

Vikings Research Network

The Vikings Research Network aims to encourage and facilitate collaboration between scholars working within the field of Viking Studies. It will develop team-based research and provide forums for members to share resources and knowledge, and to extend their own capabilities. Given the geographical isolation of Australia from much of the archaeological and manuscript material, one of the key functions of the cluster would be for members who, through travel, will have access to such material, to share it with others within the network.

Viking Studies within Australia has always been a scattered discipline, with the exception of the literature-focused hub at the University of Sydney. The only formal Viking Studies program in the country has recently been axed at the University of Melbourne, and the discipline is in grave danger of dispersal and dissipation without the kind of focus that a NEER Research Cluster would provide.

The study of Vikings is an effective focus for covering virtually all areas of early European history, both thematically and geographically. Viking raids and settlements affected most of the continent - and far beyond- while some of the themes that can be analysed within Viking studies include colonialism, warfare, women's roles and status, environment and climate, and the modern appropriations of past societies. The members of the proposed Vikings Research Cluster envisage the cluster as an on-going network, and as we are all in the early stages of our careers it will, we hope, span many years. For this reason we do not wish to define a narrow scope for the cluster but rather permit it to embrace the diversity which the study of Vikings allows.

Within these broad parameters we do have firm plans for the focus of our initial project. It will be a joint research project concentrating on the construction of identities within the nexus of Viking/European contact. The Viking Age is often characterised as the gradual integration of non-Christian Scandinavia into Christian Europe. We intend to explore and question the assumption that "Viking" and "Europe" existed as static constructs, and to consider the role played each played in defining the other during this extended and intense period of culture contact. This project links strongly to the NEER themes of 'Cultural Memory' and 'Social Fabric.' A further dimension to this investigation is the perceived conflict between non-Christian Scandinavians and Christian Europeans which tends to be foregrounded in cultural memories of the Viking period. We expect to challenge the notion of a monolithic and stable Church, and re-assess the centrality of religion within the conflict and exchange between Vikings and others. This specific project is expected to involve panel sessions at conferences and joint authorship of an article. The NEER Confluence system would be an essential component in building our collaborative research.

We hope in time to expand the network to include international academics and other Australian researchers who share our goals and interests. However we feel that a small and committed membership will be most effective in building relationships and momentum in the early stages of the cluster. The foundation members bring an range of inter-disciplinary skills to the network, including expertise in fine arts and literature, archaeology, history, languages and philology.

Members

Ms. Lisa Bennett
Flinders University

PhD Candidate
CV attached

My research is focused on cultural memory in the Sagas of Icelanders, and the 'Vikings' focus of this cluster is directly in line with my work. I am interested in promoting NEER-related events at Flinders University, which could enhance links between Flinders and Adelaide Universities, and which could also provide South Australian researchers with opportunities to interact with NEER participants from elsewhere in Australia. I would be very interested in working with NEER to help realise some South Australian-based postgraduate training schemes and symposia.

Finally, I am the e-Research Development Officer for the Flinders Humanities Research Centre, and so my knowledge of digital repositories and online content management systems (like Confluence) will help promote Viking Studies in the digital age. I will encourage the Vikings Research Cluster to put Confluence to good use, and I would also like to suggest a collaborative, 'Vikings themed' online project for the cluster to work on digitally.

Mr. Shane McLeod
University of Western Australia

PhD Candidate
CV attached

My participation in the proposed NEER Viking cluster will hopefully be of benefit to its members both in my own research strengths and in some of the international experts I may be able to involve in our future endeavours. My particular strengths are in the politics and acculturation of the early Viking Age, especially in England, with the interpretation of both written sources and archaeological material. I have also researched the Norse construction of identity during the Viking Age, both at home and in their colonies, work which will be continued through the cluster. I successfully completed the Viking and Early Medieval Studies masters course at Uppsala University and met a number of leading Scandinavian scholars in the field with whom I have remained in contact and who I will hopefully be able to involve in some of the cluster's activities. The aims of the cluster may also be furthered during my planned research trip to Europe, during which time I expect to be involved in cluster-related activities. I am currently treasurer of the Perth Medieval and Renaissance Group and subsequently have some experience in the administrative aspects of extra-curricular academic pursuits. I am also on the organising committee for a 2008 symposium, and this experience will be of use in organising future cluster activities.

