



ISAA

National Newsletter

The Boab tree is self-sustaining; it draws on its own resources. Upside down, it flourishes against the grain.

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Late Spring *ISAA Review*
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MEMBERSHIP

\$70 – Full Members & Friends
\$45 – Concessional Members
\$85 – Household Membership

— At the NSW Chapter meeting in May, the Director of the State Library of NSW, Regina Sutton, spoke on 'The State Library and its Strategic Directions'. This was a very polished presentation, replete with strategic priorities, desired outcomes, sustainability and all manner of impressive performance indicators. There was mention of the need to create effective communication frameworks, outreach programs and partnerships, recognition of the need for staff wellbeing with effective leadership, engagement and ownership and last but not least, reference to the library's 'clients'. Clients? Those hundreds of men and women, young and old, who use the library every day. Clients? They look like readers to me – people who love being around books with no thought for the language of the corporate boardroom.

Perhaps this is being too precious but I think not, as a recent *Sydney Morning Herald* article (3 July), 'Bland ambition as libraries put bucks before books' (the 'outsourcing' of library purchases) and the subsequent correspondence, showed. A library is not a business (as Australia Post seems to have become) but a public service, peopled by staff and readers and fuelled by an essence of learning and a love of knowledge that is impossible to quantify in bottom line economics. Nor are libraries not simply repositories of the objects in their collections but also sites of human interaction. Each library's community has different needs with regard to the range of languages and age groups. As one letter-writer put it, 'the rare and precious expertise of librarians who can converse with readers, especially in their own languages, is invaluable. ISAA members are of course, readers *par excellence* and it is up to all of us to support our libraries, often and in person. The Internet might be an extraordinary and useful tool but nothing replaces the actual, physical, pleasurable experience of visiting a library.

It is very timely that the theme of the 2009 Annual Conference is 'Cultural Heritage' and that the Annual Lecture is to be given by Marion Halligan, a prolific writer of books, lots of them, about life and all its interesting complexities. *Susan Steggall, editor* ♦

Annual Conference 2009

National Library of Australia – 4th Floor Conference Room,

Thursday 15 & Friday 16 October 2009

The theme – 'Cultural Heritage' – is the 3rd in the series *The National Estate*

Lesley Vick, Convenor, Conference Committee:

dissentmagazine@dissent.com.au 03 9347 7839; 0406 980 372



Annual Lecture 2009

We are very fortunate to have Marion Halligan AM, the noted writer and cultural commentator, giving the 2009 ISAA Annual Lecture with the fascinating title of "'It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards'", the Queen remarked.' Marion was born and educated in Newcastle and moved to Canberra in the 1960s. As well as many novels and short stories Marion has written on food and travel. Her novel *The Fog Garden* was published in 2001 and her most recent novel, *Valley of Grace*, set in Paris, was published this year. She was also chair of the Literature Board of Australia from 1992 to 1995.

Conference Room, NLA, 6:00pm Thursday 15 October

ISAA Chapter Reports

ACT Chapter

At our July meeting Ian Cowan gave a broad ranging review of Darwin's impact on Victorian society and on a range of contemporary views on natural selection and its consequences including some strong words about the debate between Dawkins and creationists. There was a good roll-up with an audience of twenty. We are still seeking suggestions for another Tuesday lunchtime meeting place if these meetings are to continue.

Calendar

Thurs 13 Aug: Bruce Gaunson, 'Churchill, De Gaulle and the Middle East'

Thurs 10 Sep: Dr Alan Roberts, on the Australian Academy of Science building

Thurs 12 Nov: Jeff Clyde, on Francis Bacon

Thurs 10 Dec: John Kerin, 'The Translation of Science and Research into Policy'

All meetings: 5.00 for 5.30 at the Friends Room National Library. Mike Austin, on behalf of the ACT Committee. ♦

NSW Chapter

Our Works-in-Progress meetings have continued the principle of meeting in regional locations. At the first of these, in March at Gretchen Poiner's home, 'Rosehill' at Marulan, Gretchen presented a scholarly and well-developed paper on the Australian garden, with particular reference to the history of the garden at 'Rosehill'. After an excellent lunch, we enjoyed an autumn stroll in that delightful garden. Our second Works-in-Progress meeting, in June, was again hosted by John and Marie Ramsland at their Newcastle home on the theme of 'The World of Small Places and their Communities: An exploration of the human condition'. Les Ridgeway discussed the history of the Aboriginal reserves in the Newcastle area and Allan Chawner presented a visual essay on people in small communities internationally. A rich and stimulating event!

