

Occupational Science: Generating an International Perspective

Report on the Inaugural International
Occupational Science Think Tank

Shoalhaven Campus
University of Wollongong

19-21 July, 2006

Convened by the Australasian Occupational Science Centre (AOSC),
on behalf of the International Society of Occupational Scientists (ISOS)

Written and compiled by Alison Wicks

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Foreword

*Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.
Begin it now.*
Goethe

I dared to dream. I dreamt that one day occupational scientists from around the world would come together for dialogue and debate.

My dream came true.

From 19-21 July, 2006, nineteen occupational scientists from ten different countries met in Shoalhaven, in Australia, for the Inaugural International Occupational Science Think Tank.

To clarify for those who have not heard of occupational science, it is the study of occupation (the things people do to occupy their time), the relationship between occupation and health, and the political, social, cultural and environmental influences on occupation.

Occupational science is a relatively new academic discipline which was founded by occupational therapists in the late 1980s and has been evolving since then in different ways in various countries. It was envisaged that a think tank of occupational scientists from around the globe would contribute significantly to the ongoing development of occupational science.

Whilst it may seem that nineteen personally invited occupational scientists would form an exclusive group, they were in fact part of a very inclusive group. The people invited were representatives of national or international occupational science organizations. The International Society of Occupational Science, the Society for the Study of Occupation: USA, occupationUK & IRELAND, the Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists, the Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists, the WFOT International Advisory Group: Occupational Science and the Association for the Journal of Occupational Science were all represented at the Think Tank. Additionally, the Think Tank participants were representing occupational scientists in England, Sweden, Netherlands, Japan, Taiwan, Canada, United States, New Zealand and Australia.

Many of the participants had not met each other prior to the Think Tank. While some are well known, others are emerging occupational scientists and some of the participants had not previously identified themselves as occupational scientists. Two 'wild cards' were invited to ensure that grass roots perspectives were presented. These two participants are working in non traditional areas of practice and research.

The broad aims of the Think Tank were:

- to consider an occupational science research agenda;
- to establish international occupational science networks of individuals and institutions; and
- to promote an international voice for occupational scientists.

All sessions were informal and conducted in a relaxed setting. There was ample opportunity to enjoy the beautiful Shoalhaven environs and to talk to each other.

As Convener of the Think Tank, my role was that of a facilitator. My objective was to make it happen by organizing sponsorship, transport, accommodation, meals, venues, and partner programs. With my 'brains trust', a core group of fellow occupational scientists, we developed a program and proposed some topics for discussions. However, although the time schedule was fixed for organizational reasons, the group of participants was informed that the subject and structure of the discussions were flexible.

I freely admit having no idea what would actually happen during the Think Tank sessions. I had no preconceptions of what, if any, would be the outcome. I knew much depended upon the interaction between the participants.

But I had faith. I believed that by putting together like-minded people, who were passionate about occupational science, in a context that was safe, comfortable and naturally beautiful, something special would happen. And it did. In the words of one participant, this event was 'catalytic'.

I also acknowledge that in the early stages of planning I really did not know how it would be funded. However, all costs were covered by sponsorship. To say that I was overwhelmed by the level of support from local people and organizations as well as national and international agencies is an understatement.

This report has been written to record what happened at the Think Tank and to present the outcome of the group discussion to the broader community. As I personally believe this inaugural international Think Tank was a momentous event in the history of occupational science and will influence the future growth and development of occupational science around the globe, this report needs to be widely disseminated.

Students, practitioners and academics who already adopt or who are interested in an occupational perspective should read this report.

Alison Wicks
Director, AOSC

December, 2006

The Context

The Inaugural International Occupational Science Think Tank was held in Nowra, the administrative centre of the City of Shoalhaven on the south coast of NSW, Australia. Nowra is a 2½ hour drive from Sydney.

Shoalhaven is a very popular tourist destination. It has 741,000 acres of National Park, mountains, coastal plains, rivers, lakes and 109 beaches.

The venue for the Think Tank was the Shoalhaven Campus which was established in 2000 by the University of Wollongong, the Illawarra Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and the Shoalhaven City Council. The local Aboriginal group has supported the Campus from the beginning by withdrawing a lands claim thus enabling the Campus to be established on the West Nowra site. Other Shoalhaven community groups have totally supported the Campus.

The Australasian Occupational Science Centre (AOSC) was the host of the Think Tank, on behalf of the International Society of Occupational Scientists (ISOS). AOSC is a community education and research centre focusing on influences that govern occupation and the relationship between health and occupation. AOSC is located at the Shoalhaven Campus.

Similar to the Campus, AOSC has the full support of the local community. AOSC Pty Ltd was formed in November 2004 by some Shoalhaven business persons for the sole purpose of establishing AOSC. Following successful lobbying by AOSC Pty Ltd, the University of Wollongong granted approval in December 2004 for the establishment of AOSC as a program within its Centre for Health Service Development. Seed funding from the Shoalhaven City Council, sponsorship from Shoalhaven businesses, funding through the Australian Government's Regional Partnership Program, support from the Shoalhaven Campus and in-kind contributions have covered all infrastructure and project expenses of the AOSC to date. However, the cost of the Think Tank was fully covered by other international, national and local sponsorship.

The mini bus in which participants were transported to and from Nowra was one of the significant contexts of the Think Tank. From all accounts, the time spent in the bus travelling as a group, provided opportunity for many important conversations and relationship formation.

Participants were accommodated close to the Campus in private lodges and cabins, all of which overlook the beautiful Shoalhaven River. For many of the participants it was the first time they had seen kangaroos, wombats, cockatoos and other native Australian flora and fauna.

