

Setting the scene for international collaboration: **INORMS 2006**

Jan Massey and Colleen Clur report on the inaugural INORMS congress in Brisbane

The International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) held its inaugural congress from 22-25 August 2006, in Brisbane, Australia. The congress was hosted by the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS) – and was attended by 450 delegates from 23 countries, 173 workshop participants, 71 national and international speakers, and 21 sponsors.

The theme of the Brisbane conference was *Internationalisation of Research – the big issues and opportunities for the decade*. It was also the title of the opening address by Queensland Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Andrews who said that that national government research funding bodies should not necessarily require commercial outcomes for their programmes.

He said funders of curiosity-based research in Australia were increasingly linking funding to expectations of economic outcomes: “Funding bodies ... should recognise that long-term economic outcomes frequently result from curiosity-based research ... if our research provides a discovery from which an outcome is possible, that’s fine, but we shouldn’t compel university researchers to identify social or economic outcomes in advance.”

He added that “we need to make room for a creative, inspiring and fun research environ-

ment in our universities.”

Collaboration over competition was a resounding message at the congress. The Australian of the Year for 2006, Professor Ian Frazer, from the University of Queensland, gave large credit for the development of his breakthrough cervical cancer vaccine to collaboration with Chinese scientist, the late Dr Jian Zhou. Professor Frazer told delegates cancer was a worldwide concern, and one that may require worldwide solutions. Within the next 10 years, cancer would not only be the number one killer in the developed world, but also in the developing world, he said.

“One of the challenges we’ll face is how to get that vaccine out in the developing world when it’s essentially developed as a commercial product,” Professor Frazer said.

The Inspector General of the National Science Foundation of the United States Dr Christine Boesz also called for collaboration within the world’s research community – to combat the

problem of misconduct in research. “This is a global challenge that we should be very concerned about. We need to work with governments around the world – international co-operation does work,” she said.

Professor Melissa Little from Developmental Biology at the University of Queensland, addressed delegates on stem cell research and discussed different legislative approaches which apply around the world.

Dr David Lynn from the Wellcome Trust questioned whether there was a loss of public confidence in science and urged the scientific community to be more self-confident, thus encouraging more open discussions of important scientific results and issues.

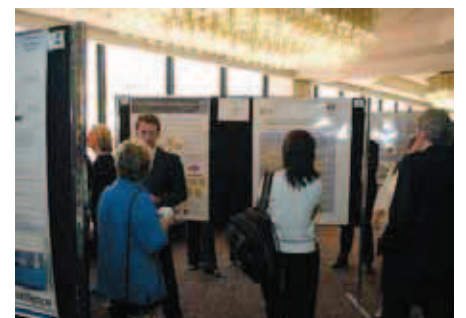
Professor Cheryl de la Rey from the University of Cape Town focused on the question of how to improve the supply, quality and demographic profile of researchers across the spectrum of sciences in a developing country such as South Africa.

There was strong participation in pre-congress workshops which demonstrated the desire by delegates to keep abreast of best practice by learning from senior research leaders and managers. The workshops covered the anatomy of a successful research project; international perspectives on ethics; and funding opportunities for international collaboration, and many said they appreciated the practical knowledge they had gained. As part of the

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Fiona Wood (Congress Co-Convenor),
University of New England, Australia



Delegates at the poster session



(From left to right) Jan Massey, (Congress Convenor) Janet Dibsmith (Congress Co-Convenor, the University of Adelaide), Adam Spencer (Australian radio DJ and media personality) and Merilee Robb (The University of Sydney)

conference there was also a session on research management for new and emerging research institutions. The session was facilitated by Professor Cliff Studman and included speakers from Bangladesh, South Africa and Uganda.

The opportunity for developing networks and contacts throughout the congress – at the workshops, main sessions, social events, trade booths and outstanding poster displays - has laid a firm foundation for greater emphasis on the importance of the research management profession. Scientists, policy makers, research leaders and managers all shared their diverse experiences and perspectives of best practice in research management, policy and leadership. Delegates from both advanced and emerging research institutions entered into the spirit of debate, took away new ideas and made new contacts.

The geographic spread of INORMS now encompasses the USA, Canada, UK, Europe, Australasia, the Pacific Rim, and Southern Africa, and this depth of experience and knowledge made the congress both vibrant and relevant. The large numbers at the congress indicate recognition of the importance of quality research management. We believe the congress has made a significant statement about the importance of quality collaboration and

linkages – so that the billions of dollars spent on R&D (globally) will be used more effectively and will have a greater impact on the lives of ordinary people.

We are very pleased with the response to the meeting and would like to thank all those who supported the event, particularly National Steering Committee members who contributed large amounts of their time to ensure its success. We would also like to thank the Queensland Department of State Development Trade and Innovation, the Australian Research Council, CSIRO National Research Flagships and the Australasian Research Management Society who were major sponsors of the INORMS congress.

Dr Ian Carter, from the University of Liverpool and the Association of Research Managers and Administrators UK (ARMA), said the inaugural congress had set a very high standard for the next meeting (2008) in Liverpool.

“We hope to be able to continue that dialogue in Liverpool – and even to the next meeting planned for 2010 to be hosted by the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA), in South Africa.”

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The conference in session



Opening speakers Professor Peter Andrews (Queensland Chief Scientist) and Professor Ian Frazer (The Australian of the Year for 2006)

Jan Massey (Convenor, INORMS Congress) is the Director of The University of Queensland's Office of Research and Postgraduate Studies
Email: jmpal@bigpond.net.au

Colleen Clur is the managing director of Compass Communications, Queensland, specialising in high-level communication, marketing and management.

Email:
colleen@compasscommunications.com.au