AALL Memberships

As of 8 October, AALL had 250 members. This is an increase from 2016, and continues the trend of rising membership numbers in conference years. Our membership includes 247 members from Australia, and one member each from Oman, Canada and New Zealand. I hope that our ongoing participation in the International Consortium of Academic Language and Learning Developers (ICALLD) leads to growing numbers of international members.

AALL Members
Financial members, as at 8 October 2017

Year	Members
2006	142
2007	161
2008	177
2009	198
2010	215
2011	280
2012	260
2013	334
2014	273
2015	309
2016	226
2017	250

In addition, local connections remain vitally important, and members are encouraged to draw on AALL funds to host meetings and events, both small and large, local and national. Such gatherings are a great way to facilitate professional conversations, welcome new ALL staff into the AALL community, and foster important support networks.

AALL Executive

A number of Executive members will be stepping down in 2017. Joseph Yeo, who has been our 2016-2017 Treasurer will be stepping aside. Joseph took over the role from Dai Fei Yang, and helped to ease our transition to the new online membership system provided by Conference Online. Joseph has been a dedicated and tireless Treasurer, working behind the scenes with systems and processes that have not always cooperated as we would have liked! Joseph, thank you for your contributions to the role and to AALL. I hope we are able to find a worthy replacement! It is important to recognise the ongoing support and advice provided to the Treasurer by David Rowland, AALL's first and longest serving Treasurer. He continues to guide AALL's financial matters without formal recognition, and I'm sure will continue to support our new Treasurer – whoever they may be – as they learn the role. Thank you yet again David for your ongoing support of AALL.

I have also decided that 2017 is a good time for me to step down from my role as President. I have now been part of the AALL Executive for eight years: two as the John Grierson recipient, two as the Vice-President, and four as the President. I have felt very privileged to be part of the organisation, and I've been lucky enough to take up positions that have allowed me to have a visible impact on members and on ALL work in Australia. I've been reflecting back on my time with AALL, and put together a few thoughts that you'll find at the end of this report.

A couple of other long-serving executive committee members are considering stepping away, but – typical of this community – they have expressed a desire to stay on should the new Executive want some continuity and ongoing support. AALL elections will take place over the next month, and the new 2018-2019 Executive Committee and office bearers will be announced at the AALL conference at the AGM. There are already lots of ideas being discussed for the organisation's next steps, including revamping the AALL website and establishing a system for gathering benchmarking information, so I'm excited to see what the new committee brings.

AALL Grants

AALL has funded two project grants so far this year, with another three currently under consideration. The two grants funded in round one were:

1. Event grant - Embedded academic language and learning: ways of being and ways of working (Tony Cannell, University of Sydney Business School)
2. Resource grant - ALL Managers/Heads' Toolbox (Elena Verezub, Swinburne University and Bronwyn James, University of Sydney).

In an exciting year for AALL, we ran our first commissioned grant round, designed to encourage research grants on a subject of strategic importance for AALL. It was prompted by growing concern among AALL members about universities' increasing use of commercial, third-party academic and language and learning services, and perceptions that ALL roles are at risk of being automated or outsourced. These services are contributing to broader shifts in ALL work that include restructuring and re-classification of ALL roles, the growth of peer-to-peer models, and increasing casualization – subjects which feature strongly in this year's conference program. Applications have just closed, and we hope to announce the commissioned grant winners at the upcoming conference.

There were no applications for travel grants or for the John Grierson Grant in 2017, which is surprising given it is a conference year. AALL members are encouraged to make use of the AALL grants schemes, as they aim to ensure that the organisation's funds are redistributed back to members in support of professional development.

AALL Contributions

It has been an all too common function of AALL in recent years to support members through institutional change. Although we have not been approached by any members so far in 2017, I am aware of at least one team facing a potential restructure. I continue to urge anyone in this position to contact AALL about the proposed change, and if requested, AALL can make a submission; in my view, it's one of the Association's most important functions and a critical benefit for members.

International relationships

ICALLD – the International Consortium of Academic Language and Learning Developers – held its second online symposium for sharing practice and research, this year hosted by the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE). There were 127 registrations and each session had up to 53 attendees. The event received generally positive feedback, and the semi-structured panel discussion was popular, featuring the Presidents of LSAC, ATLAANZ and AALL in a conversation about hot topics in their countries. Time zones continue to present a challenge, as there are only about 2 hours in any given day when members from all countries can meet at a time that is reasonable for all, and therefore talk across international boundaries.

