



Australian University Heads of English

Call for Papers

'The Value of Literature'

December 1, 2022,

CHASS Congress of the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, University of Melbourne

In recent times the value, or 'value for money' of research in Literary Studies has been openly questioned in levels of government and some parts of the media. So too, new modes of data collection and attempts to quantify research quality at individual universities and at national and international levels, are requiring those doing research into literature to carefully consider where they publish and the topics of research they address if they continue to publish or apply for grants at all. While Australia continues to produce works of literature of a high level and the status of creative writing itself is less openly questioned, the role and importance of literary scholarship and criticism and the teaching of literature at universities has come under significant pressure in the public sphere. Fewer column inches are available to consider the importance of literature in major news outlets, and far less funding for literary or scholarly journals is available through funding bodies. Literature and deliberation over its value, which so decisively shaped the social networks and intellectual character of the modern public sphere, is now noticeable by its absence.

This one-day seminar, which will comprise the contribution of the Australian University Heads of English to the inaugural CHASS Congress of the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, is calling for papers that address the idea of 'The Value of Literature'. The word 'literature' is understood to include the study and teaching of and writing about works of literature as well as the creation and publication of works of creative writing including fiction, creative non-fiction and literary essays, poetry, and writing for works of performance, film and other media. We welcome proposals focused on, though not limited to the following areas:

The value of literature in relation to:

- academic literary research and scholarship
- scholarship on the pedagogical value of literature
- the kinds of knowledge produced by universities
- the writing of literary essays both for specialised and general audiences

- the state of the literary ecosystem (large and small publishing, literary and scholarly journals, etc) in Australia and its relation to the global literary marketplace.
- the role of oral and written expression within our cultures
- the idea of literature as contributing to orders of knowledge and/or the idea of literature as disrupting those orders
- the historical role of literature in the creation of the modern public sphere
- how literature contributes to social or political engagement
- the function of literature in the national conversation
- how literature contributes to the formation and questioning of identity and belonging
- how literature contributes to social and individual well-being
- how modes of literary expression are imbedded within our social and economic systems
- the under-acknowledged importance of narrative/storytelling/poetic expression in the various domains of modern life

Papers will be 20 minutes long with 10 minutes question time in each session. Please send abstracts of up to 350 words setting out your topic and proposal by 30 September 2022 to

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On behalf of the organising committee (Ann Vickery, Elizabeth McMahon, Chris Conti)