

The Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association (AULLA)

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AULLA was founded in 1950 as the Australasian Universities Modern Languages Association. The name was changed in 1957 to emphasize that the Association embraced all disciplines concerned with literary and language studies. When first established, AULLA was the only organization in Australasia representing the interests of academics working in English and foreign language areas. At that time there were 11 universities in Australia and four in New Zealand. The membership was drawn from all these institutions, each of which had departments of English, French, German and, with one or two exceptions, Classics. Other languages like Italian, Russian, Maori and Hebrew were also taught in a minority of institutions. AULLA's chief aim was to provide academics with an opportunity for exchange of ideas by means of regular conferences and the publication of a journal. At the same time it functioned as a lobby group which attempted to keep the importance of the work done in this branch of the humanities before the minds of the public, of educational bureaucrats, and of successive governments.

Today AULLA continues to serve these purposes. A conference is held every 2 years, hosted and organized by one of the universities, with two conferences in Australia followed by one in New Zealand in a recurrent cycle. The most recent conference was held in Adelaide in February 2001. Attendance at conferences varies from 300 to 150 delegates, with the majority of delegates drawn from the staff of Australasian universities; but postgraduate students are also well represented, and a significant number of visitors from other countries usually attend. The conferences are normally structured by sections divided along disciplinary lines with the bulk of the programme devoted to research papers; occasionally, panel discussions which may deal with questions of teaching methods, syllabus or other matters of policy are included. Time is also given to plenary sessions which are concerned with broader issues of interest to those working in the humanities generally. These are often addressed by distinguished scholars invited from abroad.

The journal *AUMLA* (a vestige of the Association's original name) is published regularly twice a year. It has a wide international circulation among university libraries and contains articles and reviews contributed for the most part by scholars working in the literature and language area in Australasian, Southern African, European and North American institutions. English is the predominant language of publication, but material is also published in French and German. The issues of the journal generally carry articles representative of all areas in the discipline; occasionally special issues are produced which focus on a particular period, genre or theme.

Contraction of staff and other resources in the last decade has made it difficult for academics to find the time and energy to lobby government and other bodies systematically. Nevertheless, AULLA was able to make a detailed submission to the 1997 West report on the funding of higher education in Australia and has had input into reports and surveys like the Leal report of 1994 into the teaching of languages other than English in Australia.

While the activities described above continue to be seen as worthwhile and continue to attract interest and support from quarters traditionally linked to the Association, trends in membership figures and conference attendance are a cause for concern.

The decade since 1990 has seen the membership in Australia fall from 490 to just over 200;

in the same period the New Zealand membership, after a small increase to 106 in the mid-1990s, fell from 96 to 65. The number of institutions subscribing to the journal has remained steady at 230. The decline in membership is the more marked when we bear in mind that there are now more than 35 universities in Australia and six in New Zealand.

It is difficult to detect consistent trends in conference attendance, especially since conferences held in Australia are normally integrated with those of the Australian Society for Classical Studies, but there has been a clear decline since 1987 when more than 350 attended the conference at Macquarie University in Sydney. Ten years later the conference at the University of Sydney attracted approximately 200, and the 1999 conference in Auckland saw fewer than 150 delegates.

It is possible to discern a number of factors driving these trends. At the practical level, reduction in university funding is an overriding concern. Staffing levels, especially in the disciplines most closely linked to AULLA, have fallen significantly in the last 10 years and so the pool from which membership might be drawn has contracted. Financial support for attendance at conferences has decreased and, since AULLA's membership spreads over centres covering a distance of some 6000 km, the impact of this reduction in funding is considerable. At the same time, people would prefer to husband such funding as is available to assist them to attend larger gatherings in what are seen as more stimulating circumstances in Europe or North America, for which return travel can now be arranged relatively quickly and cheaply, if not, given the recent threats of Deep Vein Thrombosis, entirely painlessly.

