Creative Documentary Practice:
Internalising the Systems Model of Creativity through
documentary video and online practice

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A creative work thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication & Media Arts
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Declarations:

**Declaration 1:**
I hereby certify that some elements of the creative work *Using Fort Scratchley* which has been submitted as part of this creative PhD thesis were created in collaboration with another researcher, Kathy Freeman, who worked on the video documentary as the editor. Kathy was working at the Honours level from 2005 to 2006 and I was her Honours Supervisor. Kathy was researching the creative role of the editor, her Honours research was titled *Expanding and Contracting the role of the Editor: Investigating the role of the editor in the collaborative and creative procedure of documentary film production* (Freeman, 2007). While Kathy’s work dovetailed closely with my own work there was a clear separation of responsibilities and research imperatives, as each of our research topics was focussed on the creative aspects of our different production crew roles.

**Declaration 2:**
I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis contains one journal publication and three peer-reviewed published conference papers authored by myself.


Declaration 3:
I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis contains one published journal article of which I am a joint author. The co-authored paper was written with my principal supervisor Dr Phillip McIntyre, and contains some of the literature reviewed for this exegesis.

Statement of Originality:

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.
Acknowledgments:

Firstly, I will thank my family, particularly my husband David Washbourne and our children Alice and Rose. They have been immensely supportive and have endured many absences when my PhD work has taken me away from our relaxation time. Their patience and tolerance has been amazing and I am in debt to them. Now, it is time for me to begin returning the 'love' that has sustained me throughout this project.

Secondly, I am immensely grateful to my principal supervisor Dr Phillip McIntyre, who agreed to supervise this project without much knowledge of either my practitioner skills or my researcher abilities. Phillip brings immense integrity to the role of PhD supervisor. This quality was particularly important at the beginning of my PhD before I was diagnosed with Scotopic sensitivity, when the intention of my written work was difficult to decipher. This form of visual dyslexia is corrected with Irlen lenses, I began wearing mine in 2006, two years into my PhD. Since then Phillip has had the onerous task of pointing out many writing habits which were a consequence of my visual disorder. I will always be indebted to Phillip for his patience and sensitivity with this particular issue, his generosity of spirit and belief in the learning and creative processes make him a fine academic. Also I would like to thank my co-supervisors, Dr Judy Wells and Dr Judith Sandner, both of whom have at different times supported and made significant contributions to the quality of this research.¹

Thirdly, this research would not have been possible without University of Newcastle internal grant funding schemes which enabled me to create new knowledge about creative practice as well as contribute to the community's understanding of local history. I would like to thank the School of Design Communication and IT, and multiple Heads of School, Dr Anne Llewellyn and Dr Brian Regan, who have supported this part-time research over the last seven years. I am also genuinely appreciative of the sustained research support through the Faculty of Science and IT, most notably the recognition of my research higher degree work with the award 'Outstanding Post Graduate (Research) Student Achievement Award in 2008'. Furthermore, the support of the Faculty’s Research Committee and the PVC, Prof Bill Hogarth, has enabled me to complete this PhD ahead of time.

Finally, I would like to thank my documentary collaborators and research participants for their personal and professional contributions to the project.

¹ Dr Judy Wells retired from academic life during my candidature, and Dr Judith Sandner became my co-supervisor.
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Synopsis

The process of documentary making which is the subject of analysis here was conducted through the low budget video and online productions of Using Fort Scratchley and Fort Scratchley a Living History (www.fortscratchley.org). The new contribution to knowledge generated through this self-reflective research considers my creative documentary experience against a number of creativity theories, models and processes. This practice-led research took a reflective empirical approach, using the Practitioner Based Enquiry methodology (Murray & Lawrence, 2000). The analytical scope of the research is comprised of practitioner ‘data’ collected across four production years; including a reflective journal detailing the making of the cross-platform documentaries, the documentary production paperwork and the documentaries themselves. Using Fort Scratchley, commissioned by Newcastle City Council, runs 53-minutes in length and employs oral history interviews that capture the military, maritime, coal mining and Awabakal usages of the Fort Scratchley site situated at the mouth of the Hunter River in Newcastle, Australia. The oral history interviews and additional archival material were re-worked, extended and prepared for delivery through an online data-based called Fort Scratchley a Living History. The online documentary permits minimal interactivity as the media has been presented through five pre-set tours: Awabakal, Coal Mining, Military, Maritime, and Theatre.

The production of these two Fort Scratchley documentaries provided a research environment that interrogated the effectiveness and appropriateness of a particular confluence model of creativity, the Systems Model of Creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999), a Group Creativity Model (Nijstad & Paulus, 2003) and three staged creative process theories (Bastick, 1982; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Wallas, 1976). In employing these models and theories, which can be seen as complementary, the research investigates the assumption that they could be readily applied to documentary production practice. The analysis of data reveals the layers of complexity within these theories; layers that account for collaborative practices as well as explaining a practitioner’s intuition and embodied knowledge. In particular, this exegesis discusses and analyses how these creativity theories can be used to demystify creative documentary practice by deconstructing how I mediated external contexts, knowledges and skills, and drew on internalised and previously embodied knowledge throughout the production processes. In conclusion the exegesis argues that it is necessary to revise the System’s Model of Creativity in order to more clearly situate creative practice inside a system.
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