Participants

Dr Florence Clark	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor and Chair, University of Southern California's Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy • Vice President, International Society of Occupational Scientists • Member, Society of Study of Occupation: USA
Dr Virginia Dickie	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Professor, Division of Occupational Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill • President-Elect, Society of Study of Occupation: USA
Dr Clare Hocking	New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Professor, School of Occupational Therapy at AUT University in Auckland, New Zealand • Editor, Journal of Occupational Science • Member, Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists
Dr Hans Jonsson	Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Professor and Head of the Master Program, Division of Occupational Therapy, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm in Sweden • Research Director, the European Master of Science Program in Occupational Therapy, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Frank Kronenberg	see note ⁱ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International guest lecturer and consultant in occupational therapy • Joint founder of Spirit of Survivors - Occupational Therapy without Borders
Dr Debbie Laliberte Rudman	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant Professor, School of Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario Canada • Chair, Occupational Science Field, Graduate Program in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences • Vice President Elect, Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists CSOS
Dr Jin Ling Lo	Taiwan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Professor, School of Occupational Therapy, College of Medicine at the National Taiwan University • Member, World Federation of Occupational Therapists International Advisory Group: Occupational Science

ⁱ Frank carries a passport from the Netherlands and resides in South Africa. However, he states he cannot claim to represent either of these countries, because, by choice, he sees himself as an 'independent voice, without borders'. He believes that ultimately, what carries most weight is others' perception of who he is or who or what he represents. For this Think Tank, Frank's Dutch and South African connections are acknowledged.

Dr Tamako Miyamae	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor and Head, Graduate School of Rehabilitation Sciences at Seirei Christopher University in Japan
Dr Matthew Molineux	United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head, Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at Leeds Metropolitan University • Convener, occupationUK & Ireland • Member, World Federation of Occupational Therapists International Advisory Group: Occupational Science
Dr Doris Pierce	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endowed Chair in Occupational Therapy at Eastern Kentucky University • Past President, Society for Study of Occupation: USA
Dr Helene J. Polatajko	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor, Department of Public Health Science and Professor and Chair, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy and the Graduate Department of Rehabilitation Science, University of Toronto • Co Chair, Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists • Member, World Federation of Occupational Therapists International Advisory Group: Occupational Science
Dr Mandy Stanley	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecturer, Occupational Therapy program at the School of Health Sciences, University of South Australia • Editorial Team Member, Journal of Occupational Science • Vice President (Admin), Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists
Kerry Thomas	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director and Senior Consultant of <i>interPART</i> and Associates Pty Ltd and a member of Friends of <i>interPART</i> Inc, organizations that endeavour to support vulnerable people in their efforts to realize their potential and to access meaningful, long term livelihoods
Dr Elizabeth Townsend	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor and Director, School of Occupational Therapy at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia • Co Chair, Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists • Vice President (Finance), International Society of Occupational Scientists
Dr Gail Whiteford	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor of Occupational Therapy at Charles Sturt University, Director of RIPPLE research centre, and Head of the Albury-Wodonga campus • Member, World Federation of Occupational Therapists International Advisory Group: Occupational Science • Past President, Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists

Dr Alison Wicks	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director, Australasian Occupational Science Centre, and Honorary Research Fellow at Centre for Health Service Development, University of Wollongong • President, Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists • Executive Assistant, International Society of Occupational Scientists • Project Leader, World Federation of Occupational Therapists: International Advisory Group: Occupational Science • Editorial Team Member, Journal of Occupational Science
Valerie Wright-St Clair	New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Lecturer, School of Occupational Therapy , AUT University in Auckland, New Zealand • Member, Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists
Hiroshi Yoshikawa	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor, Department of Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health and Welfare, Prefectural University of Hiroshima
Dr Ruth Zemke	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Emerita, University of Southern California • President, Society for Study of Occupation: USA • Member, World Federation of Occupational Therapists: International Advisory Group: Occupational Science

Sponsors & Supporters

Events such as the Think Tank do not happen without the support and financial backing of many people and organizations.

The Inaugural Occupational Science Think Tank was completely funded through sponsorship, which covered the travel costs to and from Sydney, accommodation and meals for all participants.

Gold sponsors were the Journal of Occupational Science and the University of Wollongong's Graduate School of Business.

Silver sponsors were the Seirei Christopher University in Japan and the University of Wollongong.

The Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the University of Southern California was a **Bronze sponsor**.

The following **Discretionary sponsors** provided financial or in-kind support:

- AOSC Pty Ltd
- Auckland University of Technology
- Australasian Occupational Science Centre
- The Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists
- JPA Business Advisors
- Kinghorn Ford
- Nowra Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Clinic
- Shoalhaven Campus
- Shoalhaven City Council
- Shoalhaven Ex Servicemen's Sports Club
- Shoalhaven Spring Water
- South Coast Style
- Terara Sand Pty Ltd

Aimi Michel was contracted to be an interpreter for the two Japanese participants and Simone Foggo, a student at Shoalhaven Campus was contracted to record the session discussions. Simone also assisted in the preparation of this report.

The following people who volunteered their time and skills for the Think Tank also must be acknowledged:

- Bill & Janice Hilzinger
- Larry Wicks
- Peter Swan
- Bob & Margaret Torrens
- John Waterhouse

Program

The Think Tank program was informal, designed to maximize opportunities for group discussion as well as networking. Over two days, the participants met as a group for six 1½ hour sessions. During the remainder of the time there were ample opportunities to talk one-to-one in a quiet place while enjoying a cup of coffee or a glass of wine; to explore the local surroundings and places of interest; or to participate in group and individual activities.

Wednesday July 19, 2006

Participants were transported from Sydney to Nowra. A shuttle service using private cars and a mini bus provided by a local sporting club, all driven by local volunteers, operated from 5.30am until 9.00pm. As people were arriving at various times, there were no set activities on this day and they could relax and recover from jet lag as required. Most chose to meet for a combined dinner in one of the lodges.

