On Saturday 20 August, ANU hosted a highly successful symposium on the theme of ‘Working for Women: experiences, relationships, and cultural representation in pre-modern Europe’, which attracted over 55 participants.

Throughout the day participants were stimulated by excellent papers on topics ranging from 12th-century Latin love letters to revolutionary France. Delegates also heard from some very distinguished speakers, including Professor Constant Mews, Director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology at Monash University, who spoke on Thomas Aquinas and Catherine of Siena. Both he and Professor Margaret Jolly from the ANU’s School of Culture, History and Language in the College of Asia and the Pacific later provided a thoughtful and stimulating response at the conclusion of the day, drawing together the themes of the symposium and commenting enthusiastically about the diversity of medieval and early modern history at the ANU and in Australia.

In addition to hearing from excellent speakers, participants were treated to a wonderful lunch along with an impromptu change of venue from the AD Hope Conference Room to the Manning Clark Theatre, after a multicultural music festival unexpectedly began in the courtyard outside the AD Hope Building!

Fortunately, participants seemed happy to get some fresh air and didn’t mind the walk between venues!

The event was supported by the College of Arts and Social Sciences, the School of History, the School of Cultural Inquiry, and the ANU Gender Institute as part of its new initiative to encourage activities on gender issues. We’d also like to thank Carolyn Strange, who as head of the History node of the Gender Institute provided the official welcome and stayed throughout the day to listen to all of the papers.

We were particularly pleased that the event drew people from Sydney, Armidale, Melbourne and Tasmania, along with those closer to home from the ANU and Canberra’s cultural institutions and the wider public.

Thanks to all those who attended and made the day a success.

- Merridee Bailey, Tania Colwell, Julie Hotchin and Sarah Randles