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Introduction

R. Handley
University of Wollongong

P. Pether
University of Wollongong

J. Pugliese
University of Wollongong

M. Scott
University of Wollongong

J. Robinson
University of Wollongong

See next page for additional authors

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Introduction

Abstract

Contemporary culture is currently characterised by distinct movements both from within and without universities which are questioning, rethinking, and rewriting the parameters and ground of traditional academic disciplines. Law/Text/Culture situates itself within this mobile and changing cultural context; it seeks to enable the articulation of the issues and development of the theories and practices generated by disciplinary crossings between fields and bodies of knowledge that have traditionally been seen as discrete and autonomous. Law/Text/Culture is a journal committed to producing intersections of the law, textuality and all aspects of culture. It publishes work across a range of genres - from artwork to the traditional scholarly essay. It invites work which crosses borders - of genres and institutions, as well as disciplines and fields. The journal accepts work from people working outside and inside traditional educational and legal settings. Law/Text/Culture is particularly concerned with both the law's textuality, that is, the specific textual forms by which the law circulates within a culture, and also the multiplicity of texts and subjects which the law touches and shapes, and which, in turn, impact on and change the law. This differentiates Law/Text/Culture from other interdisciplinary journals devoted to the fields of law and the humanities and law and literature.

Authors

R. Handley, P. Pether, J. Pugliese, M. Scott, J. Robinson, and C. Hough

An Introduction

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Law/Text/Culture offers spaces from which to write and speak about the law to people who have not usually had access to academic journals, and who have traditionally been relegated to the minoritizing positions of "sub-" or "marginal" cultures. The institutional spaces of the law, from courtrooms to the solicitor's office, already encompass these cultural differences in their everyday processes; yet too often these differences are sanitized, censored or silenced in professional journals. As editors, we want to acknowledge the often radical differences — linguistic, cultural, and political — that constitute contemporary Australian culture, and we are therefore committed to publishing voices of difference and of opposition.

The discipline and institutions of law have only recently begun to engage with the transformations manifested in the so-called “new humanities”: cultural studies, communications/media studies, post-colonial studies, gender studies, and so on. These transformations have called into question traditional claims that certain institutions and their cultural products are either ideologically neutral or value free. The urgent need for the law to engage with other disciplines has been apparent from, for example, the changes in law, text(s) and culture generated by *Mabo v The State of Queensland*, and the media exposure of examples of judicial gender bias. Such changes exemplify the contemporary demands to reform Australian legal structures and practices in order to address criticisms of the limits to “access to justice”. This productive juncture offers *Law/Text/Culture* sites for disciplinary border crossings and interventions which address and compel engagement between theory and practice, academic debate and policy formation, the universities, legal institutions, and the larger cultural and political communities — sites which have been regarded as separate or disjunctive.

This journal emerges from a particular institutional and cultural context, one which is engendering a tradition of rigorous and critical interdisciplinary work. Wollongong University’s Faculty of Law is a leader in the interdisciplinary education of lawyers; Wollongong’s Department of English is an innovative department committed, at both pedagogical and research levels, to the critical analysis of texts (across a variety of media) and of culture.

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