Thursday July 20, 2006

The official launch of the Think Tank was held at the Shoalhaven Campus on Thursday at 9.00am. Uncle Ben Brown, an Aboriginal Elder representing the local Wandj Wandian people opened the event by welcoming participants on behalf of the traditional owners of the land. Councillor Peter Murphy, Deputy Mayor of Shoalhaven City Council then welcomed everyone to Shoalhaven and in her address, Robbie Collins, Head of Shoalhaven Campus, said how pleased she was to have so many international visitors. The Federal Member for Gilmore, Joanna Gash, then officially opened the Think Tank. Sponsors, supporters and volunteers were acknowledged. The first three group sessions were held after the opening session and an informal dinner was held in the evening.

Friday July 21, 2006

Another three group sessions took place on Friday. There was time for some relaxation and recreational occupations in the afternoon before a dinner at one of the local restaurants. Supporters of AOSC and the Think Tank volunteers and their partners were invited to the dinner.

During the dinner, the participants each presented to Robbie Collins, Head of Shoalhaven Campus, a small token from their respective organizations. Robbie responded by presenting a boomerang handmade by Laddie Timbery who is a local Aboriginal Elder, to each participant.

The participants also sincerely thanked the volunteers who provided transport to and from Sydney and around Nowra, and who organized the recreational occupations for the participants and the program of activities for the five partners.

Saturday July 22, 2006

The day began with an optional bush walk to the Pulpit Rock, which afforded breathtaking views of the Shoalhaven River and Bundanon, the arts education centre gifted to the Australian nation by Arthur and Yvonne Boyd. Then it was time to board the bus and the cars for the drive back to Sydney.

Overview of Sessions

Prior to the Think Tank, participants were invited to submit stimulus papers on issues relevant to the stated aims. These papers were distributed to the participants, who could choose to disseminate them among members of their respective organizations for additional comments and feedback. The preparation, circulation and discussion of the stimulus papers were strategies designed to ‘kick start’ discussion at the Think Tank, and to ensure a broad range of perspectives were presented and considered. The titles of the Stimulus Papers are listed in Appendix A.

Session 1

Alison Wicks chaired the first session. She began by suggesting three topics for Think Tank discussions in the subsequent five sessions:

- local and global research issues that are important in occupational science;
- challenges to working collaboratively in occupational science;
- the feasibility of rejuvenating ISOS, the International Society of Occupational Scientists established in 1999.

Participants were then invited to introduce themselves to the other group members. After the introductions, a message from Ann Wilcock was read aloud. Ann was the Inaugural President of ISOS and Founding Editor of the Journal of Occupational Science. In her message, Ann supported the Think Tank as an opportunity for developing thoughts and creating ways forward. She also restated her strongly held belief that occupational science has the power to answer many of the vexed questions throughout the world, if it could be adopted and developed by the range of disciplines which touch on parts of occupation in their existing work.

Session 2

Gail Whiteford was invited to chair Session 2 which focused on research areas and research issues pertinent to occupational scientists. This was indeed an interesting session as the participants were still getting comfortable in the setting and becoming familiar with each other. In many ways, this session was a warm up for the other sessions to follow. As Gail said, in this session we “talked and talked and talked, until we reached a point where the talking could begin”.

The ideas and the comments were diverse, as was to be expected, given the wide ranging experience, interest areas and work settings of the participants. For example, in relation to the different approaches to occupational science research, Florence Clark said that to forward occupational science we need a cooperative, broad range of approaches and need to develop an embracing appreciation of the research that is being undertaken. Debbie Rudman stated it is important that we “critically explore where we are ‘at’ and what are we **not** looking at”.

Not surprisingly, given that all participants were occupational therapists, the relationship between occupational science and occupational therapy was discussed. The group was told that in the United States, the relationship is very symbiotic, and that if occupational science was not tied to occupational therapy, it would not continue to exist.

Kerry Thomas raised a pertinent question - “what is the purpose of occupational science research?” Kerry felt that although we need rigorous academic research, we also “need organic research, and that we need to use people in the community who have insights which may inform the political agenda”.

In summary, the key questions explored by the group in this session were:

- What is the intersection between the research agenda of occupational science and occupational therapy? Are there risks or benefits in having an intersection?
- Should the Think Tank produce a statement about research priorities in occupational science?
- What are the risks & benefits of aligning occupational science with global social issues?
- What is the basic premise upon which occupational science research rests? (Is it that humans are occupational beings?)
- Are we building or spreading knowledge through occupational science research?
- Should we look at universal issues or focus on local issues in research?
- What are the ontological and epistemological foundations of occupational science research? What about a pluralistic epistemology?
- How do occupational scientists find a funding stream? Are we too parochial?

Session 3

In Session 3, Professor Ian Ring joined the Think Tank to listen, to learn and to provide feedback and comments. Ian is a part-time Professorial Fellow (Academic Development) at the Centre for Health Service Development, University of Wollongong. Previously he was Principal Medical Epidemiologist and Executive Director of the Health Information Branch at Queensland Health and he has also served as Head of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at James Cook University, and Foundation Director of the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute at the Australian National University. He is a medical graduate with qualifications in epidemiology and public health. His current research interests are Indigenous health and cardiovascular health.

Helene Polatajko, who chaired this session, chose to do a Visioning Exercise with the group. She wanted us to look to the future and develop a collective vision. *What will occupational science look like in 10 years?*

The rules and process of the visioning exercise were as follows. Helene asked a question and we wrote our responses on a card. We worked in groups of three. No one else could critique what we had written, though people could ask for clarification. Once the card was handed over to Helene, the group owned it. The cards were then stuck on the white board in clusters based on thematic similarity as determined by group consensus.

