



Charles Sturt
University

Engagement Case Study: Multi-Platform Palaeomeia Investigation and Engagement

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1. Executive Summary

This project consists of a three-year multi-platform, cross-disciplinary engagement project that resulted in several research outputs, many news articles and soft literature, dozens of hours of published audio content, and engagement with dozens of universities and cultural institutions around the world.

The project focused broadly on investigation and engagement in the field of 'palaeo-media' – that is, media content (including fiction, science communication, film, research and more) produced about palaeontology or extinct organisms. The project adopted multiple communication and media methodologies and lines of enquiry as a method to interrogate, engage with, and integrate a popular field of science.

The major component, but by no means the only component, of the project was the creative production of a podcast focused on science communication (specifically within palaeontology) and the links between science and media across that discipline. Activities associated with the podcast included end-to-end production, creation of all branding and social media, creation and maintenance of the podcast website, publication of related material and all other aspects of the production.

This report demonstrates the breadth of outcomes and outputs from the project as a major engagement case study at Charles Sturt University.

2. Background and Overview

1. Origins and Aims of the Project

The project originated in early 2022 as a form of practice-oriented investigation into science communication (see below) from the perspective of the communication/media discipline.

At that time, it was proposed to be a non-traditional research output (NTRO) in the form of a podcast which was called *Fossils and Fiction*. The aim of the podcast as identified in the HREA document submitted in March 2022 was:

a public podcast for the purposes of exploring the possibilities of podcasts for science communication. This is a method of practice-based research.

A secondary goal was identified as:

The project is an initiative in the researcher's continued turn toward science communication as a key discipline of research and teaching practice. It also contributes to ensuring the researcher is continually active in professional practice, which is important for Charles Sturt University's teaching goals.

Therefore, the project was designed with research, creative, professional practice, and pedagogical outcomes in mind.

Additionally, it emerged out of a generalised personal interest in ancient life, particularly but not exclusively dinosaurs and Australian megafauna, and a desire to merge this interest with my academic expertise and pursuits.

The project grew well beyond the podcast to encompass a broad-ranging series of media engagements, articles in venues such as *The Conversation*, book chapters and book reviews, among other outputs detailed in this report.

2. Science and Communication/Media

Science communication is:

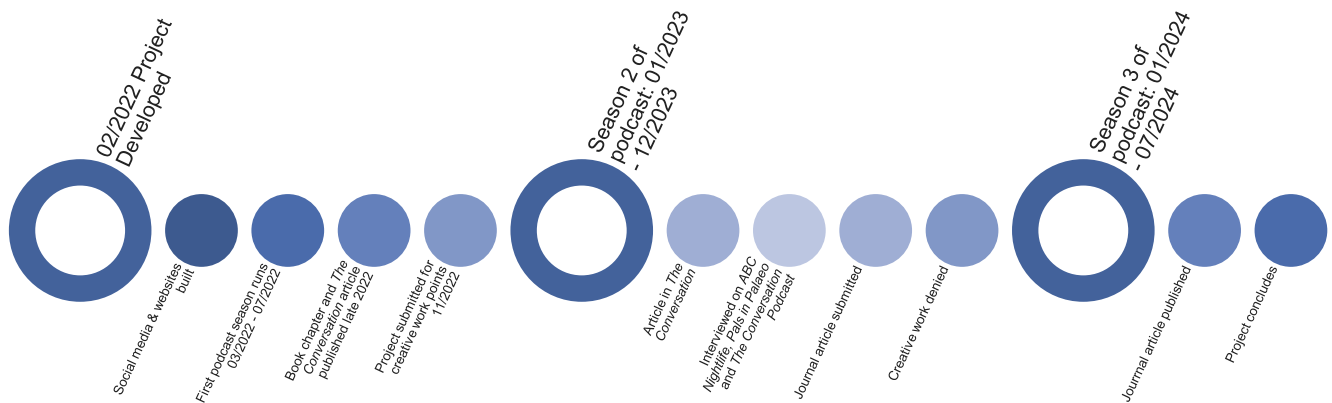
the use of appropriate skills, media, activities, and dialogue to produce one or more of the following personal responses to science: Awareness... Enjoyment... Interest... Opinions... Understanding (Burns et al., 2003, p. 191)

However, it is a field generally dominated by those who are trained as or practicing scientists. The field of communication and media studies, which roughly emerged as a modern academic discipline in the 1920s out of war-time propaganda and advertising studies, has often had little to do with science communication. Indeed, Burns et al. (2003, p. 183) claims that science communication is not “an offshoot of the discipline of communications.”