But the most important changes in the last decade have been a decline in the centrality and popularity of disciplines traditionally associated with AULLA, and an increase in specialization in university faculties. While Australia and New Zealand are both countries with an impressive cultural mix, the study of foreign languages is a strength of neither secondary nor tertiary education. The number of school students offering languages for their final-year examinations continues to decline, and, it follows, fewer enrol in university courses which assume a basic knowledge of the language in question. There is considerable stress on the learning of what are called community languages but the study of these is often divorced from a tertiary environment. Furthermore, language-learning tends to be seen as a useful tool for economic or business purposes rather than as a mental activity promoting broad education or cultural awareness. In such a climate it is not surprising that Latin and Ancient Greek are taught in only one-third of tertiary institutions. While Asian languages, notably Japanese, Chinese and Indonesian, are taught in most Australian universities, these are areas not traditionally linked with membership of AULLA and are prone to be seen primarily as vehicles to material prosperity in the globalized corporate sector.

Increased specialization is evident in the fact that more and more conferences related to particular research areas or to recently developed departments are now being arranged. Theatre Studies, Victorian Studies, Gender Studies, Film, Media and Communication Studies, Australian and New Zealand Studies, and Cultural Studies are examples of areas which have been created in the last two decades. These are all fields which can and should come within AULLA's panoramic gaze, but they tend to hive off separately. Equally centrifugal is the conviction held by many that conferences devoted to a particular theme or even author are more productive because they encourage more clearly focused and better informed discussion. There is much to be said for these views and trends, and the success of such specialist conferences and more narrowly targeted organizations cannot be denied. The challenge to AULLA will be to flourish alongside and in synergy with these developments.

The AULLA executive has stressed and will continue to stress the need for an umbrella organization to represent the humanities in a global way, and organize gatherings which bring together the creative energy of the multiplicity of groups which can readily come within its purview. It is only from such a perspective that the interests of the whole can best be

served and represented to the community at large and within the universities themselves. One way forward may be to replace the traditional sectional structure of conferences by a more thematic one which will straddle the boundaries now seen as old-fashioned or obstructive. Further, the current executive will need to continue and increase the efforts made in the past to encourage membership among the relevant departments of the newer universities which tend to be poorly represented. At a time when international links are seen as important, AULLA's profile will be enhanced by a continuing close relationship with FILLM and it is hoped that the 2005 FILLM congress will be held in conjunction with AULLA in one of the Australian universities. Such a congress is likely to enjoy widespread support from the tertiary sector and attract much needed media attention. It could have a considerable impact on policy-makers, advertise the value of both the old and new humanities and show that they have much to gain from a catholic organization like AULLA which has strong international links and which they can together help to shape and strengthen.

<http://emsah.uq.edu.au/journals/aumla>

International Association of Hungarian Studies (IAHS)

Nemetsközi Magyar Filológiai Társaság

József Jankovics

The International Association of Hungarian Studies was born out of the recognition that Hungarian philology – or, more broadly speaking, Hungarian studies in general – had already come to represent an international scholarly discipline in the same way as the study of other languages, literatures and national civilizations had developed into coherent disciplines like *Germanistik*, Turkology or any other. Each individual national civilization represents an autonomous, yet constitutive part of our universal human culture. It also embodies its own individual colour and value, the cultivation and study of which lie in the general human interest. It was with this idea in mind that international scholarly organizations for the promotion of Hungarian studies were established in the widest possible range of countries throughout the world.

After repeated recommendations from scholars involved in Hungarian studies worldwide, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences took the first steps towards the foundation of the Association in 1977. At the Academy's invitation, approximately 100 Hungarian and non-Hungarian specialists came together in Ny íregyháza and the provisional general assembly held on 25 August 1977 agreed upon the foundation of the International Association of Hungarian Studies, set down its constitution and elected as its principal officers Bo Wickman (President), Tibor Klaniczay (Secretary-General), and Miklós Béládi (Deputy Secretary-General). Thus an international organization was born which, following the principles of similar well-established associations, would bring together scholars of various nationalities on a global basis, united by their interest in Hungarian studies.

The Association facilitates the regular exchange of information between the scholars of the