Australia’s Distinctiveness in a Globalizing World:
Towards a New Area Studies

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Stimulated by Martha C. Nussbaum’s book, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (1997), we propose a revitalization of area studies programs in universities, to encourage them to respond to the profound academic challenges now being thrown up by globalization. The paper sketches a critique of conventional area studies in favor of the kinds of ‘internationalizing’ curricula advocated by Professor Nussbaum - and by many others, including some leading scholars in Asia - e.g., Singapore’s Professor Wang Gungwu.

In the light of Nussbaum’s recommendations, we outline a new approach to Australian Studies in Japanese universities. This approach is based on what we identify as Australia’s distinctiveness in a globalizing world.

We suggest that this distinctiveness has three core components:

1. Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;
2. Australian multiculturalism (e.g., as a micro-model for global citizenship);
3. Australia’s European cultural heritage in proximity to Asia (e.g., modeling the politics of recognition).

We propose that Australian Studies programs in Japanese universities are justified on two important grounds - viz.,

(A) Acknowledging that the Japan-Australia relationship can (and should) be broadened and deepened,

and by

(B) Integrating Australian Studies in Japan into a renewed area studies framework.