

Appendix 1: President's Report 2016

For the past year ASPERA has operated a newly expanded executive with seven elected members. This has made convening meetings more challenging, however all have been present for most executive meetings. The increased capacity of the executive, with a formally constituted research subcommittee (RSC) chair and online communications editor, has allowed us to achieve a great deal.

Membership and Conference participation

There have been a number of discussions about the need to build the conference for future years, and to expand its reach beyond the immediate ASPERA network. An effort has been made to get back in touch with institutions that have been involved in the past, and to recruit new members. In the course of promoting the Creative Practice Research Seed Grant, member institutions have been canvassed to nominate formal ASPERA representatives (separate from conference attendance). The limitations placed on membership in the constitution have been discussed a number of times and ultimately these have been affirmed. Associate status is appropriate for vocational institutions, as a focus on research continues to be central to ASPERA's activities. The Academy of Information technology (AIT) was accepted by the executive committee as an associate member. Committee members have also discussed international ASPERA membership with Auckland University, Fuji National University and Victoria University.

Consideration needs to be given to how ASPERA can support screen production education and research at universities in smaller countries in our region. Unlike ASPERA, the International Association of Film and Television Schools (CILECT) does not represent screen production courses outside the film school model, or place a priority on research. It is also very expensive to join. There have been international enquiries about membership to ASPERA, as mentioned above, but no formal applications as yet. At present these institutions could be considered for Associate Membership. The incoming executive would benefit from guidance at the AGM on whether full membership should be considered for any international institutions. If this were to be approved, a motion to change the constitution would need to be presented at a future ASPERA Annual General Meeting.

Finance

As only the second Treasurer in 13 years, Alison has created a new bank account and an electronic payments procedure that requires authorisation by a second member of the executive. The executive decided to allocate specific amounts of money to both Communications and the RSC to allow for them to plan within a budget, and then to request approval of those budgets. This procedure worked well.

Communication

The executive reformatted 2014-15 executive committee minutes and has posted these on the website, together with the 2016 minutes, so that members have access to information about ongoing business. Bettina Frankham has updated the Mailchimp and Supervisors and Examiners lists, Richard Seale has revised the logo, improved the website and managed content. Bettina and Richard created a new MailChimp email list to replace the Google group list, drawing on data provided by Alison from the 2015 conference. It was decided to minimise adhoc emails to the ASPERA list by using Mailchimp to distribute a monthly newsletter in the week following the executive meeting. The newsletter email has been developed into a summary posting with links back to detailed content on the website or with other hosts. Good use is also being made of the ASPERA Facebook group to keep the ASPERA community informed.

The executive working bee meeting at UTS in February was devoted to reviewing ASPERA's online needs and developing specifications for a new website that Richard is building. Richard presented mock-ups and exemplars to the executive and took us through a structured consultation process. The website that Nico built for ASPERA a few years ago uses a grid hosting package (including multiple sites other than ASPERA) which doesn't allow granular access to individual sites via FTP. This was appropriate at the time, but now that we have an online communications editor on committee, we have decided to move the site to a more traditional Control Panel host to give full access to the back end of the site so that Richard can edit the theme and structure of the site directly.

Efforts have been made to secure more and new images for the webpage, however some executive members have had difficulty securing access to these from their institutions. The new website give prominence to embedded video content from across the ASPERA community. Please try to arrange with the online communications editor to have images and video from your institution available for the website.

Aims

As a result of the working bee discussions, the aims of ASPERA as stated in the constitution and webpage have been reviewed. The conclusion of a discussion on the clause "to lift the profile of the screen based

industries within the wider economic, social and cultural development of Australia” was that, whilst it was aspirational and may seem a little grand, it was important to preserve this broader, foundational remit, as it gives ASPERA a strong platform to engage with industry when, and if, necessary.

Research and the RSC

Susan Kerrigan, Kath Dooley, Bettina Frankham and Marsha Berry all volunteered and were co-opted to the Research Sub-Committee. The RSC developed content for a Research Resources page on the ASPERA website. This includes the refereed proceedings of the 2015 ASPERA Conference, and a list of suggested journals for screen production research output. Led by Craig Batty, the committee also arranged and prepared material for ASPERA to host the *Sightlines Journal* with the inaugural issue of the online journal of peer-reviewed screen works from the first Sightlines festival/conference (2014), <http://aspera.org.au/research/sightlines-2/journal/>. Richard organised final preparation and hosting. Some funds were allocated to employ people to assist on this work.

