

Work to be done

Chair's Report 2018

Like US presidents, CUCD chairs can only serve two terms, and last week handed over to my successor. Fortunately CUCD chairs do not have quite the same capacity for mischief making. I am really grateful to successive Standing Committees and especially to Catherine Steel and Gesine Manuwald for support, advice and for occasionally curbing my enthusiasm. Thank you all.

It has been a huge privilege to be involved in the development of the subject over the last six years. Those six years have been mainly good ones for our subject. The number of UK HEI's teaching classical subjects has grown in this time. Our discipline is now firmly established in post-1992 universities. The range of what students can study has increased, and university level classical subjects have never been so accessible. The results of the last REF were good for the discipline, and an excellent panel has been selected for the next exercise. I am constantly impressed at how many people have been willing to step up and play an active part in protecting and promoting our subjects. Mid-career academics are busier than ever before, dealing with TEF as well as REF and generating impact as well as research. Yet again and again individuals volunteer to take on new roles and responsibilities. We have some great citizens among us. We are very fortunate in that.

Our own [statistics](#), which now track gender against career stage among staff, as well as student numbers, show how successfully the discipline is renewing itself, and gradually becoming more diverse in the process. Women make up a third of our professors, a figure which compares well with some other disciplines. The foundation of the [Womens' Classical Committee](#) in 2015 has made a huge difference to debate across the discipline. It is astonishing how much it has achieved in just three years.

It has also been a pleasure to watch how well the older classical societies now work together. CUCD, the CA (merged with JACT since 2015), the Roman and Hellenic Societies regularly exchange information. We have made joint responses to various consultations emerging from government, from Select Committees, and also from various of the fast-shifting constellation of HE quangos. When appropriate we have also made common cause with other groups including University Archaeology UK and the Classical Association of Scotland.

But much remains to be done.

Far too many of our colleagues remain on short-term and or fractional contracts. Revising the [CUCD Protocol on Staffing](#) last year made it clear how much the situation had deteriorated since the first version was written in 2008. Then the big issue was the treatment of temporary full-time staff. Now casualization and precarity have become enormous problems. Many of these battles have to be fought within institutions and even departments, which vary enormously in how far they make their most junior staff welcome and nurture their careers. There is a [current consultation](#) about revising the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. This issue will not go away in the next few years, and matters to all of us.

Lobbying at the national level remains vital. The [Arts Humanities Alliance](#), which was founded by my predecessor Robin Osborne, has become a powerful voice lobbying in the sector, on everything from Open Access to supporting Humanities colleagues in other countries. It is needed even more now. The AHRC has become much worse in recent years in consulting with subject associations and learned societies. The British Academy still holds town meetings occasionally, but its influence with government is limited. When funding for the British Schools (now rebranded BIRI institutes) was threatened in the last spending round, the Academy was not on our side. The AHA played a crucial role in demonstrating the breadth of support for the schools across the disciplines. The Schools owe their survival largely to AHA and a mass of lobbying by individuals. In the past we could occasionally call on an All-Party Group at Westminster. Archaeology still has such a [group](#), but the Classics one no longer exists.

We need to remember our common interests and our common situation. Classics has many natural strengths. It recruits well, there is a huge public interest, It is still in some places seen as a prestige subject. But over the last year we have seen that the charge that it is exclusive, élitist and a badge of privilege has not gone away. We have to more careful about whose support we accept, and perhaps also more restrained in our public debates over what our core values are. Or perhaps we simply need to talk up the issues that matter to us, and not talk down the views of others so much. There have been some bruising exchanges on twitter in particular. Classicists above all others know the value of free debate, but we should also remember that every *agon* has its rules. Some media are better places than others for discussing issues that we all care about. We are lucky as a discipline to have been offered thoughtful provocations from the pens of Johanna Hanink, Neville Morley, Josephine Quinn, Donna Zuckerberg and others. We have lots to think about. But abusive and personal responses in public media help no one. United we stand....

This is not all work for CUCD of course. Subject associations are good at marshalling responses, at presenting a united voice to government, to universities and to each other, and at keeping an eye on the devil in policy detail. The energy comes from somewhere else. As individuals we have a chance to press for positive change (and resist reaction) in many places, in departmental meetings and university committees, on editorial boards and appointment panels, on the councils of learned societies and so on. Rather to my surprise, I have seen government agencies do much

better than academic bodies in many respects. When selecting panellists for the latest REF, HEFCE took the lead in promoting diversity issues, and more and more universities are getting to grips with Athena SWAN. Meanwhile our learned societies and our section in the British Academy lags far behind. There is work to be done.

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