

# Column: Conference Reflections

## TESOL Research Network Colloquium

### by Sarah Mason

Have you attended any conferences that were especially inspiring? Would you like to recommend a conference to our members? In this column, contributors can share information about specific conferences, presentations they attended, or helpful logistical information for those of us who have not stepped out of our comfort zones yet. Please contact the editor if you would like to contribute an installment or if you just have an idea you would like to run by her. We look forward to the next installment of “Conference Reflections.”

In September 2018 I had a chance to attend the TESOL Research Network Workshops and Colloquium 2018, held annually in Sydney, Australia. It is held jointly by the Centre for English Teaching (CET), University of Sydney, and the Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University and this time it took place on the beautiful and historic grounds of Sydney University’s Camperdown Campus. There are two components to the colloquium: one day of workshops and one day of research presentations and networking opportunities.

### Workshops & Presentations

The pre-colloquium workshops were held on the Friday prior to the colloquium proper. This year Professor Emeritus Ann Johns from the Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages, San Diego State University, ran a morning workshop. Professor Johns’

workshop was entitled “Connecting Reading and Writing in an EAP class,” it was very practically oriented, and I am sure it could be useful to many instructors working in the field in Japan where English for academic purposes is taught by many of us working in the profession. Following that, Professor Jack Richards from the Sydney School of Education and Social Work, the University of Sydney, ran the afternoon workshop on the topic of “Curriculum Design for Novices.” It was very entertaining and helpful even for teachers with some experience already in curriculum design.

The colloquium proper was held on Saturday, September 8th, and consisted of a combination of two keynote addresses (by Ann Johns and Honglin Chen), three symposia, and over thirty presentations. A wide range of topics and issues in TESOL and linguistics were covered,



mainly concerning applied linguistics but also addressing such industry issues as employment.

## Networking and career development

The colloquium's stated purpose is networking and I felt that it operated successfully in that sense. The atmosphere was friendly and there was a lot of mingling among participants and audience members during the breaks. There were many presentations given by students, including presentations about masters level research theses and PhD research. The blurb for the colloquium explicitly stated that its purpose is to provide presenting opportunities for researchers whose work is either in progress or completed. For novice researchers who are seeking friendly and international forums to present their work, I think this colloquium is ideal.

## Food

The lunchtime recess was one hour long, which would have given participants plenty of time to purchase food from the numerous nearby cafes on campus, however that wasn't necessary because the colloquium organisers generously provided a delicious catering service. This was a pleasant surprise because the colloquium itself is free and I hadn't been expecting extensive catering. The healthy food catered to a wide range of dietary requirements, including vegetarian and halal options. There were also tasty snacks, both sweet and savoury, offered in the scheduled coffee break, and of course food and drinks at the closing and networking gathering held at the end of the day.

The colloquium has been growing in popularity over the last few years and was well attended. The deadline for submitting proposals this time was June 30th and successful applicants for presenting papers were notified by July 18th, leaving a couple of months for travel arrangements.

## Location & Facilities

Sydney University's Camperdown Campus is a pleasant 15-minute walk from Central Station but buses also run frequently from the station. Due to its central location, there are many nearby shopping and dining possibilities. The September weather was glorious, ideal sightseeing weather for those who are new to Sydney. The

facilities were the usual type one would expect from a conference being held in a university, not particularly glamorous, but there are some historical buildings on the Sydney campus and the grounds are very green and lush. The entrance to the Law building was a little difficult to locate and for those attending the colloquium for the first time better signage would have helped.

The colloquium had a broad range of presenters, with diversity in ethnicity, gender, and experience. The stated purpose of the colloquium is sharing research in the area of teaching English to speakers of other languages, as well as providing researchers, both established and new, a chance to network and explore possible future collaborations. I felt the friendly atmosphere did facilitate this and I would like to encourage other researchers to consider attending the colloquium. Falling as it does in early September, it should certainly be kept in mind as an option for those seeking a low-key conference during their long summer break.

## Bio

Sarah Mason hails from Adelaide, Australia and has been teaching English in Japan for 20 years. She is currently a PhD candidate at Macquarie University,



Sydney, and works as a lecturer in the Department of English Language Studies at Mejiro University, Tokyo. Her research interests include educational environments and language teacher identity studies. She can be contacted at [nosam0811@gmail.com](mailto:nosam0811@gmail.com).