



# **Public Relations Handbook**

**A Guide for U3A Public Relations Officers**

**[www.nsw.u3anet.org.au](http://www.nsw.u3anet.org.au)**

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## A Guide for U3A Public Relations Officers

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## PREFACE

*This Handbook was first prepared as "Your Guide to Public Relations" in 2009 by Col Jones, then Publicity Officer for the U3A Network NSW Inc, and to date has been available by download from the Network website. This revised edition has been published in hard copy thanks to a grant from the NSW Government. The original text has been varied to integrate updated information about the Network and its services.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Welcome to the world of Publicity. If it's your first landing on this alien planet it can be a pretty scary place, inhabited as it is by all sorts of strange creatures and packed full of traps and pitfalls for the unwary.*

*The good news is that you're no longer on your own.*

*Each of us has had to face the daunting task of trying to work out exactly what it is that a Publicity Officer does, and how best to do it.*

*Every area poses its own unique challenges and opportunities and yet there are basic similarities and common resources that we can all access.*

*Your U3A is part of the NSW Network; and it is as a Network that we can work together to assist each other in improving our Marketing skills.*

*The U3A movement is well respected because of its association with seniors and education, and if your target has never heard of us... DON'T BE AFRAID TO EDUCATE THEM!*

*I hope that this Handbook will be both inspirational and useful to all those who choose to "take on" the role of Publicity Officer.*

*Col Jones  
Network NSW Public Relations Officer 2009*

## SPREADING THE WORD

It's all very well to have something to say, but where are you going to say it? The following list while not exhaustive may help set us on the right track.

### LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

- **Your local Library** is a great place to display a notice, but have you considered asking the chief librarian to have a small number of brochures or membership application forms kept under the counter for those who ask? This is a handy trick when a phone enquiry regarding new membership gets to the one about "can you post me some info?" They can pick it up at the library and you save on Postage.  
*Many libraries have display areas for community brochures and will be able to provide space for U3A brochures and term programs.*
- **Clubs** such as Returned Services, Bowling and Golf are present in virtually all towns and since most of them cater at least in part for our age group, they are normally happy to place a notice on their members board for upcoming events such as Open/Enrolment Days
- **Medical centres and doctors' surgeries** provide a prime location to advertise upcoming major events. And since the majority of doctors are familiar with the medical studies pointing to the mental benefits for seniors who join organizations such as ours, they are normally happy to place advertising or brochures in their waiting rooms.
- **Tourist Information Centres** are often one of the first Ports of Call for newcomers to your town, but they aren't all Tourists. With increasing numbers of "Baby Boomers" retiring, there is a steady flow of prospective residents as well. It's another great place to have some brochures or a notice.
- **Neighbourhood and Community Centres** are always happy to accept some advertising and it's surprising how many of the locals have a look at the Notice board. It would be handy to have a few brochures here as well.
- **Local Councils** usually print, or have available on their websites, an annual listing of organisations such as ours. The trick here is to make sure your U3A is listed in all of the relevant categories (Seniors groups, Education etc.)
- **Churches** are generally more than happy to place advertising on their Notice Boards. If you're really lucky, they may even place an item in their Parish news sheet for upcoming events such as your Open Day etc.

- **Art Galleries/Cultural Centres** can be ideal places to have a few brochures. Although the brochure rack is always full and provides plenty of competition, a quick look to remove whatever is obsolete will provide some space. This is one of those places where AN EYE CATCHING BOCHURE is essential. We will be talking about brochures in a later section.
- **Newsagents** are worth a try. Some will place a brochure in their window and some won't.
- **Pharmacies** are also great places to have advertising. After all, we tend to spend a lot of time (and money) in them, and so do others in our age group.
- **Retail Stores** especially small independent operators may be prevailed upon to place a notice in their window. Be on the look out for stores displaying advertising for non-profit groups.

*NOTE: Before approaching businesses in Shopping Centres bear in mind that their Leasing agreement often prohibits the display of any advertising other than their own. However, the Shopping Centre administration may have a community noticeboard.*

- **Retirement Villages** are springing up everywhere, and are great places to attract new members. Speak to the manager to see if they are prepared to place a notice on their board (remember that some Villages have more than one board) and to have some brochures available for residents.
- **Outlying Towns, Villages ad Satellite Suburbs** are increasingly clustered around larger centres and many people "come to town" to shop and attend to business etc.

