

Editorial

This special issue honours the late Don Lamberton, who died on 28 November 2014. Don was one of the founders of *Prometheus* and was its general editor for over 20 years. The journal is lasting testament to his scholarship and broad intellectual interests. However, on this occasion, *Prometheus* is only the vehicle for a very special tribute to its late general editor. While Don's intellectual efforts were directed largely towards information economics, his interests extended further to include a number of cognate disciplines. Similarly, Don Lamberton's career spanned a range of different identities and roles: academic, educator, critic, editor and researcher. This special issue adds an insightful dimension to appreciating Don, not by label or by role, but Don as a person. Of all the identities we carry in life, our personhood is uniquely defined by the values to which we adhere and the choices we make. At times, the values and choices we make may bring us into conflict with power. This was true of Don Lamberton. He valued ideas; he was passionate about them. And he was prepared to stand up for what he believed and thought was right. As a consequence, his values guided the choices he made about what questions were worth asking and where he should devote his time.

One of the most significant and consistent academic choices made by Don was to devote his time and attention to the encouragement of students. It was central to the meaning he derived from his intellectual work. Since he lived for ideas, he, in turn, shaped the ideas of many of his students and sought to provide them with the skills to carry on the intellectual work he had commenced. For Don, progress and learning were, in part, attained by questioning. Don fervently believed that senior academics should teach, and especially first-year students, arguing that the young should be exposed to the old as early as possible. To this end, Don was paradoxically both grounded in conventional economic thinking, but ardent in his conviction that orthodox economics had failed to address adequately the role played by information, knowledge and learning in the economy.

This special issue pays tribute to Don by reprinting as the very first paper in the issue his statement of 1984, dissenting from the report of his colleagues on the government committee reviewing the patent system in Australia. Don was especially proud of this piece and deservedly: it shows him at his determined best, both as an intellectual and as a person. Stuart Macdonald provides a brief introduction to this example of Don the Dissenter.

The remainder of the issue assembles eleven contributions from Don's students. To qualify, a broad definition of Don's student was adopted – simply, someone who had learnt from Don and acknowledged that his ideas and approach had influenced their career. A number of the contributors were supervised by Don for their doctoral work. While all the contributions reflect an aspect of Don, they fall roughly into three categories, exemplifying: Don's love of ideas; his willingness to express dissent; and his approach to academic practice.

The first group of five papers (Engelbrecht, Welch, Tibben, Rooney and Noble) underline the fact that Don's curiosity about information left its mark on many of his students, who in turn, developed and built on these ideas as part of their own careers. Hans-Jürgen Engelbrecht's paper on information, capital and well-being explores a theme that also intrigued Don Lamberton: information as capital. Engelbrecht also addresses the normative assessment of information and innovation – an area neglected by Don. Lawrence Welch's paper charts the development of the knowledge-based theory of internationalisation. Welch observes that a key theoretical development was the relaxation of the assumption of perfect knowledge used in economics – the same critique that was central to Lamberton's thinking. Will Tibben's paper has a focus on information and development in a Pacific island development context. Tibben develops the theme, explored elsewhere by Lamberton, that information is costly and this cost needs to be factored into development policy and interventions. David Rooney's paper broadly addresses information sharing, a theme also central to Don Lamberton's interests. Rooney pays tribute to Lamberton by exploring the importance of generosity in knowledge systems. He argues that generosity is a meeting point between knowledge and wisdom, which in turn should be factored into the knowledge policy development process. The final paper in this section, by Christopher Noble, explores the idea of 'mindset', the persistent way a person thinks about the world. Mindset is an integral adjunct to Lamberton's interests in information sharing, path-dependency, lock-in and organisational obsolescence. Taken together, this group of five papers demonstrates the paradigmatic nature of Lamberton's thinking about information.

A second group of two papers reflects on Don Lamberton as dissenter. Ruth Williams presents a picture of Don Lamberton as a scholar who welcomed the unexpected resulting from intellectual inquiry. The unexpected provided the opportunity 'to ask new questions' and 'to repeat old but unsettled ones'. Don preferred open-mindedness over closed-mindedness and this value unfortunately led to instances where his advice was unheeded. Dissent followed. In Williams's view, Lamberton was a man of foresight and failing to listen to his message contributed to costs and missed opportunities. Hazel Moir builds on this theme by revisiting an old but still unsettled issue: reforming patent policy. Moir's contribution echoes Don Lamberton's conviction that the government advisory committee, on which Don sat, had missed a grand opportunity to adjust an ancient institution to the current needs of the Australian economy. Moir wonders what has changed since Don wrote his dissenting statement. After 30 years, many of the same old questions about intellectual property rights and their place in an information economy remain unanswered – except by powerful interest groups.

The third and final group of papers brings together four contributions which reflect on Don Lamberton's values in his approach to academic work. Tom Mandeville, a colleague of Don at the University of Queensland reflects on these years and recalls that the questions Don asked eventually led the author to an interest in evolutionary economics. David Court takes a similar approach by highlighting Lamberton's scholarly values of openness, a willingness to listen and the sharing of data and connections that were important to his career. In Court's case, it was the area of copyright that attracted his professional curiosity, and which suggested the feasibility of copyright-without-exclusivity. Darrel Doessel's paper presents a view of Don Lamberton from the periphery. Doessel's research in health economics benefited from Lamberton's approach to information, but what seems to have left the

more lasting impression was Lamberton as a 'good academic': a role model worthy of emulation. Doessel laments that these qualities are often missing within the modern university. Finally, Richard Joseph's contribution acknowledges Lamberton as a master academic craftsman. He argues that it was Lamberton's commitment to the idea that the individual academic should take personal responsibility for his work, and his preference for 'practical learning' which made Don's approach to student supervision and teaching so effective and valued.

Taken together, the papers in this special issue highlight the values adopted and choices made by Don Lamberton that ultimately defined why he was such an exceptional intellectual and highly-praised educator. His choice of important questions in information economics has sharpened many academic minds, shaped many academic careers and challenged future research. His preparedness to stand by his values meant that he was at times drawn into dissent and controversy. While inconvenient and uncomfortable for those in power, the critical questions raised by Lamberton have not lost their currency over the course of time. Finally, Lamberton's emphasis on openness and the willingness to question orthodoxy has provided a guiding light for many.

A fitting parting accolade to Don Lamberton's life and work can be found in the words of Hilaire Belloc:

He does not die that can bequeath
Some influence to the land he knows.

The contributors to this special issue demonstrate that Don has left us with something of enduring value.

Richard Joseph
Editor