Co-ordinator

Dr Katrina Burge
University of Melbourne

Lecturer, Viking Studies, School of Languages
CV attached

In my role as co-ordinator of the proposed NEER Vikings Research Network, I will encourage and support the research of members, and contribute my own skills and research. My five years of teaching Viking Studies and Old Norse has given me some expertise in these areas which I look forward to sharing with my colleagues in the Network. Given the recent axing of these subjects at the University of Melbourne, I am fully aware of the importance of self-motivated and collaborative research that is not dependent on departmental structure and support, and this motivation will be valuable in steering and focusing the fledgling Vikings Research Network.

My contacts with other scholars particularly in Britain and North America will strengthen the ties between this network and the wider academic community. As a group of young Australian researchers, we will draw on these resources to help us build and maintain international profiles within this field.

I have had experience in organising academic conferences and symposia, often on shoestring budgets, and expect to use these skills in bring about increased contact between those of us working within Viking Studies.

Activities 2007-2008

AEMA Conference

Sydney, September 2007

Two of the members of the proposed cluster gave papers in a common session at the AEMA conference in September this year.

'Vikings and their Enemies' Symposium

Melbourne, November 2007

All three members will be presenting their current research at the Melbourne 'Vikings and their Enemies' symposium later this month. This will also be an opportunity to discuss the cluster's research projects with other Australian scholars working in the area of Viking Studies and perhaps to enlarge its membership.

Old Norse-Icelandic Studies Symposium

Sydney, April 2008

The NEER Old Norse cluster symposium in Sydney will be attended by most of the members of the Vikings cluster. There is considerable common ground between the historical/social focus of the Vikings cluster, and the linguistic/literary slant of the ON-I group, and we look forward to the mutual exchange of ideas.

AEMA Conference

Brisbane, October 2008

Joint paper session.

ANZAMEMS Conference

Tasmania, December 2008

Panel presentation.

Aims and Intended Outcomes

The Vikings Research Network aims to form and foster research collaboration between local and international scholars, and to publish its research outcomes. Members intend to apply for external grants to develop network-related research projects. Our initial project on Viking identities is not seen as the basis for an external grant. However we will most likely seek ARC funding for a proposed future project on the effects of climate and environment on the social fabric and culture contacts of the Viking Age. In addition to these aims, which are essentially focused on the network and its members, we hope also to create opportunities, including conferences and seminars, for the wider exchange and dissemination of material relating to Viking Studies.

Old Norse Language Weekends

2007-2009

Weekend language intensives, offered in Melbourne, to permit those with an interest in Viking Studies to build up the language skills required for serious academic study.

Symposium Proceedings

Early 2008

The proceedings of the Melbourne 'Vikings and their Enemies' symposium are expected to be published in 2008. All members of the proposed network are contributing to this symposium, and their papers reflect the research interests at the heart of this network.

Viking Archaeology Workshop

Perth, May 2008

To coincide with a visit by Dr Alexandra Sanmark from University College London, a workshop on aspects of Viking archaeology is planned.

International Research, Networking and Teaching

Mid 2008

Members of the cluster have European study and research trips planned which will permit them access to material not available in Australia, and facilitate collaboration and consultation with international scholars. One member of the network will be teaching an Old Norse summer school in Ireland, studying in Copenhagen and digging in Iceland; another will be renewing links with Swedish universities and carrying out network-related research. These are all opportunities to strengthen our links with other scholars and to enrich the knowledge base of the Vikings Research Network

Joint Article(s)

Early 2009

The initial research project into Viking and European identities is expected to lead to one or more jointly-written papers in refereed journals.

Vikings Conference

Mid 2009

We are hoping to arrange a conference to be held probably in Perth or Melbourne, which will bring together local and international scholars. We would aim to publish the proceedings of this conference.