Investigate the opportunities that may be lurking... all or any of the above may be applicable, and remember that many of our members travel considerable distances to attend courses (especially good ones).

*TIP: A trip anywhere is expensive these days, so why not "let your fingers do the walking" – check the phone book and post the material instead.*

#### REMEMBER:

Always take your material with you. There's nothing worse than being empty handed when you hear, "That's fine; give them to me and I'll put them up later." Before you start out, do a rough calculation of how many items you might need.

While some of the suggested locations may not normally be prepared to assist organizations, you could be pleasantly surprised with the reception you receive.

## HANDLING THE MEDIA



Having a working relationship with the media is important and all the more so in small towns and suburbs, where the local paper can be your best friend. All the same, you will need to decide the answers to two questions: HOW MUCH and HOW OFTEN

### HOW MUCH?

It's easy to get carried away. After all, what you have to say is REALLY important... right?

WRONG... at least it is to an Editor, who sees news as something to fill in the gaps between paid advertisements. Make no mistake; if your item doesn't fit then at best it receives a No.1 haircut and at worst it's shaved off all together. To minimize the risk, keep your items smart, reasonably small and factual. The aim is to develop a format that the media can work with, and bear in mind, this will vary with the section of the media you are dealing with.

### HOW OFTEN?

This is a hotly debated issue. The "hit hard and often" gang insist that saturation bombing means you will get a reasonable percentage of your material used, while the "softly, softly" crew are almost conspicuous by their silence. The ideal probably lies somewhere in between but remember, the objective is to get THE IMPORTANT items out there (Open Days, AGM's, Enrolment Days etc.) while a few additional releases throughout the year will keep your U3A in the public eye.

It's up to you to gauge your local community and decide what's going to work.

Here is a list of suggested outlets. The list is not exhaustive and you may find opportunities peculiar to your town.

## MEDIA OUTLETS

### NEWSPAPERS

Give them plenty of warning about a major upcoming event (e.g. your Open Day), and you may find a reporter covering the story complete with camera. Alternately they are normally happy to accept your photos together with a short covering story.

*TIP: Why not send the story and photos by email? It saves on both postage and time. It's also a good idea to get the name of a contact for future articles.*

Local newspapers also often have a Community Noticeboard section that lists regular local organisations and their activities.

Outlying Area Newspapers: Here's a tip for the larger towns – it's easy to forget that outlying Centres often have their own newspapers.

## RADIO STATIONS

**ABC Radio** – Regional stations are more than happy to put your message on air. And don't forget Radio National.

**Commercial stations** – while independent stations are a dying breed, it is still possible to get your messages on air in their Community Service announcements section.

**Community Radio** – there has been a massive increase in the number of these stations. Get to know the operators, get your message on air and perhaps even find yourself on air as well!

## ON-LINE NEWS LINKS

For those who are new to the Internet, it's easy to forget that many newspapers also have a website. In fact, reading the morning news while spilling your coffee on the keyboard has become a way of life for millions.

And just like the "real" newspapers they also have Community Information Sections. Why not learn how to get your message across in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

## THE INTERNET

The Internet has become the only show in town when it comes to communication and our new members are increasingly using it. After all, many of them have used a computer throughout their working lives and this habit certainly continues into retirement. It's not surprising then that some retirees first learn of our existence through our Web sites. Is yours up to speed when it comes to promotion? Make sure your website home page is attractive, and that information about your U3A is easily accessed by visitors to the site, even if you also have a log-in members' area. Include your newsletter and contact information.

**Postscript:** *Link your website with the NSW Network website, where browsers can be directed to websites in an area they are visiting or moving to, or just looking for information about U3A.*

## TELEVISION STATIONS

In country areas the main stations appear to be PRIME, WIN and TEN (SOUTHERN CROSS). If you're fortunate enough to have an office in town, then simply drop in with your message. If not, either send your Community Announcement by mail or via their Websites.

