



## From the Executive Director's Desk

Despite the great progress that medical science has made against cholera, smallpox and polio, last year's Ebola outbreak reminded us that we still remain vulnerable to infectious disease. To prevent Australians from being infected, biosecurity measures were instituted at airports, airline passengers from affected areas were screened and people suspected of carrying the disease were kept in isolation.

The Ebola outbreak has now been largely contained, but it is worth asking whether the outbreak could have been handled better--more efficiently, more effectively and more economically? To help authorities these questions, researchers have analysed news reports and tweets to see how factual (and false) information was propagated through and across communication channels. Understanding the flow of information will help authorities to design better information campaigns in future.

Important lessons can also be learned from the past. In one large-scale project, humanities researchers have teamed up with data scientists to study one of the worst scourges in modern history, the 1918-1920 Spanish flu.

The researchers include experts in history, English, engineering and data analytics. They are examining how information and commentary about the "Spanish flu" spread among groups of people; they are also looking at the role of opinion leaders. For example, the researchers have focussed on the actions and statements of Royal S. Copeland, who was the New York Commissioner Health when the Spanish flu began. By applying large-scale data mining techniques to a database of newspapers, magazines and reports, the researchers are piecing together a time-line of Copeland's advice and how his recommendations permeated through society. Should theatres be kept open? Should kissing be discouraged? Should quarantines be

widened?

By combining historical research with data analytics, these researchers are not only shedding new light on the past; they will also be able to make recommendations for the future.

Large-scale data analysis has the potential to revolutionise the work of social scientists and humanists. For this reason, this year's CHASS Forum (15 & 16 October, Melbourne) will include a panel discussion of the potential and the pitfalls of "big data" in HASS research. Mark your dairies for an interesting discussion, one of many from this year's program.

Emeritus Professor Steven Schwartz AM

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**CHASS**  
Australia Prizes



## Nominations open: 2015 CHASS Australia Prizes

Nominations are open for a limited time only. We encourage applicants to apply early. Self-nominations are welcome. There is no nomination fee for any of the four categories - Book (non-fiction), Distinctive Work, Future Leader, and Student. For specific terms and conditions related to each category, [please click here](#). We are happy to provide assistance regarding your application, please feel free to contact us via email/phone.

[Apply Now](#) |

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## HASS Your Say: *Playing with Passion*

**Dr Nigel Erskine, Head of Research, Australian National Maritime Museum, CHASS Board Member**

Like me, I'm sure many of you saw the recent ABC 7:30 Report interview with Betty Churcher. It is likely to be her last as this much-loved former Director of the National Gallery of Australia battles the final stages of terminal disease, but despite this, the passion which she brought to her work at the NGA still shone through. Indeed, describing the secret of her successful career, Churcher confessed that it was her passion and obsession for art which 'just jerked me through life'.

By coincidence I had been thinking about passion over the weekend. Seated high up on one side of the stage during an SSO performance of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, with a grandstand view of the musicians I couldn't help wondering what sustains elite musicians through years of rehearsals to win a place in a prestigious orchestra. Once again, I think it's a matter of passion.

And so when asked by a young undergraduate 'What advice would you give to someone wanting to pursue a career in museums?', my response was – you have to have passion. Passion for a subject area, passion for audience interaction and communication, passion for exploring new media, ideas and opportunities. Oh – and of course a fair measure of hard work, talent, persistence, resilience and good luck!

Importantly however, the rewards for such dedication go beyond personal satisfaction. As all of us who work in areas of the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences know, when our exhibitions,

performances, publications or other endeavours are shared with audiences, they have the power to generate discussions and debate that move us from the everyday and commonplace, to the exceptional and extraordinary.

As a measure of success it often remains a difficult concept to get across to funding bodies intent on quantity, but without doubt, the HASS sector is responsible for producing outcomes that enrich the quality of life of every Australian.

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## Humanities in the Regions: An ACHRC Event

The Australasian Consortium of Humanities Research Centres (ACHRC) is a group aimed at networking humanities-based centres across Australia and New Zealand, facilitating discussions about best practice in humanities research, and focusing on the practicalities of research for humanities centres.

In 2014 we added a regional event to our annual meeting to respond to the needs of humanities researchers outside the capital cities and promote their participation in the network. This idea has blossomed in a member initiative we are calling Humanities in the Regions and we are hosting a stand-alone event.

The ACHRC's 2015 Humanities in the Regions event is co-hosted with Dr Robert Mason of the University of Southern Queensland and CHASS, and will take place at USQ's Toowoomba campus on 13-14 April 2015. It combines presentations on practical aspects of working on Humanities-projects from the regions, expertise in collaboration and grant writing partnerships, and workshops aimed at generating research outcomes. Presentations from Professor Ian Buchanan from the University of Wollongong, Richard Scully from the University of New England and Susannah Radstone from the University of South Australia, will provide rounded discussion on humanities research outcomes and success in the regions.