Following the AGM on 21 May, the Director of the NSW State Library, Regina Sutton, spoke on the strategic directions of the Library as it treads a fine line between economic efficiency and traditional scholarly and community service.

On 4 July, ISAA-NSW hosted a well-attended public seminar, in conjunction with the State Library of NSW on the theme of 'Scenes from Childhood' – an exploration of the cultural and social dimensions of childhood in colonial days. The seminar was opened by Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian, followed by speakers Margot Riley, David Hill, John Ramsland OAM, Gaynor Macdonald and Sheridan Dudley. The seminar's *Proceedings* is under way.

Calendar:

Wed 9 Sep: Works-in-Progress meeting with Johanna Nicholls & Elizabeth Fletcher, at the home of Margaret and John McDonald, 10.30am

Fri 6 Nov: Closing date, Essay Competition

Further details of all these events, including address details and RSVP contacts are available on the NSW Chapter website at www.isaa.org.au or from the Secretary, Ian Keese at 0423 536 656. Email: nsw@isaa.org.au

Janet George, Chapter Chair (02 9251 9778) ♦

Victorian Group

We are in the process of fixing dates for a series of talks for the rest of this year. Two definite ones we have so far are:

Wed 9 Sep: John McLaren on Vincent Buckley

Mon 5 Oct: Emily Turner-Graham on Rudolf Asmis

We are also looking to arrange some daytime meetings, either in the city itself or wherever else is convenient for members.

Evening meetings will be held at **6 pm** at the **State Library of Victoria**. Any suggestions for other appropriate venues for evening meetings are welcome.

Walter Struve: wstruve@slv.vic.gov.au ♦

South Australian Group

At our April meeting, Jane Nelson lit up the group with her report on a six-week trip to find useful clues for her M A research on Christopher Marlowe and the rise of hermetic mysticism/atheism. 'Jane's excellent adventure' turned out to have been just that: a balance between an itinerary that covered the ground but with 'wiggle room' for adjustment if a fruitful source presented itself. She found the Warburg Library in London a thrilling place to work as one of their two visiting scholars for a couple of days. In the British Library she found a manuscript copy by Marlowe of a work on the Arian heresy. In Germany she found a foul copy (the author's copy for the players) in the library of Prince Heinrich Julius of Wolfenbüttel.

In June, Gerhard Weissmann held us in thrall to the question of 'entropy-increase', the logical assumption that we cannot have change and development without destroying things. Gerhard pointed out the risks of assuming that reactions and events take place without some entropy when we do not even understand the limits of our current knowledge. He sees life as an 'entropy-increasing blip – no more, no less'. It was such a thought-provoking session that all agreed to come to the next session with a contribution for a discussion of applications of entropy-increase to society.

Gerhard Weissmann is the active member of longest standing in South Australia. He was at the first ISAA meeting I attended – the meeting called to dissolve the South Australian Chapter, late in 2001.

Born in 1926, his childhood was overshadowed by the rise of Nazism (his father was a 'progressive' Jew and his mother a Protestant, brought up in a convent as an orphan). Gerhard's skill in mathematical thinking was discovered by his primary school teacher. By high school, his life's passion for physics and systems thinking was taking shape. He learned, probably from his mother, to be outspoken and resist coercion; after the war he gave his bicycle to a Russian soldier only after he felt a machine gun pressing into his ribs.

At university he was exposed to – if not always taught by – some of the great names in 20th-century physics. Niels Bohr was his great missed opportunity when they passed in the corridor and Gerhard had nothing to say to him. Teaching influences included R.W. Pohl and his dictum that 'before we can discuss anything, we must be clear about our reference system,' and Werner Heisenberg, who had just returned from the United States after participating in the final stages of deploying the atomic bomb. Max Planck however was disappointment. When students flocked to his last public lecture at Göttingen in 1947, they only heard about his religious views (Planck died later that year).

In the late 1940s, Europe was no place for an idealistic young man, so Gerhard migrated in 1950, worked in an open cut coal mine, studied electrical engineering and married Janet who was personal assistant to Professor T. G. H. Strehlow. For thirty years Gerhard worked for Tom Playford's Electricity Trust of South Australia, which was the engine room of the industrialisation of SA, then turned to dairy farming and political activism, mainly on environmental issues, as Chair of the SA National Trust and parliamentary candidate for the Greens. The common thread in his career has been systems engineering theory, including his actively promulgated view that though we may agree that the inadequacy of a theory will feed back into inadequate applications, we usually settle for the quick fix in public policy. (See Gerard's self-published memoir and *The Entropy Field: Economic Reality and Life on Earth*, 2000 for more details.) **Convenor, Virginia Cotterell Kenny**, virginia@virginiakenny.com ♦