Despite this, science is widely represented in media of all kinds, from blockbuster films and novels to newspaper reports, podcasts, and on social media. It is both a popular topic for media and media is a common way for people to learn about science or be introduced to scientific concepts.

Therefore, another aim for this project was to examine the science-media nexus and bring existing communication methodologies to bear on the discipline.

3. Timeline of the Project



3. Outputs

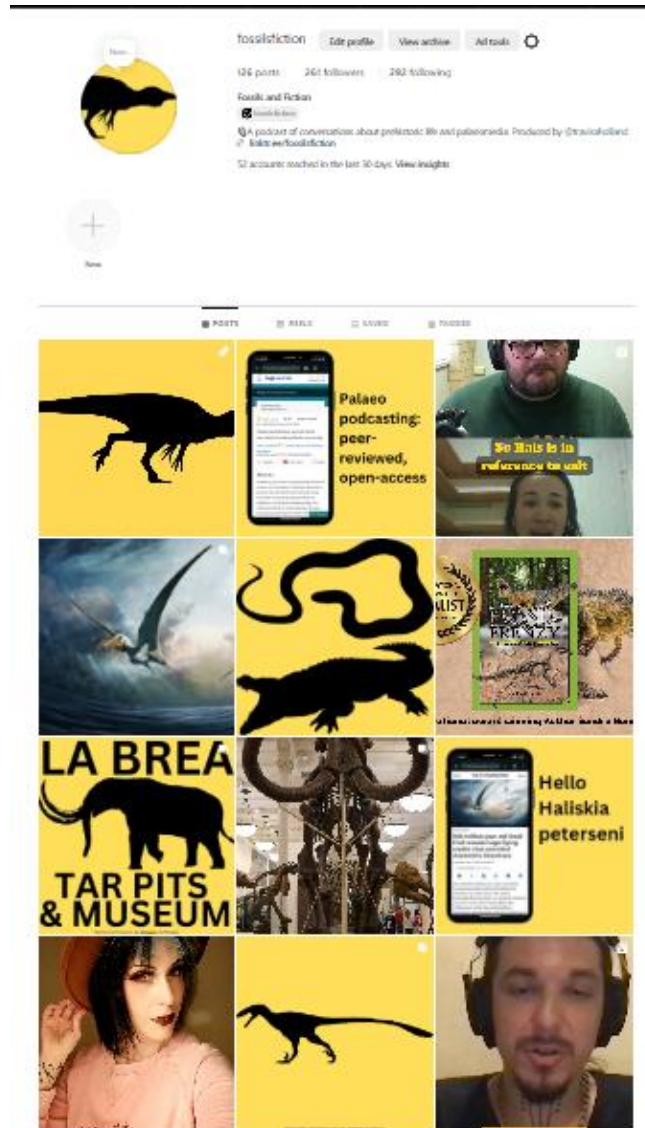
1. Podcast: Fossils and Fiction

A podcast is not merely defined by audio output but by the total assemblage of material that is featured as part of the podcast experience. This includes social media sites, websites, and graphic imagery such as the podcast logo. The development and implementation of these strategies involves a significant amount of creativity drawing on academic and professional expertise aimed at addressing the motivators for this project.

Nonetheless, the following details about the extensive podcast output are noted:

- 37 substantive episodes and two preview episodes were produced. This is a total of over 21 hours of audio and video content recorded, edited, and published online with an average length of nearly 35 minutes per episode.
- The podcast featured 40 guests from 6 nation states (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Canada and Indonesia)
- Guests included podcasters, museum workers, academic palaeontologists, other academic researchers, authors, artists, and PhD researchers.

Figure 1 below, a screenshot of the podcast Instagram account, is an example of the visual language, branding, and strategy involved in associated media items such as social media.



2. Soft Literature

Holland, T. (2023, June 12). How Jurassic Park changed film-making and our view of dinosaurs. *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/how-jurassic-park-changed-film-making-and-our-view-of-dinosaurs-203147>

Watt, L., & Holland, T. (2022). Toss aside those high heels: How Jurassic World's Claire Dearing lights a path for women in action films. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/toss-aside-those-high-heels-how-jurassic-worlds-claire-dearing-lights-a-path-for-women-in-action-films-182334>

3. Formal Research

Holland, T. (2023). Review: The Age of Mammals Nature, Development, & Palaeontology in the Long Nineteenth Century by Chris Manias. *Palaeontologia Electronica*, 26(3). <https://palaeo-electronica.org/content/review-age-of-mammals>