**REMEMBER:** *Always send your message to reach the station AT LEAST three weeks ahead of time.*

## SUMMARY : 7 STEPS TO HANDLING THE MEDIA

People fail repeatedly in their attempts to beg and cajole the media to pay attention to them. That's because media relations is a sophisticated game with its own etiquette, protocol and rules. Here are seven tips for free publicity:

1. **Send press releases** about new courses, open days, speaking engagements. These should be kept to a page or less and should provide only essential information.
2. **Press release Guidelines.** Check with the media outlet if they have any guidelines. But in any event, include the following:
  - *Identification:* If you don't have a letterhead, make sure the U3A address and phone number are included in the top left hand corner of the page.
  - *Disposition:* This tells the editor when the release should be published. The time, day, date and year should appear in capital letters below the last line of identification. If you want the release published upon receipt, write "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE"
  - *Headline:* A brief, one line summary of the release that appears just above the copy.
  - *Copy:* Copy should be straight news style with an informational sentence in the first paragraph including: "who, what, when, where and why." Include a telephone number at the end where someone can call for further information. The release should be double spaced, with the information arranged in order from the most to the least important. Publishers may edit your press release prior to printing.
3. **Get onto the speaking circuit.** Speaking to community groups and trade associations is a wonderful way to "create the buzz" about your U3A.
4. **Create a web site** that offers reciprocal links, articles by and about your U3A and a list of experts the media can contact.
5. **Start an e-zine.** A free electronic newsletter helps you sell your services and costs almost nothing. With permission, you can send the e-zine to reporters who cover community events.
6. **Get to know reporters.** Offer yourself as someone they can call on for background, commentary and story ideas. Call and ask, "How can I help you?"
7. **Look for photo opportunities.** Local newspapers, TV stations, weekly shoppers, trade publications and other media are always looking for interesting photos. Call the media with ideas, or submit your own photos (high resolution jpg).

Above all, be patient and persistent. The key to savvy media relations is understanding how to dovetail your wants and needs with those of the media.

## Sample Press release

### ***Lifelong Learning in the Third Age***

The 'Third Age' is that time of your life when you've finished with fulltime work, your family has grown up, and you are still energetic. Yes, you may be working part-time, you may have grandparent duties, but you also have some time for yourself. After the round Australia trip and the ocean cruise, what's next? How to keep your mind alive?

U3A – the community of older people who teach and learn from each other – is a great place to learn new things in a friendly social atmosphere. You can join a U3A group in over 60 locations in New South Wales, or you can learn from the U3A NSW Network's web based Resource Library. Many U3As offer their own computer courses, as well as courses and classes in a wide range of topics.

There are also over 100 items available for download from the Resource Library website, including history, language, philosophy, travel, current affairs, cryptic crosswords, and more. The Catalogue is available at <http://courses.u3anet.org.au> Courses can be downloaded electronically (no charge) or ordered on disc (a small charge for p+p).



To find out more about U3A, go to our website t [www.nsw.u3anet.org.au](http://www.nsw.u3anet.org.au) or email [info@nsw.u3anet.org.au](mailto:info@nsw.u3anet.org.au)

Photo: Mel Davies. Manager of the U3A Network Resource Library, consults the Catalogue with Jean de Hosson and Jan Bennett, at a recent U3A workshop.

*Some newspapers prefer small 'snippet' types of items, which they can print as part of a number of local news items – watch for the style of your local newspaper, and adapt your releases to suit.*

## THE PERSONAL APPROACH – YOU AS A GUEST SPEAKER



There are many groups in your community that are always looking for Guest speakers. Many of our people are also members of other groups and it isn't difficult to get the word around that you are "available". The opportunities are almost limitless in this area and have the advantage of providing a captive audience which is sympathetic to your presentation.

Sound too good to be true? Maybe it is. There is only one small problem... ARE YOU UP TO IT! If you decide to go ahead there are a couple of things worth remembering.

**Information** Make sure your material contains all of the appropriate information (who, what, when, why, how). Try to work out and emphasize aspects you think people will be most excited about or familiar with.

**Audience** Take an audience's potential likes and dislikes into account. Talking to a group of farmers may be an entirely different matter than talking to a group of ladies.

*Note: The Appendix to this Handbook is a Speaker's Kit, which provides some tips and suggestions on making a presentation on behalf of your U3A. There is also a 12 page brochure available from the Network secretary, which you can use to access information about the U3A movement in NSW. These may help you with information to adapt your talk to your audience.*

*A Powerpoint presentation, which can include a brief description of what U3A is about, information and photos from your U3A, is easy to produce from a Microsoft application. The text can be an aid to delivery, acting as a prompt, so that you do not need to read every word of your script. You can also show photos of your U3As activities.*

## SAVING THE BEST TILL LAST... WORD OF MOUTH

Nothing can beat this.

If your courses are good, social functions well attended and your members are happy, then why don't they bring their friends along? The answer is probably that they haven't thought of mentioning the U3A to anyone! This is easily remedied with a reminder in your Newsletter or a word to the Course Leaders to mention it at their courses.

