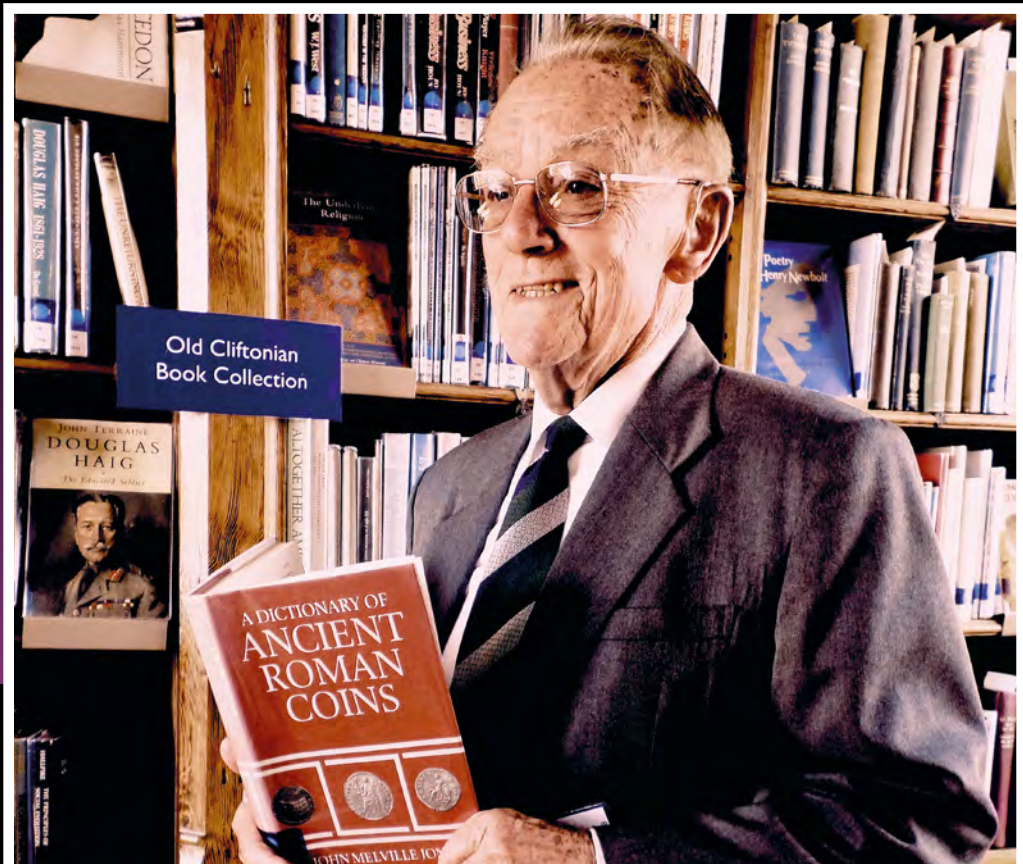


Volume 30

# Journal of the Numismatic Association of Australia



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# President's Report

With COVID-19 in its second year, the NAA is looking to rebadge itself to adapt to the rapidly changing environment. Together with this special issue of the Journal we have already embarked on a new approach to increase our online presence; our website is in the process of being revamped and there will be a return to annual publication of the Association's journal (mainly online). We will publish the standard range of articles every even year, and every other year produce a special volume of which this is the first. We will replace the face-to-face biennial conference by online webinars in the first instance (and then progress to more conference-like activities) and hold the Annual General Meeting and Council/Executive meetings online.

I am grateful to Distinguished Professor Lee Brice of Western Illinois University for co-editing with Dr Gil Davis this special volume on numismatics in the education context. It has been a pleasure having Professor Brice working with the NAA to produce a volume of international importance. It goes to the standing of our Association and Australian numismatics that we can attract such high-profile numismatists from around the world to contribute as they have.

Our next volume will be part of the standard cycle for which we take submissions at any time, and already have some under consideration. If you have an interesting piece that you would like to see published, either new material or an original observation on existing work, then please submit your article which will then be placed into the reviewing process.

Following the AGM (held online last October) the centre of gravity of the NAA Executive has moved from Perth to Victoria, with Jonathan Cohen and Lyn Bloom stepping down as Secretary and Treasurer respectively, replaced by Darren Burgess and Philip Richards. I continue as President, Richard O'Hair as Vice President and Gil Davis as Managing Editor.