I am pleased to announce that next year's symposium will be hosted in Australia, specifically by Amanda Janssen and her team at Charles Darwin University. The team will experiment with a new schedule, which will stage 1-2 hours of presentation and discussion each day for up to 5 days. The dates and details of this 'symposium week' will be available in the coming months.

AALL has also commenced a project with our international colleagues in ICALLD to extend the AALL database of practice and research to include international practice. The capacity to benchmark within Australia – an important function of the current database – will be retained, but members will also be able to explore practice and research internationally with institutions in the UK, Canada and New Zealand. This project is being guided by Bronwyn James and Judy Maxwell, who developed the current AALL database and its previous iterations. One challenge so far is language – terminology is used differently across countries (e.g. the term 'tutor') and we want to make sure the categories and their descriptions are meaningful and applicable for all. We will keep you updated about this project as it progresses.

Reflections on eight years in AALL

With my time in AALL coming to an end, I've been thinking back over some of the changes I've seen in the ALL landscape in recent years. Although I've been in the profession for over 10 years, I recognise that compared to many of my colleagues I am a relative newcomer. I have worked with ALL educators who weathered the Dawkins reforms in the 1980s, the expansion and internationalisation of the sector through the 1990s, and the English language proficiency 'crisis' in the early 2000s. While the scale of recent changes is modest in comparison, the pace of change seems to be increasing. For example, in 2015 I found myself completing two sets of paperwork at the same time: one was probation paperwork confirming my position in a role that had been newly established as part of a change management, and the other was a response to a new restructure that would see that very position transformed. It seems that structures and roles in Australian higher education now rarely remain steady for long. Change is truly the only constant.

What is unfortunate is that change is rarely if ever prompted solely by a desire to improve teaching and learning. It is typically prompted by shrinking budgets, with everyone involved doing their best to make the new arrangement work for all concerned – students in particular. ALL educators are not alone in this. Staff in most central units and staff in administrative roles – anyone not directly responsible for the core business of teaching and research – have been subject to 'rationalisation' in the last 10 years. The primary result appears to be that we are all *busier*. We are doing more, and with less, and as a result we have less and less time to commit to fostering our own professional networks, collaborating with colleagues across institutions, and carving out dedicated time and space to reflect on what we are doing.

I have felt the impact of these shifts on ALL members, and on AALL. We have seen fewer applications for event grants in recent years, a sign that perhaps people don't feel they have time in their busy schedules to organise a gathering. We have also seen fewer applications for research and resource grants, which could also be a symptom of busyness, but is perhaps more a product of fewer ALL roles including research as part of their remit. Membership numbers have also been declining somewhat since 2013/14, suggesting that perhaps new ALL practitioners do not connect with AALL as a potential source of professional support. This observation has been an important driver of this year's commissioned grant:

Roles within the profession are shifting. Some are becoming narrower and more specialised, while others are taking on a wider range of responsibilities. At some universities ALL roles have been made redundant, downgraded or deskilled, while at others ALL teams are growing in size and scope. The extent to which those in expanded, emerging and external roles identify with the ALL profession is unclear. This means that fewer staff may perceive the benefits of the professional collaboration and development that AALL aims to provide.

Perhaps what we need is a national conversation about how AALL can best support our changing profession? We need to make sure we're continuing to represent *all* those staff who support the 'development of core, disciplinary academic and professional skills and attributes in all tertiary education students' (AALL Goal 3). Perhaps we need to work harder to engage with new members, and the new ideas and practices they bring to the profession? Perhaps we need to better support our state and territory groups, who typically provide the first and most important points of contact with AALL? And perhaps we need to generate more member-led activities, not only through grant schemes, but also using other informal and innovative methods.

Although the ALL profession appears to be changing, I'm hugely optimistic about AALL's capacity to adapt to these changes in order to continue supporting ALL practitioners. We have led the way internationally in having a database of practice and research for sharing our diverse practices and benchmarking our work. We will also be paving the way for our international colleagues with research into universities' use of commercial, third-party academic and language and learning services, as these services are only beginning to expand into markets beyond Australia. We have continued to demonstrate our influence at a national level through our contribution to the AUQA Good Practice Principles, and discussions about Australia's International Education Strategy. The evidence abounds that AALL and its members are thriving, even if we might be busier than we've ever been. The challenge will be to maintain our momentum by carving out the space and time to continue working collectively – locally, nationally, and internationally – on the challenges we all face.

As I continue on as an AALL member, I'm looking forward to getting behind the new Executive and the energy and ideas they'll be bringing to the organisation and the field. I can't wait to see where we go from here.

Rowena Harper

President, Association for Academic Language and Learning