Stumbling towards the light: Four decades of a life in futures

Richard A. Slaughter

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Stumbling towards the light: Four decades of a life in futures

Richard A. Slaughter

Foresight International,
PO Box 793,
Indooroopilly,
Queensland 4068,
Australia

Email: rslaughter@ozemail.com.au

Highlights

- Presents as reprints 33 key papers by Richard Slaughter, published in Futures Journal from 1988 to 2020
- Reflects on thirteen contributions from futurists who have worked with Richard Slaughter on those themes
- His work is classified in six main themes including integral futures, education, methods and strategies, Anthropocene
- Richard has critiqued the futures field and curated futures knowledge, most notably in the Knowledge Base of Futures Studies
- Further structural and educational embodiments of futures studies and foresight are needed for today's global emergency

Abstract: This Virtual Curated Special Issue comprises 33 of Richard's Slaughters publications in Futures Journal, alongside commentaries on their themes and the contribution that Richard's work has had on individual scholars and practitioners as well the broader futures studies community. Thirteen contributors have offered reflections covering six key themes of his work, namely critical commentary on futures; critical and integral futures; education, young people and futures; futures and foresight methods and strategies; twenty first century / Anthropocene; and curating futures knowledge. Over Richard's career, with influences from him as well as others, methodological practices in future studies have developed from external scanning and analysis to encompass these themes. If there's any single notion that flows through the author's own journey it's the primacy of the human and cultural interiors and the clarity that comes from seeing how they interact with the external, empirically measurable world. What also becomes clear in this view is that worldviews, cultures and values are every bit as significant as technique and technology. Futures work needs a new role, new levels of recognition and a more credible stance in helping our species to awaken from its long, dangerous dream of dominance and power.

Keywords: Futures studies; foresight; critical futures; futures education; integral futures; Richard Slaughter

Introduction

This Virtual Curated Special Issue has been several years in the making. Its origins lie in conversations held during a World Futures Studies Federation in Norway during mid-2017. Initially it appeared that the issue would be guest-edited but this proved to be too much for busy people. Thus, in late 2019 Ted Fuller, the editor of *Futures*, very kindly took on this key task. Some twenty or more people were invited to contribute, resulting in thirteen published articles. Six key topics covering different aspects of my work were defined. A selection of earlier publications from each topic was provided to authors addressing that topic and are also made newly available here (Table 1, below). Some people chose to work from the given themes and related material while others used them as a springboard to pursue other matters, mostly in the light of their own personal experiences and subsequent work.

Throughout any such exercise it's clearly an honour for the work of any author to be given the close, sustained attention of peers and colleagues. The collective judgements of such a group must be seen overall as, if not entirely objective, then at the very least, reliable. Reading through this material has been a humbling and, at times, moving experience. The result is an informed and perceptive collective overview that reveals both familiar and quite new insights. It's here that the project may have wider benefits since its underlying rationale includes the quest for new knowledge about futures and how that knowledge can develop and become more productive.

1. Critical commentary on futures: Jay Gary, Marcus Bussey
2. Critical and Integral futures: Meredith Bowden, JP Jakonen
3. Education, young people and Futures: Caroline Smith, Rowena Murrow
4. Futures / foresight methods and strategies: Andy Hines, Chris Reidy, Luke van der Lan
5. Twenty first century / Anthropocene: Chris Jones, Victor Motti
6. Curating futures knowledge: Jim Dator, Alex Burns

Table 1 General Themes and Contributors

Starting points

One of the more obvious traps for biographers is an underlying, perhaps unconscious, view that one's own time as a knowing agent in history may appear inherently more significant than any other: *apres moi le deluge*. Clearly this is a fantasy of egoic life allowing individuals to feel that they are somehow at 'the centre of things' regardless of the facts. For most of us, however, our life journeys occur very much on the periphery of world events. Yet certain features of our time really do differ significantly from previous ones. The years following World War 11 are arguably among the most fateful since it was during this critical, highly atypical, period that humanity grew in size, scale and collective impact, giving rise to what was later called 'the great acceleration.' Like it or

not, humanity was challenged as never before to unite and work toward a more harmonious, peaceful and sustainable world. Over time, however, it became obvious to anyone who cared to examine the evidence, that our species was failing to moderate its spiralling demands and manage the world it created. Consequently, whatever transpires in the mid-range future, whatever 'steady state' may eventually ensue, human prospects in the early 21st Century have become overwhelmingly Dystopian. There's no point in denying this fact, although many still do. The reality before us is, after all, harsh and difficult to confront. Yet in my considered view we cannot deny that our species is set upon what now appears to be a collision course with the natural systems that govern and regulate the planet (Higgs, 2014). So, while no individual life can be considered 'special' the times are certainly that and more. We are forced to confront the collective failures of an adolescent species that lacks sufficient self-understanding, wisdom and restraint to moderate its growth, its spiralling demands, and live more lightly upon the Earth.

None of this was evident to those who grew up during the mid-20th century in the rich West within its pervasive atmosphere of hope and renewed optimism for a brighter future. These and following generations largely absorbed the myths, assumptions and practices that surrounded them and thought little more of it. While far from true for everyone, the overall ethos – at least in Western Democracies - suggested that life could be good and the future lay open ahead. As it turned out, it took decades before anyone realised that the design template perfected in 1950s America contained no limiting principle and had tended toward 'overshoot and collapse futures' from the very outset (Slaughter, 2010).

I've written elsewhere about how my first engagement with this idea of 'future' was in the form of a beautifully illustrated series featuring Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future, in a 1950s-60s boy's paper called *The Eagle*.[1] Over time I found myself intuitively drawn to young adult future fiction and, later on, to the burgeoning literature of Science Fiction (SF) itself within which possibilities for human futures seemed unlimited. It was only in my mid-teens that I began to wonder why so many of these fictional futures were populated by rampaging robots, deadly technologies, angry aliens, dying worlds and other disasters. The next clue arrived in the form of a book I found by chance while studying at Chester College in England: Edmund Leach's Reith Lectures, *A Runaway World* (Leach 1967). Why, I thought, was I not hearing anything about this during a 3-year period of teacher training? What else was missing?

I duly qualified and, following a probationary year in Portsmouth, spent the next six years living and working in Bermuda. That story has been told elsewhere so I'll just say that this was where I finally 'woke up' to what was happening there and in the wider world. I later called it my' radicalising experience.' I'd started to see not merely that various trends and events were causing concern but also some of the driving forces that lay behind them: economic growth, new technology, consumerism, national and species exceptionalism etc. Lewis Mumford, Hannah Arendt, the great American conservationists, my own experiences and many other influences were forming a broad and highly disturbing pattern. Although I could not know it at time, I later realised that this had been a process of raw, unschooled, sense-making. Once back in the UK and studying at Lancaster University, a third element fell into place. It took the form of a Sociology unit on 'Alternative Futures.' And that was it. I'd found a way of thinking that

helped to assemble the various bits and pieces I'd discovered into something larger and more meaningful. It seemed like home and, as if that were not sufficient, I discovered that others lived there too - interesting and productive people from different cultures all around the world. My isolation was coming to an end. Starting in 1980 with the First Global Conference on the Future in Toronto, Canada, I took every possible opportunity to head overseas to meet new people, to learn and discover more. Table 2 provides a succinct timeline of career highlights.

Year	RAS Career	Books, Key Papers, Projects and Locations
1975	Leave Bermuda	**Birds in Bermuda.**
	BA Hons	*School of Independent Studies, University of Lancaster.*
	BA Hons	
	BA / PhD	Science, Technology & the Human Future. (B.A. Hons.) Dissertations.
	PhD	
!980	PhD	
	PhD	
	PhD	Critical Futures Study & Curriculum Renewal (Ph.D.) Dissertation. Futures in education: teaching and learning for tomorrow.
	Post Doc	Futures Education: Why we need to teach for tomorrow.
	Post Doc	Futures study in the curriculum.
1985	Post Doc	Towards a Critical Futurism 1-3. What do we do now the future is here? *(Yorcon Essay Competition Winner).*
	Post Doc	Critical futures study: A dimension of futures work. What do we do now the future is here?
1987		**Futures Tools and Techniques.** Future vision in the nuclear age. T Cycle (1st Edition). Delicate immortal meanings (SF).
1988	To Australia	**Recovering the Future.** Cultural reconstruction in the post-modern world. *Commission for the Future, Melbourne / Visiting Fellow, Monash University*
1989	Univ of Melbourne (UM)	**Studying the Future** (Ed). Cultural reconstruction in the post-modern world. Probing beneath the surface – Review of a decade's futures work. *Lecturer in Futures & Social Education, Institute of Education.*
1990	UM	**The Foresight Principle.** Assessing the QUEST for future knowledge. Universities as institutions of foresight.
1991	UM	Changing images of futures in the 20th C. The machine at the heart of the world: Technology, violence and futures in young peoples' media.
1992	UM	The promise of the 21st Century. Australia's commission for the future.
1993	UM	**Education for the 21st Century** (with H Beare). Knowledge Base of Futures Studies (special issue, *Futures*). Looking for the real 'megatrends.'
1994	UM / Futures Study Centre (FSC)	*Leave university. Set up Futures Study Centre. Work begins on KBFS series.* Why we should care for future generations now. From fatalism to foresight: educating young people for the early 21st C.
1995	FSC	**KBFS Series Vol 1: Foundations; Vol 2: Organisations, Practices, Products; Vol 3: Directions & Outlooks** (Ed.) **The Foresight Principle** (book).

