

ANZAMEMS President's Report – Annual General Meeting, April 2019

The past year has seen ANZAMEMS achieve new successes, one of the most notable of which was the adoption of an impressive new look for our journal, *Parergon*, under the leadership of the Editor, Sue Broomhall. The journal goes from strength to strength in terms of the quality of its content, its placement in the Project MUSE rankings (since 2015, it has steadily risen from the top 12% to the top 7%), and its h-index (which rose from 5 to 7 over the past year). 2018 was also the year that saw *Parergon* appear on the front page of the BBC News website and appear prominently in the reporting of other news organisations. These stories highlighted the impressive research of Heather Dalton (the winner of our inaugural Philippa Maddern ECR Publication Prize), Jukka Salo, Pekka Niemelä and Simo Örmä into the Emperor Frederick II's Australasian cockatoo. If you have yet to read the article, I encourage you to do so as it is a first-rate piece of research.

I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution to the Association made by a number of key members of the ANZAMEMS General Committee in the course of the past year. I would like to extend particular thanks to both Sue, as *Parergon's* Editor, and to Hélène Sirantoine, the Reviews Editor, both of whom have worked tremendously hard to develop not only a new budgeting structure for *Parergon*, which has played an important role in allowing us to establish a financial reserve, but also a new committee structure for the journal that provides early career scholars in Australasia with a unique opportunity to gain editorial experience. I would also like to note the incredible hard work that our Executive Administrator, Marina Gerzić, now entering her third year in the role, plays in ensuring everything from the journal to the conference runs smoothly.

This year I also have the pleasure of thanking our conference sub-committee based at The University of Sydney and at Macquarie University. Led by Dan Anlezark, the sub-committee worked extremely hard to ensure we all enjoyed a first-class event in Sydney. As with any conference, there is a tremendous amount of behind the scenes work. I'm particularly grateful to all the conference committee members and in particular to Dan, Louise D'Arcens, Peter Anstey, Stephanie Russo, Anya Adair, Nicholas Baker, and Hélène Sirantoine.

I'm also very grateful to the General Committee members who joined the team at the 2018 AGM. Karen Jillings stepped into the role of Secretary this year and has been

doing excellent work keeping us organised. Similarly, Amanda McVitty has been doing sterling work as our new Communications Officer, as have Elisabeth Rolston and Hannah Skipworth, as the new postgraduate representatives. I'd also like to extend my gratitude to Sarah Ross and Judith Collard, who will both be stepping down, respectively, as our Aotearoa New Zealand Vice-President and Treasurer this year. We very much appreciate the time they have been willing to invest in the Association and the insights they have brought to the General Committee. And we are especially grateful to Sarah who stepped into her role following two years as the convenor for our Wellington conference.

Before moving on to specific issues, I think it important to acknowledge the hard work of all ANZAMEMS's General Committee members. Their efforts ensure the smooth running of the day-to-day business of the Association. Committee service is hard work but offers a genuine opportunity to make an important contribution to fostering the well-being of medieval and early modern studies in Australasia. I would encourage members to consider standing for a position.

General Committee Business

The period since the 2018 AGM has seen the General Committee working extremely hard on behalf of the Association's membership. The series of sub-committees set up in 2015 continue to explore new ways in which to advance ANZAMEMS's primary goals. Each sub-committee is chaired and staffed by members of the General Committee.

At the 2016 AGM the membership voted to establish the Finance sub-committee (Chair: Peter Sherlock). This sub-committee has continued its assessment of expenditure across the Association with a view to ensuring the future sustainability of PATS, prizes, administrative support, and high quality journal production. It has now established a budget that ensures the Association holds a year's revenue in reserve. We are, as a consequence of Peter's hard work, able to provide future conference convenors with a detailed breakdown of the support available from the Association. The Finance sub-committee took steps in 2018/19 to create a separate bank account for the Association independent of The University of Western Australia. This new structure is intended to speed up the process of paying out prize money, arranging conference financing, etc. The sub-committee also took steps to enact the decision

of the General Committee that the Executive Administrator's contract should move from a 'by the hour' model to a fixed-term, annual contract renewable at the start of each year subject to performance review.

The Honours and Prizes sub-committee (Chair: Sarah Ross) was extremely active in 2018, particularly with regard to business in the lead up to the conference. The sub-committee administered both the Crawford and the Maddern prizes under Sarah's direction and worked with the Editor and the Finance sub-committee to explore the options for introducing further substantial prizes.

