BEHIND GLASS DOORS
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Robert Crawford and Jackie Dickenson

BEHIND GLASS DOORS

The World of Australian Advertising Agencies 1959-1989
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Behind Glass Doors has had a long gestation and there are many people to thank.

The University of Melbourne provided two small grants in 2007 and 2008 that were used to seed the project. Thanks to the latter of these grants, we were able to fund a workshop attended by twenty current and former advertising practitioners in May 2009, at which we tested the feasibility of an oral history of the Australian industry. We thank everyone who came that day for their generous participation, but we are especially grateful to Mike Reed and Rosem’ry Bertel, whose enthusiasm for the project contributed greatly to its progress.

Two scholars deserve special thanks for their efforts at this stage of the project. First, we are ever grateful to Professor Susan Smulyan of Brown University who wowed the industry workshop with her knowledge of American advertising and helped them to grasp the value of an oral history of their industry. Second, our thanks go to Professor Liz McFall of the Open University, whose work provided the intellectual framework for the project and who, in 2010, though prevented by volcano ash from travelling to Melbourne as the guest speaker at a symposium on advertising histories, kindly made the trip later in the year and inspired our post-graduate students with her incisive analysis.
The Australian Research Council funded our project through its Discovery scheme and we are grateful to all of the team members who worked so hard to secure that funding: the Chief Investigators Professor John Sinclair of the University of Melbourne and Professor Linda Brennan of RMIT University, and the Partner Investigators Professor Sean Nixon of Essex University and the aforementioned Professor Smulyan. Professors Nixon and Smulyan both spent time in Australia collaborating with the team here, contributing to workshops in Melbourne and Sydney, and, in Professor Smulyan’s case, advising UTS post-graduates. Professor Smulyan was also an exceptionally generous host to the Australian team in her home city, and helped complete interviews and conduct research in the US.

Our team also included three outstanding Australian research scholars: Phillip Mills in Sydney who provided valuable contextual research in the early stages of the project, and, in Melbourne, Dr Rosemary Francis and Dr Wendy Dick. Dr Francis brought her considerable oral history skills and experience to the task of interviewing the Melbourne practitioners and Dr Dick transcribed those interviews, as well as organising archival material and generally helping to keep the project on track.

We are especially grateful to Rod Blakeney who allowed us to archive records and advertising material from his agency, Barry Banks Blakeney, which closed in 2014 after forty years, and to Toni Lawler, Luella Copeland-Smith, and Adelle Webster who gave us valuable documents relating to their advertising careers. Some of this material has been used to produce this book. We are also grateful to Jeremy Light for providing access to past copies of *AdNews*, to Ash Farr at McCann for providing access to the agency’s scrapbook from the early 1960s, and to
Acknowledgements

John Gutteridge at J. Walter Thompson for putting us in contact with the agency’s alumni network.

Robert would like to thank the School of Communication in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at UTS for providing him with the time and resources to complete the project. He would also like to express an enormous thanks to his wife, Rebecca, who has provided unwavering support for the project from the beginning all the way to the end.

And finally, our sincerest thanks go to the 120 former advertising professionals in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, and New York who answered our questions with generosity and unwavering enthusiasm. Without their support, this history would never have been written.
The advertising agency business has played a pivotal role in the emergence of a consumer society in contemporary Australia, and its integration with the global order. *Behind Glass Doors* lets us see the history of how this process developed over a decisive period in the latter twentieth century, culminating in what is rightly identified here as the industry’s ‘golden age’.

Robert Crawford and Jackie Dickenson are leading scholars in the history and historiography of the advertising industry in Australia. Their approach is rigorously academic, but it also demonstrates a sound knowledge of the structure and workings of the industry, including the actual practices of advertising. Accordingly, this book will appeal to people involved in the advertising business, at the same time as it is welcomed by scholars as a uniquely informed contribution to the nation’s economic and cultural history.

Indeed, it is the extensive interviews with actual advertising agency personnel of the era which forms the prime information source throughout the book. The list of interviewees reminds us of how many distinguished Australians began their creative careers in advertising – Peter Carey and Ken Done, for instance – but it also includes some of the foremost entrepreneurs and
managers who built and maintained the leading agencies of the period. The authors are able to draw on their respondents’ recollections in a way which is rich in colour and evocative of their times and milieu, but woven into a valid historical narrative which moves over the crucial decades, never bogged down in mere anecdote.

They begin with the influx of the US and UK advertising agencies from 1959, and the consequent impact of this internationalisation on the professional orientation of advertising personnel. The advertising industry in Australia thus came to be positioned between the influences of both these countries, notably in its experience of the ‘creative revolution, and subsequently also as a stepping-stone to South East Asia. Pursuing their central theme of the impact of globalisation upon professionalisation, Crawford and Dickenson cover recruitment and training; relations with clients; support staff; and agency principals. They trace the shifting tensions between creativity and financial management inherent in advertising, and provide comparative insights across agencies with regard to how they adapted their practices in response to global trends. The coverage takes us through the golden age up to 1989, after which new challenges have arisen to confront the industry, both nationally and globally, in the digital era.

*Behind Glass Doors* is the major output from Australian Research Council Discovery grant DP120100777 Globalising the magic system: a history of advertising industry practices in Australia 1959-1989, funded 2012–2014, with myself and Robert Crawford as Chief Investigators. Jackie Dickenson was the Senior Research Associate on the project, while Partner
Investigators were Susan Smulyan of Brown University (USA); Sean Nixon of the University of Essex (UK) and Linda Brennan of RMIT University.

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BEGG, Austin. Agency Management. Worked Melbourne from 1960s. Agencies: Young and Rubicam (Y&R), Begg Dow Priday (BDP).


BOSTON, Margaret. Researcher/Planner. Worked London from 1950s. Agency: O&M.


COWPER, John. Account Management. Worked Sydney from 1960s. Agencies: Hansen Rubensohn-McCann Erickson, Fortune, Murray Evans, JWT.

Interviewees


DAWSON, Ian. Account Management. Worked Sydney from 1970s. Agency: JWT and, MDA, Mojo MDA.


FARRELLY, Tania. Planner. Worked Melbourne from 1980s. Agency: O&M.


FULTON, Margaret. Account Manager. Worked Sydney from 1950s. Agency: JWT.


GRAHAM, Greg. Media. Worked Sydney from 1970s. Agencies: McCann-Erickson, USP Needham, DDB, JWT.


HARRIS, Bruce. Agency Management. Worked Sydney from 1950s. Agencies: Lintas, George Patterson, SSC&B:Lintas.


JACKSON, Marie. Account Management. Worked Melbourne from 1970s. Agency: O&M.

JARRETT, Bruce. Creative Director. Worked Sydney from 1950s. Agency: George Patterson.

JOBBINS, Joy. Account Management. Worked Sydney and Melbourne from 1950s. Agencies: Richardson Cox, Carden Advertising, TAB.


KINSELLA, Graeme. Account Management. Worked New Zealand, Sydney, and Kuala Lumpur from 1960s. Agencies: Dobbs-Wiggins McCann-Erickson, Hertz Walpole, Leo Burnett, George Patterson, SSB/Fortune Communications, FCB.

Interviewees


MERCHANT, Dennis. Media. Worked Sydney from 1950s. Agencies: Canny Paramor & Canny (CPC), Jackson Wain, Hansen Rubensohn-McCann Erickson, Y&R.


NICOL, Helene. Production. Worked Melbourne and Sydney from 1970s. Agencies: Carden Advertising, Masius, SSB.


REED, Mike. Post-Production. Worked Melbourne from 1970s. Company: Mike Reed & Partners Post Production (MRPPP).


RITCHIE, Michael. Production. Worked Sydney from 1980s. Agencies: George Patterson, O&M.


