

# Message from the New Division Chair

## CMS in the Shadow of Trump Tower

**Mark Learmonth**, Durham University, UK

It is both a delight and an honour to be the CMS Division Chair for 2018/19. I am determined to use my year as Chair to make a positive difference for members of our division.

Our year started well with a particularly memorable AOM conference in Chicago. The Atlanta conference in 2017 had been both marred and invigorated by the challenge of Donald Trump and the response to his racist measures that were called for from the AOM. It was marred because attendance was down significantly, especially (and hardly surprisingly) in the CMS Division. But it was also invigorated because as a Division we were able to take a prominent stance against Trump's Executive order – a stance that in many senses led the way for the rest of the Academy to follow. In Chicago this year, numbers of conference attendees were at record levels across the whole academy – including CMS. At the same time, however, we had not forgotten the challenges represented by Trump and by populism more broadly. The issues we continue

to face were reflected, explicitly and implicitly, in the content of many of the PDWs and papers in the main program. Indeed, Chicago's Trump Tower – which stands close to the main conference hotels – represented a potent reminder of some of the wider societal challenges we need to continue to address as a CMS Division.

Our keynote speaker, Professor Nancy Harding, also directly addressed these challenges. She spoke eloquently and movingly of her own family, and about her experiences of growing up in a mining community in South Wales. Many of her brothers and sisters and other close family continue to live in the area, some working in minimum-wage jobs. The insights she gained from her background – an unusual one for a management school professor – suggest new understandings of how we might resist the sorts of values that Trump in the USA and Brexit in the UK have crystallized. She also illustrated the dangers of pigeon-holing individuals and their beliefs. People's attitudes are much more



complex and multi-faceted – even when they come from areas where voting patterns suggest strong support for Trump or Brexit – than some might imagine. The talk ended with Nancy inviting two colleagues to join her to give their own perspectives on these issues. The inclusivity of this pre-planned move was entirely in line with the mood of her talk. It was altogether unsurprising therefore that she received a spontaneous standing ovation at the end of the address; unsurprising, even though I personally cannot recall another conference where the keynote speaker received such an enthusiastic response.

Among the challenges facing us now as a Division is to find ways of providing more support to CMS scholars outside the AOM conference itself. It is clear that many of those who most need support – such as doctoral students and early ca-



*Professor Nancy Harding, Keynote Speaker*



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*Dr Ajnesh Prasad and Professor Banu Özkazanç-Pan, Invited by Professor Nancy Harding*

reer researchers in schools where CMS is marginal or even treated with active hostility – are not being granted funding to attend the AOM conference. So we need to look at the ways in which we currently spend our finances (most of which currently go on social events at the conference). It would be good to find the wherewithal to offer people whose employers won't pay for them to attend at least some opportunities to come to future AOM conferences. Beyond the conference, this coming year also presents us with new opportunities. These include a new technology platform that will allow members to connect with each other and engage in debates and discussions that currently take place at conferences or via emails – Connect@AOM – which will be adopted in the coming months. I see this development as a real opportunity to provide all our members, but especially doctoral students and early career researchers, with the kinds of encouragement and intellectual stimulation that we can all benefit from.

In sum, the year ahead represents challenges, but with these challenges comes new opportunities to (re)define ourselves as CMS members, to enact our values as a community of critical scholars, and to continue our engagement with the critical issues of our time. I will be delighted to hear from members and prospective members their feedback on what we do as a Division and their ideas for further change and development.

