Sharing knowledge in the spirit of Humboldt

Update, Dec 30, 2019: The official report, including program and book of abstracts is now available here.

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Regular readers of Language on the Move will have noticed that we have not published much in recent weeks. This is because our team has been busy hosting the 2019 Humboldt Symposium. We were excited to be able to welcome more than 130 attendees to Macquarie University.

Our guests included Humboldt Fellows from across Australia (AAvHF; Australian Association of von Humboldt Fellows) and New Zealand (NZAvHF; New Zealand Association of von Humboldt Fellows), early career researchers from these two countries and across the disciplines, and four keynote speakers, Professors Ingrid Gogolin (Language Education; Hamburg University), Dietmar Hoettecke (Physics Education; Hamburg University), Ulrich Volp (Theology; Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz) and Siouxsie Wiles (Microbiology; University of Auckland)
Thanks to generous funding from the Humboldt Foundation, we were able to engage in a unique interdisciplinary conversation around the theme “Sharing knowledge in the spirit of Humboldt”.

The Language-on-the-Move team brought Alexander von Humboldt to Macquarie University. Original artwork by Sadami Konchi.

The symposium aimed to rethink what “sharing knowledge” means in today’s world. It was a forum for debating the role of academic publishing, media engagement, social media, academic networks, research-industry links, interdisciplinary collaboration, and research communication in contexts of linguistic and cultural diversity. The program included panels devoted to sharing knowledge through science communication, sharing knowledge in a diverse world, sharing knowledge through media engagement, sharing knowledge beyond the academy, sharing knowledge between the humanities and sciences, and sharing knowledge through academic networks. The full program can be viewed here.

2019 marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), and the symposium was also an opportunity to reflect on Humboldt’s legacy. Humboldt was not only a pioneering researcher, explorer and thinker but also an extraordinary research communicator. Humboldt reminds us that conducting research has never been enough; knowledge needs to be shared to be meaningful.
One way in which the rich content and interactions of the symposium have been shared beyond the actual event is through creating an extensive Twitter record. Before, during and after the Humboldt Symposium 2019, hundreds of tweets were published under the hashtag #AvHMQ. Head over to Twitter to continue the conversation or simply enjoy the record and learn about fun aspects of the program, such as our amazing conference artist, Sadami Konchi.

Another way to look back at the Humboldt Symposium 2019 is by enjoying our slide show of photos taken by our roving photographer, Ana Sofia Bruzon.

Just before the conference I headed to the ABC Studio in Ultimo for a Late Night Live interview with Phillip Adams about Alexander von Humboldt and why we still care about him today. So if you’d like to learn more, listen to this 20-minute podcast.

The proceedings of the 2019 Humboldt Symposium “Sharing Knowledge in the Spirit of Humboldt” will be published next year in a special issue of the Journal of the Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW.