

**Heads of History  
AHA Conference Annual Meeting**

**Monday 3 July 2017, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.  
Room 309, University House, cnr King and Auckland streets, Newcastle**

**Chair:** Christina Twomey

**Minutes:** Ann Standish

**Minutes**

**Present:** Nicholas Brown (ANU), Jane Carey (UoW), Martin Crotty (UQ), Nancy Cushing (UoN), Catherine Dewhurst (USQ), Romain Fathi (Flinders), Dianne Hall (VU), Alison Holland (Macquarie), Andrew May (UM), Philippa Mein Smith (UTas), Nell Musgrove (ACU), Paul Sendziuk (UA), Zora Simic (UNSW), Ann Standish (AHA), Christina Twomey (Monash), Bart Ziino (Deakin)

**Apologies:** Claire Brennan, Linda Bryder (Auckland), Marcus Bussey (USC), Eleanor Hancock (ADFA), Julie Kimber (Swinburne), Jane Lydon (UWA), Li Narangoa (ANU), Bobby Oliver (Curtin), Sandra Wilson (Murdoch)

Christina Twomey welcomes Heads of History and representatives and opens the meeting

**1. Quality Journal List**

Joy Damousi, Vice-President AHA and Chair, Research Portfolio provided background to the AHA's involvement in developing a list of history journals. At the Sydney HoH meeting in 2015, amid concern that lists of preferred journals for publication were being generated by universities that didn't reflect the history discipline's needs, Heads requested the AHA draw up a list of history journals. As a result, a subcommittee of AHA executive committee members was established to look into the matter.

It was decided that rather than start a new list, HoHs would be asked to send any existing lists to AHA. The list circulated is compilation of those lists. Clearly, there were many absences. With the aim of producing a consolidated list, the AHA wanted to get feedback from AHA members and HoHs on journals were included. So, the future steps were:

- 1 – to compile a comprehensive list by the end of the year
- 2 – to rank them (this would not be happening yet)

Here at the HoH meeting and at the AGM there would be a call for submissions for journals to be added to the list; these should be sent to the AHA executive officer within the month. As a footnote, Joy noted that the ERA was upon us next year (ARC ranked list, 2018), and it would be interesting to see what history journals were there and if they were ranked.

Jane Carey asked what had happened with the discussion re. rankings last year and where did the circulated list come from. Joy replied there had been considerable controversy over the issue and a circuit breaker had been needed; that's why the AHA had decided to ask people what lists were already out there. So, there had been a few steps backwards, with the aim of producing a comprehensive list. Jane said a comprehensive list was impossible. Joy said it was not to include everything in the world, but journals that this association agrees that historians publish in.

Nick Brown said, to clarify, we were looking at journals we would recommend, not every journal in the world that CAN be published in. And then, this list would be ranked?

Christina Twomey asked who is doing the recommending. Joy replied that at this point, she was asking for recommendations. Christina argued that there had to be criteria for recommendations and asked for clarification about what makes the list.

Nicholas Brown said there were pragmatic reasons for a list, we needed to be able to point ECRS towards journals. Romain Fathi agreed, saying that was the purpose of such a list.

Paul Senduik asked if any journals had been excluded yet. Joy said not yet, but this could happen as the process takes on. Martin Crotty said it has taken 2 years already and the AHA needed to get cracking.

Christina repeated that a criterion for inclusion was needed. Martin suggested that the journals should be legitimate, refereed publications. Fiona Paisley argued we could go the other way; that rather than having a criterion it should be simply a list of journals that historians publish in. Paul said that this would make a long list, which would not be very helpful. Fiona asked if what we were saying that the list could only work if it was restrictive. Nicholas said the fundamental point of the exercise was to avoid universities employing arbitrary lists.

Joy said ranking was the next step. This is where the heat will be and where the criteria kick in. Christina asked Joy to clarify – if the journals aren't ranked at this stage, in effect the list can include everything. We will accept anything at the moment, with the possibility that it gets dropped off later. Joy agreed that that was how the initial list was to be compiled: tell us and we'll put it on the list. Once the ranking sets in, that will lead to culling.

Andy May clarified that ERA 2018 would not be ranked. He said it was a complicated process, with various things to keep step with. DASH group, analysis of lists – 18, 20 institutions across the country, including UMM 6-700 journals. He said methodology and criteria need to be grappled with at some stage and putting membership on hold over the issue was not a good move.

Joy agreed, but said the conversation became gridlocked. She doesn't think members were left hanging and there are still issues to be worked through. Andy said the AHA needs to get through the process, for many reasons.

Jane Carey said many AHA members don't feel any list should happen. Christina said that the executive has already decided there will be a list, so this is not up for discussion.

Martin said he still felt some sort of criteria was needed, eg, refereed, legit, not pay for publish. Christina said this should be the bare minimum and was something that the executive needed to decide. Paul said paying for publishing should not necessarily rule journals out, raising the issue of book publishing, which often requires subsidies.

Jane raised the issue of 'studies' and interdisciplinary journals and the difficulty of getting a definitive list if those are not included. She also expressed her concern re. possibilities of prescriptiveness.

