



ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Quarterly Newsletter no 1, 5 July 2007

Welcome to the re-born ASAA Newsletter, an informal quarterly report about the workings of the ASAA Council and other issues of interest to our members. If you have something you'd like to be considered for inclusion in future newsletters, please contact the Association's Secretary, Michele Ford (michele.ford@usyd.edu.au).

New President

We are sorry to have to inform ASAA members that **Michael Leigh** has resigned as president of the association. Michael did a great deal for us during his six months in office, but has had to withdraw from the position because of the pressure of other work. After careful consideration, the Council decided to ask **Robert Cribb** to return as president for the remainder of the 2007-2008 presidential term. Robert is familiar with the work of the ASAA from his time as president 2005-2006, and we felt that this arrangement would allow us to proceed with minimal disruption to our active program for the remainder of the council's term.

Membership Drive

As many of you may be aware, the Council has been actively engaged in a membership drive. The ASAA believes there is an urgent need to develop a strategy to preserve, renew and extend Australian expertise about Asia. This requires a strong association, supported by all members of the Asian Studies community, no matter what their discipline base. ASAA Councillors have been contacting potential members in their universities and their geographical area groupings. We urge all current members of the ASAA to recruit a colleague or three, to help strengthen the association in this election year, when lobbying for Asian Studies on both sides of the hill is even more crucial. New members can join online at <https://www.registernow.com.au/secure/Register.aspx?ID=594>

New Website

In the past few months, the Council has been working to prepare a new ASAA website, which will feature an enhanced design, a Register of Asia Expertise, and information on employment and grant opportunities. It is now also possible to pay membership dues securely online. The URL of the new site is <http://www.asaa.asn.au>. We expect to go live early in July. We would like to thank **Dr Matthew Ciolek** (ANU) for all his work in maintaining the ASAA's old website.

ASAA Presidents' Prize and DK Award

The ASAA Presidents' Prize and DK Award is awarded each year to the best PhD thesis in Asian Studies at an Australian university. Each university has been asked to nominate a single thesis for consideration by the committee and letters to this effect have been sent to all the vice-chancellors. If you have a likely candidate for nomination for this prize, please follow up the issue up within your university.

ASAA Prize for Excellence in Asian Studies

Awards are available for people at the start of their careers, and for recognition at the end of their careers, but there is little in between. At its last meeting, the ASAA Council decided to found a new Asian Studies prize for mid-career researchers, bearing in mind that formal recognition of research achievements can be important in career development. Council had decided to ask Anthony Reid for permission to name the prize after him, bearing in mind his substantial contributions to the profession in Australia. Due to a misunderstanding, the call for nominations for the prize was made before this permission had been sought. Tony has since let us know that, as an active academic, he would prefer not to be noticed in this way, and suggested that the prize be known simply as the ASAA Prize for Excellence in Asian Studies. We apologise to him and to our members for this confusion.

The ASAA Prize for Excellence in Asian Studies (\$1000) is awarded biennially to a mid-career researcher (or researchers) for research on an Asian subject, as represented in a sole-authored book or a portfolio of articles and/or book chapters. Applicants must be ASAA members employed at an Australian University below Associate Professor level, and must have completed their PhD at least five years before the application is lodged. More details will be available on the new website when it is launched.

ASAA Biennial Conference

Is this the Asian Century? 17th biennial conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA), 1-3 July 2008, Sebel Albert Park Hotel, Melbourne.

The biennial Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) conference is the largest gathering of expertise on Asia in the southern hemisphere. The theme for 2008 invites you to assess how the regions and issues on which you are interested are faring. The ASAA conference is multi-disciplinary and covers Central, South, South-East and North East Asia and the relationship of all of these with the rest of the world.

The 17th biennial conference on 1-3 July 2008 will bring together specialists to assess trends in Asian law, medicine and health, science, ethics/human rights, politics, regional security, economics, culture, religion, environment, media, the performing arts and many other fields. Given the theme, we encourage cross-country and inter-regional analysis. To assess how Asia is doing, we need to think broadly about Asia and compare trends in India and China, the new giants of Asia, with the older industrial power Japan and newly emerging economies of Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. We also need to link up these trends with events outside Asia.