The second Sightlines conference will be held 28-29 November this year at RMIT, under the stewardship of Leo Berkley. After that Leo and the ASPERA executive will discuss whether, how, when and where to conduct Sightlines 3. The RSC coordinated the peer review of full papers for the 2016 conference and organised a half-day research boot camp run immediately before it. The RSC is also developing and co-editing a ‘companion to screen production’ book with chapters from the ASPERA research community.

The executive discussed the need for a comparative survey exercise, reporting on how creative work is being measured in each different institution. This is central to ASPERA’s purpose to be across the way that creative practice is quantified, valued, recognised, and measured as research across the sector. The research sub-committee has taken up this task with the launch of the Creative Practice Research Project. Ethics have been approved via RMIT for the interview stage of this project, which will be taking place before, during and after the ASPERA conference. The project’s RA, Dr Smiljana Glisovic, has already undertaken some document analysis, and made contact with research leaders at a selection of universities, with more to follow. She will be at the conference, which will form part of the project’s ‘data’, and will make a short presentation to delegates to update them and ask for their participation.

The RSC was also involved in a special issue of the *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, co-edited by Craig Batty and Susan Kerrigan. Themed ‘Writing with/on/for the Screen’, the special issue features eight articles authored by members of the ASPERA community.

Creative Practice Research Seed Grant

James Vernon, in consultation with the RSC and executive committee, revised the ASPERA Research Seed Grant guidelines and application. The new documents make the benefit of the Seed Grant to the ASPERA community more explicit and further encourage collaboration and mentoring.

Previous Executive approved \$5000.00 for two \$2500.00 seed grants in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 periods and issued just one on each occasion. This year the executive took a number of steps to build interest in the grant. It was decided to offer a larger amount in the hope of increasing the number of applications and achieving more substantial outcomes. It was also decided not to exclude people from the Executive or RSC from applying, as these committees now account for a substantial number of active researchers in the ASPERA community. A committee includes a member of the ASPERA executive, the chair of RSC, a past president and one other ASPERA member. The committee would exclude anyone with a current application for the grant. A formal presentation at the ASPERA conference, following the award, was made a condition of the Seed Grant. There was some concern that by restricting the outcomes to NTROs (non-traditional research outputs), some valuable traditional outputs and work relevant to ASPERA could be cut out, however the executive decided to retain the unique NTRO focus to the grant.

Conference participants may want to revisit the question of opening the grant to traditional research, such as creative practice research that is not aimed at producing a creative output.

Policy and representation

ASPERA welcomes the fact that the Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA) has become more active and communicative in recent months and looks forward to a productive relationship with this ‘peak body of peak bodies’ in future. With input from the executive Craig Batty and I prepared an opinion piece on higher education policy for the DDCA’s new digital conversation ‘publication’, NiTRO, launched on 30th June. We also provided the Australian research Council (ARC) with feedback on the federal government’s *National Innovation and Science Agenda* (NISA).

ASPERA has a deadline of the 25th of July 2016 to provide feedback on Driving Innovation, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education (at <https://docs.education.gov.au>), the government's plan to implement significant changes in the regulation of higher education in 2018.

The 2016 congress of the International Association of Film and Television Schools (Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinéma et de Télévision – CILECT) will be held at Griffith Film School from November 20 – 24. The congress theme is Ethics/Aesthetics <http://www.cilect.org/cake/event/60#.V3BSMTdfni4>. Incoming president James Vernon will represent ASPERA. Current treasurer Alison Wotherspoon will also be attending as a corresponding member.

Other Business

Thanks to the executive committee 'ordinary members' Sarah Stollman and Mark Ryan for stepping in to help with committee business a number of times. Sarah has proof read and revised the layout of a number of documents including those for the Seed Grant. Mark stepped in to record and prepare executive meeting minutes when Bettina had to take leave during the last two months. Mark also took on the role of President of the Screen Studies Association of Australian and New Zealand (SSAAANZ) this year.

In summary, ASPERA has had a very productive year, with much improved communications and availability of information on our activities. It is disappointing that there was no uptake of the Creative Practice Research Seed Grant this year, however, the research subcommittee has been very active with a raft of publication opportunities for members including the referred conference papers and NTROs on the ASPERA website. ASPERA continues to represent the sector and provide ongoing forums for sharing and discussing ideas nationally.

John Cumming
ASPERA President 2015/16