

Executive Summary

Medieval and Early Modern studies (MEMS) is an extensive and shifting research field in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. This report by Dr Katharine Blake is the main output of a mapping project undertaken from October 2019 to January 2020 ANZAMEMS (Australia and New Zealand Association of Medieval and Early Modern Studies). The project aimed to map the impact and scope of MEMS on the Australian and New Zealand tertiary and research landscape to inform ANZAMEMS' strategic agenda, responding to a gap in MEMS data.

Methodology

For this project, macro and micro approaches were undertaken. The macro approach drawing from sources of research and development reporting from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Stats NZ Tauranga Aotearoa, the Australian Research Council, the Royal Society Te Apārangi, the Australian Academy of the Humanities and peak bodies for the tertiary sector. Through standard research classifications used by reporting bodies, a formula was developed in order to interpret statistics at an umbrella level.

At a micro level, a keyword search was used as a means of attaining information from relevant websites including university, funding and government websites. There are some limitations on the effectiveness of this methodology because of the subjectivity of the researcher and variations in information availability and website structure. A member survey to provide insight into the concerns of ANZAMEMS members was also conducted.

Current MEMS Snapshot

MEMS Teaching

A keyword survey of Bachelor of Arts courses across nine Australian and New Zealand universities shows that there is a diverse range of majors and units that feature MEMS content. This is in part due to the diversification of course offerings and restructuring of the bachelor's degree across larger universities.

University offerings in Australia are shaped by a high level of international students, primarily from Asia. This has led to a prioritisation of degrees perceived to have higher employability results such as engineering. Despite the perception that MEMS degrees result in lower employability, MEMS degrees resulted in an employability rate that compares favourably to degrees in other fields. However, the casualisation of university positions has destabilised teaching career opportunities and poses significant challenges for those continuing into academia and research in the MEMS field after completion of their studies.

MEMS Research

The report details the successful funding of MEMS projects through the Australian Research Council (ARC) in Australia, and Marsden in New Zealand, and MEMS presence in Excellence in Research for Australia exercises. In order to appropriately define and categorise MEMS as a subgroup, then current Australia and New Zealand Standard Research Codes (ANZSRC) were used to identify the scope of MEMS content in the tertiary space; the 2020 update to ANSRC had not been implemented. Five of the 20 ANZSRC divisions were deemed to have MEMS content. There are 158 Field of Research subgroups within these divisions, and 15 of those subgroups relate to MEMS. Through an

analysis of branches of knowledge identified by ANZSRC, it is determined that 6.2% of these branches are supported by MEMS. Drawing from this analysis, the formula for the MEMS-ANZSRC subgroup is used in the report to measure the impact and presence of MEMS in wider reporting.

The formula developed as part of this project shows what percentage of the three most saturated divisions have MEMS content, allowing for the calculation of the portion of funding reliant on MEMS. This is exemplified in the below averages of ARC funding calculated over 4 years:

- “Language, Communication and Culture” – 35% resulting in a MEMS average portion representing \$3,962,621 per year.
- “History and Archaeology,” – 45% resulting in a MEMS average portion representing \$11,942,621 per year.
- “Philosophy and Religious Studies” - 56% resulting in a MEMS average portion representing \$3,880,920 per year.

Impact Case Studies

Case studies collected for this report give insight into successfully funded projects that focus on specific MEMS-related outcomes.

These include:

- Projects that focused on disciplinary innovation such as experimental applications of MEMS and digital scholarship.
- Projects that engaged the general public in MEMS such as festivals and public events.
- Projects that fostered collaboration across multiple disciplines, exemplified by the Rare Manuscript Collection.
- Projects that fostered global collaboration with scholars from countries such as South China, Taiwan, Macau, England, and the United States on projects relating to art and culture.
- Projects that provided insight into present concerns of MEMS such as the effect of history and traditional knowledge on contemporary Māori culture.

The ACU Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry is an example of a highly regarded, internationally competitive research programme contributing to the ANZAMEMS community.

Members Survey

ANZAMEMS members were surveyed using a non-prescriptive, 5-part questionnaire. 10% of members returned these. The results showed a diverse range of MEMS knowledge and activities. It also identified the areas of concern that included: difficulty obtaining work in a shrinking job market, a lack of support for early career researchers and issues securing funding. The lack of support and mentorship was identified as a primary concern that acted as a barrier for early career researchers and their employment prospects.

Future Directions

There are leadership opportunities for ANZAMEMS in providing guidance to graduates and those seeking funding.

This includes:

- The facilitation of competitive funding workshops and training.
- The establishment of an online hub to allow for the sharing of knowledge and resources. This should be a self-sustaining hub due to ANZAMEMS resource limitations.
- A greater focus on projects that engage with digital humanities as these have a high rate of success and suggest the benefits of further exploring and integrating digital scholarship with MEMS.
- The opportunity for ANZAMEMS to form valuable partnerships with government and MEMS centres with the view to providing greater insight into funding decisions and fostering new opportunities.
- Supporting early career researchers and assisting them in navigating an increasingly competitive funding and teaching landscape.

Future studies would benefit from the establishment of MEMS codes and the use of a data mining method that would allow for a less subjective and more comprehensive data collection.

Conclusion

While MEMS in Australia and New Zealand is vibrant and innovative, funding is restricted and competitive which results in a high rate of unsuccessful funding applications. The MEMS presence within the university sector is thriving, but highly competitive in terms of substantial funding and employment opportunities. The effect of international student markets has resulted in the diversification of opportunities but has also led to a more competitive local market. Further support is needed for those pursuing an academic career in MEMS and ANZAMEMS is uniquely positioned to provide leadership and guidance.