By the end of the session, the cards were grouped into six clusters, each of which was named by the group. These six themes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Research themes

1. transformative praxis	2. mainstream
3. cohesive, dynamic, diverse science	4. socially and ecologically responsible
5. innovative partnerships	6. socially and politically influential

It was from these themes that the Think Tank participants developed their vision statement:

In 2016, occupational science will be a cohesive, dynamic and diverse science which transforms practice, is mainstream, is socially and ecologically responsible with innovative partnerships, and which is socially and politically influential.

This was an extremely interesting and enjoyable session, one that aroused a lot of discussion, laughter and interaction.

Session 4

When Virginia Dickie chaired Session 4, she set out to map current and future areas in occupational science research.

Virginia began by asking us to write down a brief description of the research projects in which we were currently involved and in which we intend to be involved. The group was then asked to decide within which of the six themes, identified in Session 3, each of the research projects fitted. Although some research projects related to two or more themes, for the purpose of this exercise they were assigned to just one.

After all the research projects had been categorized thematically, it was apparent the majority of research being undertaken by the Think Tank participants related to theme 3, a cohesive, diverse and dynamic science. Some examples of the participants' current and planned occupational science research and occupational-focused programs related to each theme are presented in Table 2 below. A full list of the occupational science research projects and programs that were identified by the participants is in Appendix B. This comprehensive list highlights the emphasis on projects related to theme 3: a cohesive, diverse and dynamic science.

Table 2: Examples of participants' projects

<p style="text-align: center;">1. Transformative Praxis</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2. Mainstream</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative programs to enable older people to manage loneliness • Collaborative and comparative study of occupation-based practice • Developing Lifestyle Redesign® interventions for diverse populations that derive from occupational science (e.g. Weight loss, ulcer prevention, healthy ageing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading knowledge on retirement and ageing via the media (popular science) • Celebrating the everyday things we do with a sculpture garden • Work/Life balance • Strategies older people use to participate in occupation, at home and in the community
<p style="text-align: center;">3. Cohesive, Diverse & Dynamic Science</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4. Socially and Ecologically Responsible</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic building of empirical knowledge regarding occupational balance, occupational transitions, qualities of occupations • Occupation related to well-being, measurement tools, intervention strategies etc • Daily time budget and occupational balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening places of origin • Development and operationalization of processes and systems to manage diversity and multi-dimensionality across stake holders • Refugees – resettlement processes from an occupational perspective • Occupation and poverty reduction – organic strategies
<p style="text-align: center;">5. Innovative Partnerships</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">6. Socially and Politically Influential</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising public awareness of occupational science by working with corporate partners to train staff for 5 star wellness resorts, for Baby Boomers with annual incomes over \$500,000 • Alternative tourism as a transformative occupation • Encouraging international research relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population ageing + social policy • Individual and social level issues related to occupation • Critical examination of the concept of participation • Social equity/justice – critical policy structural analysis of data on everyday experience – survey data, population data, interview /observation data

Session 5

In session 5, which was chaired by Doris Pierce, the purpose and structure of an international occupational science organization were considered.

The following information was provided, as it was important background for the discussion.

- ISOS, the International Society of Occupational Scientists, was established in 1999 to advance world health, well-being and justice by energizing a worldwide network of individuals, groups and organizations to research, debate and activate towards equity of opportunity for all people, in accordance with their occupational nature. Institutional sponsorship provided funds for ISOS to become incorporated and to establish its website. ISOS, in collaboration with the Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists (ASOS) set up the international list server. ISOS is being managed and maintained by a volunteer Executive Assistant. It does not have paid members. Although it has been relatively inactive in the past couple of years, the Think Tank is an ISOS initiative which has been brought to fruition by AOSC.
- The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) International Advisory Group: Occupational Science (IAGOS) was established in 2000 to: ensure quality representation of occupational therapy in the field of occupational science; increase the understanding of occupational science by occupational therapists worldwide; and to advise the WFOT Council in matters concerning occupational science as they relate to occupational therapy. There are 5 members of the IAGOS. Currently, they represent the United Kingdom, Canada, United States, Taiwan and Australasia.
- Various national groups of occupational scientists have been formed since 2000:
 - Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists (CSOS)
 - Society for Study of Occupation: USA (SSO:USA)
 - Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists (ASOS)
 - occupation UK & IRELAND

Each group has specific aims, as described on their respective websites and the size and structure of each group varies. Appendix C has a list of relevant websites.

Doris posed a range of questions to help guide discussion on what she regarded as three critical issues for an international occupational science organization: its vision, its position and operation. Here are some examples of her guiding questions:

Vision: What are the guiding principles and philosophical underpinnings?
 Whom does it target?
 Will it be a political body, producing position statements?

Position: What will be its relationship to the existing national organizations?
 How will it relate to occupational therapy organizations?

Operation: Who are the members?
 What will be its workforce capacity?

The discussion was wide ranging and many issues were raised. By the end of the session the group agreed to adopt the vision created in session three and proposed the functions and objectives of an international occupational science organization dedicated to that vision.

Proposed Vision

The development of a science which is a cohesive, dynamic and diverse, which transforms practice, is mainstream, is socially and ecologically responsible, with innovative partnerships, and which is socially and politically influential.

