

FRENCH FORUM A MELBOURNE INITIATIVE

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A new initiative linking researchers in French Studies was launched in Melbourne earlier this year. Bertrand Bourgeois, of the University of Melbourne, invited colleagues of the several universities in the city with a French Studies program (The University of Melbourne, Monash University, RMIT and La Trobe University) to participate in a forum to exchange and share ideas and projects in the field of francophone studies and beyond. The forum is open to researchers, academic teachers and postgraduate students in the field of French studies, including linguistics, translation studies and history. This initiative elicited enthusiastic responses and a first meeting took place on September 2nd, 2011 at the Babel building of the University of Melbourne.

To begin with, the suggested name for this structure, Forum Francophone de Recherche à Melbourne (acronym FFRAME), was confirmed by the numerous participants from all four Melbourne universities. This meeting also served as an opportunity for everyone to get to know colleagues from other universities. The fifteen participants of the first meeting presented their research priorities as well as projects which could interest the other members of the forum.

This was an excellent opportunity, not only for researchers who have recently taken up their posts, but also for long-established academics, to get an idea of the great variety of research activities carried out in Melbourne, ranging from language evaluation and specific aspects of language teaching, to francophone cinema, 19th century French literature and comic strips. Some participants are firmly grounded in their home disciplines of history or linguistics; others spread their academic focus over several interdisciplinary areas. The Forum will facilitate existing collaborative projects involving academics from different universities and will also be a place where new projects can be initiated, thanks to regular contact and better communication networks. The French Forum offers an opportunity to publicise projects, initiatives and events and will encourage joint publication ventures, thus allowing both staff and students from all participating universities to benefit from the visits of

international scholars. It will tie in with other efforts to create a vibrant French-Australian academic and cultural community such as ISFAR, the Melbourne Salon, and might also lead to article submissions to *Explorations*.

The participants also agreed on the proposed format: it will include the opportunity to announce matters of interest and the presentation of a French studies topic by one of the participants, followed by general discussion. These presentations can be made in French or English and can serve as testing grounds for future conference papers or articles. The FFRAME meetings will be held every two months at the University of Melbourne. FFRAME would like to take this opportunity to thank the School of Languages and Linguistics of the University of Melbourne for providing a venue and refreshments.

The second FFRAME meeting took place on the 14th of October. It featured the first topical presentation and attracted even more participants than the inaugural meeting. Bertrand Bourgeois had prepared a paper on Théophile Gautier's *Le Roi Candaule* entitled 'Gautier et le culte de l'art : de la femme objet au texte-bibelot' in which he argued that in this short story the author transforms both the woman and the text into objects of collection and therefore claims again the autonomy of art from bourgeois society. This presentation elicited a lively discussion which centred on the role of description, the presentations of masculinity and decadence to be found in Gautier's text.

At the third FFRAME meeting, which took place on the 25th of November 2011, Véronique Duché-Gavet presented a paper on the teaching and learning of foreign languages during the Renaissance. She demonstrated that some of the methods of language learning have actually changed little over the last 500 years.

We are looking forward to listening to further interesting and stimulating presentations in 2012, as several participants have already come forward with ideas of papers they would like to present to the French Forum in the coming months.

The University of Melbourne