ISAA in Queensland

While some Queensland members have been with ISAA for a long time, we have added a few more over the last year or so. Distance is still a handicap in getting together but it is hoped that Ian Keese will be able to visit some of them early in 2010. While it is not usual to list all members of a group in the Newsletter, it has been done here, not only as a way of putting them in contact with each other and the rest of the ISAA membership, but also in the spirit of ISAA as a community of scholars. ISAA members in Queensland are: Jill Byrnes, Hervey Bay • Emer. Prof. William Caelli, Gaven Dr Eleanor Crosby, Gaven • Dr Kay Fraser, Eagle Heights Prof. Anna Haebich, South Brisbane • Dr Laila Haglund, Rathdowney

Dr Cameron Hazlehurst Mapleton • Prof Ian Lowe Marcoola
Dr Susan Niven, Bundaberg • Keith Wilson, Barga ♦

New Members

Welcome to the following new members who have joined since publication of the March Newsletter.

- Ronald Bodycoat AM • Emer. Prof. William Caelli AO
- Dr Eleanor Crosby • Dr Miriam Dixon
- Alasdair McGregor • Robert Sellick ♦

Report from the National Council

At the July National Council meeting in Canberra, Barbara Preston (whom members met when she delivered a paper at the 2008 Conference) was welcomed on the Council as a co-opted member. She contributed a memorandum to the Council for discussion on extending ways ISAA might think about its potential membership pool. These matters will be taken up in future meetings. Council also welcomed the input of Queensland member, Keith Wilson, who has taken on management of the website. Ian Keese and Keith will work in tandem to keep the website up to date and useful. On the question of outsiders accessing ISAA publications on an Internet database, members will perhaps remember that ISAA contributes its conference *Proceedings* and *Review* publications to the academic on-line database Thomson Gale, based in Michigan, USA. Council has decided to investigate the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University on-line database – 'informit' – which will give

ISAA authors academic coverage with a particularly Australian approach. See <http://www.informit.com.au/> ISAA member, Alan Roberts has taken on the role of Admin Officer of ISAA following the end of Marie-Louise Rankin's term. It is a reprise of the situation that existed when Julie Bozza was Admin Officer and also an active ISAA member, and it works extremely well.

The Conference program is shaping up and abstracts of a range of interesting papers have arrived in Convenor Lesley Vick's in-tray. Marion Halligan, a Member of the Order of Australia in the General Division (AM) for 'service to literature as an author, to the promotion of Australian writers and to support for literary events and professional organisations', will deliver the Annual Lecture. For details see page one of this newsletter. **Jane Burns, Hon. Sec** ♦

AGM and Council Elections

With this newsletter, is a notice of the 2009 AGM to be held on the second day of the Conference. Please note that the position of Vice President is vacant and there are three positions for ordinary members. Two of these positions have been filled by co-opted members in accordance with the constitution and they will among those standing for election for 2009-2010. ♦



Admin Officer Alan Robert, (left) & Treasurer Stephen Horn at an ACT meeting at the NLA, 9 July

Financial News

The prospects for the 2009 conference are good in view of the generous cash contribution of \$2,500 from National Library.

An increasing number of members are becoming interested in paying their annual subscriptions by electronic transfer or direct debit through Internet banking. We want to encourage this and plan to amend our forms accordingly. However it is important that the Treasurer can identify the person who has made the payment and determine what the payment was for on the bank statement. To do this we would request that you:

1. Include your name on the 'To account' description.
2. Either (a) post the attached form to the ISAA PO Box, ticking that you have paid by electronic transfer, or (b) send an email to Alan Roberts at info@isaa.org.au indicating the amount paid, the date paid and the nature of the payment (eg \$70 membership + \$15 donation), and fax this information to the Treasurer, Stephen Horn, 02 6258 5045 ♦

Members' Activities

Awards & Prizes

• Michael Horsburgh, AM for 'service to the community, particularly through the Anglican Church of Australia and through theological and social welfare education'. ♦

Publications

- John Moses, *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History*, Berghahn Books, UK, 2009
- Lucy Sullivan, *Shakespeare's Shattered Youth - laming or elixir? from a close reading of the sonnets*, Windrush Press, Windsor, 2009 ♦

Member Profile

John Moses, a native of Atherton, North Queensland and a U. Queensland graduate was awarded a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service, for 1961-63. In these two years at the University of Munich, under the guidance of Roman Catholic liberal, Franz Schnabel, he learned of the deleterious heritage of Prussianism on German history. Moses then transferred to Erlangen and completed a doctorate in German labour history under the liberal political scientist/historian, Waldemar Besson. This proved to be a valuable grounding in Marxist and other socialist theory. Parallel to this, under the Reformation historian, Walter Peter Fuchs, John Moses was introduced to the Hegelian-Neo-Rankean world of ideas that dominated the German academic community until after World War II.