Potential Functions

- Collaboration
- Networking
- Developing partnerships
- Increasing public visibility of occupational science
- Coordination of occupational science events to avoid duplication
- Development of a calendar of occupational science events
- Expansion of occupational science— both geographically and across disciplines
- Development of the field
- Publication of books and reports
- Dissemination through popular media
- Advising
- Advocacy
- Interpretation of issues from an occupational perspective
- Continued revision of vision
- Seeking research funds
- Developing resources
- Lobbying

Proposed Objectives

- Create a more occupationally just world
- Facilitate the development of occupational science
- Implement the Think Tank vision.
- Maximize the occupational potential of individuals and groups
- Study lives and relationships
- Understand occupation

The participants supported the suggestion to have a working group which would further develop this proposal and consider the structure of an international occupational science organization.

Florence Clark raised the possibility holding a second think tank, to be scheduled after the University of Southern California's Annual Occupational Science Symposium in 2007, as the forum to progress discussions of the function and operation of an international occupational science organization. This idea was well received and strongly supported.

Session 6

It was the role of Liz Townsend, as chairperson of session 6, to bring the Think Tank discussions to a close. Liz began by summarizing what we had done in the previous sessions:

“In the 2nd session Gail warmed us up and got us going and thinking about research. In the 3rd session, Helene’s visioning exercise allowed us to focus in a practical and participatory way on a direction. Virginia got us thinking about where we ARE working together. (There appears to be an overwhelming amount of interest amongst us in the field of ageing/retirement and in ways of identifying social relevance). Doris got us moving forward in a practical way.”

Then Liz invited Frank, as a ‘wild card’, to play the role of ‘joker’, presenting his ‘clownclusions’ⁱⁱ. He started with his personal reflections and critique and then invited everyone else to share their reflections. As people spoke, Liz wrote a summary of the comments on the whiteboard, placing each under one of the following headings: resolutions; critique, spreading the fire; reflections.

Some of the critiques included: the need to be more inclusive by ensuring the missing voices are heard; translating occupational science texts into languages other than English; and bringing occupational therapy along with occupational science.

Since the Think Tank, the list of resolutions have been considered by the participants and further categorized and synthesized. As a result, some strategic directions for developing occupational science, drawn from all the resolutions, have been proposed. These directions are the key outcome of the Think Tank.

The participants have also proposed to ‘gift’ the complete list of resolutions to future think tanks so it may be used in generating additional international perspectives on occupational science. The complete list of resolutions proposed by the Think Tank can be found in Appendix D.

ⁱⁱ **Clownclusions** are clown-improvisations on lectures, papers, conferences, which take place immediately afterwards, in the same auditorium, with the same audience, and in relation to the discourses that the speakers addressed. The aim is to offer another perspective, that of an innocent clown, of the presented discourse. Clownclusions attempt to challenge the debated themes, to demonstrate its errors, hidden prejudices, express latent emotions, and name what was silenced. They are presented in the spirit of humor, as a ‘social mirror’.

Outcome

The Inaugural International Occupational Science Think Tank proposes that the following strategic direction be used as a framework to guide the continued development of occupational science, internationally. The goals identified in Table 3 are not prioritized, and appear in alphabetical order.

Table 3: Proposal for strategic direction

	Goals	Suggested strategies
C	<u>C</u>ontinuation of think tanks as a way of building on the TT2006 vision and promoting further dialogue and action related to occupational science	maintaining a diversity of participants and discussion topics at future think tanks; considering the strategic proposal; exploring different dimensions of occupational science research
Da	<u>D</u>evelopment of a pluralistic science	having further discussion on how different ways of knowing and different forms of knowledge can be engaged; recognizing the necessity for knowledge development gained through multiple perspectives and methods, incorporating inclusive voices on an international level
Di	<u>D</u>evelopment of ISOS as an international organization to support the growth of occupational science internationally	developing connections in South Africa and South America; having the first meeting of ISOS in LA in 2007; holding subsequent meetings in different regions
Ds	<u>D</u>evelopment of structures and processes to facilitate theoretical and empirical work regarding occupation - locally, nationally and internationally	developing an international occupational science research network; developing local and national networks for facilitating responses to social needs related to occupation
Fe	<u>F</u>urther dialogue regarding the relationship of occupational science to various types of partners, especially occupational therapy	critically considering the facilitation of the relationship between occupational therapy and occupational science; developing innovative partnerships that are socially and politically influential
Fo	<u>F</u>urther dialogue regarding the role of occupational science in relation to knowledge development, knowledge dissemination and translation, and social action	ensuring there is a diversity of voices in this discussion, including 'wild card' members
S	<u>S</u>trategic positioning of occupational science in the mainstream via a focus on targeted areas of social and political relevance	focusing on social issues, such as ageing, and other 'lighthouse projects'

What Next?

The Inaugural International Occupational Science Think Tank has provided the momentum for several future initiatives.

The Second International Occupational Science Think Tank

Due to strong support of the proposal for the second International Occupational Science Think Tank, the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the University of Southern California (USC) has offered to be the host. The next think tank will be held in April 2007, following the USC's Annual Occupational Science Symposium. The primary aim of the second think tank is to develop the frame of reference for an international occupational science organization.

Occupational Science Think Tank in South Africa

The University of Cape Town in South Africa has already offered to host a think tank in either 2009 or 2010.

Post graduate course in occupational science at AOSC

Following the successful hosting of the Think Tank by AOSC, and the completion of its community-focused and occupation-based projects, the University of Wollongong has committed funds for a two year, part time (0.5 FTE) academic position within AOSC. This financial support, commencing in May 2007, will enable AOSC to develop a post graduate course in occupational science that will be marketed to a range of disciplines.

Japanese Society for the Study of Occupation (JSSO)

By the end of the Think Tank, Tamako Miyamae and Hiromi Yoshikawa, the participants from Japan, had resolved to establish the Japanese Society for the Study of Occupation. So, it was really exciting to learn that on the 3 December 2006, at the 10th Japanese Occupational Science Seminar, the establishment of the Japanese Society for the Study of Occupation was approved. JSSO will promote the development of occupational science and raise its profile as a discipline in Japan.