RUTHERFORD, Fysh. Creative. Worked Melbourne and Hong
Interviewees

Kong from 1970s. Agencies: MDA, Clemenger, Leo Burnett, KSB, Connaghan & May, Masius, George Patterson.


STEEDMAN, John. Media. Worked Sydney and Adelaide from 1970s. Agencies: McCann-Erickson, JWT.


* Agencies recorded up to 1989.
INTRODUCTION

As a fresh-faced Michael Ball passed through the glass doors at the Melbourne office of the J. Walter Thompson in 1958, he had little knowledge of the world he was entering. After a short interview with the creative director, Ball landed a job as a junior copywriter. His first question did not concern salary or benefits; it was simply ‘what is a copywriter?’ The former University of Melbourne student knew more about theology and New Testament Greek than he did about the art of writing and producing advertisements.¹

His unfamiliarity with the advertising industry was something shared by the majority of those who entered the agency industry at this time. Ball would have no formal training scheme to help him adjust. Like so many others, he learnt on the job – writing in the office in the mornings, drinking with other creatives in the afternoons, and sometimes writing again in the evenings. Ball was a quick learner, and he soon developed a sophisticated understanding of advertising and the advertising industry.

Three years after joining JWT, Ball relocated to New York with his wife, where he worked as account executive on the Shell account. When the account moved to Ogilvy & Mather, Ball moved across with it. Over the next three decades, Ball rose through the ranks of the multi-national agency, improving its
everyday operations and leading its entry into Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. At one stage, he was touted as the successor to David Ogilvy, the founder of O&M and one of the giants of twentieth-century advertising. In many ways, Ball’s rise reflects the story of Australia’s advertising agencies during the period spanning the 1960s through to the end of the 1980s. Over this time, these agencies progressively adopted a more professional and global outlook.

The industry that Ball joined in the 1950s was different from the industry that he left some three decades later. Australia’s advertising agencies in the 1950s were operating in a small market at the outer reaches of the British Empire. After the enforced austerity of the Depression and war years, Australians were finally in a position to consume, and the advertising industry was ready to help out. At this time, advertising agencies were not the only firms creating advertisements. Department stores such as Myer and David Jones also ran their own advertising departments that surpassed many agencies in terms of size and creative output. Radio stations similarly employed their own copywriters and production teams to create spots and announcements for clients.

The agencies themselves were still a cottage industry. Aside from JWT, Lintas, and a handful of local firms, the standard Australian agency was a relatively small operation. As they were dealing with local newspapers and radio stations, the vast majority of agencies were single-city operations. Most bore the name of their entrepreneurial founder, who had started the agency working as an account executive and copywriter. The founders’ ability to attract business had enabled them to employ further staff and, subsequently, establish specialised departments covering account service, advertisement production and agency
administration. Of these, it was the account service department that held sway.

Over the 1960s advertising agencies in Australia began to change. The momentum did not come from within. It was the agencies’ clients, the advertisers, who drove it. In the context of the global post-war economic boom, Australia was fast becoming an affluent consumer market. With international firms eager to enter this lucrative arena, competition for the consumer’s attention was intensifying. In this climate advertising became an indispensable tool. Competition and television-commercial costs prompted clients to invest more in their advertising and marketing strategies. Advertising expenditure continued to climb throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, and agencies were the key beneficiaries. They were able to indulge themselves in the production of large campaigns and were rewarded with enormous salaries and enviable work conditions. Advertising had become a glamour industry. Dazzled by the agencies’ stylish offices and generous lunches, many advertisers were happy to give their agencies free rein in the hope that the ensuing campaigns would have the nation singing their brand name.

Bigger budgets came with bigger expectations. International advertisers were particularly keen to see a replication of the support offered by their American or British agencies. With the newly arrived branches of multi-national agencies happily obliging, local agencies were forced to follow suit. The professionalisation of the advertising agency affected various aspects of its operations and structure as well as its creative output. Education and training would be an integral part of this process. When Ball joined JWT, few in the industry had matriculated from high school. By the time he departed, a significant proportion of new staff had a degree. This up-skilling also revealed
itself in the attention paid to marketing. Agencies similarly paid greater attention to their own training schemes, ensuring that employees were inculcated with their specific approach. Although agencies hoped that the more disciplined approach would also enhance their creative output, the reality was that the creative department marched to a different beat. It had long been and still remained a random mixture of personalities and backgrounds. However, the creative department’s position in the agency hierarchy went from being peripheral to central. While clients enjoyed long lunches with their account service executives, their primary reason for hiring an agency was its capacity to create ads that worked. They wanted the magic and they were willing to pay for it.

As agencies realised that their reputation was only as good as the reels they showed to prospective clients, they were prepared to expend more effort and significantly more money on keeping their creative stars happy. This emphasis on creativity not only affected the structure and operations of the advertising agencies, it would also have a direct impact on the type of campaigns they created. The professionalisation of the agencies was also being driven by the globalisation of the advertising industry. Multi-national agencies directly and indirectly exposed Australian advertising professionals to the latest practices and ideas being implemented abroad. Changes in technology further facilitated this access. As the advertising agencies came to be seen as more professional and worldly in their outlook and practices, they were able to satisfy the advertisers’ expectations. Ultimately, the agency’s successful repositioning of themselves as glamorous partners rather than mere service-providers to their clients created a ‘golden age’ for Australian advertising agencies and, in particular, the managers and the creatives.
It was not, of course, a ‘golden age’ for everyone. The changes affecting agency operations meant that employees in certain departments were becoming vulnerable. Account service staff saw their status slowly erode as clients and agency management placed a new emphasis on creative work, while support staff, such as tea ladies and lift operators, fell victim to the agencies’ drive for greater profitability. Others struggled with the prevailing agency culture. Australian advertising’s hyper-masculine environment meant that the agency could be a challenging and difficult workplace for women. Few rose through the ranks, fewer still found their way into senior positions within the agency hierarchy.

Advertising’s glory days were fleeting. The forces that enabled advertising to grow from a cottage industry to a global enterprise would also consume it. As agencies adopted a more professional approach to their work, so too did their clients. Advertisers were also training staff. The appointment of marketing managers and, later, brand managers to oversee their marketing strategy would have a significant impact on their relationship with the agency. As the managing directors focused on running their businesses, they left it to their marketing experts to deal with the agency.

For the advertising CEO David Mattingly, the denial of access to key figures in the client’s firm ‘was a major revolution in the advertising world, it changed everything’. Agency frustrations with their perceived demotion were compounded by the marketing team’s attitude towards advertising. They considered advertising to be just one part of a broader marketing strategy, and demanded that the agency follow their directives. As the agency–client relationship was relegated to junior marketing executives, clients reduced their advertising budgets yet still
demanded the same level of service that they had previously enjoyed.

With less money and influence, advertising’s glamour began to fade. Globalisation similarly eroded the status of Australian advertising agencies. While technology had facilitated greater connectivity, Australia’s size and distance nevertheless remained an issue. Individual Australian advertising agents certainly fared well on the global stage, but Australian agencies did not enjoy the same opportunities. They were subject to the decisions made elsewhere by clients (concerning budgets or strategy) and agency head offices (client selection or office operations). The decline of the Australian advertising agency in the 1990s underscores the degree to which the period spanning the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s was a high point for the industry.

Studies of the globalisation of advertising have generally focused on the decisions and actions of the largest multi-national agencies and, to a lesser extent, those responsible for leading them. Such accounts have identified the key turning points and the defining characteristics of the industry’s globalisation, but their focus on the activities occurring at the macro scale has overlooked the ways in which local agencies and staff engaged in these processes.

