



## The Australasian Society for Classical Studies

### SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2010

It has again been an extremely busy year for the Society. Membership continues to grow steadily, up from 470 last year to 488 this year, though not all those are financial, as usual. Particularly pleasing this year for both the Treasurer and the Secretary is the much lower rate of recidivism – a record low number of non-payers, 58, or 11.3% of the membership. As a result I am training my sights on a different target of wrong-doers this year – those people who attend the annual conference without either paying their membership subscription or failing to join the Society, when it is a requirement that they do so in order to attend and/or give a paper. The number this year is quite unprecedentedly large: some 30 people, when normally we have none, or at worst one or two. Needless to say, they will be receiving a pleasantly worded note from me about their dereliction.

ASCS 31 in Perth was a great success, thanks to the hard work of Lara O'Sullivan, ably assisted by her husband Neil and their team of helpers. There were about 95 in attendance, and 67 papers, a terrific response given the distance of travel to Perth. A great initiative taken by Neil was to produce in electronic format the *Proceedings* of the conference; following a refereeing process 29 of the papers were included in these *Proceedings*. I understand that the convenors of the present conference are planning to follow the example, so there are hopes that it may become a regular production.

Congratulations again to the Editors for bringing out the latest issue of *Antichthon*, Vol 44, *suo anno*, or *ante suum annum*, really. Vol 45 for 2011 is also well under way at this stage. A major development connected with the journal was arranging for its electrification; the process is now complete and the ProQuest database is available up to Vol 44 (2010) in those institutions which subscribe to the database.

A good number of one-off conference received subsidies this past year: [I have put up a list of them on the overhead]. The total amount of ASCS funds provided in support was \$5500, of which about \$2000 was returned.

April	USyd	Genre in the Ancient World	\$500
June/July	ANU	Orality and Literacy 9	\$1000
July	USyd	Appian and the Romans	\$1000
July	UCant	Dining Divinely / PacRim Seminar	\$500
August	MonashU	From Sappho to X	\$1000
Sept/Oct	MonashU	Amphora 4	\$1000
October	UQ	Greek History	\$500

Let me now ride a hobby-horse or two. There has been, I perceive, increasing concern about the number of papers at ASCS conferences. When the decision was made in 2003 that the General Meeting and Conference should be held annually, and that they should be “shorter and sharper”, i.e. that they be of three days' duration, rather than the five-day conferences every 18 months to two years which had been the practice for the preceding 36 years of ASCS's existence. However, in order to fit in the number of papers offered, that last proviso has been gradually abandoned. ASCS 25 in Bendigo, the first after the decision to have “shorter and sharper” annual conferences, took four days; ASCS 29 in Christchurch required four days; ASCS 30 in Sydney occupied four days; ASCS 31 in Perth was fitted into three days; ASCS 32 here in Auckland will cover four days. But in all these cases, parallel sessions (up to three or more at a time) had to be timetabled in order to fit in the number of papers delivered: at ASCS 30 there were 170 registrants of whom 123 gave papers (72%); at ASCS 31 there were 93 registrants and 67 papers (72%); and at this conference there are around 170 registrants and 143 papers (84% !). There are occasions on which no less than **six** parallel sessions are required in order to fit the number of papers in. A large number of parallel sessions does not allow for that comfortable exchange of research and ideas which ought to lie at the heart of an academic conference.

It can be seen that the number of papers offered has grown considerably. And it is also clear that that one of the reasons for the increasing number has been the result of postgraduate students offering

papers, or being encouraged by their supervisors to offer them. On my rough calculation from the draft program for ASCS 32 there are 74 papers by academic staff and 69 papers by postgraduates or recent postgraduates (48%). We are moving towards a heavy imbalance of papers by postgraduate students. Some will say that this is no bad thing, that postgraduates should gain the experience of offering a paper and getting feedback on it, and that postgraduates are the future of the profession. But I think we have to be careful that the conference does not acquire the reputation of being a mainly postgraduate affair, a perception which is building.

ASCS expends a good proportion of its annual income promoting postgraduates. The three main sources of ASCS's income are: membership subscriptions (around \$10,000), institutional subscribers (around \$10,000) and interest on investments (around \$7000 in 2009), a total of around \$27,000 per year. The following amounts of money are regularly spent each year on postgraduate activities:

Early Career Award	\$2000
Student conference travel subsidies	\$3000-\$4000
OPTIMA	up to \$600
Support for Amphora conference	\$1000

In addition to that, of the \$5000 or so provided each year to support one-off conferences, the commonest request by convenors for support is for funds to subsidise postgraduate registration fees. Postgraduate students represent about 40% of the membership, but as their subscription is only half the full rate, they do not produce 40% of our income, more like about \$4000-\$5000 a year.

Despite what the President said in his conference address, it is debatable whether all this promotion of postgraduate involvement is producing "the future of the profession". From memory (and it may not be 100% accurate), of the 13 or 14 appointments in the last five years or so in Classics and Ancient History departments in Australia (I don't have my eye so closely on NZ departments), **nine** have gone to **overseas** scholars; meaning only **five** Australians have been successful in getting a job, and of those five one was a mature-age appointment who had worked in a different sphere, another two had returned to Australia after gaining UK doctorates, and a fourth had been hanging around for a while before getting a permanent position. Just **one recent** Australian postgraduate then who has benefited from ASCS's promotion of postgraduate students.

That raises another serious question: the number of overseas appointments to Australian academic positions (and to a lesser degree, New Zealand ones). If we went a little further back than the range of years I have just mentioned, I think you would find a very large number of jobs going to overseas appointments. Can we say the same of Australasians getting jobs overseas? I think not.

Anyway, I digress, and before I get howled down for student-bashing, I will move on. Suffice it to say that the executive committee has been looking at these two interlinked concerns – the number of conference papers and of postgraduate students offering them – and considering what solutions there might be to these concerns.

The executive committee has also been considering moving the Society further into the 20th century and looking at the feasibility of introducing the online payment of subscriptions. Watch this space!

The usual range of prize and award competitions was conducted in 2010; I will be reporting the results later. The Newsletter was, as usual, sent out twice during the year, in April and September. John Penwill and Marguerite Johnson continued their good work in putting the Newsletter together and formatting it, and John took on the unenviable task of collating a publications list, which was published in the September Newsletter. This list will now be collated annually and placed in the Newsletter and on the website. Thank you to both of them. The President in his earlier address urged the fullest co-operation from both the University Representatives and the members in providing the most complete and accurate information as possible for the Newsletter, so that there are no missed items such as we had for the first publication list last September. Regular messages are also sent out by email to around 440 members (or 90%) who have opted to receive communications in this format. I managed to score a century of messages before the end of the year. The executive committee had four email consultations during the year; while this method of conducting business has its drawbacks, it is a convenient way to involve the larger number of committee members on both sides of the Ditch.

Before I close I would like to thank all those people who give voluntarily of their time to assist the Society: the co-ordinators and assessors for the two essay competitions, the co-ordinators (and

markers) for the two translation competitions, the two assessors for the early career award, and the coordinator and panel for the Optima Prize. We owe them a debt of thanks for giving up their time, usually in the summer vacation, to carry out these tasks.

Bruce Marshall  
Honorary Secretary, ASCS  
15th January 2010