Reflections

At the completion of an event such as a think tank, it is worthwhile reflecting, both on practical issues as well as personal experiences, to understand what transpired and to learn some lessons for the future.

My own reflections as Convener, on some of the practical issues related to the planning and organization of the Think Tank, as well as some recommendations for organizers of future think tanks can be found in Appendix E.

When I reflect on the variety and depth of support that the Think Tank received from all levels of the community I realize how occupational science ‘strikes a chord’ with so many different people and organizations. Given that occupational science is still a relatively new, and somewhat unknown academic discipline, I firmly believe that the potential contribution of occupational science to understanding and making a positive difference to the everyday lives of people is huge.

Reflecting on the comments made by the participants in the final session and on the comments that I have received since then has helped me appreciate the powerful influence the Think Tank has had on some of the participants. The following comments demonstrate that the Think Tank experience was personally transformative and affirming for some of the participants: “I think I’ve been transformed by this”; “getting together here reaffirms my choice to be in occupational science”; and “I am now reconsidering how to get a balance back into my life and... engage in the wider 'occupational' domain”. Having the opportunity to meet and dialogue with occupational scientists from around the world was also significant. As one participant said, “One of the things this international forum has helped me to understand better is where I am coming from. I understand my own culture when I see other cultures.”

From my personal viewpoint as an occupational scientist, I feel that the first international think tank highlighted that individual occupational scientists and occupational science departments around the world are all contributing to a better understanding of occupation and the influences upon it. It also became apparent to me that each country or region adopts a particular focus, adding its own unique flavor to the knowledge being generated. By the end of the Think Tank I had the sense that occupational science as a discipline has significantly matured over the past years and has developed its own persona, one that is no longer primarily associated with particular institutions and individuals. I am also extremely excited that the Think Tank has galvanized the participants to work towards developing an international body to represent invisible voices and ‘spread the fire’.

I have another dream. I dream that one day there will be worldwide network of occupational scientists across diverse disciplines and interested groups and organizations advocating occupational justice for world health and well-being.

I know now that dreams come true.

*When we are dreaming alone it is only a dream.
When we are dreaming with others, it is the beginning of reality.*
Dom Helder Camara

Appendices

Appendix A - Think Tank stimulus papers

Title	Submitter
Occupational science in Japan	Tamako Miyamae
Stimulus paper for the International Occupational Science Think Tank	CSOS
Activities related to occupational science in Taiwan	Jin Ling Lo
Stimulus paper for the International Occupational Science Think Tank	Jin Ling Lo
Clare's alternate position on human rights – June 2006	Clare Hocking
Occupational science: trends, developments and issues	Clare Hocking
A federation of occupational science societies – draft proposal	Alison Wicks
History of occupational science in Japan	Hiromi Yoshikawa, Tamako Miyamae
Coming to terms with the political nature of human occupation	Frank Kronenberg
Mission, functions and organization of ISOS	Doris Pierce
Thoughts on the occasion of the Occupational Science Think Tank 2006	Ann Wilcock
Research agenda	Ruth Zemke
Mapping the future of occupational science ⁱⁱⁱ	Florence Clark
The research agenda of occupational science ^{iv}	Gail Whiteford
The promise of occupational science: the development of an emerging academic discipline ^v	Helene Polatajko

ⁱⁱⁱ This stimulus paper has since been published as: Clark (2006). One person's thoughts on the future of occupational science. *Journal of Occupational Science*. 13(3), 167-179.

^{iv} Extract from: Molineux & Whiteford (2006). Occupational science: genesis, evolution and future contribution, In E Duncan (Ed) *Foundations in Occupational Therapy*. Pp 297-313 London: Elsevier.

^v Molke, Laliberte & Polatajko (2004.) The promise of occupational science: the development of an emerging academic discipline. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 71(5), 269-281.

Appendix B - Current and future research interests

Transformative Praxis

- Improving the quality of life/wellbeing of the elderly (Jin-Ling)
- Community education re active ageing, seniors' participation in engaging occupations and seniors' use of the Internet (Alison)
- Innovative programs to enable older people to manage loneliness (Mandy)
- Collaborative and comparative study of occupation-based practice (Doris & Clare)
- Developing Lifestyle Redesign® interventions for diverse populations that derive from occupational science (eg. Weightloss, ulcer prevention, healthy ageing) (Florence)
- Developing a virtual environment to assist in occupational therapy interventions (Florence)
- Discovery of meaningful occupations (Hiromi)
- Develop sleep interventions by occupational therapists and medical doctors (Doris)
- Making occupational therapy available as a relevant resource in the context of transformation in South Africa (Frank)
- Occupational transformation of practice (Helene)
- Occupation and praxis in occupational therapy (Gail)
- Clownclusions as a transformative occupation (Frank)

Mainstream

- Strategies older people use to participate in occupation, at home and in the community (Clare)
- How to craft a 'successful' retirement (Mandy)
- Spreading knowledge to society and media (popular science) about retirement and ageing (Hans)
- Influences of occupational perspectives (Hiromi)
- Change through doing before thinking (Hiromi)
- Celebrating the everyday things we do by means of a sculpture garden (Alison)
- Meditations on occupation (Mandy)
- Work/life balance (Helene)

Cohesive, Diverse and Dynamic Science

- Older people's understandings and perceptions of well-being (Mandy)
- Ageing well research – elders' everyday participation in community (Valerie)
- Population studies on ageing – longitudinal studies (Valerie)
- Furthering the interdisciplinary science through cost effectiveness methodologies conducting randomized clinical trials on the effectiveness of Lifestyle Redesign ® interventions in preventing pressure ulcers in people with spinal cord injury and in producing positive health outcomes in the elderly (Florence)
- Supporting researchers in Healthy Ageing (Ruth)
- Systematical building of empirical knowledge regarding occupational balance, occupational transitions, qualities of occupations (Hans)