*Get people talking and interest will spread.*



## LOGOS AND LETTERHEADS

As I read the mail crossing my desk one thing that stands out is the way businesses individualize themselves with a logo.

**A LOGO** is a graphical element, symbol, or icon that, together with its **logotype** (which is set in a unique typeface or arranged in a particular way) form a trademark or brand. A logo is typically designed to cause immediate recognition by the viewer, inspiring trust, admiration, loyalty and an implied superiority. The logo is one aspect of the brand of a company, and the shapes, colors, fonts and images are usually different from others in a similar market.

Logos may also be used to identify organizations or other entities in non-economic contexts.



The 3 block U3A logo is used worldwide to identify U3As associated with the 'British model' of U3As. It can be used in association with the organisational name of a U3A. It is widely used across Australia.

Here are a few examples of U3A logos, which identify themselves with their geographical location, thereby emphasising their association with their local community:



While the decision to create an individual logo or persist with something more traditional is an issue best resolved by each individual U3A, from the Publicity perspective it makes little difference.



## WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS HOW THE LOGO IS APPLIED

Re-examine the above definition and note the following points:

- Logotype
- Immediate recognition
- Inspiration

The logotype should be unique – a combination of both lettering style and placement. Coupled with a logo, it says "This is who we are! Come and join us!"

Immediate recognition occurs when a logo becomes familiar. It is essential that your logo appear on everything – letterhead, envelopes, News bulletins, Press releases, E-mails – everything.

If your logo is inspirational it will, first and foremost, inspire existing members and this will help inspire them to "spread the word" amongst their friends and neighbours. Potential new members will be prompted to make further enquiries if they like what they see.

*Postscript: The U3A Network NSW Inc has registered its own logo as a Trade Mark (2011) and encourages its member U3As to use the trade mark/logo on its publicity material such as websites, letterheads, leaflets etc. This logo can be in addition to the U3A group's own logo with an endorsement such as*

*" a Member of the U3A Network NSW", to reinforce the point that although each U3A is an autonomous body, it is also a member of a State, national and worldwide movement. It also promotes 'brand recognition'.*

*To obtain a jpg of the Network logo, email to [info@nsw.u3anet.org.au](mailto:info@nsw.u3anet.org.au)*



*The Network trade mark/logo may also be used on such items as T shirts, caps, etc, but U3As intending to do so should submit a request and design to the Network executive committee for approval to proceed to production. The trade mark/logo may be used in association with community activities with which U3A is involved, eg Seniors Week , COTA presentations.*

*The trade mark/ logo may not be used by or in association with any external commercial entity's promotions, except with the permission of the Network executive where there is a partnership agreement between the Network and the commercial entity (eg the Co-op Bookshop; sponsors of the Network Annual Conference). Where there is any doubt about whether the Trade Mark/logo can be used, the appropriate course is to contact the Network secretary.*

## BROCHURES, BROCHURES EVERYWHERE

You've worked out how to get your message around town and everyone's happy about the logo, so now you need to clinch the deal... you need something tangible... YOU NEED A BROCHURE (or two).

Thanks to the computer, we can all produce a range of documents that look professional and can be produced in either color or black and white.

The secret to an attractive brochure is more a matter of design than technology.

A lot of companies make huge amounts of money designing all sorts of brochures and handouts, and that's fine if you can afford it, (which we can't). So it's up to us to be a bit inventive, get some team effort going and use what's available: fortunately for us Microsoft Office Publisher and similar programs are invaluable at moments like these (what a great idea for a new course).

Brochures may be broadly grouped into three types:

1. Informational
2. Membership application
3. Event

It is also possible to combine Nos. 1 and 2, cutting down on paper.