While more recent accounts have begun to redress this imbalance, they nevertheless tend to focus on the actions of key agencies or prioritise the voices of leading figures. Such emphases reflect the nature of the sources at hand. As few agencies have maintained their archives, those that are accessible (such as the J. Walter Thompson material held at Duke University’s Hartmann Center) have understandably had a significant impact on scholarship concerning the historical development of the advertising agency business. The decisions to keep certain
Introduction

materials and to dispose of others have also skewed scholarship towards the actions of key agency figures. A similar emphasis can be discerned in the industry press, where the journalists’ sense of newsworthiness sees them following the big moves in the industry and speaking only to major industry figures. Of course, the agencies have been equally engaged in this process, circulating media releases, offering interviews with key figures and dishing the dirt on competitors. While we value and use these same sources, we feel that they function much as the ubiquitous glass doors fitted throughout the agencies – providing a glimpse of the agency at work but restricting access to it.

In Advertising: A Cultural Economy, Liz McFall contends that academics have devoted too much time to the analysis of advertisements as texts and too little time examining how those texts are produced. Her warning against ‘[d]isregarding the practices and institutions of advertising’ is relevant to our study.6 We believe that advertising cannot be fully understood without reference to those who are responsible for creating and selling it. Of course, we do not claim to be pioneers in this field. In his sociological study of British advertising agencies in the 1990s, Sean Nixon observes that scholars examining contemporary advertising practices have paid ‘some attention … to the formal practices, institutional arrangements and types of expertise prevalent within this sector’.7 Nixon’s study would dig deeper to examine the social make-up of the British advertising industry, its informal cultures and the subjective identities of key practitioners. Building on the foundations set by McFall and Nixon, we seek to explore questions within the Australian context, albeit from a historical perspective.

This study also expands on the work undertaken on Australian advertising history. In 1984, John Spierings observed
that the advertising industry cared little for its past and that any
attempts ‘at writing advertising history are hindered by the pau-
city of original primary source material’. Since then, a growing
body of work has managed to overcome these challenges.
Although John Sinclair’s *Images Incorporated* focuses on adver-
tising as an international institution, its Australian references
nevertheless situate Australia’s advertising industry within a
broader context. Robert Crawford’s *But Wait There’s More…*
provides a more national perspective, outlining the development
of Australia’s advertising industry over the twentieth century
and the degree to which it was informed by an abiding desire
for legitimacy. More recently, Jackie Dickenson’s *Australian
Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century* uses the experiences
of individual women to illustrate the ‘ambiguous role of women
in the advertising industry’ in Australia and, indeed, abroad.
*Behind Glass Doors* sits somewhere between these studies. By
connecting the local, the national, and the global over an
extended period, we seek to develop a more comprehensive
account of advertising agencies, their everyday operations, and
the people responsible for them, as well as the different ways that
they have connected with the world around them.

Our study uses oral history testimony to give voice to the
people who worked in the industry. Patrick Fridenson’s contri-
bution to *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* claimed that
‘Oral history has become a standard practice in business history
for the study of the 20th and 21st centuries to an extent that is still
unrivalled in most other parts of the historical profession’. Rob
Perks, however, suggests such claims may be exaggerated. While
various American business historians have readily taken up the
call to use oral history, Perks observes that ‘oral evidence has
been absent or subsidiary’ in British business history, adding that
'virtually nothing about the use of oral sources in business and
corporate history, or about commissioned oral history, has been
published in *Oral History* during its forty-year history'. Perks
suggests that this reflects ‘the political origins of the British oral
history movement, which emerged … as a radical alternative
to the traditional historical study of male elites’. The situation
in Australia appears similar. A survey of the catalogue of the
*Oral History Australia Journal* reveals some forty-eight articles on
‘work’, which is defined as ‘articles about paid and unpaid work,
unemployment, the 1930s Depression, and the labour move-
ment and labour history’. The journal has published twenty-four
articles under the ‘Industry, Business and Commerce’ heading,
which covers ‘banks and banking, organisations and associations,
and public sector services as well as industrial and company
histories’.

For their part, Australia’s business historians appear to have
been, arguably, even more reluctant to engage with oral history.
Since 1997, only three articles in the *Australian Economic History
Review* have cited oral history as a keyword or a major methodo-
logical approach. By interviewing the leaders, the creatives and
the unsung workers, we hope to help bridge the divide between
Australia’s oral historians and business historians.

This study of the advertising agency in Australia is based on
the insights and reflections revealed during our interviews with
120 men and women who either worked in or with Australian
advertising agencies over the period spanning 1959 to 1989. Some
enjoyed long and illustrious careers in the advertising industry,
others worked only briefly before pursuing a different course.
A handful is still employed in the industry. As Part II reveals,
our interviewees worked across all departments in the adver-
tising agency – management, creative, account service, media,
production and administrative support. The vast majority spent time working in the industry’s key agencies, namely McCann-Erickson, J. Walter Thompson, George Patterson, Clemenger BBDO, Ogilvy & Mather, Monahan Dayman Adams, Mojo and The Campaign Palace. Each semi-structured interview followed the respondents’ professional career in advertising and invited them to reflect on their experiences of life at the advertising agency. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and New York. Other interviews were conducted over the phone and via email. Our interviewees were universally generous with their time, with interviews generally running for one to three hours. Over the course of these interviews, the participants offered detailed and often candid insights into the professional, technical, political, cultural and social aspects of agency life. In revealing themselves to be clever, articulate and insightful individuals, our interviewees exemplified the reasons why the advertising agency business had prospered during the period under study.

The interaction between globalisation and professionalisation that underpinned the advertising industry’s best years forms the structure of this book. We have therefore divided the study into two parts. Part One follows the globalisation of the advertising industry and reveals the ways that Australian agencies and advertising professionals were involved in this process. Part Two focuses on the advertising agency and the professionalisation of its everyday operations. While the two sections are distinct, their stories are fundamentally intertwined. There would be no professionalisation without globalisation and no globalisation without professionalisation.

Part One demonstrates that Australians were actively engaged in the globalisation of the advertising agency industry.
Chapter 1 opens with the arrival of McCann-Erickson in Australia from New York in 1959 and follows the actions of McCann-Erickson and the other multi-national agencies as they commenced operations in Australia in the 1960s. Ensuring that their new operations had the right outlook, the right approach, and the right staff would be an abiding concern for each new arrival. Such efforts not only laid the foundations for their own operations, they also affected local agencies that had no international connections.

In Chapter 2, we examine the multi-national agencies’ efforts to train staff in their Australian offices. By sending Australians to work in New York, London and other major offices, these agencies were establishing consistent approaches and outlooks across their networks. The multi-national agencies were not the only ones to benefit from the experiences gained during these travels. As the travellers subsequently moved to other agencies, the skills and insights they gained from their time abroad were transferred across the industry.

Such experiences are explored further in Chapter 3, which focuses on Australia’s relationship with South East Asia. The region not only offered further opportunities for Australians to gain international experience, it also enabled Australian agencies to revisit their place within the international agency networks. Building on historical networks and Australia’s proximity to the region, Australian agencies played a leading role in integrating the region into the global agency networks. In the process, Australia also emerges as an active proponent of globalisation.

Chapter 4 brings the focus back to Australia and explores the so-called Creative Revolution in Australia in the 1970s. Tired of the formulaic work and regimented practices at the
Behind Glass Doors

multi-national agencies, a new generation of Australian creatives opted to open their own boutique agencies that embraced creative work. As clients made it clear that they wanted a creative campaign, the multi-national agencies began to follow the boutiques’ lead and increasingly invested in enhancing their own creative credentials. The emergence of independent media agencies to service the boutiques’ media needs was another result of the Creative Revolution, and one that would have significant long-term impact on all agencies and their operations.

Covering the 1980s, Chapter 5 begins with an industry brimming with confidence. Billings were at an all-time high and agencies excitedly eyed the new opportunities in an increasingly globalised marketplace. Some responded to these opportunities methodically, others were positively bullish in their approach. As the realities of dealing with global advertisers and global agency networks revealed themselves, however, this self-assured outlook gradually dissipated. And, by the end of the decade, it was clear that the golden age was drawing to an end.

