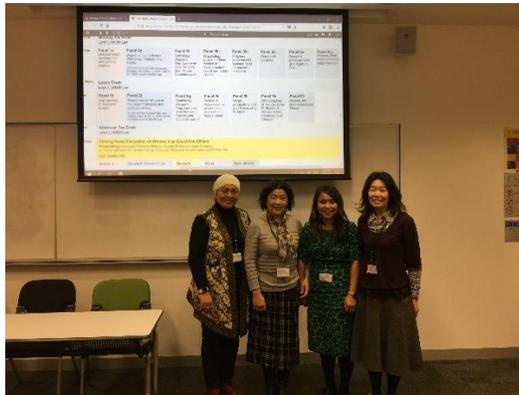


## Women in Asia Conference 2019 - our experience

By Anita Dewi, Rheny Pulungan, Ayako Hatta and Di Pin Ouyang

On 21-23 June 2019, we (Anita, Rheny, Ayako and Di Pin) attended the Women in Asia Conference 2019 at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. A library panel was held on the final day of the conference, where we presented, promoted and shared information about the collections held in the Asian Collections of the National Library of Australia and in Monash University Library's rich Japanese and Indonesian collections relating to Women in Asia, as well as the librarians' expertise in the Library. The panel presentation was well attended and received. One of the interesting questions put forward by a high profile professor researching Women in Asia was about our feelings as librarians and library staff working on Asian Studies in our institutions. In each individual response, we agreed that our expertise and knowledge in Asian Studies actually facilitates our ability to fulfill our roles, including in subject areas that are not strictly within the Asian Studies.



*From left to right: Dr Anita Dewi, Ayako Hatta, Di Pin Ouyang, Dr Rheny Pulungan*

In addition to the library panel where we presented our papers, we attended the Early Career Workshop (ECR). In the workshop we could see the approach taken by ECRs and academics' to the demand to prove social impact and (national) benefit to academic service and leadership, building international networks and finding time for life. Seeing how these pressures and characteristics are viewed from the academics' perspective gave us insights into how we, as library staff, can provide support and collaboration through library researcher engagement activities.



*Early Career Workshop*

We also attended a number of interesting panels on the second and third days of the conference. We all went to different sessions so we could pool our learnings. Anita attended panels on gendered political styles and identities; women, the internet and social media; and staging women's voices in disaster and conflict areas in Indonesia.

Rheny attended a number of panels focusing on women and the legal profession in Asia. Across Asia, the legal profession and the judiciary have undergone major changes since the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. This includes changes in the structure and size of courts, judicial reform and changes in legal practice, including the role of women in the legal profession and the judiciary in Asia. Two main speakers, Judge Saitip Sukatipan (Thailand) and Judge Selma Alaras (the Philippines) presented a new comparative context exploring the position and influence of women in the legal profession, and the ongoing barriers and limitations to women's participation in it.

Meanwhile, Ayako attended the panel "Social media and gendered participation", which discussed the dominance of white males presenting at the teachers conferences in Japan, and how few presentations were by female teachers due to their lack of confidence in presenting in front of the male audience. Social media and the internet have been utilised to encourage and empower women in their field to support and champion other women. It was also pointed out how important it was to add males as allies in these gender issues. Ayako also attended the panel "Women's movements- challenging patriarchy" that raised the issue of women in the marriage system in Japan. The current family registration system and law in Japan does not allow separate surnames for married couples.

Di attended several interesting and stimulating presentations and strongly felt the conference has been a very good place to learn many research trends such as the gendering populism in Asia, and the role of women in the legal profession in Asia in an era of anti-elitism. Aunty Maxine Ryan of La Perouse Land Council Representative welcomed over 150 delegates from 14 countries, followed by a short speech from each WIAC Committee member. The conference was wrapped up with a fantastic keynote speech presented by Associate Professor Tarini Bedi on "*Bodies that do! Bodies that speak!*" offering the delegates an interesting position on body politics and political militancy. She suggested that attention to body politics and embodiment could help us understand connections between populism and electoral

politics and the production of gendered political authority for women who compete for elections at the lowest levels of electoral democracies.

For Di it was a great opportunity to interact and engage with scholars, to learn, exchange, and network with delegates in the field of women in Asian Studies.



*From left to right: Opening day and keynote speech presented by Associate Professor Tarini Bedi*

The conference was also one of those where we found participants were very supportive of each other. We definitely learned a lot from them and are looking forward to implementing what we have learned from both the workshop and conference in our day-to-day work!