It was during Moses' time in Germany that, arguably, the greatest historiographical debate in modern German history erupted, namely the 'Fischer Controversy' about the origins of World War I. Contrary to everything the Germans believed about the outbreak of the Great War, Fischer demonstrated forcefully that Germany incurred the main guilt after all. The debate was essentially about the nature of the Prusso-German military culture in which both the intellectual and power elite of the Bismarckian Empire lived and their stranglehold on the German education system.

In 1949 the 'Guild' (*die Zunft*) of historians held its first post war conference at which the leading historians of Germany debated the over-riding question: how did this disaster overtake the 'land of poets and thinkers' of Goethe and Hegel? Professor Fischer courageously attributed the disaster to the Prussian militarist tradition that in turn derived from the Reformation heritage of Martin Luther who had inculcated in the Prusso-German mind that the 'Powers that be are ordained by God'. John Moses' book (see 'Publications', above) charts the growing awareness of this mental aberration by the young theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer that led to his theologically grounded opposition to the Hitler regime. ♦

Garage Publications Audit for ISAA as at

Mike Austin is to be heartily thanked and congratulated for having taken the initiative to house boxes of ISAA archives in his under-the-house storeroom when ISAA relinquished its own premises. When Robyn Thurecht was Admin Officer she undertook the task of organising the files of archival material and 'for sale' publications and annotating the contents on the sides of the archive boxes.

The exercise undertaken by Jane Burns, Liz Morey, and Pauline Hunter in June 2009 was to provide a print document of ISAA archival holdings that could be installed on the ISAA computer. The 'audit' was undertaken over a couple of hours so cannot claim to be absolutely accurate as to numbers of back copies of ISAA publications. But accuracy can be claimed for the listing of the books that came into possession of ISAA as a result of the ISAA Book Prize. The

lists may be a basis for policy discussion in the National Council on what we would like to do about them for the future. ♦

Vale Elizabeth Morey

Elizabeth (Liz) Morey died in her sleep in July and this gentle, minimum fuss way of leaving, while obviously not of her choosing, was typical of the way she had approached life. She had always enjoyed good health so was perplexed by the onset of cardiac arrhythmia and the inconvenience caused by the necessary medication. However she adjusted and carried on doing the things she loved – skiing, bush walking, theatre going, reading, playing bridge, travel, her wide range of friends and the daily cryptic crossword.

Liz initially trained in nursing and when the opportunity arose she went to the University of WA and gained a degree in Economics, which led her to a professional career in Treasury and a life in Canberra. She resigned early in order to take up the chance to crew on a yacht with friends from Treasury and sail the world for a year, only to have this plan shattered by a rogue wave and a spectacular shipwreck and rescue. The drama of this would have been the stuff of books or at least riveting dinner conversation for most people but, typically, Liz only spoke of it if questioned. When her offer to take on the role of Treasurer of the ACT Chapter of ISAA was gratefully accepted she brushed off any thanks by saying that she admired ISAA's capacity to offer such interesting and varied speakers and writers, and for her the ACT Chapter Treasurer's job was her best way of contributing.

Liz's life was extremely full and while her death leaves an extraordinary gap for her colleagues and close friends there is also a feeling of great pride in having known such a thoroughly involved and interesting person.

Jane Burns, July 2009 ♦

Scholars and Artists-in-Residence Research Fellowships

Scholars and artists in residence at the National Film and Sound Archive: Call for applications

The National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) invites research proposals from academics, performers, artists, audiovisual industry and archive professionals to draw fresh, innovative perspectives from the national audiovisual collection. Fellows will use the NFSA's collection to create a new sound or moving image work, a publication, an exhibit, a live audiovisual event or a combination of these and other approaches. The Fellowships offer specially facilitated access and research into the national collection; close collaboration with NFSA curatorial and technical experts; access to the Library; modern accommodation; and a fully equipped workspace provided on-site. **Applications for the Fellowships are due by 2 October 2009.**

For further information and application forms, please visit http://www.nfsa.gov.au/about_us/sar/index.html or contact Belinda Hunt at belinda.hunt@nfsa.gov.au Belinda Hunt

Manager, Scholars and Artists in Residence National Film and Sound Archive, Australia Ph. +61 2 6248 2256 ♦

Awards & Fellowships: State Library of NSW

Check the following website for details:

<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about/awards/> ♦