Part Two ventures beyond the glass doors at reception and into the agencies’ plush offices to uncover the degree to which the professionalisation brought by globalisation affected the everyday practices of all departments. In Chapter 6 we trace the ways in which young people entered the advertising business, as well as the training they received, finding a gradual professionalisation of qualifications linked to the expansion of university education, especially from the late 1960s. A decade later the industry underwent another shift, as more women than ever before took up advertising work, claiming the lower-level jobs now eschewed by tertiary-educated men.

Behind this rise in education and professional standards were the agencies’ clients, who were themselves taking advantage of
Australia’s expanding university system. Chapter 7 explores this client-driven change in more depth, as it examines the shifting nature of agency–client relationships across the period. The ‘hail-fellow-well-met’ approach to keeping a client happy – an approach that had worked for most of the twentieth century – became less potent from the 1960s, as better-educated clients demanded more accountability from their agencies. The restructuring that grew out of the global financial challenges of the early 1970s and the end of the long boom would lead, eventually, to ever-more assertive clients in this respect, until, by the onset of the recession at the end of the 1980s, they were questioning the financial structures at the heart of the agency–client relationship.

Chapter 8 explores the shift in power from account management to the creative department – the copywriters and art directors – which began during the 1960s, as Australian advertising agencies responded first to the creative revolution that emanated from New York, then incorporated the British version of that revolution by employing hundreds of expatriate copywriters and art directors. As boutique agencies set a higher bar, creative standards rose and talented creatives became increasingly valuable. By the 1980s, creative directors had become the agencies’ highest-paid executives, although their reign would be short-lived.

Chapter 9 turns to groups of advertising workers much less celebrated than those working in the creative department. These were the support staff – the researchers, media buyers, administration and finance staff, traffic managers, production managers, freelancers and suppliers – whose efforts were crucial to the smooth running of an advertising agency. The chapter explores the effects of technological change and professionalisation on these groups, finding that, in many respects, the everyday
lives of these workers were more affected by change across this period than those working in the core areas of the agency, for example, account management and the creative department. This is especially true when their experience is compared to that of the subjects of the final chapter.

Agency principals – the CEOs and managing directors – are the subjects of Chapter 10. This chapter traces the shift from family-run agencies to the sophisticated, highly professional agencies of the late 1980s, examining the changes that drove that shift. It also explores the challenges principals faced in these years, including securing and keeping new business in an increasingly competitive market. Most agencies also struggled to hang on to good staff, and the chapter discusses the strategies the best agencies employed to address this problem. With the exception of increased expectations of their financial performance imposed by globalisation, this group was less affected by change in this period than others in the agency.

Looking back on the period spanning the 1960s to the 1980s, Alex Hamill observes that ‘It was probably the great creative era’ for Australian advertising agencies. Exciting, fun, and awash with money as they rode the back of the long boom, agencies were a glamorous workplace unlike any other in Australia. Such a climate attracted highly creative and intelligent individuals, as well as a fair share of eccentrics. Australian advertising certainly had its share of mad men and women, and it is hardly surprising that so many interviewees likened their agency experiences to the television series *Mad Men*. Stories of staff using motorcycles, guns, and chainsaws in offices have become the stuff of agency folklore. But by the end of the 1980s, such stories were already becoming a thing of the past. Some glamour remained, but the twin forces of globalisation and professionalisation that had
underpinned the agency industry’s development over the last three decades were fundamentally changing their operations as well as the type of person they were letting in. ‘In 1990 I wouldn’t have been hired, full stop’, muses Hamill, who headed Australia’s largest agency in 1990 having entered the industry as a 15-year-old despatch boy. His progress is that of the industry writ large. As we listen to the insights and experiences of those who worked in Australian agencies during these three decades, we hear the story of an industry whose form and function helped usher Australia into the global age.
Rumours circulate quickly in the advertising industry. So when the senior vice-president and general manager of McCann-Erickson’s international operations landed in Sydney in May 1959, the chatter soon began. Was McCann-Erickson setting up an Australian branch? If so, when? How would they do it? Interviewed by the trade journal Broadcasting and Television (B&T) shortly after arriving, Arthur (Art) L. Grimes was still light on the details. ‘We don’t know how we’re going about it yet, whether we’ll open up our own office, or whether we’ll do it in co-operation with another agency’, the New York native explained. He therefore wanted to meet the locals and to ascertain whether or not an Australian operation was worth the cost. However, Grimes was certain about one thing: ‘I am here to make a decision on it, after which I may need to return to gain financial committee approval.’ Within six months, McCann-Erickson announced its decision. The Sydney Morning Herald covered the announcement with headline: ‘Aust., U.S. Agencies in Merger’, while the New York Times’ headline offered a more revealing interpretation of the move: ‘McCann is invading Australia’. Over the next decade, the steady flow of overseas agencies setting up operations in Australia suggested that the New York Times had, in fact, been right.
Arriving in Australia

McCann-Erickson’s arrival in Australia in 1959 signalled a new era for Australia’s advertising industry. While overseas agencies had been operating in Australia since the 1920s, their impact on the local advertising industry was restricted by their lack of numbers. When Grimes first visited Australia, there were only two agencies operating as local offices of a multinational corporation. By 1970, eleven of the top fifteen billing agencies in Australia had international owners. The sheer number of agencies moving into Australia over the course of the 1960s meant that they had a more profound impact on the local advertising industry. This chapter will explore this influence by examining the multinational agencies’ differing strategies for entering Australia, their efforts to establish a functional branch office, and their active importation of ideas and skills. Such practices demonstrate the agencies’ efforts to implement a systematised approach to establishing global networks.
Old Networks
The first foreign-owned agencies to arrive in Australia did so in the interwar period. Their reasons for entering Australia varied. Some were drawn by the prospect of accessing Australia’s small but expanding consumer market while others had been compelled to do so by their clients. The agencies’ strategies for entering Australia also differed – from the entrepreneurial to the methodical. Their common decision to enter Australia revealed, however, that agencies had long possessed the desire and the capacity to develop global networks.

Establishing its Sydney office in 1924, the New Zealand–based Goldberg Advertising was the first foreign agency to commence operations in Australia. The office quickly built up business and, within three years, the agency’s proprietor Frank Goldberg relocated the agency’s head office from Wellington to Sydney. The agency continued to operate until 1968, when it was bought out by the British agency Masius, Wynne-Williams.

In 1925 the British Samson Clark agency opened an office in Melbourne. Noting that ‘it was decided to make the attempt & to run it for a year unless the prospects seemed very doubtful, in which case it would be closed earlier’, the agency’s directors revealed a rather phlegmatic approach to expanding their operations abroad. Three staff members were despatched to establish the office, including one of the agency’s directors. The agency quickly found its footing and the Samson Clark Gazette was soon reporting that the ‘regular Australian mails reveal fresh progress every week’. Significantly, the agency sought to capitalise on its networks. While its British clients had been using Australian firms to place advertising in the local press, the Australian branch would take over this role ‘[as] these contracts expire’, ensuring that ‘all the incomings from these accounts in our own hands’.
Arriving in Australia

The Depression saw the agency merge with Price-Berry in 1930 to form ‘the largest advertising firm in Australia’. The merger collapsed during World War II, leading Hugh Berry to establish Hugh Berry Advertising (renamed Berry Currie in 1960).

