

ARMS Conference 2023 – ICC Sydney, Australia – 6-8 September

Day Minus 1 – ARMS Post Award SIG – In-person Meeting

A frantic dash through the streets of Sydney saw my Research Finance colleague and I at the fabulous UTS campus for our first in-person ARMS Post Award SIG Meeting and networking lunch. An absolutely invaluable chance to discuss the challenges and opportunities we face in our shared space with other institutions from across the country.

Day 0 – Pre-Conference Workshop

Our first taste of the ICC! Having scoped out the premises the afternoon before, we knew exactly where to head bright and early on Tuesday to learn the ins and outs of Project Management. Jeff Kasparian kept us engaged for the full day, and highlighted the importance of having a highly capable project manager for all projects, big and small. The working example of a Linkage Project with relationship management issues continued to challenge our group as the tasks continued to evolve.

Day 1 – It begins...

My first ever ARMS Conference experience begins with a packed house for the Conference Opening, and a Welcome to Country that tested the audience's skills of observation, followed by a session highlighting the benefits and advantages of Artificial – or Digital – Intelligence. While beneficial in many aspects of research administration, including streamlining compliance checks, a careful line must be walked to ensure it is used appropriately and without infringing on the rights of others. The role of AI in research – and research administration – continues to be new and challenging ground for us all.

Then, we enter the frantic land of concurrent sessions, scrabbling to hot-foot between the rooms to catch as many different sessions as possible! From University of Melbourne's contracting efficiencies and the streamlining of contract processing, to their "Reach for the Stars" Star Wars-themed presentation on researcher (and RAO) development to drastically improve their ARC success rates, there was a lot to learn from the larger Group of Eight Universities. It feels like speed-dating for the mind.

The afternoon plenary introduced us to Dr Willy-John Martin, who outlined many of the additional challenges faced by Māori researchers, and a two-year overhaul of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's grant programs to undertake a number of new approaches to support researchers and support those organisations prioritising indigenous research.

Day 2 – It continues...

Thursday begins with a fascinating perspective from researcher, A/Prof Siouxsie Wiles, who provides us with an engaging look through her career and the impact she's made during a pandemic, and the challenges faced with her institution and career progression. A quick break to network with colleagues before running in to sit right up the front of the concurrent session hosted by the ARMS Post Award SIG in support of my fellow SIG members! A recruitment drive for a worthy new SIG, hoping to make meaningful changes to the Post Award space across the sector – something I'm extremely interested in, now that my role strongly aligns with this same purpose. The session promoting involvement and bragging of our achievements.

Between sessions, an important check in with the vendors and sponsors lining the foyer to see and hear about the very intriguing Cayuse research management system, Infonetica's ethics management options, and a quick hello to our GrantEd colleagues – which scanning our QR codes and collecting souvenir pens for the team back in Adelaide. And off again to learn!

The day ends with the fabulous dinner, where awards are handed out and our ARMS Chapter Travel Award success is celebrated with our peers and new friends, in between delicious courses and a few cheeky beverages.

Day 3 – It concludes...

After the mental fatigue of absorbing as much as possible over the last two days – and enjoying our evening before – we learn about CSIRO's co-designing plans and the challenges faced by MRIs, which mimic many of the those also faced by Universities. A quick bite, a few goodbyes, and we're heading back home to share our experiences. Many thanks to the ARMS SA Chapter for supporting me for this incredible experience, and making my first ARMS Conference a memorable one!