- Occupation related to well-being, measurement tools, intervention strategies etc (Jin-Ling)
- Daily time budget and occupational balance (Tamako)
- Encouraging/supporting time use study researchers (Ruth)
- Critical textual document analysis (critical social science) of the history of occupations, by place, gender, race, and of vulnerable populations excluded from occupations (Liz)
- The “HOW” mechanisms of occupational performance (especially cognition) eg Visual Motor Mapping (Helene)
- Understanding the meaning of engagement in occupations for older people - currently shopping (Mandy)
- Research on active ageing using PAR methods (Alison)
- Understanding older people’s perceptions of loneliness (Mandy)
- Occupational transitions, identity and adaptations particularly later life, ageing (Debbie)
- Developing data-based theories on why occupational lifestyle redesign interventions are impactful using structural equation modeling (Florence)
- Developing instruments and methodologies for measuring meaningful occupation to further the interdisciplinary science (Florence)
- Contextual enablers of occupation (Helene)
- Participatory action learning and research (Kerry)
- The How – the neurophysiology of occupation (mirror neurons)(Helene)
- Digital storytelling occupation in place (geographic location) (Gail)
- Occupational development – micro, meso, macro (Helen)
- Occupational participation – population and sub population (Gail)
- Documenting the effects of naturally occurring occupations in home settings and functional emotional neuroplastic recovery in stroke survivors using MRI and TMS (Florence)
- Optical topography study of meaningful activities (Tamako)
- Context free occupational elements (Helene)
- Cross cultural study looking at meaning of occupation in spite of culturally diverse practices (Valerie)
- Derived ETIC method – new studies to explore whether it has something to offer occupational science (Valerie)
- Development of occupational science graduate programs (Ian)
- International comparative work – occupational lives in relation to political social and cultural contexts (Debbie)
- Occupation-based education and translation to practice (Virginia)
- Developing graduate and bachelor curricula in occupational science (Ruth)
- Transition from occupational therapy clinician to educator (Mandy)
- Occupational science curriculum development – academic – bachelor, masters, PhD, as well as occupational science within occupational therapy curriculum (Liz)
- Doctoral level education in occupational science (Debbie)
- Study of how scholars experience and choose scholarly work (Doris)

- Research on occupation (basic/by occupation) (Virginia)
- Understanding craft/handwork occupations – doing that enlivens the human spirit – men’s sheds/doing in spaces, women’s rooms/spaces (Valerie)
- Occupation across cultures, variation on the food-centred occupation study (Clare/Doris)

Socially and Ecologically Responsible

- Strengthening places of origin (Frank)
- Strategies to enable/ensure that those without voice (poor and marginalized) are both included in and benefit from occupational work (research, development, policy and practice) (Kerry)
- “Wholistic” approaches – relationships between economic, social, cultural political and ecological – and the implications for /re: occupation (Kerry)
- Development and operationalization of processes and systems to manage diversity and multi-dimensionality across stake holders(Kerry)
- Refugees – resettlement processes from an occupational perspective (Gail)
- Occupation and poverty reduction – organic strategies (Gail)

Innovative partnerships

- Public awareness of occupational scientists working with corporate partners (Dule Pineapple, Four Seasons Hotels, Wellpoint Inc.) in training staff for 5 star wellness resorts – for Baby Boomers with incomes over \$500,000 pa. (Florence)
- Alternative tourism as a transformative occupation (Frank)
- Encouraging international research relationships (Ruth)
- University<->Community engagement – Experiencing the creative process (Alison)
- AOSC and Health and Productivity Research Centre (Ian)

Socially and Politically Influential

- Population ageing + social policy individual and social level issues related to occupation (Debbie)
- Positioning of occupational science and occupational therapy in the academic discipline (Tamako)
- Getting a handle on the political nature of occupation (Frank)
- Contribution people who receive benefits/welfare make to occupations that benefit the community (Clare)
- Critical examination of the concept of participation (Virginia)
- Critique of ICF from occupational perspective (Clare)
- Occupational science networking grant to prioritize fundable focus areas and build team (think tank follow up) (Liz)
- Social equity/justice – critical policy structural analysis of data on everyday experience – survey data, population data, interview/observation data (Liz)
- Contribution to social capital from occupational perspective (Mandy)
- Macro-level structures and discourses – shaping of occupational possibilities (Debbie)

Appendix C – Links to relevant websites

Australasian Occupational Science Centre http://shoalhaven.uow.edu.au/aosc.html	AOSC
Australasian Society of Occupational Scientists http://www.anzocsci.org	ASOS
Canadian Society of Occupational Scientists http://www.csos2006.ca	CSOS
Centre for Health Service Development http://www.uow.edu.au/commerce/chsd/	CHSD
International Society of Occupational Scientists http://www.isocsci.org/	ISOS
<i>interPART</i> http://www.interpart.org.au	
Japanese Society for the Study of Occupation http://www.kiui.ac.jp/~stone/index.html	JSSO
Journal of Occupational Science http://www.jos.edu.au	JOS
occupationUK & IRELAND http://www.occupationuk.org	
Shoalhaven Campus http://shoalhaven.uow.edu.au	
Society for the Study of Occupation: USA http://www.sso-usa.org	SSO:USA