1996	FSC	**Futures Concepts & Powerful Ideas. New Thinking for a New Millennium.** (Ed.) Mapping the future. FS: From individual to social capacity.
1997	FSC	Near-future landscapes as a futures tool. Learning scenario planning.
1998	FSC	**World Yearbook: Futures in Education** (Ed. with D Hicks). Transcending Flatland. FS as an intellectual and applied discipline. Role of FS in reducing global risk.
1999		**Futures for the Third Millennium.** A New framework for environmental scanning *Write proposal for Australian Foresight Institute (with A. Hanich*).
2000	Australian Foresight Institute	**Gone Today, Here Tomorrow** (Ed.) Professional standards in futures wor *Invited to set up the AFI at Swinburne University. First Wilber visit. AFI Foresight Monograph Series (Ed.) launched (courtesy of the Pratt Foundation).*
2001	AFI	Monograph Series. Knowledge creation FS and the integral agenda.
2002	AFI	Monograph Series. Changing methodological paradigms in FS. Beyond the mundane: reconciling breadth and depth in futures work. Future Shock re-assessed.
2003	AFI	Monograph Series. T cycle (New Edition).
2004	AFI	**Futures Beyond Dystopia.** Road testing a new model at the AFI. *Foresight International activated.*
2005	AFI	**Pathways to Foresight** (3 DVD 8-part video). **Towards a Wise Culture: Four Classic Futures Texts** (CD-ROM). Waking up after the war.
2006	FI	**Futures Thinking for Social Foresight** (with M Bussey). Pathways and impediments to social foresight (AFI monograph 10).
2007	FI	**Beyond the Mundane.** Why is the future still a missing dimension?
2008	FI	**Integral Futures.** What difference does 'integral' make? *State of Play in the Futures Field Project begins (courtesy, Kistler Foundation).* Futures ed: catalyst for our times. Is America the 'land of the future?'
2009	FI	State of Play in the Futures Field (*Foresight* 11, 5).
2010	FI	**The Biggest Wake-Up Call in History.** Using climate change literature to support climate change response.
2011	FI	**Education for the 21st Century Revisited.** Responding to the global 'megacrisis.'
2012	FI	**To See with Fresh Eyes: Integral Futures and the Global Emergency.** Welcome to the Anthropocene. Making headway during impossible times.
2013	FI	Defending the future. Time to get real: critique of Global Trends 2030.
2014	FI	The denial of limits and interior aspects of descent.
2015	FI	Beyond the global emergency: integral futures and the search for clarity.
2016	FI	How 'development' promotes redundant visions. Academic publishing in transition: the case of Foresight.
2017	FI	Autonomous vehicles – who needs them?
2018	FI	The IT revolution reassessed: 1-3.
2019	FI	Futures studies as a quest for meaning.
2020	FI / USQ	Farewell alternative futures? *Begin working with University of S Queensland.*
2021	USQ	**Deleting Dystopia: Re-asserting Human Priorities in the Age of Surveillance Capitalism.** University of Southern Queensland.

Key: Bold text: **Books,** italics: *places and events,* plain text: papers.

Table 2: Timeline

Career themes

My first paper for *Futures* appeared in 1987 and was entitled Future Vision in the Nuclear Age (Slaughter, 1987a). Reviewing it more than 30 years later, it's evident that it unknowingly anticipated concerns and themes that would extend throughout my entire career. For example, I located the roots of the nuclear threat not in technology *per se* nor 'rogue scientists' but in 'developmental pathologies' exhibited by humans and organisations. I made a rather crude case for critiquing what I saw as the dangerous narrowness of instrumental rationality. I touched on 'systems of exploitation and repression' and considered how, and in what ways, 'the future' could indeed devolve into a real nightmare. I also drew gratefully on the work of people such as Joanna Macy, Elise Boulding, Fred Polak and many others for concepts and practices that held out the tantalising promise that it might be possible to learn how to 'negotiate viable futures.' As part of an 'interpretive perspective' I introduced what I called the Transformation (or 'T') Cycle.[2] My profound debt to Aldous Huxley and his inspiring introduction to the Perennial Philosophy was acknowledged. I also reproduced a view of the 'great chain of being' by an obscure philosopher called Ken Wilber and closed the piece with some suggestions about 'empowerment and vision in the extended present.' In summary, what the paper expressed was that despite profound fears generated by the nuclear threat, we were surrounded by resources and therefore far from helpless. If only we would take them seriously there were, and would continue to be, multiple ways forward up and out of these and related dilemmas. This view has remained intact to this day. What I later called the 'dialectic of foresight and experience' seemed inherent from the outset. Overall, a central proposition – and one that I was certainly unaware of at the time – could be summed up in five words 'remember to include the interiors.'

Looking back, it's clear that at times some of my colleagues regarded myself and my work less than enthusiastically. With all the misplaced confidence of a 'late starter' – and British one at that - here was I critiquing the work of well-established practitioners and at times tormenting them with what appeared to be crazy ideas. One was the notion that regardless of quality all futures work was permeated by specific social interests, not all of which were helpful. Indeed, from my point of view some were looking actively dangerous. Another was that the dominant empirical tradition of futures work, while valuable in its own right, had a strong tendency to overlook 'half of reality' (the human and social interiors). For example, it seemed to me that the much-touted notion of 'megatrends' had at least as much to do with ways of seeing as with patterns or trends in external events. What some saw as a further provocation, and a serious one at that, was that far from being an inspiring 'light on the hill,' I could not escape the awkward, not to say distressing, fact that the USA itself was exhibiting many symptoms of decline and decay. Viewed from 'outside' as it were, it seemed to be fast becoming a danger to itself and, indeed, to humanity as a whole. With views like this, dissonances were, and are, inevitable. Which brings me to a key point.

Over four decades I've been guided less by any kind of overarching life strategy than by a keen intuitive sense of what I needed to do at any particular time. Part of this rationale is external and stemmed from the high levels of uncertainty that attended a newly minted futurist and the sparsity of regular employment for quite long periods of time.

What I slowly became aware of was not so much an aspiration to be 'right' in any final sense, as to be consciously searching for clarity. While the latter obviously does not produce ready-made solutions, it does provide a place to stand, a beginning, or series of them. After clarity, perhaps the next most vital thing is simply to connect, to care, to be useful even if only on a limited scale. That, in turn, seems to evoke aspects of the 'extended self' that many non-Western cultures value because they reach beyond individual needs and preoccupations. The fact that I'd trained as a teacher and had relevant experience and qualifications meant that, after completing a conventional Honours Degree at Lancaster, the Department of Educational Research briefly appeared as a natural home in which I could pursue a PhD and whatever else might follow. That, however, proved an early disappointment. The job I'd been promised vanished as a consequence of the policies and budget cuts enacted by the Thatcher Government.

I've often been asked if I'd recommend my career path to others. To which my usual answer is 'probably not.' It was too risky; it ran way ahead of any effective 'demand' and also led to considerable periods of struggle and uncertainty. If I'm asked if it 'was worth it?' the answer is 'yes, absolutely.' The reason is that I took every opportunity that arose to reach out, listen, understand, get myself organised and act. Which means that some four decades later I look back with a mixture of feelings. On the one hand I share with others a clear sense of regret for the loss of the bright futures that could / should have been tangibly closer by now. On the other my broadly humanist values have remained intact and any regrets balanced by a mostly calm spirit and a clear conscience. There have been real successes along with some regrettable failures.