Christina said, to sum up, HoH recommends to EC they develop some minimum criteria for inclusion on list, and communicate this to the members.

Andy said there needed to be a timetable. Joy said suggestions needed to be back within a month with any journals suggested to be added to the list. She was aiming for a consolidated list by September EC meeting and by December EC to have criteria ready for ranking.

Christina said it would be conveyed to EC that HoHs felt this timetable should be stuck to and the process completed.

Christina thanked Joy for presenting on the matter.

## **2. Progress Report on Survey of History departments**

Martin Crotty thanked all the Heads of History who helped with the survey, whether through contributing funds or providing information. All except two institutions had returned completed surveys. Susan Kellet from UQ had been employed as RA to enter results and code the information. The project had now run out of money, with about 50 hours of data crunching left, so HoHs would again be approached for contributions.

Paul Sendzuik noted that the money was going into coding 1500 courses into different categories, to produce a powerful set of data. Susan had done an amazing job crunching it, and it would be invaluable if she could continue this. Where the Millar and Peel survey had taken more qualitative data this survey was very quantitative and provided data that could be used in many ways.

In discussing the results, Martin and Paul noted that the results were not in themselves remarkable but that the survey had achieved the aim, which was a comprehensive overview of the discipline. It would be good to do it again in 5 years, so comparisons can be formed. It also provided a lot of data

that allowed for calling up different views of the overall picture, looking at Australian history schools in comparison to New Zealand ones, for example, or Go8s compared to nonGo8s

Anna Clark thanked Martin and Paul for the work they had put into the survey. She noted that for future surveys it would be useful to collect other data related people's background and diversity.

Nicholas Brown also thanked Martin and Paul.

Christina said she thought there was agreement from the Heads that the survey was useful and that further funds should be sought to continue the work.

### **3. Structure of the History Major**

#### **4.**

Christina Twomey led a discussion to canvass views and experiences about the nature and content of first year teaching (pathways into the history major); the role of capstone units (compulsory third-year units) and the place of other compulsory units (eg at second year). She opened by saying she was not sure how many departments had moved towards the system of a single first-year history subject or how many offered multiple pathways. Folk logic says the more choice offered, the more students do history majors but she would like to hear from other people's experience. For those whose departments offered a 3rd year capstone subject, how did this work?

Bart Ziino said Deakin offered a single first-year subject, not as a philosophical choice but because imposed from above. It was called 20th world history. He felt it would be nice to offer more choice for first years.

Christina asked if HoHs disagreed with the idea that there should be only one first year subject.

Nicholas Brown said ANU had tried a single 1-semester course, but this hadn't really worked. They now offered two subjects at first year and enrolments were 20% up on last year. At ANU, the history major starting to look unusual. Having first-year enrolments doesn't guarantee having students for the next 3 years.

Christina raised the issue that because single subjects were broad and aimed to gain general interest, it might be seen that discipline-specific subjects aimed at students wanting to specialise in history might put off other students.

Nancy Cushing said at Newcastle, it was compulsory for education students to study first year Australian history, which in first semester had 800 first year students. But only around 50 history majors. This was a one-off service course. European History in second semester, had more interest, so they were looking at swapping them around. Compulsory courses have been in place, but these were now being unravelled as it was believed choice was wanted. Core courses were still going to be introduced.

Dianne Hall said that at VU all choice had been taken away, there were only common courses. This has just been introduced and she doesn't know how it's going to work. Completely new pathway degree, no discipline specific course. No rotation. No choice. Most students are education students.

Jane Carey asked if it would be possible to compile these experiences.

Christina said there was always tension between teaching to the major or to the shoppers; which didn't really matter in financial ways, but there were pedagogical issues involved. Important historical research skills were taught at honours level. Trying to appeal more broadly meant the teaching of specific skills was reduced.

Martin Crotty said that at UQ there was compulsory system with a gateway subject at first year, but 2 other subjects were also offered. From second year there was a rotating selection of elective subjects, which worked well.

Christina raised the issue of names of courses, saying these mattered in terms of attracting students.

Andy May said the theory of numbers suggested if you teach fewer subjects you'll have fewer students. At University of Melbourne, a capstone was introduced in 2010, with no gateways or other hurdles. Teaching Aust History to first years had not happened for some time ages.

Paul Sendzuik asked if Macquarie University had strong numbers in Australian history. Alison Holland replied that there was no Australian History at 1st year, only World History. There were no compulsory subjects or a structured pathway. They do have a capstone with 50-80 enrolments; this is the only compulsory part of the history major. Australian history is about to be brought back.

Christina asked if any departments had an internship program.

Anna Clarke said UTS did, but not for undergraduate history. Communications students, had the opportunity for one semester in 3rd year.

Paul said that in survey responses, 6 universities said they had them, but it was not made clear if these were history specific or faculty wide.

Anna said there seemed to be more of a move towards placements, perhaps relating to industry phds.

Christina asked about History major numbers, saying the sense was that these were mainly falling.