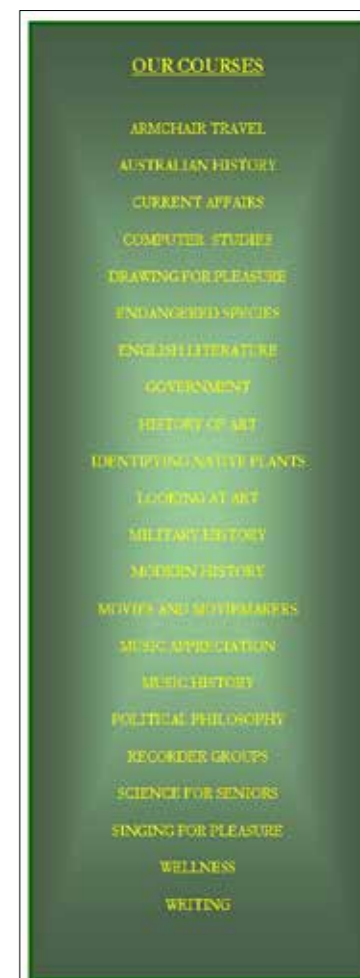
### SOME IMPORTANT DESIGN POINTS to consider are:

- What kind of impression do you want to create with prospective members? This will determine the overall style of the brochure. It's an important question which should also have been applied to the development of your logo.
- Since your brochures will be designed in colour, it's important to ascertain what they will look like in black and white. There are two primary reasons for this;
  1. Some colours don't convert to black and white (shades of grey really) as well as others.
  2. When you really want to impress, hand out colour brochures, otherwise black and white will do.

It's all a matter of cost really.

## WHAT DO I PUT IN THE BROCHURE?

Let's look at the type of information that might be included by examining a trifold brochure; one of several that is used by U3A Dubbo:

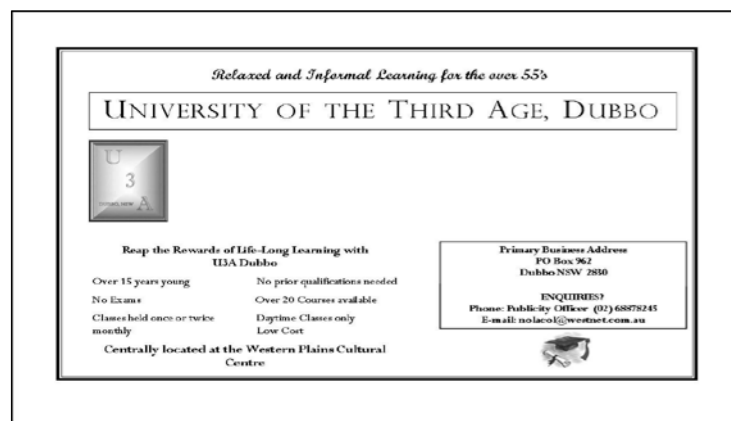




**It includes:**

- Use of the logo on both front and back.
- A brief general explanation about the U3A
- Slogan (“Life-Long Learning”)
- Contact details, both inside and out
- Specific internal details include a location map.
- THE COURSE INSERT at right is easily updated as appropriate.
- The entire brochure is printed on A4 paper and is designed to fit easily into a standard business envelope.

A NOTE ON MEMBERSHIP: Use the same principles when designing your membership forms – make use of both sides of the form, as in the following example:



**Postscript:** the U3A Network NSW has produced a 12 page brochure which describes what U3A is and does, and which can be used to introduce prospective sponsors, media people and MPs to what U3A is and does.

The Network also has produced a generic trifold information leaflet which may be useful to smaller U3As which don't have money to produce their own. This can be personalized with local contact details, and by inserting a list of courses offered.

These brochures and leaflets are available free of charge to NSW member U3As.

**POSTERS AND BANNERS**

Have you ever noticed how many people are turning out professional looking Posters, thanks to their computers? They even make that old jalopy with the “For Sale” sign on the side of the road look good. Well the same program you use for brochures can also be used for posters.

Posters on A4 or A3 sized paper, preferably laminated, can convey general information about your U3A such as a list of activities, contact points, and the website address. These are usually very acceptable in community notice-boards. If you can't print them in colour, they can be eye-catching if printed on bright coloured paper. Black and White Posters will work well in those less important areas and sometimes they even stand out better amongst all the competition.

Meanwhile, back in Dubbo...

This is going to sit in a window or on a Notice board, so keep it simple.

