

Curriculum perspectives: K–12 Design and Technology

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**Transcript of paper, *Stitching up the past: progressing the Australian Dress Register seminar*,
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Thank you for the invitation to discuss the use of the Australian Dress Register (ADR) in the area of technology education. To give you a perspective on what that means in terms of technology learning area, it is the learning areas from Years K–12. The syllabuses we are looking at would be the Science and Technology Primary Syllabus Years K–6, the Technology Mandatory Years 7–8 and 9–12, the electives of Design and Technology, also Textiles Technology and Textiles and Design. I am also going to allude to how it may have relevance to computing subjects.

The ADR provides fantastic access to information beyond the museum in a way that offers flexibility to the user. The provision of online resources is very valuable to students, particularly those at a distance. The register offers students connectedness on two levels: firstly in terms of accessibility and secondly to allow them to tap into resources in their local community that they were previously unaware of. Just by going onto the ADR myself I was able to identify an object designed and created by a dressmaker in Port Macquarie that was worn by a local identity in Port Macquarie. Students looking at that object would be able to perhaps find it in their community and become more aware of objects in their community. It is also an excellent resource for teachers.

The greatest significance of the ADR will be for students and teachers of Textiles but I will briefly outline some of the other applications it will be put to. In K–6 students study Science and Technology and the focus is on designing and making. Certainly one of the areas they look at is the area of products. It is feasible that a school may look at the products of dress and fashion so they may use the ADR to locate some examples from a particular period and then examine what were the technological influences on that particular garment.

Next year is the bicentennial celebration of Lachlan Macquarie and schools in NSW have been asked to

have a focus on Lachlan Macquarie 2010 celebrations. They will be looking at various ways to access information about colonial life and if there are objects on the ADR that would be appropriate for that they could access that information.

In Years 7–8 students study of Technology is mandatory and they continue their studies from primary on the built environment, information and communication, and products. While it may be unusual for schools to focus on fashion, some schools could do that and in some instances they might like to look at historical influences, so it is a possible resource for students and teachers.

Another possible use is for students of computing — Information and Software Technology students, and Information Processes and Technology in the HSC who study databases. This would be a wonderful database for them to look at as it has a really interesting user base for them to pitch to and has people inputting data, the interface has to be friendly for a broad range of people to look at and it would be a great case study for them to study from a computing perspective.

I suppose the main focus is our textile students and this is where it will be a really rich resource. Recently the Commonwealth has funded the digital education revolution and that has meant a rollout of 93 000 laptops for Year 9 students in NSW. There will be a continual rollout of these over the next three years. While the wireless network is not there yet it will be by 2010, and this really opens up opportunities for teachers to tap into this great resource.

Some examples of how you could use the ADR in schools are, firstly that it could be a template for analysis — a structure has been created for the people who will be inputting data, and students could use this structure as a template, or they could analyse an item of clothing, particularly one that has significance for them. This is a really powerful way of increasing student connectedness with their

learning and it provides them with a framework that has been provided by an authoritative institution like the Powerhouse Museum and gives them a world sense of something that is applicable and is appreciated by the broader community.

The object descriptions could assist students in creating their own descriptions of clothing they are designing. Sometimes it is a struggle for teachers to get students to give enough detail about what they are designing and if teachers can give a model that is the established way of giving a description in the broader community then they may be more willing to engage in completing a more substantive piece of analysis.

Students could also analyse the statements of significance and then they could write, modify, enhance them in some way, not to go on the register but to give them some assessment. The description of the statement in the register describes it as historic, aesthetic, scientific, social and spiritual features and this relates directly to the significance of textiles in the Textiles Technology and Textiles and Design syllabuses. If you are asking students the question that occurs in the register 'What makes the garment important?' that is a really excellent opportunity for students to draw together those aspects of history, style, technology and social context that they can perceive from the registrations available. It is also a really valuable literacy exercise. You are providing a scaffold, providing an audience and you are also providing modelled examples. It always helps for someone outside the classroom to say this is the way things are presented in the real world.

Where a statement of significance has not been provided in the ADR then students could do some research and look at the stories and see if they can establish more information. Also, looking towards the stories is valuing the importance of those stories in establishing provenance.

Last year we worked with the Multicultural unit doing a project titled Culture and Design Virtual Gallery. That project required students to select a piece of textile or a textile object from their family and to describe why that was of significance to them. This would be another layer you could add to that particular project to show that this is the type

of thing you do to establish provenance and to incorporate some historical aspects into learning. Those stories have been collected and housed on a Culture and Design Virtual Gallery website and other students are able to access that. It might be really nice to tap into the ADR website, having a look at the Culture and Design Virtual Gallery and have students work on one of their own inspired by the two examples.

The ADR could also provide inspiration for the design of a textile project and that is a very important use. It provides a range of different types of objects with a different emphasis. That might be an interesting starting point for a student for a major textiles project. The Major Textile Project is selected from five categories and two of those are Apparel and Costume. The ADR would provide examples that would inspire either of those categories. The objects on the ADR also model descriptions and that level of detail would allow students to analyse and describe their own Major Textile Project with that kind of detail and emphasise points that they might have not thought of in their own description. They could also consider the impact of geographical location, available resources and workers' skills on the clothing and that would cause them to consider these things in the design of clothing of a particular era and area.

In Years 9–10 students learn about historical perspectives of textiles including historical periods, technological advances and social events. They learn to recognise design features of textiles from different periods of history and identify these features in contemporary designs. That cross fertilisation of historical and contemporary design is a strong point raised in the Textiles Technology syllabus. You could combine that activity with other Powerhouse Museum resources such as the Electronic Swatchbook and Sourcing the Muse collection, and with the ADR you have a really powerful suite of resources that demonstrate the link between historical and contemporary design.

The Technology unit would like to thank the Powerhouse Museum for inviting us to work on this project, and we look forward to working with you in the future in identifying some implementation strategies and promotion of the resource, which I think will be invaluable to students.

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The Powerhouse Museum, part of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences also incorporating Sydney Observatory, the Powerhouse Discovery Centre and the NSW Migration Heritage Centre, is a NSW government cultural institution.
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