Holland, T. A. (2024). Palaeo podcasting: A practice-led extended-mixed methods case study. *Media International Australia*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X241265824>

Holland, T., & Watt, L. (2022). 'Sexism in Survival Situations': Reconsidering Gender in *Jurassic Park*. In S. Gerrard & R. Middlemost (Eds.), *Gender and Action Films 1980-2000* (pp. 123–136). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80117-506-720221009>

4. Media Coverage

PODCAST APPEARANCES

- March 2023: Short audio advertisement played on *Palaeocast*.
- July 2023: Full-length interview on *The Conversation Weekly* podcast <http://theconversation.com/thirty-years-after-jurassic-park-hit-movie-screens-its-impact-on-science-and-culture-remains-as-strong-as-ever-podcast-210110>
- September 2023: Mentioned on *I Know Dino*.
- January 2024: Full-length interview with Adele Pentland on *Pals in Palaeo*. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3gsToXsDy88NJwiRuCdct4>
- July 2024: Full-length interview with Will Harris and David Moscato on *Common Descent*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QU2WoyO_iw

RADIO

- July 2023: 770 CHQR/107.3 FM/630 CHED Alberta, Canada: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1DXM7ooNyFpIQmBAIBktuK?si=v6dMHMZXQquZG7VZrQpTIQ>
- June 2023: ABC Nightlife: 30 Years of Jurassic Park <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/nightlife/jurassicpark-dinosaurs-movies/102492598>

4. Engagement and Impact

1. Participants

Figure 2 below demonstrates the diversity of profession among guests who appeared on the podcast.

Count of Guest Role

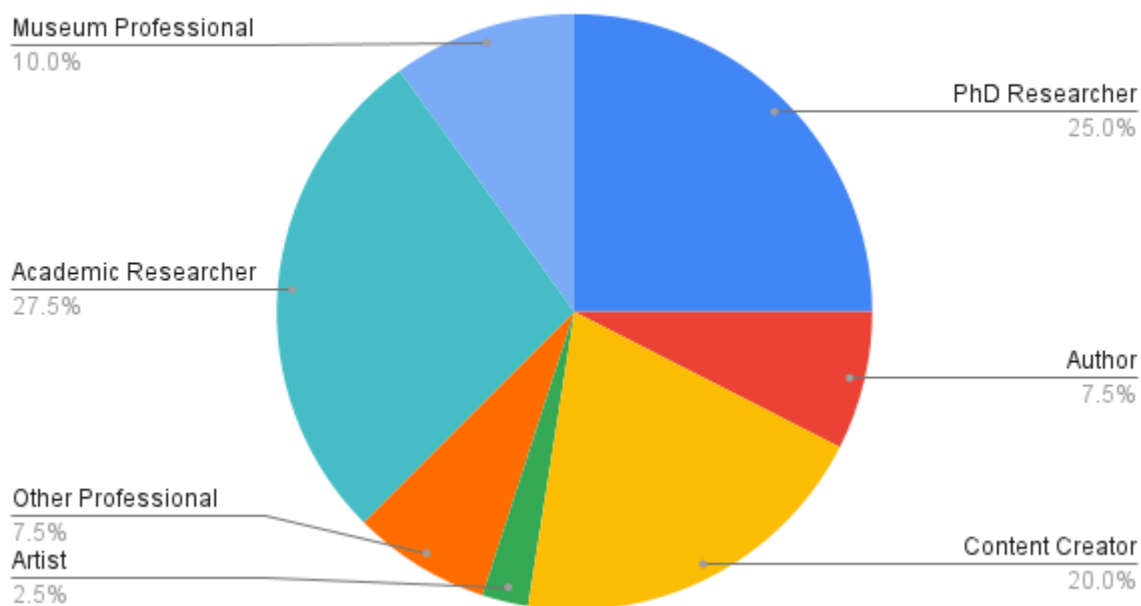
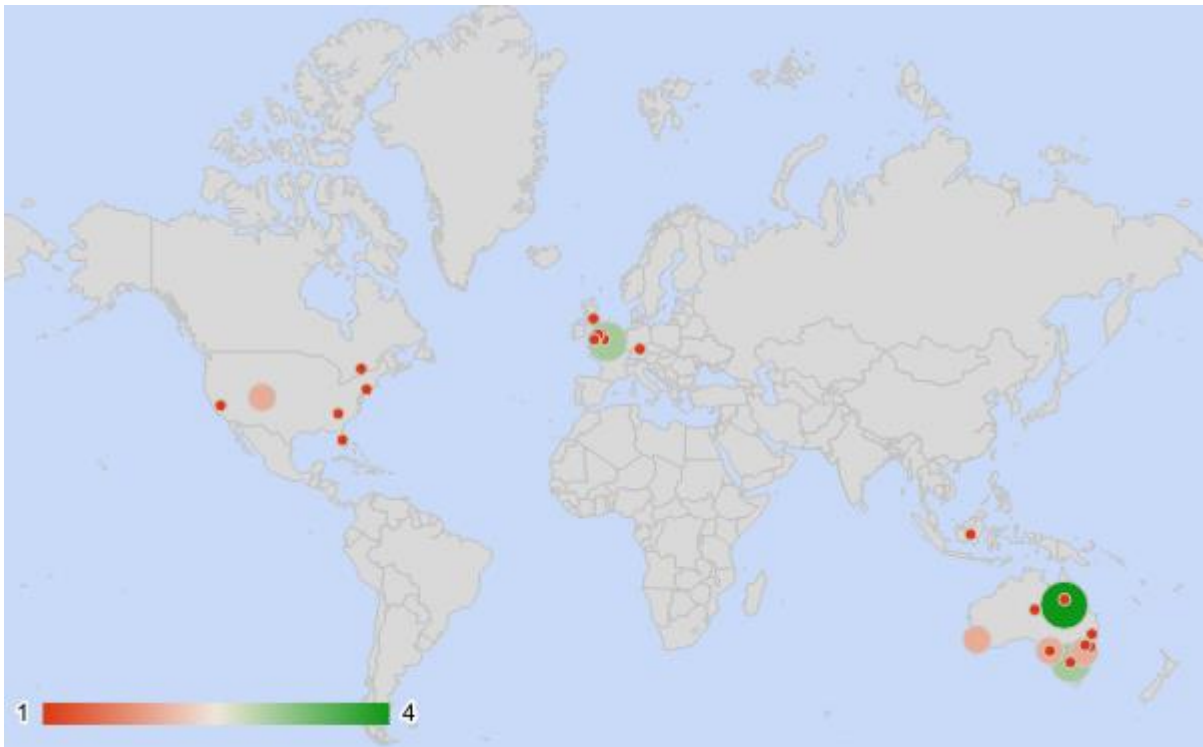