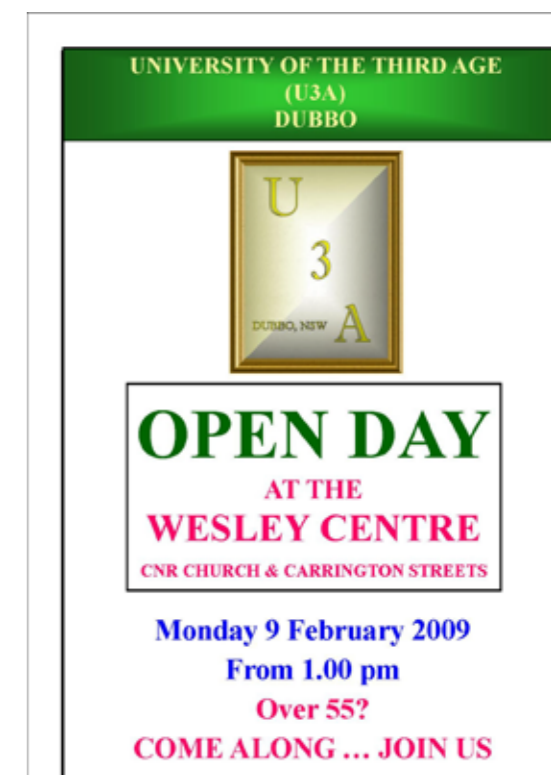
The aim is to create something that is eye catching.

Try to arrange to have some brochures nearby, preferably in a holder.

**WHEN IT COMES TO BANNERS** there's no easy way to say it... you can't make one on your Home computer, and that means you need to spend money.

There is however, one thing that must be decided on before you write the cheque; what do you want the banner to say? (This question is sure to keep the committee busy for awhile). Here again you can get an idea of what the finished product might look like by playing with the design on your computer, but on this occasion be prepared to listen to expert advice when placing your order. After all, the manufacturer knows what works and what doesn't, and should be happy to assist.

*Postscript:* Officeworks have several sized banners available with stands and bags to keep them, and will help design your banner for you, at relatively low expense.



## STANDING OUT IN THE CROWD – TABLE TOP DISPLAYS

**Events and Exhibitions**, while providing important opportunities for us to promote our U3A and gain new members, also mean that we will be in direct competition with other groups, commercial interests and government departments. Start by making up an **Events Calendar** as part of your publicity kit.

Some U3As have successfully held street stalls, with Council permission of course. Others have opened 'pop-up shops' (empty shops at low or no rental for a week or so, to hold U3A demonstration classes and exhibitions of photography, art, music groups etc). And many U3As hold Open Days in seniors week or Adult Learner's week. All of these events require displays as backdrops or handily located so that passers-by can learn about U3A.

*So, we need to be able to grab people's attention... but how?*

The answer lies in displaying your information in an informative, high tech and catchy way and all of that can cost a lot of cash; right? WRONG!

Excellent results can be achieved for a very limited cash outlay. HERE'S HOW:

On most occasions you will be supplied with a table and a couple of chairs, or on rare occasions you may have to supply your own. Always try to specify that a power point be made available.

The following is based on what is known as a "Table Top" display.

1. You need visual impact so if you have a banner, use it as a backdrop.
2. The focus of the display is a three paneled unit that locks together in 60 seconds and sits centrally and toward the rear of the table. We'll have more to say about this later on.
3. A nice plain colored tablecloth will not only cover the wear and tear on the table, but enhance the overall impact of the display.
4. A small vase of flowers really enhances a display of this type.
5. Remember your logo! An A4 sized frame that can be stood on the table with a picture of your logo will draw the attention of the passers by.
6. Brochures and Membership forms etc. should be placed in groups toward the front of the table.
7. Remember that your display is aimed at older people – have a couple of extra chairs available so they can sit and "have a chat".
8. For those with the "techno-savvy", a laptop with a looped presentation is a sure crowd puller.

*Postscript: The Network has produced a 5 minute DVD, a copy of which has been made available to each member U3A, and which can be shown on a laptop computer.*

### No Laptop? ... No Worries!

While we don't all have the luxury of a laptop computer, a slideshow display can be created using a normal TV and DVD player and although you will still need some computer skills in order to create your presentation, the results can be very effective.

**A Three Paneled Display Unit** can be constructed from 3 whiteboard/cork boards, held together with a pin-insert locking mechanism. Course photographs and other information can be placed on them.

For a more professional appearance try cutting some white card to fit inside the board frames and pasting your material to that. Hold the card in place against the whiteboard sides with Blue Tack. It looks so much better than thumbtacks, and entire panels can be made up and easily exchanged as required.

Here's a photo of the kind of display that's been used in Dubbo.





## CONTACTS

## APPENDIX - SPEAKER'S KIT

### Some tips and basic talk outline to assist with spreading the word about U3A.

The ***Hints and Suggestions for Presentation of a Talk about U3A*** was prepared by Dorothy Munns, of Mudgee U3A. Dorothy is an accredited Teacher of Speech and Drama. She conducted her own studio for a number of years, has adjudicated at eisteddfods and lectured on public speaking at schools, colleges and at TAFE. She has also presented this subject to classes at Mudgee U3A.