Campbell-Ewald’s entry into Australia was short-lived. In 1929 the *Sunday Times* reported the formation of ‘the new Australian-Canadian form of advertising service agents, Campbell-Ewald’. Seeing the global expansion of the General Motors corporation, the Canadian office of the Detroit-based agency was hoping to take advantage of its American and Empire connections. Rather than setting up from scratch, the agency opted to buy into a local firm. With little knowledge of Australia, the Canadians asked prominent businessman Sir Mark Sheldon for advice. A board member of Tooheys, Sheldon recommended the Fox Advertising Service, which handled the brewery’s account. Unfortunately for Campbell-Ewald, Fox was unprofessional at best and ill-suited to being a subsidiary of a large firm. In addition to new levels of administration, the Canadians would send through leads and recommendations. Incompetence ensured that little eventuated. Consequently, former staffer Roger Welch was required to write ‘long reports to Toronto inventing excuses for our non-success. This was a big strain on the imagination.’ As losses continued to mount, Campbell-Ewald withdrew from Australia. However, the Campbell-Ewald name did not entirely disappear from Australian advertising – it would reappear in Australia in the 1960s.

The J. Walter Thompson (JWT) agency would realise Campbell-Ewald’s dream when it landed the General Motors (GM) international account. As part of the deal, JWT agreed to establish an office wherever GM had an office. With GM plants operating in Melbourne and Adelaide, JWT prepared
to enter Australia. Discussing the agency’s takeover of the GM account, James Webb Young, the head of JWT’s international operations, noted that ‘it is entirely possible that a plan similar to that contemplated in Canada might be worked out as there are a number of agencies in Australia about the same type as the Canadian agencies’. Australia, he added, ‘presents no language difficulty [and] should be one of the easiest for us to tackle’.9

In 1930 JWT entered Australia, opening offices in Melbourne and Sydney. Like others in the JWT network, it was expected that the Australian offices would be self-sufficient within a year and that the profits for the following year would be used to pay off the company’s investment.10 The Depression and the loss of the GM account forced the Melbourne office to close. Timely account acquisitions narrowly averted a similar story in Sydney. However, as the economy improved, so too did the fortunes of JWT Sydney. The office deftly leveraged its connections with New York and London to enhance its operations. Research had been identified as a unique service from the very outset and Australian staff received ‘a great deal of useful literature from JWT in New York’.11

Although other agencies such as Weston claimed to operate market research departments, JWT identified its market research operations as part of the JWT brand.12 Its commitment to research went beyond publicity, JWT’s research department would prove to be a fertile training ground for pioneering market researchers William McNair and Sylvia Ashby.13 The growing popularity of radio in the late 1930s provided another opportunity for JWT to tap into American expertise. In 1939 the agency brought out Phil Mygatt from the US via Canada to produce a local variation of ‘Lux Radio Theatre’.14 Producing other popular
Arriving in Australia

programmes such as ‘Dad and Dave’ (modelled on the American ‘Amos ‘n’ Andy’) for Wrigley’s chewing gum and ‘Mrs ’Obbs’ for Bonnington’s Irish Moss cough mixture, JWT emerged as one of Australia’s largest agencies within a decade of its arrival.

The fifth multi-national agency to establish an office in Australia was Lintas, which commenced operations rather unobtrusively in Sydney in 1931. Unlike the other arrivals, Lintas was established as an in-house agency for the Anglo-Dutch soap manufacturer Unilever (its title being an acronym of Lever International Advertising Service). Like JWT, Lintas’s entry into Australia was driven by its major client, although it also sought other accounts. It wasted little time in tapping into the Lintas global networks, importing cases of posters and advertisements from Britain and Europe within months of arrival. Ted Moore, who had worked at Lintas from 1936 to 1939, recalled that the majority of artwork undertaken for Unilever accounts involved adaptations of American material. Two-tone shoes, for example, ‘were painted out’. However, the flow of information was not necessarily one way, as reprints of local campaigns were also being shipped to London.

By the 1960s, Goldberg Advertising, JWT, and Lintas had all been operating in Australia for some three decades and had become adopted locals. Registering itself as an Australian company in 1935, JWT had taken the title J. Walter Thompson Australia. Twenty-five years later, JWT Australia’s head, Tom Carruthers, revealed the agency’s dual identity, explaining that ‘although JWT is a completely Australian agency, we regard ourselves primarily as part of an international team’. The arrival of a new wave of multinational agencies would nevertheless shake things up – for locals and adopted locals alike.
Moving In

With a Kelvinator refrigerator in the kitchen, a Bush Simpson television in the lounge room, and a Holden in the garage, Australians living in the late 1950s were enjoying a higher standard of living than ever before. Australia was in the midst of an economic boom. As part of its ‘World Market Series’ booklets for clients, JWT published *The Australian Market* in 1959. In it, Australia was described as ‘one of the world’s principal market areas; its future expansion will be firmly based on increasing population and growing investment’. As technology overcame the tyranny of distance, Australia presented an increasingly enticing prospect for major firms with international ambitions. Such conditions would also catch the attention of advertising agencies harbouring similar aspirations. Following in McCann-Erickson’s wake, a steady stream of multi-national agencies entered the Australian market by way of outright buyouts, new start-ups, and minority shareholdings.

The formation of Hansen Rubensohn-McCann Erickson (HRMcCE) in October 1959 marked the beginning of a new era in Australian advertising. Unlike the previous generation of foreign-owned agencies that had successfully commenced operations in Australia, McCann-Erickson opted to buy out an established local agency. Hansen-Rubensohn opened its doors in Sydney in 1928. The agency’s co-founder Sim Rubensohn had previously worked in real estate and at Goldberg Advertising. Something of a wheeler-dealer, Rubensohn had built up his agency on the back of a strong network of business and political associates. However, the schmoozing was reserved for clients only. Within the office, Rubensohn was an autocrat. Bryce Courtenay thus described him as an ‘utter bastard’ towards his staff. Despatch boys such as Ian McDonald were
ordered to perform a range of tasks for the boss that had little
to do with the agency’s operations – from working till dark
in Rubensohn’s garden out in Dural to carrying his racetrack
winnings from the bookies to the bank. By 1959 Rubensohn
headed Australia’s third-largest agency: for the six months span-
ing June-December, the agency’s 140-strong staff helped it
amass a profit of £14,304.22

Selling out to McCann-Erickson at the height of the agen-
cy’s success would provide the 55-year-old Rubensohn with a
healthy nest egg for his retirement. McCann-Erickson’s decision
to enter Australia was no less straightforward. The industry
press thus reported that the ‘[m]ajor reason for the Australian
affiliation is McCann’s need to supply advertising, marketing
and merchandising services to its many clients which have set
up local operations’.23 While the major soft drink manufacturer
Coca-Cola was not mentioned, it was integral to the move.
McCann-Erickson had secured the account in 1955, prom-
ising to facilitate Coke’s strategy of integrating its American
and international campaigns. Realising this aim meant that
Australia was important for McCann-Erickson and Coca-Cola
alike. Australia’s geographical position also played in its favour,
as it offered McCann-Erickson a convenient springboard for
entering into South East Asian markets.

Less than a year later, another Australian agency announced
that it had formally joined forces with an international agency.
United Service Publicity, better known as USP, was formed in
1945 by ex-servicemen in Melbourne. Over the next fifteen years
the agency attracted a steady stream of new clients, including
GMH, Heinz and Shell. Success enabled it to create an in-
house research office as well as a marketing department.24 It also
attracted the attention of the British agency S.H. Benson, which
Behind Glass Doors

held the Shell account and was in the process of restructuring its international network of offices. USP presented a logical partner and in August 1960 it announced that it would be selling a 25 per cent share to the British agency. Announcing the deal, USP’s chairman denied that his agency had sold out to overseas interests: ‘Although the company’s new name – USP-Benson – suggested an equal partnership in Australia, the British company had a minority interest, and the Australian management group continued to operate precisely as in the past’. This minority interest increased in 1967 when both S.H. Benson and its new American partner Needham, Harper & Steers bought into the agency. Further international deals saw the agency move away from its British partners to become USP Needham in 1971.
Where McCann-Erickson’s entry into Australia came as a welcome surprise, Ted Bates’s arrival was a jolt. In March 1964, Australia’s largest agency, George Patterson (known as Patts), announced that it would be selling an 80 per cent stake to the American agency. Speaking to the industry press, Patt’s chairman, L.W. ‘Bill’ Farnsworth, explained that the deal was ‘the inevitable result of over 20 years’ close association, mutual clients and friendship between the principals of both companies’. George Patterson’s presence in South East Asia was a key part of the deal, providing Ted Bates with an instant network in the region (see Chapter 3).