Figure 3 below demonstrates the varied locations of guests on the podcast, with larger green circles representing the greatest concentration of guests.



2. Podcast Audience

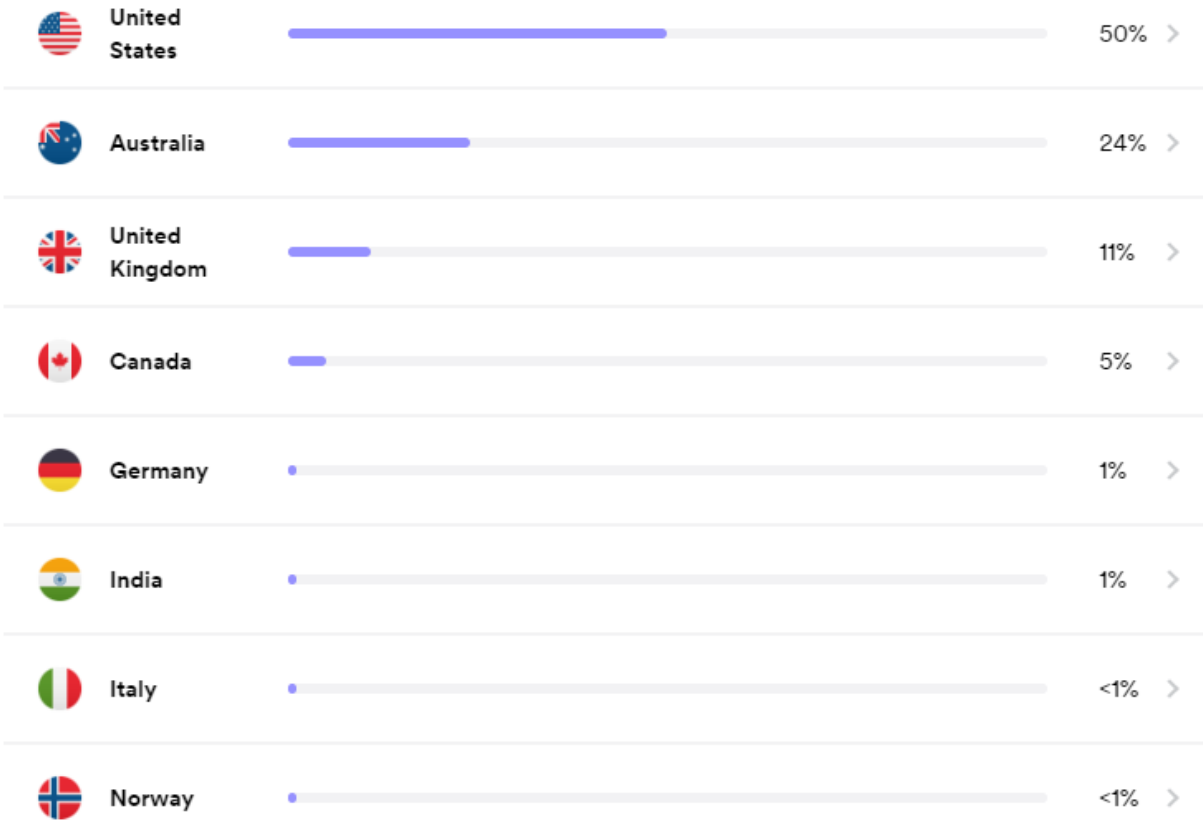
The podcast host, Spotify, records a total of 3143 listeners to the podcast feed through August 2024. YouTube records another 492 views of the podcast feed uploaded to that platform. In total, the audience listenership is therefore **3635** over the course of the publishing period from March 2022 through July 2024.