The Executive are having regular ZOOM meetings to jump-start the NAA's plunge into the new world. As an easy step towards online conferences we are looking to mount webinars mid-year with topics that should have wide appeal, one on the preservation and conservation of coins, a second on grading Australian coins both for the novice and for the more experienced collector looking to submit items to Grading Authorities.

We continue to enjoy sponsorship at a sustainable level, with Noble Numismatics (Gold), Coinworks and Downies (Silver), Drake Sterling, Mowbray Collectables, Sterling & Currency and Vintage Coins & Banknotes (Bronze) all contributing to ensure the Association's continued success. Membership is being maintained, and with the contribution by sponsors and members, the Association is able to function in these difficult times.

I am appreciative of the support of Council and other NAA members, and in particular our Secretary, Darren Burgess, and Treasurer, Philip Richards, who are pivotal in the running of the Association, and our Managing Editor, Gil Davis, for his ongoing work with the journal. On behalf of the NAA I thank both Jonathan Cohen and Lyn Bloom for their excellent contribution to the Association, and our auditor Mona Loo who has worked through the financial statements and associated material in forensic detail.

**Professor Walter R. Bloom**

President, NAA

[www.numismatics.org.au](http://www.numismatics.org.au)

9<sup>th</sup> April 2021

# About the Numismatic Association of Australia Inc

The Numismatic Association of Australia was founded in the early 1980s and incorporated in Victoria (A0024703Z) in 1992. It is the peak body for numismatics in Australia with seven sponsoring societies around Australia and New Zealand and a direct (individual) membership both national and international. The Association has four main functions:

- Promote the interests of numismatics in Australia. It brings together collectors, hobbyists and academic scholars in a shared love of anything to do with coins, banknotes, medals, tokens and numismatic paraphernalia.
- Biennial conference. This major event rotates through different States. Papers are presented by invited keynote speakers and others with sessions on ancient through to modern numismatics.
- Journal. The annual publication of the Association features a range of articles, approximately half on Australian and New Zealand topics, and the remainder from elsewhere, but especially on the ancient world. The journal has an esteemed editorial board and submissions are double-blind peer reviewed. It is published in hardcopy and online with open access and has a wide international readership. Every second year, it will be publishing a special edition on a specific topic.
- Website – <https://numismatics.org.au/>. This is the public forum of the Association hosting numismatic news, events, awards, conference details and the journal.

## How you can help

- **Become a member**. If you are interested in numismatics in Australia and want to see it survive into the future and prosper, then support your national Association. It cannot function without members and you will be part of a community that shares your passion. The cost is only \$25 per year.
- **Be involved**. The Association runs on a voluntary basis. Anything you can do to help would be greatly appreciated and there is a range of roles and tasks.
- **Make a donation**. If you really want to help secure the future of numismatics in Australia, donate to the Association; small or large, every bit helps.
- **Support the advertisers**. The advertisers do their best to help us and, in these precarious times, where would we be without them?

## Interested?

Contact Darren Burgess, [secretary@numismatics.org.au](mailto:secretary@numismatics.org.au), for any further information.



# Teaching evidence use and interpretation with coins<sup>1</sup>

Lee L. Brice and Theodora B. Kopestonsky

## Abstract

*Due to the difficulty in integrating material culture, classes taught about the ancient world usually rely on literary and, occasionally, epigraphic sources. Students get the impression that for ancient history, texts are the only, or the most important sources. Yet, material culture is a significant component, sometimes the sole source, of our knowledge about the past. By adding material culture to the curriculum, students tangibly engage with the past, encounter another type of evidence, and learn critical analysis and argument skills. This article presents several versions of a coin-based material culture assignment designed for use in large or small classes.*

## Keywords

[analytical skills] [coin] [coin iconography] [historical evidence] [material culture] [numismatic methodology] [pedagogy] [student-centered learning]

