

# The UKZN Griot Of Audits and Plaudits



The above was a title suggested to me by a mischievous correspondent. We all know about the CHE debacle, how the CHE discredited itself and how bruised egos reacted to the episode of the non-appearance of the UKZN audit report.

WORDS: KEYAN G TOMASELLI

**H**ere, however, I want to discuss this phrase in a different context.

In the July *Griot* on “Posties and Toasties” I talked about ‘Western’ audit mentality colliding with field practicalities, research procedures and the very idea of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Well, one of our number discovered on his return from a remote rocky outcrop that his vehicle had been fitted with a tracking system. One of the bureaucrats at the institution where he is employed observed that the vehicle was stationary in a single location for most of each day. To measure productivity and return on investment, the implication seemed to be, the vehicles should MOVE! Constantly! Next time we’ll employ a driver to move the vehicle back and forth as a cover for those who want to get on with real work.

Now, I wonder how Louis and Mary Leakey would have explained to the bureaucrats the fact that they spent 24 years working in a single valley, Olduvai Gorge in Kenya, before they found a fossil. How does one

publish about finding nothing? Then, how does one write about a single find, a jaw. Not only would they have been told to stop their work, but their vehicle would have been impounded, and the origins of mankind would never have been discovered. In fact, the English physicist Arthur Eddington who actually proved Einstein’s theory that space and time is being bent did so in the field, on a West African island, by taking photographs of stars during a solar eclipse. But *he* was NOT moving, so maybe he forfeited his salary? Yet, it was he who proved that space and time are relative. He and Einstein got the plaudits no thanks to the audits.

I thus conclude from audit culture that Darwin would never have visited the Galapagos Islands and the corollary, that the theory of Intelligent Design would not have been necessary. How many scientists and years did it take to develop the atomic bomb, and incredibly, these scientists were not allowed to publish their work. They were all holed up in a single place and except for the Rosenbergs were mum, chum. No movement

there – at least until the big bang. What if Einstein was told that he was wasting his time doing obscure mathematics, instead of MOVING about, giving the impression of being busy, and feeding vehicle tracking data to his disbelieving managers? What if Eddington had been denied his funding application to test the theory of relativity from a site in a different continent? Would auditing culture have emerged in a pre-Einsteinian world? I think not.

The very discoveries that feed audit culture are those used by the auditors to wreck the academic enterprise, the free flow of ideas and even of working in the field. The plaudits are for the audits, not for the raw data. Tell you what, the humanoid robot, Data of *Star Trek*, has more humanity than do those who think that a stationary vehicle in a remote valley is an indication of sloth, goofing off, and idleness. But ask those same auditors to check out what is being done way out in the bush, well, they’ll arrive in their city suits and ask for iced water.

What’s next? We all get fitted with microchips which report when we’re contemplating the

mysteries of the universe while taking a crap; wasting time on a rockface tracing thousand year old engravings, or engaging in discussions with peers *en route* to somewhere else. Moving, that’s the trick when one uses institutional cars. Reminds me of a car manufacturer’s advertising catchphrase “We like to keep you moving”. The same company that then largely produced characterless models then replaced this with “Shift expectations”. Moving, said architect Frank Lloyd Wright is a disease called “mobilitis”. The symptoms of mobilitis are evident in management as they whizz between campuses, dragging behind them long-suffering academics who would rather work in a single place/classroom than appear to be busy by moving all the time. The auditors have shifted expectations. The expectation is no longer that we produce quality work but that we send fast and dirty articles into SAPSE journals. Gotta keep the treadmill moving. How else will we pay the bills?

Forget about the Leakeys with their single-minded lifetime project that changed the

way that people understand their origins. Punish Darwin for delaying publication of the *Origin of the Species* due his fear about the ideological implications of the theory of evolution – which in the current conjuncture places auditors at the top of the evolutionary process. Imprison the doers, those who get their hands dirty in the field by changing the space-time relations now enabled by tracking companies. Reminds me of the stereotypical London’s bobby’s command, “Now then, move along, don’t loiter”. Are we academics not allowed to loiter any more while we contemplate the cosmos?

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**Disclaimer: The views expressed in this column are the author’s own.**

## Sudoku

6		5	7		4			9
		9				1		3
			5					
				5				8
4		8		2		3		1
3				4				
					5			
9		7				8		
5			1		3	7		4

# Go Bokke!

The School, of Nursing shows their support for the Springboks.



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