Following the 2017 AGM, a permanent sub-committee was established to address issues of equity and diversity (Chair: Charlotte-Rose Millar). This committee has now produced its own guidelines for this and future conferences, approved by the General Committee and available to members on request. The official ANZAMEMS equity and diversity statement, adopted at the 2017 AGM, is published regularly in the front matter of *Parergon*.

A Constitutional Amendment sub-committee, which I myself chair, completed its review of the Association's constitution in the first half of 2017. This review was necessitated by legal changes in Western Australia. The proposed constitution was circulated to the membership prior to the 2018 AGM and, following a vote, was adopted. It has now been registered with the government of Western Australia. The majority of the changes were necessitated by legal requirements. One additional change expanded the number of General Committee members from 14 to 15 to assist with increasing business. The notice issued for the 2019 AGM was accompanied by a copy of the new constitution; this completes the legal process connected with its adoption.

I would like to thank all of the sub-committee chairs for their hard work over the last few months. We will review the work of all the sub-committees at the AGM and I anticipate most will continue into 2019/20 with the aim of ensuring ANZAMEMS remains a vibrant, active, and responsive organisation. I would welcome expressions of interest from the membership if you feel you might have particular skills to contribute to the work being undertaken by the General Committee in any of the above areas.

A full list of the sub-committees and their current membership is available on ANZAMEMS website.

Administration

The administration of ANZAMEMS continues to evolve. The Association has now completed a transition to a model of fixed virtual AGMs to ensure we comply fully with our constitutional obligations and reporting requirements. The President/Chair convenes regular virtual meetings of the General Committee three times a year (spaced approximately four months apart in non-conference years). Editorial sub-committee meetings, convened by the Editor, are held once every six months, while other sub-committees are convened on an ad hoc basis by their chairs as business arises.

The position of Executive Administrator, established following the 2017 AGM to support of the General Committee and the membership, underwent minor modifications following its first year in operation as a clearer portrait of the EA's full duties emerged. The new Position Description is available to members for inspection on request. The role combines key activities around membership and administration with broader elements of the communications portfolio.

Postgraduate Advanced Training seminars

February 2019 saw our first PATS since 2017. It was organised by Louise D'Arcens in conjunction with the Sydney conference. The PATS, which focused on digital humanities, preceded the conference on February 4-5, and was divided into two strands. Guest speakers included Professor Elaine Treharne (Stanford University) and Dr Francesco Borghesi (University of Sydney).

2018 unfortunately saw a planned PATS fall through. The financing for this was, however, transferred to the 2019 budget. A call for Expressions of Interest was issued at the February OGM.

Looking to the future, I will, in the course of the AGM, be tabling an **Expression of Interest** received from **The University of Western Australia** with regard to holding the **2021 conference**. This EoI is recommended to the membership by the

Committee. The OGM held at the Sydney conference passed a non-binding but indicative vote in favour of this proposal. In line with the constitution, financial members are balloted formally on whether or not to accept the EoI at the AGM.

I would like to invite **Expressions of Interest** for our **2023 conference**. If you are keen but uncertain quite what is required and what support ANZAMEMS is able to offer, I would be delighted to discuss, informally, what hosting a conference involves. We have also prepared an **ANZAMEMS Conference Policy** document. Those interested can contact the Executive Administrator, who will provide a copy.

I would like to encourage the membership to make the most of the Association's online presence. The new website continued to develop in 2018 under the guidance of Marina and Amanda McVitty; it provides an excellent resource for scholars in this hemisphere. It is my hope that it will become a first point of reference for those in the rest of the world who, perhaps as a result of encountering our journal, are curious to know exactly what goes on in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. It is also to be hoped that it will become a reference point for non-academics in Australasia seeking expertise in our field. I am especially interested in exploring ways in which it may become a platform through which to raise awareness of new digital research. With that in mind, I was particularly pleased to see steps towards broadening our digital horizons apparent across every aspect of our February conference. Those efforts were evident not only in the conference PATS but also across a wide range of other activities, including the introduction of a conference app and the simulcast panel discussion held with our sister organisation, the Medieval Association of the Pacific. I am very grateful to my counterpart, John Ott, who as President of MAP worked extremely hard to enable us to connect with colleagues in Arizona, and to Louise D'Arcens and the conference team who worked hard to ensure our end of the event was a success (particularly as it was held at a rather early hour of the day!).

In ending this report, I would like to thank all of my fellow Committee members. I am deeply indebted to all of them as it is their hard work, freely given time, patience, and tremendous efforts that build the foundations that ensure ANZAMEMS remains the friendly and supportive Association that it is.

President, Chris Jones

March 2019