On the Patterson side, the deal also addressed a problem concerning the cost of the agency’s shares – its size and profitability meant that few Australians could afford to invest in the agency. Despite being the subject of a takeover, George Patterson’s name remained in place. Farnsworth also declared that Patts would ‘continue to operate in exactly the same manner as it has over the past 30 years’ and that it would ‘be completely independent from the New York Company’.

For the trade journal B&T, such promises could not detract from the fact that the largest agency in Australia had sold out so quickly. While it recognised that such deals ‘represent a fact of life and the increasing internationalisation of business’, B&T looked ahead with trepidation, asking whether there would ‘be any large Australian agencies left in a few years when the Americans have stopped picking the field over, and what is this going to mean to Australian advertisers and media?’

The flow of multi-national agencies entering Australia did not abate. Within months of Patt’s takeover, rumours were circulating about Foote Cone & Belding’s (FCB) entry into Australia. Having recently become a public company, FCB was
in the midst of developing a worldwide presence. By November 1964, it was official. FCB bought out Briggs, Canny, James, and Paramor, which had been a merger of two smaller Sydney and Melbourne agencies that had sought a national presence five years earlier. Maintaining its wary outlook, B&T observed that ‘[t]here are misgivings and headshakings at the loss of independence of a fine Australian agency – but no anti-American sentiments’.30 Over the next few years, the flow continued. Campbell-Ewald returned in 1966 when it merged with Coudrey-Gotham to become Coudrey-Campbell-Ewald. Grey merged twice with local shops, first with Browne & Bruce in 1965 and then with a larger local agency, Thompson Ansell Blunden, in 1967. The British agency Masius, Wynne-Williams acquired Australia’s first international agency (Goldberg Advertising) and Melbourne’s oldest agency (Paton-Hughes) in 1968. The regularity of such mergers attracted less media coverage and the trade press’s cursory accounts of these mergers in the second half the decade revealed that mergers had ceased to be front-page news.

Leo Burnett’s acquisition of Jackson Wain in 1970 generated greater comment. Over the 1960s, Jackson Wain had established its own network of offices across Australia, the UK, and South East Asia. By 1970 it boasted the third-largest billings. Already in the mid-60s, commentators were predicting that it would need an international partner to maintain its dominance in South East Asia.31 As Australianness had become a part of the Jackson Wain brand, its decision to sell out to its long-time partner, Leo Burnett, in 1970 was all the more surprising. Ever the salesman, Jackson Wain’s director, Frank Grace, looked ahead not backwards. He presented the takeover ‘as a logical flow-on to the Australian agency’s establishment of an overseas network’
that would ‘more readily identify the agency as a member of the world-wide group’.32

Of course, buying out an agency was not the only strategy. A small but significant number of multi-national agencies opted to enter Australia by establishing their own branches from scratch. While the start-up costs and the lack of local accounts meant that this was a more vulnerable option, it nevertheless facilitated greater consistency across the multi-national agency’s networks. In 1962 the British agency Pritchard Wood commenced operations in Sydney. The agency was owned by the Interpublic holding company, which also included McCann-Erickson and HRMcCE. Former general manager of HRMcCE John Bristow would head the new operation. As the expanding HRMcCE was struggling with conflicting accounts, Pritchard Wood offered an alternative that ensured that the profits remained in the same company. Vic Nicholson recalled that the Pritchard Wood title was deliberately chosen to ‘contrast with American influence. It would give rationalisation to the British international company and to the Anglophile Australian that there was an alternative in international agencies’.33 Conceding that Pritchard Wood was treated as little more than a sideline, Nicholson revealed that the agency’s primary function in the Australian market was a strategic one.

Ogilvy & Mather’s entry into Australia was less opportunistic than that of Pritchard Wood. In 1964 the British-based Crowther & Mather and the US-based Ogilvy, Benson & Mather merged to form Ogilvy & Mather International (O&M). Headed by the quintessential adman David Ogilvy, the new agency quickly consolidated its operations in Europe and North America before considering its options in the Southern Hemisphere. Michael
Ball, an Australian working in the agency’s Toronto office who had been involved in the merger, was selected by Ogilvy to tour Australia and the Asia-Pacific region and to develop a plan for the agency. In 1965 the 29-year-old spent several months travelling across the region to ascertain whether O&M should enter the region and how. Ball advised O&M to enter Australia but not to buy into an agency, as the good ones were unavailable. Moreover, he felt that O&M’s research-led approach to advertising offered something unique to the Australian market: ‘I thought that if we go and offer something quite different in Australia, then we will stand out, and I can go back as an Australian with credibility and start from scratch.’34 The Australian office would then be used as a base for entering New Zealand and Asia.

The arrival of Young and Rubicam (Y&R) in 1969 was equally planned. Rumours of Y&R setting up in Australia had been circulating since 1964. It was the recruitment of Arthur Holland to work in the agency’s New York offices in 1967, however, that signalled Y&R’s intent to set up an Australian branch. Described ‘as a leading figure in creative advertising in Australia’ who could work as an art director, a copywriter, and a manager, Holland had been the principal of Rodgers Holland Everingham, one of the first agencies in Australia to prioritise the creative side of advertising over the account-service side.35 He was to spend a year or two as a senior creative at Y&R before returning to Australia to establish a Y&R office. The appointment of someone with creative and management experience to train in the agency’s headquarters hinted at the type of operation that Y&R hoped to establish in Australia. Y&R’s Sydney office opened its doors in May 1969.

Y&R was given three years to cover its start-up costs – much longer than JWT had in 1930. But without any accounts to its
name, the new operation would need all the time it could get. The fate of Y&R in Australia lay in the hands of its staff. Where some agencies had a reputation for sending out average or poor performing staff – known as ‘dead wood’ – to their Australian offices, Y&R sent out award winners. Holland returned as creative director, but it was Joseph ‘Joe’ DeDeo who led Y&R’s Australian push. The Princeton-educated DeDeo was admired by colleagues and competitors alike. Dennis Merchant, who had been the agency’s first local recruit, considers him ‘the best boss I ever had’ and one of the best ‘all round’ advertising men who ‘had a great understanding of the creative process, [was a] very astute judge of creative work … [and] came from a research background’. DeDeo later recalled that Y&R had considered mergers, but he was of the view that ‘If we had anything to contribute, we should be able to make it on our own. I felt this so strongly that I said it was the only basis on which I’d take the assignment.’

By the end of the decade, Australia’s advertising agency industry had undergone a radical transformation. Through strategic acquisitions, mergers, and start-ups, the multinational agencies had come to dominate the scene. While some were perturbed by this development, the vast majority of Australian advertising professionals considered it part and parcel of contemporary advertising – particularly those who hoped to attract the next overseas suitor. Entering the Australian market was but the first step for these agencies. The next step, the establishment of a successful office, would prove to be a much harder and longer task.

Establishing the Right Ideas
‘Every Thompson office derives its particular character from its
setting’, explained the in-house journal *J. Walter Thompson News* in 1959. ‘Sydney, basking in a Southern California climate, is best described as a shirt-sleeve office … In structure, it is Thompson-New York in microcosm’. After thirty years in Australia, JWT had struck a balance between the local and the international. For those agencies that had just landed in Australia, the immediate task was to shift the balance towards the international. Having spent so much on their Australian ventures, these multi-national agencies were determined to ensure that their latest acquisitions conformed to the ideologies, strategies, and practices that had helped elevate them into global corporations.

