

MERGA Vice President's Report (Conferences) to the AGM: July 2011

My first thanks needs to go to the other Executive members of MERGA who support MERGA as an important research group as well as the annual MERGA conference, each in their own particular ways.

My next set of thanks goes to the 2010 MERGA 33 Fremantle team led by Len Sparrow and Jack Bana. Len and Jack supported by an excellent team (Barry Kissane, Marion Kempe, John Malone). This team provided the MERGA community with a most enjoyable conference which received very positive reviews from all the participants. The setting in Fremantle, the hospitality and food excellent and the keynotes and research papers stimulating, added up to a very successful conference, my thanks on behalf of the MERGA executive and community go to you, the Fremantle Team.

I am sure that the current 2011 MERGA 34 Conference to be held in Alice Springs from Sunday 3rd to Thursday 7th of July will be different but as successful as the Fremantle conference. This conference being a joint effort between AAMT and MERGA has resulted in many variations on usual MERGA practices but the collaborative nature these variations have called for has been positive. My thanks go to the organising team which consists of Steve Thornton and Julie Clark on behalf of MERGA and Toby Spencer, Will Morony, Ann Belperio, Melinda Pearson, Chris Stocks, and Matt Skoss on behalf of AAMT. An additional thanks goes to Judy Mousley who did an amazing job of overseeing the receipt of the MERGA papers, sending them out to review panels and then collating them on their return. This took time and energy and Judy did a great job of this showing patience and tolerance at a standard which was a model for all of us. In organisation of the 2011 conference the level of collaborative discussion and organisation to manage a range of different people in different areas of Australia has been high and so I thank you all in advance for what will be a stimulating conference in an interesting environment.

The 2012 MERGA 35 Conference moves to another interesting and entirely new setting in Singapore. The Singapore team is led by Dr Ang Keng Cheng (Head and advisor), Dr Jaguthsing Dindyal and Dr Cheng Lu Pien (co-chairs). The rest of the team is comprised of Mr Chan Chun Ming, Eric (Secretary), Dr Yap Sook Fwe (Logistics), Dr Ho Weng Kin (Food & Social Programme), Mrs Low-ee Huei Wuan (PR & Accommodation), Dr Koay Phong Lee (PR & Accommodation), Dr Berinderjeet Kaur (Scientific Programme), Dr Ng Swee Fong (Floating Member + Proceedings), Dr Teo Kok Ming (Treasurer), Ms Cynthia Seto (AST & MOE representative). The proposed venue is the National Institute of Education (NIE), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. The NIE campus is the venue of many local and international conferences each year and on-site accommodation will be available but the university is easily accessible by various modes of transport within Singapore. This is an important and exciting venture which needs supporting because it illustrates how MERGA has grown beyond the borders of New Zealand and Australia to include our Asian neighbours.

We are currently in discussion about the team and venue for MERGA 36, 2013 and it seems most likely that the conference will return to a more central Australian city. Further information about this will be announced in due course.

This year we continued to use a process of reviewing research papers, symposia, and other types of contributions, using panels of reviewers who met on specified days. Eleven panels were convened using mathematics education researchers with appropriate expertise in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Each paper was independently reviewed by two panel members, and then they met as part of the panel and discussed their assessments and

produced a single consensus report that provided the author(s) with detailed feedback. In both 2010 and again in 2011 we have critically reviewed the review forms and modified them to provide more appropriate feedback to authors. This process is on-going, as is the review process itself in an effort to ensure that conference papers are of a high standard but at the same time represent what they are; conference papers not journal articles. The conference guidelines recently rewritten and updated by Judy Mousley continue to be reviewed and added to. These guidelines have become important documents to support conference convenors and to shape MERGA conferences within a professional approach.

The Early bird submission process continues to support new writers as well as more experienced writers who want to take advantage of an earlier submission time. In 2010 there were 38 papers submitted in this process, almost a quarter were accepted on the first review and the remainder were returned to the author/s with extensive feedback which resulted in an eventual 100% acceptance rate for this group. The same figure has been maintained in this conference. For research papers the acceptance for publication rate has remained constant in the new review process with a 75-79% acceptance rate over the past three years. Review panel acceptances of papers for publication also vary with most panels achieving at least a 70% acceptance rate but other panel's acceptance rates are lower. All research papers which are not accepted for publication are re-reviewed by two independent reviewers. As you can see reviewing of research papers and other conference submissions continues to be a challenging process which requires on-going discussion.

Thank you again for your support.

Bobbie Hunter, 21 June 2011