

ASPERA Executive committee report on the activities of the association during the last financial year 2019-2020

Since the 2019-2020 Executive Committee was elected at the 2019 AGM on 2 December 2019, the Committee has held 8 meetings via Zoom. The Committee has communicated with the ASPERA community via 4 direct emails to the Association's mailing list, 12 Facebook posts, 1 Zoom roundtable meeting and 1 Zoom town hall meeting.

The following business was undertaken on behalf of ASPERA during the term of the 2019-2020 Executive Committee:

- Collaborated with the Screen & Sound Cultures research group within RMIT University's School of Media and Communication for the Sightlines festival/conference held between 2nd and 4th December 2019 in Melbourne.
- Supported projects undertaken by the Research sub-committee that include:
 1. Research (including funding for a research assistant) and writing of the ASPERA Report, *Diversity on and off screen in Australian Film Schools*. Based on data from a survey of Australian tertiary institutions teaching screen production, the report is projected to be released before the end of 2020.
 2. Call for papers for a Special issue of the journal *Alphaville*, 'Fostering diversity on and off screen'.
 3. Maintenance and updating of the list of journals appropriate for screen production research.
- Co-hosted the *COVIDsafe Protocols in Higher Education Screen Production Roundtable*, with David Balfour of AFTRS, via Zoom on 28 May 2020 with around 50 members of the ASPERA community in attendance.
- Supported the online conference hosted by University of Newcastle. This was held in place of the planned in-person conference that had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. The 1-day conference consisted of 4 sessions,
 1. Teaching media production in isolation,
 2. Developing excellent higher degree research supervision,
 3. Update from the Research sub-committee and
 4. ASPERA Town Hall meeting.
- Recognised the service and contribution of past ASPERA presidents Gillian Leahy and Alison Wotherspoon via a special presentation at the online conference.
- Updated the Constitution to reflect changes passed at the 2019 AGM.

Since the end of the 2019-2020 financial year the Executive Committee has also:

- Welcomed 3 new members commencing from the year 2020-2021: University of Wollongong (full member); SAE Creative Media Institute (full member); and Auckland University of Technology (associate member).
- Funded two COVID-19 small research grants to document the challenges of filmmaking practice during the pandemic by means of either a visual essay or short audio-visual work. The completed works will be hosted as resources on the ASPERA website.
- Commenced work on the 3rd Edition of the Sightlines online journal, including:
 1. Appointing members of the Research sub-committee to the editorial board,
 2. Circulating a call for works,
 3. Conduct an editorial review of submissions,
 4. Establish the process and criteria for peer review.
- Commenced the website re-design project with the new site to be launched in April 2021.
- Established a Teaching and Learning sub-committee with Rachel Wilson of RMIT co-opted to chair the committee.

- Joined the Council of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) as an institutional member.
- Continued membership of the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA) as an institutional member.

Financial Results

For the financial year ended 30 June 2020 ASPERA reported a surplus of \$6,931 from membership revenue of \$11,115. The surplus was greater than expected due to the cancellation of both the 2020 Conference (which typically costs the organisation around \$4000) and the Executive Working Bee (budgeted at \$1500). The surplus is added to carried forward surpluses, which now total \$22,175 at as 30 June 2020. This means the organisation is in a robust financial position, with the accumulated surpluses mainly represented by cash in the bank of \$24,075. The Executive Committee has agreed to budget the year ending 30 June 2021 with a deficit, using approximately \$5000 of the accumulated funds to redesign the organisation's website.

Reflecting on the value of ASPERA and looking forward

The period of 2019-2020 has been a time of particular challenge. From the black summer bushfires through to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, it has been anything but business as usual for our member institutions and community of practice. As educators, we are seeking to address the need for greater diversity in media representation and in the industry itself through the ways that we facilitate learning. We are developing ways to support our students even when our face-to-face time with them is curtailed. We are continuing our research while dealing with the rationalisation of our workplaces reflected, for some, in the loss of valued co-workers, pay cuts and fee hikes. Under these circumstances, the value of the collegial network, the resources for education and research as well as the opportunities and information that ASPERA provides are even more important to ensuring the long-term sustainability of our field. The Executive Committee look forward to continuing the collaboration that is ASPERA and to supporting screen production education and research as we all adapt to the changing demands faced by the sector.