Appendix D - Resolutions for consideration at future think tanks

- That consideration be given to how different ways of knowing and different forms of knowledge can be engaged to inform and guide the occupational science debate and to the system or structure by which the 'content' and 'process' of occupational science can proceed, grow and develop.
- That occupational science systematically builds knowledge about occupation. Areas like occupational transitions, identity balance and qualities of occupation need to be explored empirically as well as theoretically. The knowledge can then be implemented in projects like successful ageing and infusing occupation into refugee camps.
- That occupational science focus on social issues such as ageing.
- That an international research network in occupational science with identified research foci be created, fostering the development of international research teams working on 'lighthouse' projects.
- That we identify and connect with (potentially) interested actors (principally occupational therapists) in South Africa and South America to inform and/or explore possibilities for developing occupational science in collaboration with the international community of occupational scientists.
- That organizers of future think tanks resist the temptation and pressure to include more people – the power of the think tank is in being small and focused.
- That occupational science commit to the development of a pluralistic science
- That the first meeting of ISOS be in Los Angeles in 2007
- That AOSC needs to be consolidated
- That diversity of participants, topics, strategies, dimensions of occupational science research, definitions etc be maintained in future think tanks.
- That the Inaugural Think Tank formally adopt the TT2006 vision (Draft) for further development.
- That occupational science knowledge be developed in each nation & /society to respond to social needs through occupation.
- That we enable the development/enhancement of a cohesive dynamic diverse science that transforms praxis, becomes mainstream, and is socially and ecologically responsible, with innovative partnerships that is socially and politically influential, and that the AOSC be the hub for that.

- That occupational science recognizes the necessity for knowledge development regarding occupation gained through multiple perspectives and methods, incorporating inclusive voices on an international level.
- That the international network emerging from the 2006 Inaugural International Occupational Science Think Tank critically consider the facilitation of the relationship between occupational science and occupational therapy.
- That ISOS be invited to propose to regional occupational science societies that there be a rotating responsibility for hosting subsequent international occupational science think tanks.
- That ISOS resolve that there is a need to further ‘flesh out’ the mission of occupational science in terms of meeting societal needs and creating public awareness about its potential contribution to a healthier world.
- That the Japanese Society for Study of Occupation be established

Appendix E - Recommendations for organizing an international think tank

Recommendation 1 - Set specific criteria for selecting participants and ensure that these criteria are related to the specific purpose of the think tank.

Undoubtedly, making decisions about who to invite was one process fraught with anguish. There were many people from around the world who could, and some will argue *should*, have been invited. But, as there were budget and space limitations, and a need to keep the group relatively small to facilitate discussion, some criteria were set at the outset as a means of determining who to invite. For the Inaugural Think Tank, it was decided to invite people who were representatives of the various national occupational science societies and organizations. A few of the original people invited were unable to attend and so suitable substitutes were chosen.

There will always be people who are disappointed at not being able to attend. However, dissemination of information about the think tank, electronically and via the national occupational science organizations and societies, will enable those people who are interested to read about the program, the outcomes and recommendations.

Recommendation 2 - Invite ‘wild cards’.

Sometimes, gut instincts need to be followed. I felt strongly that there needed to be at least two people at the Inaugural Think Tank who were not academics and who came from non traditional areas of practice and research to ensure a non-myopic perspective was presented. I was thrilled when both Kerry and Frank accepted their invitations, albeit reluctantly at first. Their role in the think tank was critical. They reminded us of the voices that are so often unheard or missing, and regularly asked the question, ‘So what?’ The ‘wild cards’ kept the discussion grounded, prompting us not be so evangelistic, but more pragmatic and realistic.

Recommendation 3 - Call for sharply focused stimulus papers.

An assortment of stimulus papers was received. Their dissemination prior to the Think Tank gave us an introduction to the diversity of interests and concerns of the participants. It was felt that for future think tanks, stimulus papers should focus more on the specific goals of the think tank, in order to lay foundations for targeted discussions, thereby improving outcomes.

Recommendation 4 - Use electronic communication

Prior to the Think Tank, all communication with the participants prior was via email. This form of communication was cost effective and proved to be an efficient means of communicating with people living in various parts of the world with different time zones. On occasions, a REPLY ALL was requested to promote communication among the participants prior to meeting each other. Additionally, the setting of an appropriate deadline for any requested email replies facilitated the planning process. Post Think Tank, the use of the Occupational Science list server^{vi}, as well as the list servers and websites of the national occupational science societies will be effective means of keeping people informed of the development of occupational science from an international perspective.

Recommendation 5 - Invite a non occupational scientist as a means of ‘spreading the fire’ among other disciplines

Inviting a non occupational scientist to participate in the Think Tank proved valuable. Ian Ring’s comments, drawn from his own experiences in professional and academic organizations were very helpful and insightful. At times, his contributions either brought us back to the real world or prompted us to consider the big picture.

Recommendation 6 – Share the facilitator’s role

The strategy of sharing the facilitator’s role, by appointing different chairpersons, spread the workload among the participants. All appointed chairpersons were skilled group facilitators and as a result, the sessions were very productive. Also, as each chairperson adopted a unique approach and style, the variety in the sessions added to the participants’ enjoyment.

Recommendation 7 – Develop strategies for maintaining a record of the sessions

A whiteboard, small cards, blutac and pens were used by most of the Chairpersons to record and display the ideas and suggestions shared by the participants. Recording comments in this way enabled participants to review what was discussed, and facilitated reaching a consensus on a particular topic. Contracting a typist to record all the comments and decisions made throughout each session was extremely useful. The typed diaries of each session provided the material for the compilation of this report. At the conclusion of the Think Tank, participants were provided with a CD which contained a copy of Ann Wilcock’s message, participant profiles and contact details, most of the stimulus papers, as well as photographs taken throughout the Think Tank.

^{vi} See the Links page of the ASOS website at <http://www.anzocsci.org> for details of how to subscribe to the Occupational Science list server.