

President's Report to the Annual General Meeting, ANZAMEMS, April 2022

2021 was not the post-pandemic year we were hoping for with returning lockdowns and travel restrictions since our last AGM. There has been tremendous pressure on all of us in different ways, and I want to begin by congratulating everyone for whatever their achievements have been.

Although formal restrictions seem to be lifting at present, there is still a great deal of uncertainty around travel, particularly internationally. The Conference Committee at UWA took the difficult but necessary step of moving the upcoming conference entirely online. This will be a first for ANZAMEMS, and while it is disappointing not to be able to gather in person, digital spaces have their own value and affordances and I look forward to the event a great deal. I thank the Conference Committee for their hard work under very challenging circumstances over the past several years, particularly the co-conveners Kirk Essary and Marina Gerzic.

As we look forward to the 2022 conference, I am grateful to the team at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch for their Expression of Interest in hosting the 2024 conference and encourage members to actively consider proposing one for the 2026 conference.

New initiatives supporting members

ANZAMEMS has been exploring new ways to support postgraduate and early-career researchers. Nat Cutter and Megan Shaw, the postgraduate representatives worked very hard in this space, as have the members of the ECR group. The Committee was delighted to be able to fund a scheme of short-term research fellowships for ECRs for the first time in 2022. ANZAMEMS also launched the Constant Mews Early Career Publication Prize, which honours the work of Professor Constant Mews, FAHA, a former President of ANZAMEMS as part of its suite of prizes; I thank Kathleen Neal for her work in helping set up this prize, and everyone who donated financially to support it.

As our usual in-person training seminars were not possible, ANZAMEMS ran a series of seven online sessions on ECR careers, research methodologies, and critical issues in MEMS. I thank everyone who was involved, particularly Clare Monagle and Nat Cutter who jointly chair the ANZAMEMS Seminar Committee, and Megan Shaw and Matthew Champion all of whom who organised and chaired sessions, and the local and international speakers who so generously shared their knowledge and insights.

A new ANZAMEMS internships scheme to support various Association projects while offering skill and career-development opportunities for MEMS postgraduates has been instituted. The first internship is in process of being set up to support redevelopment of the *Parergon* website through the ANU. My thanks to Rosalind Smith who, as *Parergon* Editor, will oversee this position and help determine the viability and usefulness of the scheme.

Advocating for Medieval and Early Modern Studies

In late 2021, six Humanities projects recommended by the Australian Research Council were refused funding by the Minister, including two projects in Medieval and Early Modern Studies. ANZAMEMS joined with other organisations and scholars condemning this political interference in an independent grant assessment process. The ANZAMEMS submission to a Senate inquiry into a proposed legislative change that would remove the Minister's power to veto grant funding was circulated to members. The proposed change was not supported by the Senate committee, despite overwhelming support from the sector. The Senate committee did recommend an independent inquiry into research funding; ANZAMEMS will track progress of this recommendation and make a submission should it be taken forward.

ANZAMEMS has also undertaken other work to advocate for Medieval and Early Modern Studies and Humanities disciplines more broadly, including committing to organise a small event for a 2022 multi-disciplinary Congress organised by the Council of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS) based in Melbourne. I encourage members to consider whether they would be interested in organising a panel or event for the Congress, and to get in touch with me with any queries. Matthew Champion also agreed to be nominated for the CHASS Board by ANZAMEMS, and I congratulate him on his election.

Australian members may be aware that the next Excellence in Research for Australia assessment is imminent. As part of that process, the Australian Research Council creates a list of peer-reviewed journals from which eligible publications may come. I am pleased to say that ANZAMEMS has been selected as one of the organisations that will be asked to provide expert feedback on a proposed journal list.

Administration

Careful management of the Association's finances over the past several years has enable ANZAMEMS to build its savings as well as financially support a wide range of activities and initiatives in line with our mission statement. Having this 'nest egg' and a reasonably stable

income for the past several years gives the Association a sound level of financial stability. I look forward to working with the new Treasurer to explore options for managing these funds in effective and productive ways. I thank Peter Sherlock, who has served three consecutive terms as Treasurer, for his excellent work and steady hand with ANZAMEMS finances.

A concrete outcome of the Association's sound financial situation is that the General Committee was able to reappoint Marina Gerzic as Executive Assistant for a five-year term from the start of 2022 and increase the fraction of her employment. This reflects both the excellent work Marina has done since taking on the role, and an increase administrative load resulting from the various initiatives ANZAMEMS has launched in recent years. I am delighted that ANZAMEMS has been able to offer a higher level of job security than the former year-on-year arrangement in these times where precarity is so rife in higher education. I think Marina on behalf of the the entire Association for her dedication and invaluable contributions. She has a hand in all parts of ANZAMEMS' business in her roles as Executive Assistant, editorial assistant for *Parergon* and also formally took on co-convening the 2022 Conferences with Kirk Essary in late 2021.

General Committee Business

I am grateful to all the members of the General Committee for their hard work on behalf of the Association and its members in a difficult year. ANZAMEMS could do nothing without their efforts. I am particularly grateful to Peter Sherlock (Treasurer), Karen Jillings (Secretary) and Nat Cutter (Australian postgraduate representative), who are stepping down from their roles.

The General Committee has maintained its pattern of meeting formally by Zoom four times each year, and kept in place the established subcommittees since the 2021 AGM. A full list of the sub-committees and their current chairs and membership is available on ANZAMEMS website. The Seminars subcommittee, co-chaired by Clare Monagle and Nat Cutter, worked very hard this year developing the program I described above. The Honours and Prizes subcommittee, chaired by Andrew Brown, has also worked very hard at supporting our existing suite of prizes and awards and adding to it with the ECR fellowships and Constant Mews prize. I also thank everyone who has served on the judging panels for ANZAMEMS prizes.

Rosalind Smith and Sarah Ross jointly took on editorship of *Parergon* at the 2021 AGM in a first for the journal; Sarah also returned to her former role as New Zealand Vice President. They successfully produced the two planned issues in a very challenging year for academic publishing, for which I both thank and congratulate them.

It has been a pleasure and an honour to work with the ANZAMEMS committee and members in this first year as President. I am grateful to you all for entrusting me with the position.

President, Helen Young

April 2022