Jane said that at Wollongong the numbers were growing with History have the most majors' students in the faculty. They had enrolments of 120 in first year Australian history. They currently had 5 first year subjects, and seemed to have reached a tipping point. When there were 4 subjects they got good numbers, with 5 numbers started going down.

Martin said that at UQ numbers were holding up.

Zora Simic said UNSW now had compulsory gateway subjects. First year numbers fluctuated between 600 and 300, and they were continuing to tinker. Majors had been expanded so students

have to do more subjects, but have less choice. Ancient history was taught by casuals. Overall good numbers, but the gateway was restricting.

Romain Fathi asked how subjects around conflicts and war fared with enrolments. It was agreed that these tended to attract big numbers.

Christina said human rights subjects also do well.

Nancy asked about service teaching, saying that at Newcastle History cross listed with criminology.

Christina said this depends on major convenor, and it was interesting to see what subjects get the numbers.

## **5. Honours Examination**

Andy May introduced this item to encourage information-sharing about best practice for honours thesis examination. He said that at UM, there was a reduced honours cohort from 20 years ago and they were toying with idea of having examination panel instead of the 2 examiners currently used. He was interested in what others are doing, though he understands that examination practice was constrained by university regulations. Monash has a panel, and a study had determined there was not much difference in outcome. He was interested in opinions regarding effectiveness of panel versus two markers.

Paul Sendzuik said at Adelaide, honours theses were examined by 2 - the first a common marker who reads all these; the second an expert in the field who isn't the supervisor. Examiners were encouraged to use full range of marks; the marks were combined and averaged. Theses were 15,000 words long, there tended to be around 17-24 theses each years.

Nancy Cushing said at Newcastle the theses length was 15,000 words. An external examiner had been used as a common examiner, who read them all; all theses also had an internal examiner; the marks were averaged. Around 8 theses a year in recent years. Recently, regulations had changed so they no longer had to have an external examiner (as a cost saving measure).

Nell Musgrove said theses length at ACU was 15,000. The honours program was small, with a maximum of 5. In the past, theses had been sent out to two external experts; recently, regulations had been changed and one can now be internal.

Fiona Paisley said Griffith thesis length was 15,000 words; honours enrolments are around 6; they used 2 examiners with a 3rd if there was a discrepancy in the marks.

Dianne Hall said at VU, all history honours were combined, with about 4-6 each year. The thesis length is 12-15,000 words. Two examiners, both could be internal, but more often they used one internal and one external. A panel look over the reports and if there is more than 10% difference in the mark the thesis goes to a third examiner and the two closest marks get averaged.

Nicholas Brown said the thesis length at ANU was 18000 words, and made up 50% of the final mark. There was a move to standardise the examination process to one internal and one external marker and to get those 2 to agree on a mark to minimise discrepancies. They had a small honours cohort of 6 or 7.

Alison Holland said there was no honours program at Macquarie. There was a 2-year Masters by research with a 21,000 word thesis. This was fee paying. Jane Carey said that at Wollongong there was a Masters by research, with 2nd year counting as HDR.

Bart Ziino said Deakin had a 15,000 word thesis, and 6-12 honours students per year. Until recently, an external moderator would read and rank the theses after 2 internal examiners had read and reported. They were now heading towards standardised rubrics.

Philippa Mein Smith said UTAS paid an external marker who was a former member of staff. There had been 18 honours last year, but the average tended to be 12. The second marker was an internal expert in the field. There was usually not much disagreement; what there was was sorted out in the examiners meeting. They used a formal set of criteria, which was quite useful.

Anna Clarke said UTS didn't have a history program, but did have honours in Communications. Thesis length was 15,000 words, but a creative honours may have practicum and exegesis instead. They used two examiners, one internal, one external.

Zora Simic said UNSW thesis length was 15000. They used 2 examiners, both internal. If there was disagreement, the markers and honours coordinator discussed to arrive at a final mark. Enrolment numbers ranged from 10 to 30.

Jane said at Wollongong the thesis length was 15000–18000. They had 8-12 students; 1 internal and 1 external examiner. She felt it was better to have someone who read all the theses. In cases of disagreement, the honours co-ordinator adjudicates.

Catherine Dewhirst said USQ had 3 honours students. The thesis length was 15000–18000. They used 1 internal marker (a historian) and 1 external. There was a push towards a generic honours, but they were trying to maintain a history-specific program.

Christina Twomey said Monash had 20-25 honours students; thesis length 18,000 words. There is an honours examination panel, each member reads and reports on about 5 theses; the thesis gets specialist marker as well. If the two grades are within 10 marks, they are averaged, otherwise the thesis goes to third examiner who gives final mark.

Romain Fathi said that Flinders had 5 honours students and he assumed they were externally examined.

Martin Crotty said UQ had about 20 honours students and 15,000 word thesis. They used two internal examiners, according to the university's system.

Andy May said Melbourne had 30 honours students; thesis length of 15,000 words; two examiners with the thesis going a to third disagreement in marks.

**6. Any other business.**

**There was no other business.**

**Christina Twomey thanked attendees for their participation.**

**Next meeting: 2 July 2018, ANU, Canberra ACT**

**Venue: TBC**