



The Australasian Society for Classical Studies

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2008

Membership continues to increase steadily, especially with the number of students joining; membership now stands at 440, though some 65 or more are unfinancial for 2006-2007. We also removed 24 from the membership list, not having had communication from them for three years. There is the usual disconcerting number who have to be reminded to pay their subscription each year – why are there so many disorganised academics? On a more positive note, there will as usual be new members joining as a result of attending this conference.

The conference and general meeting hosted by the University of Canterbury at Rydges Hotel in Christchurch in January was a successful and enjoyable occasion. Warm thanks were given to the Convenor, Dr Enrica Sciarrino, to Dr Gary Morrison and to their team for the efficient organisation. The involvement of the keynote speaker, Professor Andrew Stewart, from the University of California at Berkeley, was greatly appreciated. Subsidies for student travel to the conference were again made available, with AU\$2060 being divided between 10 honours and postgraduate students to enable them to attend.

Vol. 42 of the journal for 2008 appeared, again *suo anno*. The Editors will be reporting on the journal more fully elsewhere, but it would not be inappropriate here to thank them most warmly for their efforts and guidance which has seen the journal appear on a regular basis.

The Newsletter was, as usual, sent out twice during the year, in April and October. Regular messages are also sent out to members by email, and this has proved to be a useful means of disseminating information, with over 90% of members now receiving communications in this format.

A considerable amount of time was spent in July, August and September by a number of the Society's members on the ARC ERA exercise devoted to ranking journals, from a great variety of subject areas, including our own, as a basis for qualifying research productivity and hence research funding. Journals were to be ranked in four categories, A*, A, B and C. In all we made comments on 50 journals; that is not the total number of Classics and Ancient History journals on the list which the ARC produced with their suggested rankings; for all subject areas covered by the ARC the journals list had 10,000+ (?) items – it was fun scrolling through that to find our journals! Our comments were directed only at up- or down-grading and at missing items; those with whose ranking we were happy did not require a comment. As much as many of us thought the whole exercise to be invidious – how do you judge qualitatively between one journal and another in a mechanical way like that, and what is the basis for different rankings anyway? – a majority felt that we needed to be included in the exercise, for it might lead to exclusion if we were not. I am grateful to Neil O'Sullivan first for alerting to us that this exercise was being conducted – we did not get much warning and the deadline was very brief – and second for gathering information, helping to draw the list up and assisting me in resolving the inevitable disputes and disagreements. Others, who were involved in their own university's internal submissions to this ARC exercise, also gave us the benefit of their lists. We are yet to be told the outcome of all of these submissions; it will be interesting to see whether any notice will be taken of our recommendations for Classics and Ancient History.

It was a difficult year financially for ASCS in 2008, not least because we approved too much funding for one-off conferences; the demand for this sort of funding has been steadily increasing. Five subsidies were provided for such conferences in 2008: AU\$1500 for the

conference on “Aegean Prehistoric Feasting” at the University of Melbourne in March; AU\$1500 for the conference on “Private and Public Lies” at the University of Melbourne in July; AU\$1500 for a Philip Hardie Masterclass at the University of Sydney in July; AU\$1000 for a conference on the statue of Zeus at Olympia at the University of Queensland in July; and AU\$500 for the postgraduate conference “Amphora 2” at the University of Queensland in October. Three applications for funding had to be rejected for lack of funds. One of the reasons for the financial difficulty is that convenors regard the ASCS funding as a “gift”, and not, as the funding guidelines intend, a “seeding grant”. Very little money is ever returned: in the last three years ASCS has provided nearly \$16,000 for such conferences, and in that time just \$223.60 has been paid back. Last year, one grant was spent entirely on subsidising the international airfare of just one postgraduate student to attend a conference, and in another case more than half of the subsidy (\$900) was spent on subsidising the fare of one postgraduate student and on just four postgraduate students overall. The large grants to each of those two students amounted to half of the early career award which is decided by a competitive process. Convenors of one-off conferences need to be reminded that the ASCS funding is a seeding grant, with an expectation that some should be returned, so that future conferences of this sort can continue to receive support; registration fees should be set in order to recover some of the conference costs, and so create the possibility of some refund to ASCS. Provision of such funding will be more stringently scrutinised in future.

An initiative begun in 2004 – the provision of grants to small departments to assist in the local promotion of the subject – was continued in 2008. Only one application was received: from Massey University which received a grant of NZ\$380 to fund a visit by Assoc. Prof. Bonnie MacLauchlan from the University of Western Ontario.

The usual range of prize and award competitions was conducted; results will be announced later in the meeting. Another initiative, begun in 2005, was the setting up of an “Early Career” Award to the value of AU\$2000. The winner of the Early Career Award for 2007, worth AU\$2000, was Dr Katrina Cawthorn who will be using the award towards the cost of childcare to enable her to continue research for the preparation of articles arising from her thesis on “Becoming Female: The Male Body in Greek Tragedy”.

The 2008 Australian student essay competition attracted 26 entries. First prize was increased to \$400, with up to two “runner-up” prizes increased to \$100 each. The New Zealand *Scholia* essay competition in honour of John Barsby for 2008 is also being conducted. The prize for this competition is partly funded by ASCS.

The Greek and Latin translation competition, with prizes of \$250 in each section, was conducted again in 2008. It attracted 32 entrants in the Latin competition, and 17 in the Greek, from eight universities overall (five Australian and three New Zealand). [First place in the Latin competition went to Hugh Niall (MonashU), with “highly commended” awards to Leigh McKinnon (MonashU), Katherine Wangmann (UMelb), and Mary Whitehead (UAdel); first place in the Greek competition went to Sabin Proban (UAuck), with “highly commended” entries from Nicholas Olson (USyd) and Owen Colman (UMelb).]

During the year the executive committee had a number of email consultations, which have been found to be a convenient way to involve a larger number of committee members.

This has been a longer than usual report – there was a lot to comment on. I have now created a secretarial record: the longest serving Secretary of ASCS – sixteen years. Admittedly in two stints, 1978-1988, and 2003 to present. I should advise you that I am not intending to do sixteen years in my second stint!

Bruce Marshall
Honorary Secretary, ASCS
30 January 2009



SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2008

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- Membership is up: it is now 440, with an increase expected from the present conference.
- ASCS 29 in Christchurch was a successful and enjoyable occasion. The use of a hotel venue was continued and found to be most congenial.
- AU\$2060 provided for travel subsidies for 10 students to attend ASCS 29.
- Vol. 42 of *Antichthon* published *suo anno*.
- Considerable time and effort spent on the ARC ERA journals ranking list.
- One grant of NZ\$380 was made under the scheme for the provision of grants to small departments to assist in the local promotion of the subject.
- A total of AU\$6000 made available to support five one-off conferences. Three others could not be supported due to lack of funds. Too many convenors regard the support as a “gift” rather than as a “seeding grant”.
- 2007 “Early Career” Award of AU\$2000 winner was Dr Katrina Cawthorn.
- Essay Prize Competitions held Australia and New Zealand in 2008, with prize money totaling AU\$800.
- Greek and Latin Translation Competition attracted 32 entrants in the Latin competition, and 17 in the Greek. The prize is AU\$250 in each section.