In 1960, Sylvester ‘Pat’ Weaver, chairman of McCann-Erickson International, landed in Australia. His task was to introduce local staff to McCann-Erickson. From a New York viewpoint, Hansen-Rubensohn’s 32-year history counted for little; HRMcCE was little more than twelve months old. Weaver had arrived to open a day-long seminar entitled ‘This is McCann’. Nine speakers addressed the audience, using films, tapes, and some ‘700 colour slides’ to ‘familiarise Australian executives with the McCann-Erickson techniques and concepts’. Clients and media were also invited to listen to the speakers talk about ‘communications research and McCann’s contribution to this progress’. As research and marketing had been the cornerstone of McCann-Erickson’s success in the US, it was no surprise that HRMcCE would be expected to adopt a more research-oriented approach. Such an emphasis further affected an impact on the agency’s internal operations, which became highly systematised. The agency also established a reputation for being American in terms of its outlook on advertising as well as its cutthroat internal politics – such impressions would deepen in the 1970s as Rubensohn withdrew from the agency’s operations.
If HRMcCE projected the image of being the big American firm, O&M considered itself ‘the most international of international agencies … we called ourselves “one agency indivisible”’. To establish consistency across the network, O&M distributed ‘magic lanterns’. Based on David Ogilvy’s writings, these slides told ‘the story of how to make an ad … how to sell automotive, how to sell fashion’ and were used to inculcate staff and clients alike with the Ogilvy way. Attendance to these slide shows was often mandatory and staff would grumble about having to go to ‘another one of those things again’, especially when it delayed them from getting to the pub. O&M’s indoctrination efforts did not end with the slide shows. Julian Martin, who moved to O&M from Masius, was impressed by the highly structured approach to other parts of agency practice: ‘There was a book for everything … There was a book on how to write a letter.’ While Martin had written letters before, it initially took him weeks to get his supervisor’s approval for his first letter for O&M: ‘She wouldn’t let this letter go out until it was done exactly the Ogilvy way – purpose of letter, background section, key recommendations, discussion, summary.’

With their red carpets, black doors, and bare white walls, O&M’s offices in Australia were little different to any other O&M office in the world. The subsequent office alterations that saw ‘David Ogilvy’s mantra written all over the walls’ further tightened the connection between the agency’s outposts and its charismatic leader. Former staffers such as Doug Watson recall the agency rules and the expectation that staff would strictly adhere to them: ‘there was no individual respect, it was like an army’. Agency rules and Ogilvy’s homilies not only governed the office decor and creative output, at the agency’s upper echelons, the wives and partners of senior staff were vetted. These
women were also given advice about the appropriate ways of entertaining client partners. Michael Ball outlines the rationale for this approach: ‘companies need to have a culture and a set of beliefs. By establishing a clear template for operations in Australia and worldwide, O&M sought to facilitate the management of this network whilst creating a recognisable brand for clients.’

Others adopted different ways of inculcating staff with the agency doctrine. At Leo Burnett offices in Australia and across the globe, a bowl of green apples at the reception desk served as a daily reminder of the agency’s founder and its New York roots. Y&R often used gifts to staff to build up goodwill within its network. While some were of a personal nature, others sought to foster greater unity across the ranks. Unable to export the profits from its Italian operation, Y&R bought a huge slab of Italian marble. It was then cut down into blocks which were distributed to each staff member across the globe. Inscribed on each block were the agency’s mottoes ‘Understand through Discipline’ and ‘Compel with Imagination’.

Maintaining a global network required more than instructions and inspirational gifts. As experts in the field of communication, multi-national agencies understood that they also needed to maintain strong and clear lines of communication within their own networks. In 1960 McCann-Erickson vice-president Robert E. Healy explained that ‘When I visited Australia two years ago … I said we would bring advertising know-how and techniques to Australia.’ Recent visits from senior McCann figures were therefore ‘in keeping with our policy of sending top officials throughout the world, so that they should thoroughly acquaint themselves with clients and staffs.’

The advent of the jetliner meant that Australia was becoming more accessible than ever before. Keeping ‘an eye on the natives’
through increasingly regular visits became a normal part of agency life. By 1978, Geoff Lindley of O&M Sydney joked that ‘we like to think the head office is a Boeing over Los Angeles or somewhere’. The impact of such arrivals depended on the visitor’s place in the agency hierarchy. Senior international figures inevitably warranted significant attention both within the office and the industry press. At Y&R, Luella Copeland-Smith recollects that there was ‘an absolute furore’ in the agency in the week leading up to the arrival of a key visitor from the head office. For David Ogilvy’s 1979 visit, a local public relations consultant was hired to handle the guru’s media appearances.

In between visits the agency’s head office was kept abreast of developments in Australia through regular reports. The most important of these was the financial report, which was used by head office to measure the success of its Australian investment. Reporting procedures appeared to become more stringent as time wore on. In the 1970s HRMcCE sent through quarterly reports to New York, while Y&R filed monthly reports. By the 1980s the UK agency Saatchi & Saatchi was receiving daily reports. Technology in the form of telexes and faxes facilitated this increased flow of information moving both ways.

Of course, some agencies enjoyed greater autonomy than others. As the largest and most profitable agency in Australia, George Patterson was in a position to keep its overseas owners at bay – and senior staff knew it. A popular anecdote recounted by ex-Patts staffers concerned the chairman Farnsworth and his rule of refusing to meet uninvited visitors. When Ted Bates sent through a message informing Farnsworth that one of their accountants would be visiting over the next week, Farnsworth instructed the agency’s lift driver to deny the American permission to enter the building. After three days of waiting in the hotel,
the visitor returned home, whereupon Farnsworth announced he was ready to receive him. An Australian flag was also visible whenever senior American dignitaries visited, a none-too-subtle reminder that the most profitable part of the Ted Bates network did not consider itself subservient to its overseas owners.

Developing the Right Approach
‘Getting your hands on information in 1970 was a very time-consuming and quite often expensive process’, notes Ian Dawson. Larger agencies such as JWT, therefore, operated their own libraries which subscribed to advertising and marketing periodicals published locally and overseas. *Printer’s Ink, Ad Age, and Campaign* were commonly read by staff along with the advertisements contained in such publications as *Vogue*. In addition to providing background information on campaigns, these publications exposed readers to new ideas and approaches being used overseas. Creative staff encountered similar difficulties. ‘We were interested in what the rest of the world was doing’, observes the television producer Helene Nicol, adding that ‘it wasn’t as easy to see it [overseas work] then as it is now’. Show reels of award-winning television commercials (TVCs) from overseas were therefore screened at cinemas, while individual agencies used their international connections to gain access to the creative work being undertaken on pertinent accounts. For television post-production experts such as Mike Reed, overseas show reels were inspirational: ‘you saw 52 fresh ideas in the space of five minutes, sometimes you would have to spend four or five days reading a book to maybe get an idea … it was instantaneous like a drug … you got that hit’.

At HRMcCE, the new approach was to be the implementation of McCann-Erickson’s marketing and research methods.
From the announcement of the merger it was anticipated that ‘many new marketing techniques will be introduced in Australia, which deviate from the established pattern, but have proved extremely successful overseas’. Specifically, HRMcCE would have access to ‘a special formula for pre-testing advertising, which to date has been a close kept secret of McCann’s. It takes note of 169 elements which influence the effectiveness of an advertisement, and has been employed with marked accuracy.’ With the weight of the McCann research machine behind it, HRMcCE needed to spruik its new approach to prospective clients. General manager John Bristow conceded that research did not come cheaply before adding that ‘relative to the cost of failure arising from lack of intimate knowledge of the market, research appropriations seem almost minute’.