An outstanding example of the latter was a decision taken in the 1990s by executives of the Brisbane based (then) Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (BSSSS) to cancel the trial process of what would have been one of the most significant curriculum innovations anywhere: *Futures Personal, Social, Global*. I still see this as 'official vandalism' and a criminal waste of the huge amounts of time and human energy – to say nothing of idealism – devoted to creating it. The fact that an official enquiry into this debacle has never been held is a betrayal of the countless young people who have passed through the system without the substantive benefits, including a grounded sense of hope and purpose, that it offered.[3] As for 'success' the prime candidate has to be The Australian Foresight Institute (AFI) at Swinburne University that I had the honour of creating and leading for five full and rewarding years. The Masters of Strategic Foresight (MSF) was, I believe, the first such course to be offered anywhere in the world. *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* and Integral Futures were among the unique elements of the program that helped both to substantiate and distinguish it from other such programs. Despite the many ups and downs of a highly discontinuous career, the existence and subsequent 17-year journey of this program provided a heartening conclusion to the formal, official, institution-based and salaried part of my career. I'll always be grateful for the opportunity, appreciative of my colleagues and proud of what we collectively achieved.[4]

Projects and publications

Throughout my career I've devoted significant amounts of time to projects that I felt were vital and necessary, often with little idea of how they would turn out. One of the

most enjoyable was Jay Gary's invitation to work with him in Colorado on an 8-part DVD series on *Pathways to Foresight* (Slaughter & Gary, 2005). Two others also stand out. One is the State of Play in the Futures Field (SoPiFF) project mentioned here by Chris Riedy and aptly summarised in his paper for KBFS 2020 (Riedy, 2020). The other is undoubtedly the *Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* (KBFS) itself. Briefly, this began as a conversation at a World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) conference in the early 1990s and was later published as a special issue of *Futures* in 1993. Every effort was made to include contributions from around the world. If it had tanked it would have been the end of the story. However, the idea gained support from many Futurists and like-minded people. Here, at last, was a way to summarise 'what futures is all about' and to provide what one student group called a 'one-stop shop' for newcomers and others. A clear irony at the time lay in the fact that in mid-2004 when my contract at Melbourne University was about to end, I was still writing to prospective authors around the world! The three-volume hard copy edition was launched in Sydney and Washington D.C. two years later.

The new edition again attracted positive reviews and I was encouraged to continue. There was one problem, however: the hard copy box set was simply too heavy to send overseas by mail. A different solution was required. Fortunately, my son, Rohan, an IT specialist, had the technical knowledge that could enable us to transfer the material into CD-ROM format. So, on long trip to Melbourne we spent countless hours translating Word files into html documents. This, in turn, led to the 2005 edition which was light and inexpensive to mail and could therefore be widely distributed. A subsequent USB edition was lighter still and postal costs became trivial. Which, again, is where the project could have ended. Then in late 2017, Jay Gary became the in-coming chair of the Association of Professional Futurists (APF). Discussions were held, agreements signed and before long Andy Hines had joined me as co-editor of the KBFS 2020 update. It's worth noting that the KBFS has never been portrayed as being in any way comparable to the inert and solid foundations required by physical structures. From the outset I saw it as 'an evolving process' which is, in fact, what it has proved to be. It has demonstrated its value as a teaching resource, a legitimating device and a means of conserving valuable work that would otherwise have been lost.[5]

Title, Year, Publisher	Brief Focus / Contents
Recovering the Future, 1988, Grad School of Environ Science, Monash University, Melbourne (Slaughter 1988)	Proposed a truly 'critical' approach to futures enquiry and action. Then, as now, the term 'critical' did not imply criticism but, rather 'looking in depth.' The central proposition of the book was that 'by recovering our individual sense of the future we may steadily recreate what has been for too long missing from our public life: a quality of participating consciousness in space and time.'
Studying the Future, 1989, (Ed), Comm. for the Future, Melbourne (Slaughter 1989a)	One of the CFF's contributions to the Bicentennial Futures Education project. Contains ten perspectives on futures education, five reports from 'lighthouse' trial schools and list of books, resources, etc.
Education for the 21st Century, 1993, with Hedley Beare, Routledge, London	Nature of 'faulty programming' in the W worldview given growing interconnectedness & globalisation. Re-establishment of a sense of 'depth' & shift of focus from past to future. Practical suggestions for use by teachers in schools, and schools as organisations. Role of latter in helping to decide whether 21st C would tend toward renewal or disaster. Shift of values from 'having' to 'being.'

The Foresight Principle, 1995, Adamantine, London	Uses of foresight in everyday life and how to extend such uses. Rationale for why we need institutions of foresight (IoFs). How foresight and wisdom resonate productively. The creation of social foresight. What 'cultural recovery in the 21st Century' might look like.
The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies, 1996, DDM Media / Futures Study Centre, Melbourne	Three volume set in slipcover. Intended as an authoritative selection or sample of core futures material to help characterise 'what FS is' and 'how FS is enabled' around the world. Explicitly linked with the idea that such a 'knowledge base' can draw on an evolving process which means that it will change and develop over time.
New Thinking for a New Millennium, 1996, (Ed.) Routledge, London	When Routledge 'passed' on publishing the KBFS, this was selected. three sections. 1: foundations of futures thinking. 2: how FS is being implemented in education. 3: from institutional to social learning. Contains Ogilvy's brilliant essay 'FS and the human sciences.'
Futures Education: World Education. Yearbook, 1998, (Ed. with D Hicks), Kogan Page, London	Substantive international volume featuring many of the world's most prominent scholars & practitioners. Three sections. 1: Foundations of futures education. 2: Practices of Futures Ed. 3: Educating for a Sustainable Future.
Futures for the Third Millennium, 1999, Prospect Media, Sydney	Anthology of short papers from previous decade. Themes include: FS as disciplined enquiry; context & critique; futures in education; foresight institutions & practices; critical futures methods & beyond the high-tech wonderland. Used at the AFI as a course reader.
Gone Today, Here Tomorrow, 2000, (Ed.) Prospect Media, Sydney	Collection of articles, many of which first appeared in The ABN Report published by Prospect Media. Timed to coincide with the shift to a new millennium, provides diverse non-academic array of views, opinions topics, previews of 'things to come.'
Futures Beyond Dystopia, 2004, Routledge, London	Explored the view that dominant world trends suggested a long-term decline toward Dystopian futures. Yet the clear perception of dangers and dysfunctions can be a first step to dealing with them. The twin motivations of avoiding dangers and creating viable forward views can reinforce each other and stimulate the further development of FS and related fields.
Futures Thinking for Social Foresight, 2005, with Marcus Bussey, Tamkang University & Foresight International	This book is intended for teachers wishing to include some highly relevant 'futures' elements to an existing curriculum. Based on two earlier works (*Futures Tools & Techniques*, and *Futures Concepts & Powerful Ideas*) it provides a wide range of classroom exercises, ideas and tools that can be used or adapted for many different uses. Perhaps the underlying idea is that the beginning of 'futures literacy' can arise from such simple and accessible elements.
Pathways to Foresight, 2005, Peak Futures / Foresight International, Brisbane	Eight-part DVD video presentation by Richard Slaughter. Directed by Jay Gary. Topics range from 'The making of a futurist' to 'Integral Futures.' Includes audio interview with Ken Wilber and download handouts for each segment by Olgy Gary.
The Biggest Wake-Up Call in History, 2010, Foresight International, Brisbane	Part One explores the global predicament in depth. Includes evaluation of the earlier 'Limits to Growth' work. Also considers some contemporary issues in terms of the 'human shadow.' Part Two, the search for solutions, introduces aspects of Integral methods to explore possibilities that emerge from the human and social interiors. It seeks to prove substantial grounds not only for hope but for positive change.
To See with Fresh Eyes, 2012, Foresight International, Brisbane	This book is a record of a journey toward a sturdy meta-perspective that explores the potential of 'Integral Futures.' It attempts to shed sufficient light on the nature and causes of the 'global emergency' and

	to explore 'ways forward during impossible times.' As such it is a core statement of the value of Integral concepts, tools and perspectives in a time growing increasingly desperate for answers.
Deleting Dystopia, 2021, University of S Queensland	Product of a four-year investigation – *Re-assessing the IT Revolution*. Examines the rise of 'surveillance capitalism' and the Internet oligarchs. Suggests a range of solutions and ways forward.