Figures 4-6 below present further demographic information from Spotify.

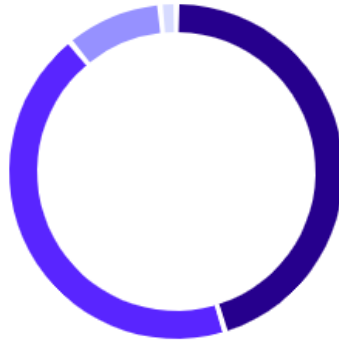
Figure 3 demonstrates that only 24% of the audience is based in Australia with the remainder international.

All of these audience figures demonstrate a substantial engagement with Charles Sturt University research.

Geographic location

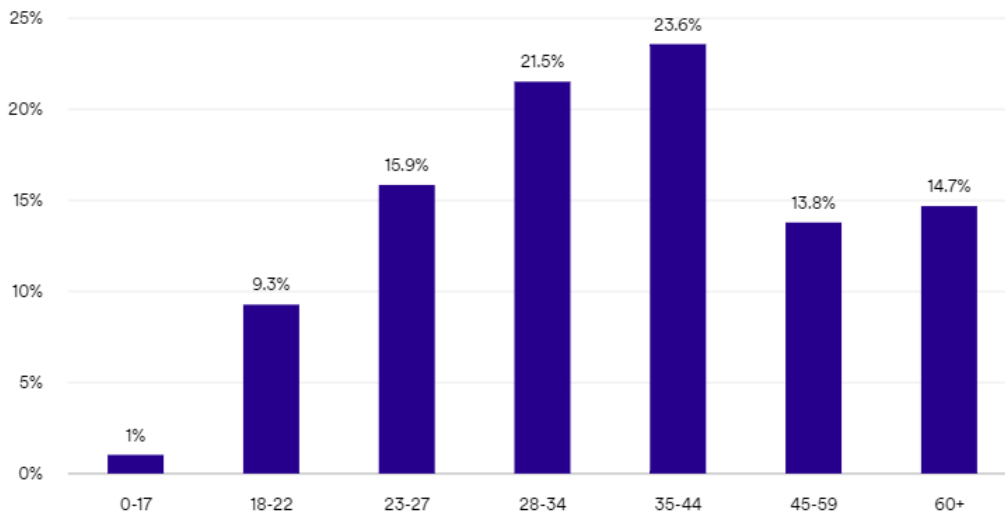


Gender



● Male	45.7%
● Female	44.2%
● Not specified	9%
● Non-binary	1%

Age



3. Social and Soft Literature Audience

- Tiktok: The podcast's TikTok account has received 76,162 views
- Instagram: The podcast's Instagram account reaches over 1000 accounts per 90 days on average
- 31,231 readers have accessed my articles from this project on *The Conversation*

5. References

Burns, T. W., O'Connor, D. J., & Stocklmayer, S. M. (2003). Science Communication: A Contemporary

Definition. *Public Understanding of Science*, 12(2), 183–202.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/09636625030122004>