The talk outline ***Discovering U3A – the University of the Third Age*** - has been adapted from a talk by Allan Haggarty (President of Griffith U3A 2011 -12, and President of the U3A Network NSW from 2012). The talk is meant only as a guide, and of course will need to be adapted for local presentation. This talk is about 20 minutes long. If needed, more detailed information about the history of U3A can be found on the Network website under the link *About The U3A Movement*.

***Powerpoint:*** Speakers might supplement their talk with a powerpoint presentation. The powerpoint slides can also be used to demonstrate some of the activities of the speaker's own U3A, with photographs and other graphics. The opening slide of the powerpoint could be something like:



Of course, if you have your own U3A logo, show that for local effect.

### *Some hints on using Powerpoint:*

- Powerpoint slides should illustrate your talk, but not distract.
- Do not include large slabs of text. Dot points can be useful as a skeleton of your talk, as well as providing 'triggers' for a speaker without having to read directly from a script.
- If using a powerpoint presentation, do not look at the screen (ie with your back turned away from the audience) but work from the laptop screen, so you can continue to face the audience.
- Be familiar with the equipment for moving the slides forward.
- Be sure to include information in the final slide on how to contact your U3A – phone, email, and website address.

Don't forget to take some brochures and other promotional items along to the meeting.

## SOME HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON PRESENTING YOUR TALK

### Giving the Address

Make sure you are properly organised, and feel comfortable.

Have easy access to your notes.

A glass of water should be on hand, you may need it.

It is only natural to be nervous, especially if addressing an audience is an unfamiliar experience. That trick, as seen on TV, of imagining the listeners without any clothes, may help calm the butterflies.

Start off with the proper style of address eg "Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen."

Speak into the microphone. Ensure it is properly positioned. Make sure everyone can hear you.

Speak steadily and distinctly, pause frequently. Remind yourself as you talk. Don't gabble.

Maintain eye contact with your audience.

Be careful with the jokes, unless you are really confident of your audience

### The Meeting

Supply the group you are to address with a few personal details beforehand, so that your audience will be provided with some information about its guest speaker.

If you are not contacted, check with the meeting's organiser to ensure arrangements remain unchanged. It is also a good idea to confirm you have the correct details regarding time, date and venue.

Find out how long you are expected to speak. You may have to shorten the address a little.

Make sure you are well prepared to deal with questions.

Bring along plenty of U3A printed material, programmes, enrolment forms, and the latest newsletter - to hand out afterwards.

Try and circulate before and after the address - speaking about the U3A with as many of those present as possible.

## A TALK OUTLINE - DISCOVERING U3A

### - THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

**U3A - or the University of the Third Age** - is a worldwide movement, the aim of which is to encourage older people to remain physically, mentally and socially active in their 'third age'.

By '**Third Age**' we mean the period of active retirement following the **First Age** of childhood and dependence, and the **Second Age** of working and child-raising. For many it's the age of achieving one's maximum potential after the stresses of the Second Age are past and before the **Fourth Age** of dependency and that other 'd' which I won't mention.

U3As are '**Universities**' in the original sense of the term - communities of people who come together to learn from one another, rather than as degree granting institutions. So a U3A is a learning co-operative of older people, encouraging positive ageing by enabling its members to share many educational, creative and leisure activities. There are no entry qualifications, apart from being in your Third Age, no exams and no degrees. It's simply relaxed, informal learning in a friendly and supportive environment.

Gerontology research has found that a well-rounded, intellectually diverse life, a good social network, social engagement and physical activity helps to keep one's brain healthy for as long as possible. U3A ticks all these boxes and enables people in their 3<sup>rd</sup> Age to continue to share the journey of life-long learning.

In an ageing population, this is vitally important to the health and welfare of the nation. It also maintains the contribution that older people make to our society generally.

The movement is **international**, having begun in Toulouse, **France** in 1972 as a type of university extension with courses conducted by members of the various university faculties. It spread to other parts of Europe and North America and then to **England** in 1981 where, unlike France, its ties to universities were to disappear.

In 1984 U3A came to **Australia**, first to Melbourne, then Adelaide, Perth, the ACT, Brisbane and finally Sydney. Australia's U3As follow the British model (as it is called).