Table 3: Key Publications

Major publications are not discussed in this introduction as some of the contributors refer to them in their own articles. Table 3, however, provides a brief overview of major works and places them in chronological order. Perhaps 50% of my working time overall has been devoted to writing in one form or another – from op ed pieces, to curriculum materials and predominantly perhaps, scholarly articles for recognised journals. I've always seen the latter as vital for discipline-building and the evolution of disciplinary perspectives and knowledge. The rewards, however, are largely qualitative and intangible. Many of my papers have been published in *Futures* which, early on, became my 'home' journal, so to speak. I'm glad to say that I've enjoyed cordial relations with each of its editors over the years (a trend I hope to continue). I've also enjoyed editing and co-editing several issues of this and other journals (Table 4. The move from analogue to digital publishing has added new complexity to the entire process. While it's been a boon for publishers it also has profound implications for individual publications, and more especially for authors. Writing and editing pro bono for commercial publishers does raise significant questions that require further attention and progressive reviews of current practice.[6] Having devoted an entire paper to this issue, it will not receive further comment here (Slaughter, 2016). Following the themes shown in Table 1, the following sections are in response to the material kindly provided by the contributors to this issue.

Year	Journal	Title
1990	Futures 22, 3	Futures for Australia and the Pacific
1992	Futures Res. Quarterly 8,4	Futures Studies and Higher Education
1993	Futures 25, 3	The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies
1997	Futures 29, 8	Teaching and Learning About Future Generations (with Allen Tough)
1999	Futures 31, 2	Dissenting Futures (with Zia Sardar)
2002	Futures 34, 3 & 4	Futures of Futures Studies
2005	Futures 37, 5	The World Futures Studies Federation
2008	Foresight 10, 4	Is America the Land of the Future?
2008	Futures 40, 2	Integral Futures
2009	Foresight 11, 5	The 'State of Play' in the Futures Field
2014	Foresight 16, 6	Descent Pathways (with Joshua Floyd)

Table 4: Journals Edited

The themes – virtual "reprinted" papers and new commentaries

Critical commentary on Futures

Reprinted articles

The articles published previously in Futures Journal in relation to this theme and included in this article collection are listed below.

Slaughter, 1991, Changing images of futures in the 20th century. (The article comments on the rise of dystopian imagery and outlines a variety of useful responses including cultural critique and futures workshops. It concludes that there is a substantial basis for informed optimism and empowerment.)

Slaughter, 1996c, Long-term thinking and the politics of reconceptualization. (The essay questions the dominance of short-term thinking in Western culture. Beginning with a critique of the minimal present it explores ways of taking longer-term views by extending time frames that can each be identified with a variety of different purposes.)

Slaughter, 2018c, The IT revolution reassessed part one: Literature review and key issues. (The first of a series, the paper reviews a number of works that have attempted to come to terms with the contradictory nature of the IT revolution: on the one hand new powers and capabilities, on the other new forms of exploitation and dispossession. It concludes that the entire enterprise needs to be located in a wider framework of understanding and value in which the power of the Internet oligarchs is greatly reduced.)

Slaughter, 2018e, The IT revolution reassessed part two: Case studies and implications. (The paper considers the much-heralded Internet of Things and the pursuit of 'driverless cars' as examples of technological over-reach. It defines a draft agenda required to reduce present impacts and accelerate the development of strategies that better serve more constructive and humanly viable ends.)

Slaughter, 2018d, The IT revolution reassessed part three: Framing solutions. (The paper takes up the theme of recovery and renewal. It re-frames current 'blind spots' as opportunities and introduces a range of considerations from human, cultural and worldview sources to challenge the dominance of high-tech narratives and options. It is suggested that higher order, more beneficial values and moral development are among many hitherto-ignored resources that are central to re-orienting the entire enterprise.)

Slaughter, 2020, Farewell alternative futures. (The notion of 'alternative futures' played a key role in the early development of futures studies but it no longer rings true. Likely sources of this change include the emergence of the Anthropocene; the malign power of Neoliberalism which encouraged denialism and fostered the 'unreality industry'; and repressed aspects of history that conceal the progressive accumulation of 'progress traps.' On the other hand, a reinvigorated futures studies brings a number of vital qualitative gifts – including Integral Futures, post-conventional values and social construction theory - to assist humanity weather the difficulties ahead.)

Other papers made available to the commentators were: How 'development' promotes redundant visions: The Queen's Wharf casino project, Brisbane. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 2016. Understanding and resolving the global problematique: Assessing the balance between progressive and socially conservative foresight. *Foresight*, 2009 (with Chris Riedy). Opinion: Is America "the land of the future"? *Foresight*, 2008. Is America the land of the future? A response. *Foresight*, 2008.

Commentaries

Jay Gary's overview (Gary, 2021 THIS ISSUE) explores some of the central and enduring themes of this topic while also providing personal reflections on how the issues and challenges I attempted to articulate over the years were received. Like many others based in the US he found some aspects helpful and others perhaps a little confronting. Overall, he found the focus on interiors and foresight as a human capacity sufficiently productive to inspire or facilitate several different projects. The DVD set on *Pathways to Foresight* was a particularly useful addition that provided a straightforward introduction to the topic.[7] Jay also shows how some of the early themes were, and are, being developed and used in his research and university roles. I found his take on the notion of 'love' as a driving force and rationale both generous and a little unnerving! Marcus Bussey and I have also known each other for many years and worked together on numerous occasions. Perhaps our most notable project grew out of the fact that a couple of teacher-oriented curriculum resource texts that I'd written and distributed for some years needed up-dating. He took on the task of selecting the best of these earlier works and then helped to assemble new material into a more presentable format. *Futures Thinking for Social Foresight* was widely distributed; CD-ROM and online pdf versions are still available.[8] His paper (Bussey 2021 THIS ISSUE) reveals how our ideals, values and practices interacted productively over this time. The example he sets is also instructive in at least two specific ways. First, because recognises the value of what he calls 'the relational' – the idea that we share that we are all enmeshed in webs of relationships and that these connections matter. Hence the crucial role of practitioners in supporting and assisting each other over the long haul. Second, he also acknowledges the vital importance of each of us finding sources of strength and perseverance during challenging times. As with Gary, he finds the critique of modernity persuasive and is fully open to what he calls the 'meta-rational' aspects of our reality. Two papers written on opposite sides of the world find value and continuing relevance in these topics.

Critical and integral futures

As most readers will know, the shift from empirical to critical to integral futures has been, and is, central to the path I've followed. It identifies a journey of exploration and discovery in which the work of countless others is inextricably entwined. As new perspectives have opened up, so the options and possibilities for humanity have, almost counter-intuitively, expanded. Critical and integral futures are not mere academic exercises. They have real-world implications and consequences. They've helped to create and sustain more complex outlooks but ones that seem ever richer and full of promise. Hence, if an 'answer' to current global dilemmas resides anywhere, part of that answer is surely here.

Reprinted articles

The articles published previously in Futures Journal in relation to this theme and included in this article collection are listed below.

Slaughter, 1997a, A foresight strategy for future generations. (Education, business and government are three areas where forward thinking is considered vital. A rationale is presented here to encourage these and others to contribute toward the formation of a national foresight

strategy. The latter needs to be informed not merely by what we know now but also by what advice future generations might offer us if they had the chance.)

Slaughter, 1990b, The foresight principle. (The article considers the nature of foresight as a human capacity, some barriers to its use and contexts where implementation is being attempted. It concludes that foresight activities are basically driven by structural imperatives that imply a continued growth of foresight work despite the difficulties involved. Provided basis for later book with the same title.)

Slaughter, 1998a, Futures beyond dystopia. (The speculative imagination is an higher—order human capacity that currently remains limited by prevailing cultural assumptions and practices. Ways forward can be found by drawing on unconventional cultural resources that include an ethos of 're-enchantment' and strategies of worldview design. These and related factors can be used as 'magnets' that tend toward the realisation of options that are presently obscured. Also the basis of a later book.)

Slaughter, 1998b, Transcending flatland - Implications of Ken Wilber's meta-narrative for futures studies. (Suggests that the Western futures project was initially founded on empiricist notions of prediction, forecasting and control. These, and other factors, have led to a fatal preoccupation with technology, the 'conquest' of nature and an irrational commitment to endless economic growth. The work of transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber provides a valuable opportunity to re-think and re-consider our preoccupation with what he terms 'flatland.' Doing so contributes to a welcome deepening and broadening of Futures Studies and the recovery of more helpful human and cultural options.)