Join us either as a presenter of a conference paper or as a participant to debate what is happening in the Asian region and its impact on the rest of the world. In

some fields, trends in Asia are driving world affairs but in other areas Asia lags behind. What is the case in your field? Will this be the Asian century?

The 2008 conference is hosted by Monash Asia Institute, Monash University on behalf of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA).

To visit the conference website, <http://www.conferenceworks.net.au/asaa/index.php>

To register, visit <http://www.secureregistrations.com/Asian>

2007 Conference Season

By convention, Australia's country-specific Asian Studies associations hold their conferences in alternate years with the ASAA's biennial conference. This year's conference season began with the Chinese Studies Association of Australia (CSAA) conference at Griffith University in Brisbane in late June. Amongst highlights was the celebration of five Australian China scholars who have won the Levenson Prize for Chinese Studies, awarded annually by the US-based Association for Asian Studies. These scholars are John Fitzgerald, Geremie Barmé, John Makeham, Antonia Finnane and Michael Dutton.

The Japanese Studies Association of Australia held its conference at the Australian National University in Canberra in early July. The program included a dinner in the Great Hall of Parliament House to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Australia-Japan Commerce Treaty.

At its last meeting, the Council decided to promote professional development within the Asian Studies community by offering training seminars at a selection of regional conferences.

The conference of the Korean Studies Association will take place at Curtin University in Perth on 12-13 July 2007. For further information, see <http://info.dolie.curtin.edu.au/KSAAConference.cfm>

The Indonesia Council Open Conference will take place at Monash University on 24-25 September 2007.

On behalf of the ASAA, Robert Cribb organized panels on Getting Published at the CSAA conference and on Applying for an Academic Job at the JSAA conference. Similar sessions will be run at the Indonesia Council Open Conference.

Ethics Statement

The long-awaited revision of the *National Statement* on ethics in research has been issued and is available at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm>. The previous *Statement* had caused difficulties for Asian Studies researchers by appearing to insist on written consent from anyone who was interviewed for research purposes. The new *Statement* removes this apparent insistence and allows researchers to

obtain consent by the most appropriate means. Many members of the ASAA made submissions to the review of the old *Statement* and it is pleasing that our representations have been noticed.

Research Quality Framework

The ranking of journals has become increasingly important within the impending Research Quality Framework, and many of us are aware that the Thomson/ISI database which is extensively used for ranking journals tends to be structurally biased both against Area Studies, against journals based outside North America and against journals in languages other than English. The European Science Foundation has attempted to address this issue by initiating a European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH; see http://www.nwo.nl/nwohome.nsf/pages/NWOP_6D7BSP_Eng?opendocument&nav=HERA_18_NL) and the ASAA Council has begun to explore the possibility of a similar initiative for the Asia-Pacific region.

ICEAPS

We are sorry to inform our members that the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) has decided to end its funding of the International Centre of Excellence for Asia Pacific Studies (ICEAPS). The Centre, which was launched by Kam Louie and headed for some time by John Fitzgerald and more recently by Ann Kumar, supported a wide range of activities in Asian and Pacific Studies, including the publication of the ASAA's e-bulletin *Asian Currents* and we have been most grateful for its contributions. Transitional arrangements for the winding up (or possible transformation) of the Centre are currently being negotiated.

HASS on the Hill

Michael Barr represented **Flinders University** at the 'HASS on the Hill' in Canberra on June 19 and 20 and send this report.

'HASS on the Hill' is a lobbying exercise organised by the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS), the hill in question being Parliament House. The 'pointy end' of the exercise was pairing up about 140 academics with federal parliamentarians to talk about issues that affect the HASS disciplines. At its most basic level the exercise was designed to encourage our politicians would think of us benignly – or even to think of us at all – but CHASS had three more specific items on their agenda.

Asking for the role of Chief Scientist to be broadened to include the human and social sciences (reflecting the European usage of the word 'science').