*[You may like to recite the General Principles of the British Model, as devised by its founder, Professor Peter Laslett, set out at the end of this talk.]*

In some NSW regional centres, U3As have been established for more than 20 years. *[ Perhaps explain when your U3A was formed].*

Australian U3As are **community based** not-for-profit associations, which aim to provide learning opportunities for older people using the skills and abilities of the members themselves. U3As are autonomous and self-supporting. The size of a U3A is variable – it will depend on the community in which it is located and to some extent on how long it has been operating.

In New South Wales there is an umbrella organisation, **U3A Network NSW**, which represents the 60 U3A groups in NSW and the ACT and 15 from interstate. The Network provides exchange of information, advice and support, access to Government, a Resource Library, and access to cost-effective insurance and copyright licences.

There are similar Networks in all other Australian States except Tasmania, and these Networks together with U3A ACT and U3A Online form the U3A Alliance Australia, which was initiated in 2010.

**So how does a U3A operate?** The curriculum of each U3A is determined by drawing on the skills and interests of its members, acting either as course leaders or tutors. Everyone has interests and many are prepared to share those interests with others. If that involves research at the local library or via the internet, then that enhances the experience, for as they say it's amazing what one learns from imparting information to others. Often that will in turn encourage others to contribute something from their own experience, which is what it's all about. Of course, some will no doubt require encouragement to come out of their shell, but that too, is part of their learning experience.

**Courses** can be as varied as a U3A chooses.

Some U3As run many courses, including art classes, art appreciation, music, languages, history, literature, cryptic crosswords, sudoku, bridge, tai chi, art, craft, science, even a Men's Shed. [*Talk about some of the courses your U3A runs*].

Maybe there are other groups in their communities involved in such activities, but if the broader community is served with such organizations, eg gardening clubs etc, U3A doesn't see any point in competing with them. Often, some U3A members also belong to these groups and U3As limited manpower is better employed in areas unlikely to be covered by anyone else, so co-operation with such groups is generally encouraged.

Many older people, for one reason or another, live alone, and U3A provides opportunities to make new friendships. Most U3As include morning or afternoon tea. Others arrange excursions to interesting activities and exhibitions locally available, or on occasion to Sydney. Many lives have been enriched, even transformed, through U3A.

U3A is self-funded by its membership. All committee members, administrators and tutors or presenters are volunteers. Most U3As operate on a modest annual **subscription** (*for example, your U3As subscription rate here*) enabling members to join any or all the year's classes. The level of subscription will depend on such costs as accommodation for classes, equipment, such as a white board, and of course photocopying and the other administrative costs associated with running any organization. Equipment such as art materials is usually an additional cost.

Now, I am happy to answer any questions you may have about U3A.

*[If attending a meeting intended to establish a new U3A, the following information may also be useful to add.]*

Most U3As start with a small group of like-minded people who will act as a steering committee to establish a U3A, and call a public meeting to ascertain local interest.

U3A courses are only limited by their members' interests and the availability of leaders/tutors. A U3A might start by ascertaining its members' interests and as to whether members are prepared to impart their knowledge of those interests for the benefit of other members. More than one member with the same or similar interests might consider pairing up to share the task, which can enhance the experience for all concerned.

Some U3As have a regional university in their area, which sometimes provides access to trained tutors or academics who like to share their research with the community.

Like other not-for-profit community groups, a new U3A should register as an incorporated association. This process provides legal entity, flexibility, and access to taxation concessions. It also provides eligibility to join the U3A network and access to the services it provides.

## **General Principles of U3A**

*Based on the philosophy of the UK co-founder of the U3A movement, Dr. Peter Laslett.*

- To provide affordable learning opportunities for older people, using the skills and abilities of the members themselves.
- Those who learn shall teach and those who teach shall learn, and there shall be no distinction between the two.
- There shall be no qualifications for membership, and no awards, degrees or diplomas shall be given.
- The emphasis shall be on learning for the love of it, and shall include an emphasis on the values of making things and improving skills of all kinds.
- Learning shall take place in a friendly, supportive, social environment.
- Those joining a U3A shall pay for its upkeep.
- There shall be no payment to any person (member or non-member) for teaching or providing a service to members except in the case of reimbursement for such expenses as travel, photocopying, etc.
- The curriculum of a U3A shall be determined by the needs/preferences of members and according to the resources available to it.
- To be at all times, non-political and non-sectarian in our approach





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