Slaughter, 2008b, Reflections on 40 years of futures studies and Futures. (While the futures field has made huge strides internally in terms of tools, methods, literature and so on, it has thus-far failed to have significant wider influence. This is particularly regrettable given that we've entered the Anthropocene, the era of human-initiated effects, that's pushing the entire global system beyond its Eocene equilibrium state. This 'perfect storm' of consequences requires us to create a more coherent, convincing, capable and unified futures community. Two central tasks are, first, the need for whole populations to 'wake up' to what is happening. Second, ways of managing multiple transitions away from 'overshoot and collapse' futures to those that are both just and sustainable.)

Other papers in this theme made available to commentators were: Making headway during impossible times. *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 2012. The integral futures controversy: An introduction. *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 2011. Beyond the Mundane - Towards post-conventional futures practice, *Futures,* 2002. Waking up after the war, *Foresight*, 2005. Futures beyond dystopia: Creating social foresight. *Futures*, 1998. Knowledge creation, futures methodologies and the integral agenda, *Foresight*, 2001.

Commentaries

Meredith Bowden (2021 THIS ISSUE) addresses the core notion of 'civilisational challenge / crisis' that confronts our over-extended civilisation. She understands how critical methods allow us to 'probe beneath the surface' and gain clarity about the origins and solutions to this disturbing outlook. She writes as one of the last people to experience the Swinburne Foresight Program and summarises many of its underlying concepts and ideas. Her paper also takes the reader through some of the ways the program attempted to promote the notion of social foresight in Australia. She is clearly energised by what she found and yet also concerned that there's been relatively little

'buy-in' on the part of the wider society. She rightly senses that the latter is running out of options and suggests that a top priority for the discipline is to gain higher levels of social and professional legitimation.

Most of the contributors here are people I know well and have worked with. Some have remained geographically distant, yet their presence is tangible due to the rich connections provided by conferences, organisations and publications. This is particularly the case with Finnish author J.P.Jakonen. It's particularly valuable to have been able to include an informed view on the development and uses of Integral Futures from an author who not only understands Integral Theory in depth but has himself also published widely on some of its applications. This means that he is practiced at consciously balancing interior and exterior factors, which makes a world of difference. His informed overview (Jakonen, 2021 THIS ISSUE) of *the process* of working to bring Integral Theory and Futures Studies together is exemplary. That process extended over perhaps a decade or more but I was too close to the action, so to speak, to be able to reflect on it or understand what was happening in any depth. Time certainly brought perspective but Jakonen's paper goes further. It provides a valuable external view that contributes fresh insights and new knowledge. I learned a great deal from reading his account of the 'seven capacities for Integral Foresight,' and I believe others will too. What I once referred to as 'the Integral controversy' looks different in the light of this perceptive contribution. Equally, however, anyone considering engaging in an innovation process of this kind will find helpful guidance here. Bowden and Jakonen have each brought new clarity to a topic that is perhaps too recent to be well-studied, let alone widely understood. Taken together, their work stands as an invitation to interested others to take up, examine and perhaps extend the narrative.

Education, young people and futures

Reprinted articles

The articles published previously in Futures Journal in relation to this theme and included in this article collection are listed below.

Slaughter, 1987b, Futures in education. (Keynote address for Australian Commission for the Future conference on this topic. Described the futures field as an under-utilised 'cultural resource.' Distinguished between futures studies, futures research and futures movements; also, based on current research, proposed a rationale and framework for innovations in schools. Emphasised positive outcomes including a shift away from economic to more vital human agendas for the future.)

Slaughter, 1993a, Futures concepts. (Presents 20 such concepts including the 'extended present', 'cultural editing' and 'the foresight principle.' Suggests that, in enabling a rich futures discourse, such concepts provide an evolving symbolic foundation for the entire futures enterprise. Argues that they should be regarded as a valuable disciplinary resource in their own right and therefore be highlighted more clearly in futures courses, publications and the like.)

Slaughter, 1994. Why we should care for future generations now. (The essay argues that caring for future generations is a legitimate ethical concern that arises from our common humanity. It explores several reasons why this may be so, considers strategies for achieving this goal and argues that such caring has a number of 'win-win' outcomes. Hence it has positive implications

for present people as well, promoting deeper reflection, more considered action and a re-framing of conventional assumptions about many aspects of the world that tend to under-valued and taken for granted.)

Slaughter, 1996a. Futures studies: From individual to social capacity. (This paper proposes that instead of thinking about field in a unitary manner we consider it in terms of five distinct layers, or levels, of activity. These are: first, the underlying capacity of the human mind to imagine the not-here and the not yet; second, the enlivening role of futures ideas and concepts; third, the analytic gains provided by futures tools and methods; fourth, practical applications in a range of contexts, some of which can be purpose-built [institutions of foresight]. It proposes that when these 'layers' operate in a coordinated manner futures studies takes on new life as an emergent social capability.)

Slaughter, 1997a. A foresight strategy for future generations. (Drawing on examples from the Australian context, the paper suggests a broad strategy for establishing a national foresight strategy. A straightforward model is proposed based on a series of key questions about current issues, continuity, change, future problems, inspiration and hope. To this is added a focus on asking what advice futures generations could ask of us if they had the chance.)

Slaughter, 2004. Road testing a new model at the Australian Foresight Institute. (By 1994 the AFI had established itself as a 'second generation' approach to post-graduate teaching, learning and research in futures studies. Its core purposes included: understanding and creating social foresight in Australia, supporting the emergence of a new generation of foresight practitioners and running successful, world-class courses. It succeeded in some, but not all of these, since social foresight is clearly a long-term goal. But it did succeed in pioneering new courses, new or renewed methods and carrying our significant research into social foresight.)

Other papers in this theme made available to commentators were. Futures education: Catalyst for our times, *Journal of Futures Studies*, 2008. Cultural reconstruction in the post-modern world, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1989. Critical futures study - A dimension of curriculum work, *Curriculum Perspectives*, 1986.

Commentaries

Since the first half of my career was devoted to these topics, I'm grateful for the time and effort that Caroline Smith and Rowena Morrow have put into their contributions. Both generously bring their own experiences to the fore and reveal in some detail how their involvement in this work not only made huge demands upon them but also how they responded. Caroline (Smith 2021 THIS ISSUE) provides a welcome summary and overview of the long path that I trod with others in our sustained attempts to properly ground 'futures ed' and have it accepted in Australian schools and universities. We've both experienced the elation of success, the pleasure of working in a 'hands-on' mode and also the difficulty of maintaining what was painstakingly created. We've walked together on many of these occasions and experienced similar frustrations. She details her own particular journey through this contested territory and contributes her own insights and experiences. The fact remains that that so many would-be curriculum innovations in this area all seem to follow a similar pattern of early success, adoption and appreciation, only to be culled during yet another 're-org' a few years later. It is profoundly disturbing to note that, even now, most school and university systems around the world are failing to seriously evaluate futures thinking or integrate aspects of it into their worldviews, classrooms, lecture halls and on-line sessions. Is this merely inherent conservatism and what role has been played by Neoliberal economics? One

thing seems clear, business-as-usual still rules. Which makes little sense in the context of our contested, unstable present and the dangerous future ahead.

The paper that really took my breath away, however, was by Rowena Morrow, one of the early 'mid-career professional' students at the Australian Foresight Institute (AFI). She not only brought her own distinct energy to the program from the early days but also has the rare ability to 'tell it like it is.' Her reflections on the way she responded and grew within the program and beyond, are to my mind, profoundly inspiring. This, after all, is what all 'good' teaching and learning are about. All parties are open to transformation and change. Rowena's account (Morrow 2021 THIS ISSUE) will bear fruit over many years by showing, once again, how work of this kind can be both personally and socially liberating. It is beyond me to imagine how anyone seriously involved in education at any level could fail to appreciate the enduring value of such experiences. It is tantalising to consider how easily they could, and should, be made available to so many more people in countless other educational environments.

Futures / foresight methods and strategies

Reprinted articles

The articles published previously in Futures Journal in relation to this theme and included in this article collection are listed below.