Asking for the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council to be broadened to include one new ex officio members from the humanities and one from the social sciences.

Changing the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) into the Department of Education, Research and Training (DERT). Given the unfortunate

acronym involved here I wondered if it might be better to suggest the Department of Science, Education, Research and Training (DSERT).

These are hardly revolutionary changes, but it was thought that if they are granted it will at least give the HASS group a seat at the research table in Canberra, whereas at the moment we are very much sitting out in the cold.

We were also encouraged to raise issues that arise directly from our fields of professional and research interest, which in my case is International Relations-cum-Asian Studies.

With Professor Deborah Stevenson of UWS I met Senator Graham Chapman (Liberal, SA) and Senator Natasha Stott Despoja (Democrat, SA) and dutifully made these standard SHASS suggestions, along with my own request for special help for Asian language studies (both at university and at school) and Asian studies more generally. I particularly requested that the government fund a programme to promote the teaching of Asian languages in schools, both because this seems to me to be the nub of the problem and also because the ALP has promised to introduce a \$68.6 million 'National Asian Language and Studies in Schools Program'.

Senator Chapman is a former Vice-President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs and he responded well to the suggestion that learning Asian languages and doing Asia studies was a matter of the national interest. Surprisingly he was completely unaware that there was any crisis in either field at any level of education, but I have done my best to convince him otherwise. In the meeting I gave him a copy of the ASAA Federal Budget submission for 2006–2007 (the most recent available) and since then I have passed him a couple of other items, including ASAA's 2002 report on the state of Asian Studies in Australia (*Maximizing Australia's Asia Knowledge*), and a couple of other items (including the URL to the announcement of the ALP's National Asian Language And Studies In Schools Program).

Senator Stott Despoja also responded very positively to these requests, but given her record on education issues, this is hardly a surprise. Even though she is a retiring minority party senator I have hopes that some good may flow from that meeting.

Now we will have to wait and see if anything practical comes out of the exercise. Personally I live in hope rather than anticipation, but you never know....'

Pam Nilan, who attended on behalf of the **University of Newcastle**, writes:

HASS on the Hill was an opportunity to really think about whether politicians are ever interested in the kind of research we do in the region. My impression is that most are firmly focused on Australian domestic issues and it is difficult to lift their mindset into wider Asia-Pacific concerns. But of course this HASS on the Hill took place just prior to an election, so that is not really surprising.

The Council of Humanities and Social Sciences proposal to replace the current position of Chief Scientist with equal representation from the physical and social

sciences seemed to be received with interest by the political sector and if accepted might have some positive implications for Asia-based research in Australia. The question of encouraging the teaching of (Asian and other) languages was raised on the briefing day and gained a lot of support from HASS delegates.

I certainly raised it with the Labor politician I met and Kevin Rudd's personal Asian language proficiency appears to be leading by example because he agreed heartily with my suggestions. I was told by him that Rudd would be addressing an Asian-focused business dinner partly in Mandarin in a few weeks time and that Rudd personally believes all Australian business studies graduates need some knowledge of an Asian language. Obviously this would give a boost to Asian Studies at all educational levels if it came to pass.

National Languages Summit Communiqué

A Communiqué from the National Languages Summit has been released, outlining the united vision of 160 of Australia's leading experts in the field of language education and language use. The Communiqué is available at <http://www.humanities.org.au/Policy/Languages/>.

Queen's Birthday Honours, 2007

Congratulations to three senior Asianists who were honoured in the 2007 Queen's Birthday round. They are Professor Colin Mackerras, appointed Officer (AO) in the Order of Australia, and Professors Tony Milner and Peter Rimmer, who were appointed Member (AM) in the Order of Australia.

Appointments and Promotions

Remco Breuker recently joined the Division of Pacific and Asian History at the Australian National University as a research fellow. His research is on early Korean history and Korea's relations with states and tribes in Manchuria.

Members of the ASAA are always interested to hear news of the latest appointments and promotions. Please drop a line to the editor (michele.ford@usyd.edu.au) when something interesting happens.