At this event, we will be launching "Humanities in the Regions", an ACHRC project designed to meet the needs of regions-based Humanities researchers. We invite interested parties to join the project that will be part network and part action group. For more information, [click here](#) or [contact Tully Barnett](#).

If you can't make it to this event, do consider coming to Auckland in November for the [ACHRC Annual Meeting](#).

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## Sector and Member Events

Early bird registrations opening 30 March: [GAME CHANGER – Innovating Education Through Creativity and Drama Practice](#), Drama Australia, Sydney, 10-12 July

Super early bird registrations closing 31 March: [ASME XXth ASME National Conference 'Music: Educating for Life'](#), Adelaide, 30 September–02 October

Early bird registrations closing 31 March: [ANZAMEMS Tenth Biennial International Conference](#), St Lucia, Queensland, 14-18 July

Nominations closing April 01: [2015 Jean Martin Award](#), TASA

[18th Biennial Conference of the Australian Rangeland Society 'Innovation in the Rangelands'](#), Alice Springs, 12–16 April

Public lecture: [Battlefield Archaeology - The ANZAC Centenary Lectures](#), The University of Melbourne, 06 May

Registrations closing 08 May: [IAG 2015 Conference 'Exploring Geographic Connections'](#), Canberra, 01-03 July

Symposium: [The Archaeology of Portable Art - South East Asian, Pacific, and Australian Perspectives](#), Canberra, 23-24 May

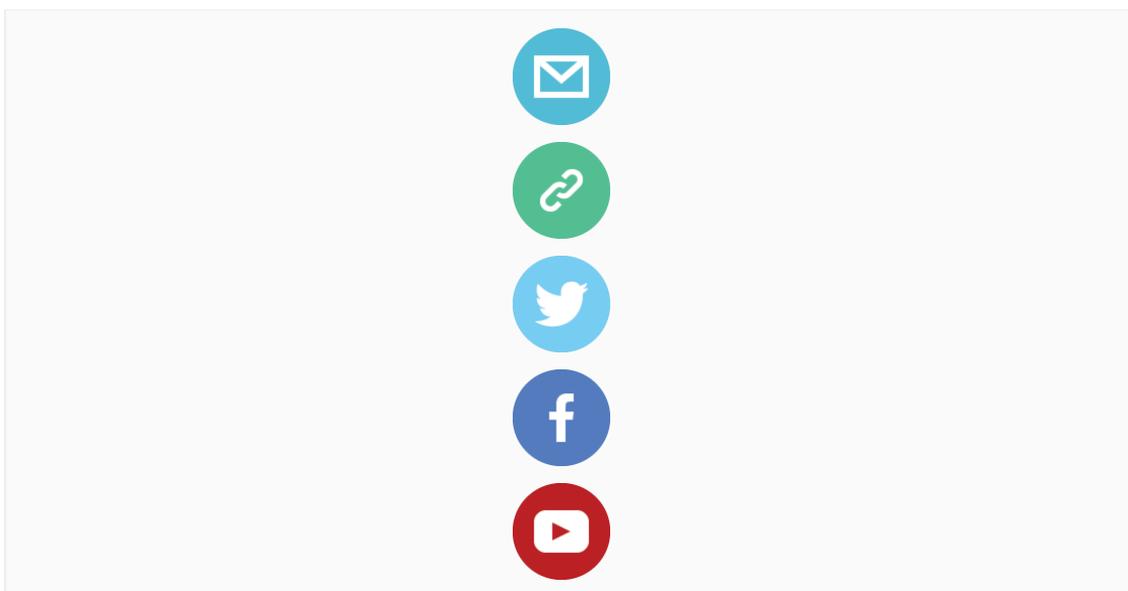
Registrations open: [Music - Count Us In \(MCUI\)](#), Music Australia

Registrations open: [2015 Annual National Native Title Conference 'Leadership, Legacy and Opportunity'](#), AIATSIS, Port Douglas, 16-18 June

Registrations open: [ANZATS Conference 2015 'A Life Worth Living'](#), Sydney, 29 June-01 July

On-going Exhibition: [Painting for Antarctica - Wendy Sharpe and Bernard Ollis Follow Shackleton](#), Australian National Maritime Museum

*Note: While we take due care to list correct information about events listed here, all listings are subject to change and we advise that you reconfirm details before making bookings. Please like our Facebook page for more updates on available grants and sector events.*



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