Slaughter, 1990a. Assessing the quest for future knowledge. (QUEST stands for quick environmental scanning technique. It was pioneered by Burt Nanus and Selwyn Enzer in the U.S. during the early 1980s. It takes place over one or two days. The main stages are as follows: preparation [prior to the workshop], environmental scanning process, intermediate analysis and report, strategic options workshop and follow-up. The paper describes how it was used by the author in Australia with a variety of organisations to positive effect. The paper describes possible extensions of this technique.)

Slaughter, 1993b. Looking for the real 'megatrends.' (The term 'megatrend' was coined by John Naisbitt in the early 1980s and purported to identify significant, large-scale changes that were held to be taking place in the U.S. at the time. A closer look, however, revealed the limitations of empirical work that overlooked the interpretive capabilities that it unknowingly employed. The paper offered a critique along these lines and suggested a more explicit focus on critical and epistemological methods that suggest different results.)

Slaughter, 1997b. Near-future landscapes as a futures tool. (Many, if not most images of futures within futures studies are rendered in text and, as such, can appear abstract or obscure to non-specialists. Alternatively, graphics and visual images are easier to grasp, especially by young people. The paper considers a small sample of NFLs and considers how they can illuminate abstract ideas, illustrate future consequences and dramatise particular scenarios. It also speculates on ways this medium might continue to develop in the future.)

Slaughter, 1999a. Lessons from the Australian Commission for the Future: 1986-98. (The CFF was launched in 1986 and lasted for a decade. The paper summarises its successes and failures and draws out some of the possible implications for future practice. The AFI [above] could be considered as having benefitted from these. It also summarises why such institutions of foresight [IOFs] remain valuable and considers how they could be supported by an integrated foresight strategy. In closing the paper speculates that the CFF was effectively placed 'under

siege' by the prevailing neo-liberal orthodoxy and 'the shadow' that arguably exists within our major institutions.

Slaughter, 1999b. Towards responsible dissent and the rise of transformational futures. (The need for such futures arises from the fact that naïve affluent populations are, to a large extent, driving global trends that lead to disastrous outcomes. Furthermore, futures studies is open to both misguided and legitimate uses. By opening to futures that 'dissent' from mainstream preoccupations it becomes possible to re-vision the foundations of human futures. Terms such as 'transformational' and 'post-normal' also take on greater salience and meaning.)

Slaughter, 2002a. Beyond the mundane: reconciling breadth and depth in futures work. (Mundane futures are defined as those that extend unproblematically from the current status quo and from an over-reliance upon external, empiricist, views of reality. In fact, understanding the forward view requires a careful combination of 'inner' and 'outer' views. The paper provides a succinct account of three general approaches to futures work: pop futures (entertainment), problem-oriented futures (serious but often superficial), critical and epistemological futures. Examples of each are provided.

Other papers in this theme made available to commentators were: Sense making, futures work and the global emergency. *Foresight*, 2012. From forecasting and scenarios to social construction: Changing methodological paradigms in futures studies. *Foresight,* 2002. A new framework for environmental scanning, *Foresight,* 1999. Foresight beyond strategy: Social initiatives by business and Ggvernment, *Long Range Planning,* 1996. Academic publishing in transition: The case of Foresight, *World Futures Review*, 2016.

Commentaries

Andy Hines (Hines, 2021 THIS ISSUE) and Chris Riedy (Riedy, 2021 THIS ISSUE) provide two of the most detailed and nuanced accounts of how our pathways through futures (and life) have intersected over more than two decades. They each catch the spirit of these varied collaborations and I'm particularly grateful for the fact that they bring to the fore things that I'd forgotten or, indeed, not seen as clearly. What I could not forget, however, is the delight of working with such dedicated and ethically grounded people, each of whom have contributed so much in their own right to the field. Andy was one of the first, and certainly one of the most popular, visitors to the AFI. Although – or in some ways because - he and I have quite distinct perspectives we've worked very productively together on many occasions. With Terry Collins he co-authored one of the early papers that summarised the progress of Integral Futures.[9] Then in 2020 we collaborated to produce that year's update of the KBFS. I first met Chris Riedy when he was a student and was even then impressed with his dedication and crystal clear, ethically grounded, thinking. His Ph.D. was one of the first, if not the first, to approach the dilemmas of climate change through an Integral lens. It was a pleasure to work with him on the SoPiFF project and to witness the way his career has steadily progressed. Luke van der Laan is the most recent colleague to be included here and a welcome addition. He takes a look at how futures knowledge in the form of notions of foresight, and strategic foresight, have evolved and what, in his view, needs to be done to strengthen and better apply them in a world that needs them more than ever (van der Laan, 2021). His key point is that if we want our work to be more popular, more widely appreciated and applied then we have to think clearly and act consistently as we go about our futures / foresight work. Once again, the notion that clarity is or should be a core concern for all futures workers receives strong endorsement.

Twenty-first century / Anthropocene

Reprinted articles

The articles published previously in Futures Journal in relation to this theme and included in this article collection are listed below.

Slaughter, 1996d. Towards a re-enchanted world. (Brief biographical piece outlining origins of my involvement in futures [SF, Bermuda, insights into global change], growing interest in foresight as a human and social capacity and, finally, an aspiration to 'live in a world that has experienced a recovery of vision, meaning and purpose.')

Slaughter, 2000. A personal agenda for the 21st Century. (Written for Futures 32, published in 2000. Suggests the coming century would be a 'make or break' time for humanity and present trends did not encourage optimism. Stressing, however, that there were / are many ways for humanity to 'steer' toward more consciously chosen futures. The paper addressed both 'inner' and 'outer' threats and suggested an emerging 'congruence of insight' on possible responses.)

Slaughter, 2002b. Futures studies as a civilizational catalyst. (The paper considers how the growth dynamic that had driven recent trends had run up against a world of physical limits. It considered implications for futures studies of this 'civilisational challenge' and explored strategies for responding to it. These included greater use of FS itself whose ultimate goal could be viewed as 'helping to create the foundations of a new civilisation.')

Slaughter, 2012b. Welcome to the Anthropocene. (Given that humanity appears to have entered a new era the paper argues for a number of shifts in our efforts to understand and deal with change. They include the following: embracing insights about global change, valuing and applying the relevant 'signals', cultivating scepticism about the role(s) of science and technology and exploring the potential of a wide range of human, cultural and institutional innovations.)

Slaughter, 2015b. The global emergency - perspectives, overviews, responses. (The paper reviews sources on how patterns of continuity and change are playing out at the global level and what this means for current policy, decision making and futures / foresight practice. For example, Greer diagnoses the processes of 'descent' from the peak of industrial expansion. Urry shows how 'carbon capital' and related social interests have driven the 'trajectory of development' in ways that work against our collective wellbeing. Zolly and Healy demonstrate the value of systems thinking and Higgins confronts us with the need for a 'law of ecocide' within our legal systems in order to defend, re-value and recover natural resources from their present decline. From this evidence the paper concludes that humanity has indeed arrived at a true 'inflection point' and that the human penchant for evasion, denial and diversion are unlikely to remain effective for much longer.)

Slaughter, 2020. Farewell alternative futures? (The notion of 'alternative futures' played a dominant role in the early development of futures studies and applied foresight but the optimism it once signified, and the sense of unqualified agency, no longer ring true. The paper seeks to clarify why humanity is failing to comprehend and manage its spiralling impacts upon the global system. Beyond the climate crisis per se it also considers s other sets of factors that include neoliberal ideology, the rise of denialism, conventional macro-history and the accumulation of 'progress traps' throughout the long human story. In contrast to this rather dismal account, positive developments in futures studies and sources of qualified optimism, renewed agency, are briefly discussed.)

Other papers in this theme made available to commentators were:. The denial of limits and interior aspects of descent, *Foresight,* 2014. Descent pathways, *Foresight*, 2014. Responding to the global mega crisis, *Journal of Futures Studies*, 2011. Evaluating 'overshoot and collapse' futures, *World Futures Review*, 2010. Beyond the threshold: Using climate change literature to support climate change response, *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 2009.

Commentaries

Chris Jones and I had known each other for some time before we undertook on the not-inconsiderable task of heading up the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) for four years beginning on the fateful day now known as 9/11. Our careers followed similar pathways from initial inspiration to theses writing and university teaching. I welcome in particular his comments on one of my more recent papers: Farewell alternative futures? (Slaughter, 2020) It put forward a deliberately provocative thesis suggesting that global notions of 'alternative futures' that once appeared to have great symbolic and practical power no longer applied. Overshoot and collapse futures had become ever more likely in a world that continues to ignore limits and destabilise natural systems. What, then of alternatives? Chris (Jones 2021 THIS ISSUE) provides an answer based on the notion that they remain salient under a wide range of conditions. I'd certainly like to know what others think as well. I'd hoped that the paper, which required serious amounts of time and energy to write, would generate further critique and debate. Thus-far, however, and with the exception of these comments, feedback has been minimal. I find it concerning that this should be so since one of the core purposes of the journals such is to encourage active and collaborative debates on just such issues.