International connections also provided Australians with new frameworks for creating and testing advertising campaigns in a more strategic way. Each agency adopted its own approach. In the late 1950s staff at JWT were using the T-Square tool. Used across the JWT network since 1919, the T-Square required staff to consider five questions: what are we selling; to whom are we selling; where are we selling; when are we selling; and how are we selling.

At Lintas, advertisements followed the highly prescriptive UPGA (Unilever Plan for Good Advertising) guideline. By the late 1960s, Stephen King in London’s JWT office challenged these marketing-focused tools. Calling for tools that firstly identified the desired response from consumers and secondly helped generate advertising that would stimulate the desired response, King and Jeremy Bullmore devised the T-Plan. The T-Plan asked five questions: where are we; why are we there; where could we be; how could we get there; and are we getting there.
By 1970, the T-Plan was being used at JWT in Sydney. Having received little such direction at his previous agencies HRMcCE and Lintas, Alan Robertson considered this ‘much more disciplined way of approaching’ advertising to be a revelation.69

Other agencies similarly devised tools that helped systematise their marketing and creative approaches. John Clemenger, which sold out a 35 per cent share to Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn (BBDO) in 1972, readily utilised the BBDO four-point process: ‘1. Know your prime prospect. 2. Know your prime prospect’s problem. 3. Know your product and how it can solve your prospect’s problems. 4. And break the boredom barrier.’70 Y&R’s Strategy Selection Outline and SCORE (Simple, Credible, Original, Relevant, Empathetic) creative briefing format were both imported directly from the head office and were warmly received by local staff – some of whom would continue to use these principles long after they had moved on from the agency.71

A simpler way of ensuring the right approach was to copy a TVC produced overseas. As Australian regulations required all TVCs to contain at least 80 per cent Australian content, advertisers could not simply import commercials. Coca-Cola’s desire for a single image across the globe meant that HRMcCE was initially re-filming American TVCs in Australia. Its first original TVC for Coca-Cola appeared in January 1961.72 Re-shooting overseas commercials frame for frame would continue to be common practice through to the 1980s.73 Another way of circumventing Australian regulations and ensuring that the campaign adopted the right approach was the practice of ‘ghost-crewing’. This practice saw Australian crews being sent abroad to produce a TVC but the actual work was entirely done by overseas production teams.74 While it was an expensive
strategy, it nevertheless ensured that the campaign would follow the right approach.

**Importing the Right People**

In 1958, Lloyd Ring (Deke) Coleman stepped down as the managing director of JWT in Australia. For the last seventeen years he had led the agency’s Australian office, having previously directed the JWT’s continental European operations from Paris. Described as a ‘world citizen’, Coleman was born in Brockport, New York, and studied at Rochester University and Columbia University. His replacement, the straight-talking John Sharman, had joined the Sydney office’s despatch department in 1941. Sharman was also the first local to head JWT’s Australian operations and would go on to become an executive vice-president responsible for Asia-Pacific, South and Central America, and Canada. While Sharman demonstrated that Australians were as capable as their American or British counterparts, various agencies nevertheless felt that their Australian investments would benefit from an increase in international experience.

The first individuals despatched by head office to Australia would take up management positions. At HRMcCE, David Hopkins was moved from the Los Angeles office to Sydney in 1962 to take over from John Bristow as general manager. Peter Clemenger described him as ‘an innate politician’. Writing on Australian conditions for the American trade journal *Advertising Age*, Hopkins revealed a diplomatic pragmatism. While Australians were described as being ‘very receptive to new ideas’, he also cautioned readers against applying American marketing techniques in a doctrinaire manner. In the battle for the Nabisco account, Clemenger remembered Hopkins’s less diplomatic side: ‘We were the local boys with a bit of flair,
but the McCann international strength finally crushed us. They moved in the “heavies” from New York, and that was that.’77

Another senior American, Vincent Tutching, was brought out to open HRMcCE’s Melbourne branch. Local staff claimed that the appointment of a vice-president of McCann-Erickson International to this post was a vote of confidence, which ‘demonstrates the importance McCann attaches to the growing market in Australia and the South West Pacific’.78

As O&M and Y&R were both opening entirely new branches, the new management was directly selected by head office. However, the recently arrived managers at both agencies wasted little time in bringing on board local staff. Ball explained that O&M’s ‘staff will be Australian and we will be looking for Australians with international advertising experience … But there will be with us generally a senior copywriter from an overseas branch in rotation.’79 Visiting his three-month old offices in Australia, Ed Ney, head of Y&R’s international operations, boasted that his agency was similarly trying not to be heavy-handed in its appointments: ‘We have 1500 people employed worldwide outside the USA and of these only a handful – 25 to 30 – are Americans.’80

As the management issues abated, the Australian offices of multi-national agencies looked to import staff with specific new skills or expertise. In 1960 HRMcCE brought out Mike Larbalestier from the Marplan research agency in London to direct its new research department. As Clemenger’s anecdote about Hopkins reveals, expert copywriters would be flown in when agencies were pitching for new accounts. Graham Nunn, who worked on Y&R’s pitch for the Chrysler account that famously included a surprise visit from legendary racing driver Stirling Moss, highlights the important role played by overseas
experts: ‘It was the Sydney office of Y&R that basically put the pitch together. They came down to Adelaide for the pitch but they had gotten in … Al Hagar, who was a car specialist from Y&R Detroit … they also had the Americans from Sydney and they were all ex-New York Americans.’81 Y&R would land the client, and Hagar would later become head of Y&R in Australia.

A more common import was the English copywriter. While reports in the trade press in the early 1960s reveal that English agencies lacked the research orientation of their American counterparts, Australian offices displayed a growing admiration for English creativity and were eager to emulate the clever advertising coming out of London. Moreover, importing saved them the time and costs of training someone.82 In 1968 Lionel Hunt noticed a copywriter opening at Masius in Melbourne. Hunt had previously worked as an account executive in agencies across Australia before returning to Britain for two years. The interview was conducted at the agency’s London office with Hunt as the ‘lunch companion’ of Jack Wynne-Williams.83 Having secured Wynne-Williams’s approval, Hunt could take up his position at the agency’s Melbourne office.

A decade later, agencies would adopt a more proactive approach to recruiting creative talent. Outlining Grey’s recruitment procedure, creative director Peter Carey explained that ‘[t]here are only two other countries where you’d find really good art directors and we ruled out the US because of the high salaries. We started going through the UK agency art book – Design and Art Direction – to see who was doing good work there.’84 Recruitment agencies also set up London offices creatives and account service staff alike to Australia.85 Many also arrived of their own volition. Some were persuaded by an Australian spouse wanting to return home, others were lured by
the promise of sun, sand, and surf. Frustrated by the hierarchy of JWT in London, where the senior account service positions were reserved for Oxbridge graduates, Trevor Fearnley arrived in Sydney as a ‘£10 Pom’ in 1972. He had nothing lined up: JWT had no vacancies nor did HRMcCE. His experience at JWT London, however, persuaded HRMcCE to speak to him. Despite arriving 30 minutes late for the interview, Fearnley walked out with a job at the multi-national agency.

When McCann-Erickson announced its intention to enter Australia, Broadcasting and Television exclaimed ‘Let ’em come!’ predicting that the ‘[e]xtension of the McCann-Erickson agency to Australia will, we bet, heighten the interest in Down Under along Madison Avenue’. It certainly did. By the early 1970s, the vast majority of major multi-national agencies boasted offices in Australia. While the arrival of agencies from overseas had been nothing new, the speed and number of agencies setting up in Australia certainly was. Their reasons varied. Most were led by clients, but many were also motivated by entrepreneurial ambition. Each had brought a new perspective on advertising and agency practice, which was reflected in the different ways they went about establishing successful branches in Australia. Of course, the task of setting up the agency’s Australian operations was also part of the broader project – the establishment and maintenance of a global network. The next step would be to send Australian staff out into the world to broaden their experiences and sharpen their understanding of contemporary global advertising.