not only helps keep members keep in touch with each other, reducing feelings of isolation, but also preserves the organisation’s momentum.

However, it has been criticised for sloppy programming leading to possible security and privacy problems. The company has switched all its resources to fixing these ASAP.

### **How Zoom works for a tutor**

The U3A tutor or class leader (called a host) registers with Zoom and books a virtual meeting room at a convenient time and date.

( To minimise confusion, tutors may prefer to schedule online meetings at exactly the same time and day of the week as the real meetings have been held pre-Coronavirus.)

The host then sends an email inviting students to attend and giving them a link with password to use on that day. When students click on that link, they are

prompted to download Zoom to their own device if they have not already done so.

Next, the student’s screen changes to reveal a chequerboard of rectangular windows showing all the students gathered so far.

As more students log in, the programme automatically reduces the size of each person’s screen so that each become progressively smaller.

Alternatively, each viewer can choose a different view, say of the speaker of the moment taking up two thirds or more of the screen and a film strip of views of everyone else rolling across the top.

Everyone attending can see, hear and talk to all the others.

### **Who can benefit?**

U3ANR life member Graeme Eggins has been researching alternative methods of teaching .

His extensive research online and with contacts in other U3As and former business colleagues led to the U3ANR Macintosh group’s successful Zoom trials “It wasn’t all plain sailing at first but we have Zoom more or less under control now,” he said.

“If you keep the meetings simple at first and try to stop everyone from talking at once Zoom is a wonderful tool.

“It can be used for talks, discussions, live demonstrations, PowerPoint presentations and even white board diagrams.”

Classes with fewer than 25 members seem most likely to benefit from using Zoom....



U3A specialist classes with fewer than 25 members seem most likely to benefit from using Zoom. For example, groups discussing books, languages, investment, genealogy, science and technology. Committee members can also use it for executive meetings.

### **Maintaining order**

You can imagine the shambles if you have a class of say 15 people with everyone talking at once.

Therefore, the group needs to negotiate rules, perhaps deciding that anyone who wants to talk must first put up a virtual thumb like this: 👍 (The thumb is available in the program.)

Members may need to be encouraged to mute their own microphone when not speaking.

If calls for order and rules don't work, the host has power to switch off all or any individual microphones.

Meetings don't have to be visual – you can have audio-only chats.

### **Security considerations**

The Australian Cyber Security Centre urges video conferencing hosts to protect against hackers and online pests.

You can do this by:

- Send invitations and logon details separately from the invitation



through a secure method, like email or encrypted messaging apps.

- Do not publish website links or logon details on publicly accessible websites or social media.
- Encourage your students to treat their access link like a password – IOW, not to share it with others.
- Tell students to be aware of their surroundings. Use a private room or headphones if possible.
- Allow only invited participants to join the meeting.
- Make sure *Screen Sharing* is set to *Host* only.
- If you're using any web conferencing programme on your device, make sure you have the latest version of Zoom (and your other programmes) installed plus the latest security updates.

### **What's the payoff for tutors?**

Your students will love you.

## Looking for things to do?

Lots of resources can be found online to help keep you stimulated. Here are a few to get you started.

**U3A Online** has more than 50 high quality non-award courses for people who like to learn new things.

It publishes a free monthly email newsletter, **GEMs**. Why not check out a sample? GEMs Newsletter April 2020

YOURLifeChoices fortnightly magazine and e-news for 50s, 60s and beyond will keep you up to date on health, wealth, travel, work, new technology and great food.

youtube.com has lots of old and classic movies. Search for “free old classic movies”

## ZOOM - How it all started

Zoom began nine years ago as a communications tool for big business and big education. Social distancing has seen its popularity soar. In BCV (Before Corona Virus) few people outside big corporations and universities had heard of it.

Now the US-based corporation is worth around \$29 billion.

According to a report in *The Guardian*, Zoom saw a 535% rise in daily traffic to the **Zoom.us** download page in April.

Even high-profile figures, including the British prime minister, Boris Johnson, and the former US federal reserve chair Alan Greenspan, use it

for conferencing as they work from home.

Why? Because it's cross platform and offers a free version. It doesn't matter if you are using a desktop, a laptop, a tablet or smart phone, Zoom will work for you. It runs on the Windows and Apple operating systems, plus Linux.

It is comparatively stable. If a student is on a poor Internet connection, they can cut their video link and just listen in and comment.

As more and more groups like U3A join traditional video conferencing users, pressure on existing networks increases. Australian ISPs are already vastly increasing their online capacity to meet this demand.

**Lily pond answer: DAY 29**

## Are you au fait with E-board?

One of the services our U3A offers members is the right to join up to eight separate electronic mailing lists.

Most members, when they complete their membership form, opt to be able to send and receive messages about U3ANR's activities through **e-board**. (electronic notice board).

Members can use e-board to exchange general U3A information, make announcements such as times of U3ANR meetings, ask or give help to other members with anything, swap/share/give away anything and sell one-off items.

Policy says e-board is not to be used for any unlawful matter, to discuss topics that other members could find offensive (i.e. politics, sexist jokes), or to advertise **a range of products or services** for personal gain.

Apart from **general** e-board, members can join seven other **specialist** lists. These allow members to send/receive messages from others in these groups:

- friday forum
- genealogy
- investments
- photography
- science
- technology
- tuesday-with-u3a

To send a message to all members of specialist list X, send it to:

[X@lismoreu3a.org.au](mailto:X@lismoreu3a.org.au)

Follow the same style to send a message to **all** subscribed U3ANR members via the **general** e-board, i.e. [e-board@lismoreu3a.org.au](mailto:e-board@lismoreu3a.org.au)

If you would like to join or leave any list, email your request to

[X-owner@lismoreu3a.org.au](mailto:X-owner@lismoreu3a.org.au)

(The Webmaster is the “owner”)

You may find it convenient to add the address of e-board and any other U3A message group to your contacts list.

Management places some restrictions on messages. Messages are restricted to the equivalent of one page of plain text (15K) and they must be signed.

Attachments of any kind (photographs, Word documents) are not permitted, but you can include a simple Web address.

For further information contact our web administrator, Stuart Montgomery, at [stuart@islandchangers.com](mailto:stuart@islandchangers.com)

NOTE: Our webpage (as opposed to e-board) is currently undergoing a significant rearrangement and restructure, so it is worthwhile to keep an eye on it, to note any changes that may affect you.

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## What is U3A?

U3A is a self-help, non-profit organisation run by seniors for seniors and devoted to learning for the fun of learning, while making new friendships and enhancing old ones.

U3A Northern Rivers (U3ANR) offers many courses and activities each term. One annual membership fee entitles you to take part in as many activities as you wish, provided that the course is not full.

**Website:** [www.u3anriv.org.au](http://www.u3anriv.org.au)

**Mail: PO Box 4291,  
Goonellabah, 2480**

## End of term

### Friday 3 July

## Deadline for next newsletter

### Wednesday 24 July

### **Disclaimer**

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