Victor Motti and I have only met once at a 2017 WFSF conference in Norway. His contribution (Motti 2021 THIS ISSUE) reminded me that many issues, including the uses and pathologies of IT can take on very different aspects and meanings in non-Western environments. It's a timely reminder that although the global system is a single complex entity, cultures vary greatly. From those varied points of view diversity, empathy and mutual respect remain essential keys to understanding. Motti's view is consistent with that of others who have drawn attention to the relative paucity of non-Western sources with FS - a view that is taken up again below. On the other hand, the emergence of the Anthropocene as a distinct new era which, as the saying goes, 'changes everything,' seems under-represented here. There's obviously a great deal more to say about these complex and dynamically evolving issues.

Curating futures knowledge

Reprinted articles

The articles published previously in Futures Journal in relation to this theme and included in this article collection are listed below.

Slaughter, 1989b. Probing beneath the surface. Review of a decade's futures work. (Draws on shared experiences of the 20th Century to support relevance of FS, which it identifies as a viable discipline. Suggest value of focus on continuity and change at a variety of levels. Sets out an early model of critical futures work and some related conceptual and methodological innovations including layered views of social structure, conscious use of time frames [including the extended present] and the 'Transformative Cycle' a tool for mapping processes of change.

Concludes that futures work is non-trivial and that 'probing beneath the surface' reveals many opportunities to explore new meanings and purposes.

Slaughter, 1991. Changing images of futures in the 20th century. (The article frames the rise of dystopian images of futures as a 'imaging dilemma' and suggests ways beyond the simple dualism of utopia / dystopia. Explores a variety of responses including critique, workshops, re-negotiating cultural assumptions and 'imagine-ing' a different cultural dynamic. Offers a critical model for so doing and outlines a straightforward method for dealing with young peoples' fears. Suggests that notions of a 'wisdom culture' may offer a positively divergent set of options and possibilities.)

Slaughter, 1999a. Lessons from the Australian Commission for the Future: 1986-98. (The CFF was launched in 1986 and lasted for a decade. The paper summarises its successes and failures and draws out some of the possible implications for future practice. The AFI [above] could be considered as having benefitted from these. It also summarises why such institutions of foresight [IOFs] remain valuable and considers how they could be supported by an integrated foresight strategy. In closing the paper speculates that the CFF was effectively placed 'under siege' by the prevailing neo-liberal orthodoxy and 'the shadow' that arguably within our major institutions.)

Slaughter, 1993c. The substantive knowledge base of futures studies. (Editorial setting out a structural model of FS with features that are structurally similar to those of many other disciplines. That is, a core of elements that, taken together, form the shared substance of that field. In the case of FS such elements include language, concepts and metaphors; theories, ideas and images; an extensive literature; organisations, networks and practitioners; methodologies and tools; and, finally, social movements and innovations.)

Slaughter, 1993b. The knowledge base of futures studies as an evolving process. (In order to avoid any suggestion that the KBFS be regarded as monolithic, settled or unchanging, the paper identifies four specific ways that it is better viewed as an active and evolving process. These are through critique, innovation, synthesis and the emergence of new voices. Its evolution since the early 1990s strongly supports this process orientation.)

Other papers in this theme made available to commentators were: Defending the future: Introductory overview of a special issue of On the Horizon on responses to The Biggest Wake-up Call in History, *On the Horizon*, 2013. Guest editorial: State of Play in the Futures Field, *Foresight*, 2009. The state of play in the futures field: A meta-scanning overview, *Foresight*, 2009. Looking towards the futures studies renaissance: A conversation between Richard A. Slaughter and Wendell Bell, *Journal of Futures Studies*, 2007. World Futures Studies Federation: Histories and futures, Editorial, *Futures,* 2005. Futures studies as an intellectual and applied discipline, *American Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 1998.

Commentaries

The two final contributions under this heading could not be more different. Jim Dator is, for good reason, one of the most productive and well-respected people in the field while Alex Burns was another early AFI student with a distinct gift for bibliographic analysis. Dator's account (Dator 2021 THIS ISSUE) draws on his long experience of, and familiarity with futures studies. He started perhaps a decade earlier than myself and travelled Eastward from the US to Europe and beyond in search of wider perspectives. When I started in the 1980s my early travels took me in the opposite direction. That is, West to the USA where I hoped to learn the craft from people such as Hazel Henderson

and Wendell Bell. Thus, while Jim was exploring other cultures I was learning from, and trying to come to grips with, America, and how it saw itself in relation to the rest of the world. I recall pausing on many occasions to consider 'what exactly should my focus be?' As a Westerner myself I felt that, initially at least, my primary task was that of understanding the dysfunctions of the Western worldview since it appeared responsible for so many dysfunctional global effects and consequences.

Jim's passion in this paper seems undiminished and his preoccupation seems to be on FS as a global, international and non-Western enterprise. He wants to include everyone and every culture which, in an ideal world, might be possible. Yet in our world perhaps things are not quite so straightforward. He approves of some of my early work and usefully locates the KBFS in a wider context of earlier efforts to organise futures knowledge. This was new to me. He also believes that the version we currently have is insufficiently multi-cultural. While agreeing wholeheartedly in principle it's hard see how it could be any other way given the limitations that I confronted at every stage. From my point of view, he over-states the options I had for including more material from non-Western sources. What he regards as omissions, however, are perhaps best accounted for by the differences in our life conditions at every stage. Having started earlier he had more direct contact with some of the far-flung founders of the field who he feels have been overlooked. He also had the benefit for many years of continuing institutional support for travel, communications and, of course, willing student helpers. Where we agree is that the KBFS would benefit significantly by including many more non-Western sources. By now, however, it should be clear that such work is beyond any one individual. It requires well organised entities with sufficient finance and expertise to do the job properly.[10] Fortunately, he admits that that 'no one can do everything.' To which I can only add 'Amen.'

Finally, Alex Burns' piece provides an informed and restrained account of major publications and usefully links these with wider events, including changes in society and culture (Burns 2021 THIS ISSUE). His summaries of key works are both concise and accurate. At the AFI during the early 2000s he was in a good position to evaluate the program and the bibliographic resources deployed to support it. He usefully identifies three distinct career periods from early starting points to later products and processes. He takes a long view of the progressive development of key foci of this work from the critique of neoliberal society, to what he calls 'species issues of the Anthropocene' and the identification of forward-looking strategies. The latter clearly include changes of institutional focus, particularly in governance and education and the identification of 'energy descent pathways.' This, surely, is one of the most vital areas for further development and growth within futures studies and applied foresight.

Conclusion: Emergent themes

What emerges for me from these contributions is that my early intuitions that saw the future field as a bold and necessary endeavour have certainly been confirmed. I'm also glad to know that some of the innovations that I've had a hand in creating have been widely accepted and rendered into practice. For example, the view that there is more to futures work than external scanning and analysis has been widely accepted. It is also more common for practitioners to pay due attention to the socially constructed

character of social reality and to see within that enlarged area quite new opportunities and, of course, dangers. The shift from 'empirical' work to 'critical' work has therefore, in a sense, succeeded. But the key underlying point is that both are needed. Our collective understanding of the climate crisis is, for example, dependent on high quality empirical time series data. What we do with that, how we respond, however, lies clearly in the human, cultural, values domain. The further shift toward an 'integral' stance has also made steady progress and is recognised by many as an essential, highly productive step. Among many other things it helps to situate a developmental view of human life worlds revealing core features of our inner lives that make us less, or more, human.

It is my firm view that practitioners ignore the human and cultural interiors at their peril. At the very least they provide access to sources of insight and understanding that are indispensable, especially during periods of adversity. I'd argue, for example, that it's impossible to resolve the global emergency without understanding how and why we arrived at this point in the first place. How, for example, did we manage to forget that our civilisation is little more than a transient set of surface ripples on the lip of an unknowable gulf of deep time and fathomless evolution? Where, or when, did we lose respect for this ancient natural heritage and come to view it as expendable? What has been lost in the collective bid for instrumental power and global dominance? For these and many other reasons, integral methods have multiple uses as part of an advanced futures toolkit. I've attempted to demonstrate this in a number of ways. Three short papers attempt to show how the method can be applied to climate change, the global emergency and strategies for 'making headway during impossible times' (Slaughter, 2009, 2015a & 2012). One way of attempting to summarise some of this wide-ranging material is to locate it on a four-quadrant figure (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Domains of Generic Responses

By contrast, it's clear that futures studies and applied foresight still have some way to go before they are better understood and more consistently applied. Paradoxically, one reason for this may well be that we remain embedded in a crisis-prone reality that has little time for such matters. As Michel Godet is said to have declared: 'when things are going well no one sees the need for foresight. When they're going badly it's too late.' That this is not a new insight is demonstrated by the fact that Machiavelli came to the same conclusion several centuries ago.[11] On the other hand, while humanity can be stubborn and unwilling to revise deep seated cultural assumptions, it can and sometimes does learn from experiences such as the Covid-19 pandemic. It became a disaster not because it was unforeseeable but because humanity failed to appreciate its own deep and systemic connections with the natural world and prepare for such eventualities. This is yet another indication that the foresight function needs to be properly established at the most senior levels of government.

Perhaps humanity is best regarded as 'an unfinished animal.' It just happens to be our fate, our moment in history, to know that we are indeed an adolescent species. Indeed, it has been suggested that the human brain-mind system is adapted for life in the Neolithic era, our institutions are in many respects medieval and so it is hardly surprising that we are dismayed by the endless transgressions of 21st Century technology. This will never be a recipe for quiet living, but it does suggest a profound

need for deeper human and cultural understanding. A parallel narrative asserts that over long centuries we've learned how to communicate with each other and organise ourselves into settlements of increasing scale and density. A long sequence of increasingly powerful tools and technologies has emerged from this context. But we tend to lose track of the many 'progress traps' accumulated along the way and the ways these play out in our own time (Lewis & Maslin, 2018). Given this context it's not hard to understand why humans are often said to lack the wisdom, prudence and foresight to manage the world they have created. The fixation on short-term thinking is seen as part of this inheritance. So perhaps we can agree that foresight is *an emergent capacity of the human brain-mind system* that is slowly helping us learn how to expand our awareness and understanding.

If there's any single notion that flows through my own journey it's *the primacy of the human and cultural interiors and the clarity that comes from seeing how they interact with the external, empirically measurable world.* What also becomes clear in this view is that *worldviews, cultures and values are every bit as significant as technique and technology*. It also follows that futures work needs to draw widely and openly on relevant disciplines. Many different sources could be cited here. But for present purposes there are a couple whose work exemplifies much of the above: the late John Urry and Jennifer Gidley (Urry, 2016; Gidley, 2017). Both draw on wider worlds of reference and provide highly credible accounts of how these inform and enrich futures work. Readers are encouraged to either access their works directly or via in-depth reviews (Slaughter, 2018b). Then, as several contributors have noted, we need to relinquish the habit of seeing everything with Western eyes and acknowledge our own complicity in the dilemmas we face. Futures work of any kind is certainly demanding but it also brings with it substantial intrinsic rewards such as self-understanding and purpose as are expressed here by Rowena Morrow, J.P. Jakonen and others. It's also, as Marcus Bussey mentions, a collective enterprise at every level. The notion that anyone can credibly be regarded as a 'lone genius' is clearly an oxymoron. Feedback is a universal necessity and critique is a powerful tool to be used with care. I regret that in the early days I did not know how to apply it in more sensitive and respectful ways.

A variety of practical actions and initiatives can be part of continuing to build the discipline of futures studies and applied foresight. For example, some European governments have already declared a formal 'climate emergency.' However, the larger challenge is to acknowledge the broader reality of the 'global emergency.' It's one way of confronting head-on the hitherto powerful influence of short-term thinking and future discounting which can no longer be dismissed as esoteric side issues. They are central to the ability of all societies to mobilise in their own defence. It's consistent with the above that the misguided loss of 'Futures Ed' as an active and productive capability in schools needs to be challenged and reversed. Young people do not need be compelled to become 'futures literate.' It is something that they adopt with energy and enthusiasm when given the opportunity to do so. The benefits of his vital sector of educational activity and provision are clear and inarguable in non-ideological discourse. Similarly, we need a whole new generation of Institutions of Foresight (IoFs) along with appropriate university programs for training and qualifications.

At the macro level greater attention needs to be paid to reducing inequality and intervening in the careless uses of power. It's probably a mistake to seek merely to

'regulate' the vast internet monopolies that currently wield more power than most nation states. There's a growing need for the timely replacement of compromised IT systems with publicly owned alternatives based on human rights and progressive social values (Slaughter, 2020; 2021). The rise of digital money and the 'stealth' takeover and privatisation of educational provision by these same oligarchs also requires urgent critical attention. Stories of progress, 'connection' and identity as expressed by the oligarchs should be seen for the fast tracks to Dystopia that they are. The early consequences are already visible in China where human beings are routinely subjected to universal surveillance and reduced to mere pawns in a vast digital prison. Such issues are among many that evoke the careful use of layered futures work that relates obvious surface features to underlying and often contested intangibles.

In short, futures work needs a new role, new levels of recognition and a more credible stance in helping our species to awaken from its long, dangerous dream of dominance and power. If ever there was a time to enable these changes it is now.

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I would like to thank Ted Fuller for taking up this project and curating it throughout. When it proved impossible to find 'guest editors' he took on the task himself. This was in addition to the heavy workload he already had as the editor of *Futures*. I also want to thank each of the contributors for taking the time and making the effort to read some of my work and to write their own account of what has been, by any measure, a fascinating and productive journey. I'm hopeful that this project will not only succeed in its own right but become the first in a series of similar projects to review the lives and work of many others.

It is my enduring pleasure to have known and worked with each of those who have contributed to this project. Thank you again,

Richard Slaughter.
Brisbane, March 26th, 2021

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Notes

[1] See The Genius of Frank Hampson and the Eagle, 2018: https://richardslaughter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Genius_of_FrankH_Eagle_illos.pdf

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[1] While editing KBFS 2020 I attempted to bring in a whole language group encompassing several under-represented countries. It started well, with plenty of goodwill but ended badly. The material was unpublishable and there was no way our modest budget could render it usable. I ended up frustrated; the would-be contributors felt rejected and angry. Which rather proves the point about the need for proper organisational support when working across cultures and languages. It may well be useful to approach UNESCO for its suggestions on this topic.

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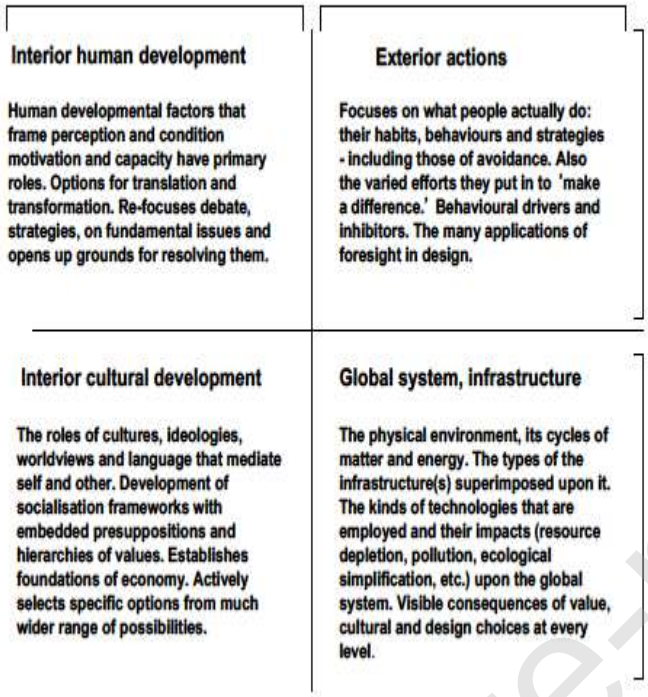
Figure Captions

Figure 1. Generic responses to the global emergency
Most approaches to the global emergency tend to omit one or more domains of enquiry and action. This highly compressed four-quadrant summary of generic responses highlights some of the different types of enquiry required to understand – and perhaps begin to resolve – some of the encroaching dilemmas facing humankind.
Source: Slaughter (2012c), p199.



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