## Introduction

A consistently difficult aspect of teaching the ancient world is integrating material culture—artefacts—into the classroom. Students often use literary sources in classes on the ancient world and may even encounter inscriptions, such as the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. When students consider how we know what we think we know about the ancient world they often get the impression that for Greek and Roman history texts are the only or the most important sources we use. But material culture is an important component of our knowledge about the past.<sup>2</sup> Often it is our only source other than the archaeological traces seen on sites. Yet, outside classes in archaeology or art history, material culture hardly exists and even in those classes where it is customary content it is often necessarily limited to images on a screen. Bringing material culture into the classroom is valuable not only for presenting another type of evidence, but it also stimulates student engagement with tangible objects while teaching invaluable critical

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1 Versions of this project were presented at the Dupage County Social Studies Conference in Naperville Illinois and the AAH annual meeting in Champaign-Urbana Illinois. We are grateful to conference organisers and audience members for their insightful comments. We also thank Frank L. Holt and Andrea Moore, who read drafts of this article, as well as the anonymous peer reviewers of JNAA. All the comments contributed to improving the final article. Most importantly, we thank our students in Macomb, Illinois, and Knoxville, Tennessee, without whom this article and assignment would not have been possible.

2 For a recent discussion with bibliography see Dyer 2021.



analysis and argument skills. This article presents several versions of a coin-based material culture assignment, designed for use during classes large or small.

Students are often unfamiliar with material culture – both what it is, its value as evidence, and how we employ it. This problem is particularly pronounced in so-called “general-survey” classes in which many of the students are not specialising in history, ancient studies, or archaeology and have little or no familiarity with history as a subject, much less the ancient world or the methodologies we employ to understand the past. Students often struggle with understanding architectural plans, strange objects, unfamiliar artistic styles, and confusing fragmentary remains. Regardless of our students’ background, part of our task as instructors is demonstrating to them all how we use evidence to explore the past. Also, many students are tactile learners—they tend to learn and retain information better when they can hold and manipulate objects connected with the culture and history they study. Additionally, bringing material culture into the classroom can increase student interest in the material and excite them about learning.

While source documents and literature offer an entry-point to students studying the past, material culture remains critical to understanding it. Yet using it effectively in a class can be challenging and intimidating for students and instructors alike. An instructor wishing to integrate material culture finds a few initial speedbumps. The wide variety of types of material culture surviving from the past (e.g., weapons, jewellery, pottery, coins, etc.) provides a surfeit of choices that can be overwhelming in-class planning. There is also the need to present proper methodology to exploit these items effectively as evidence for the past. Finally, there is the problem of availability. Some programs have museums nearby and a fortunate few have artefacts or high quality replicas readily available for handling during class, but these are the extreme minority of programs and fragile or tiny artefacts are not so effective in large classes. Photographs are helpful, ubiquitous, and often affordable but they are distant and two-dimensional. Casts can be inexpensive but require space to store and must be transported. No wonder most instructors find it difficult to bring material culture into the classroom.

Coins provide superb tools for bringing material culture and how we use it as evidence into classes of various sizes and backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> They are a common artefact from many societies in the present and past and one with which current students are already familiar. Unlike so many historical artefacts, there is no need to explain what a coin is or how it usually functioned in the past – as a monetary instrument and carrier of signals of identity. Coins still function in much of the world in the same way they did in the past. This near ubiquity also means that they are not tied to a specific culture. They are a diverse type of material culture. Modern coins are readily available in many places around the world and smaller denominations are generally affordable, and therefore

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3 In addition to the articles in this volume, see also McIntyre, Dunn, and Richardson 2020.

useful for exploring diverse cultures and societies. Coins are small but not fragile; therefore, they are not necessarily a burden to transport and share in a classroom setting as something like armour or a glass vessel could be.

Numismatics need not be a difficult topic to introduce to a class, regardless of student background. With its specialised vocabulary, mixture of financial and artistic qualities, and detail-oriented methodology, numismatics can appear intimidating to some instructors and students unaccustomed to the field. If we are expecting students to absorb the specialisation in a semester-long history survey course then fear would be an understandable reaction. But neither teachers nor students need acquire the skills to become specialists. Since the goal is to introduce material culture and have students consider how scholars can use it as evidence there is no need for methodological depth. We have found that with a short crash course (less than a class period) on coinage, numismatic terms, and methods, students have sufficient information to consider, interrogate, and discuss coins as evidence. During the recent spate of online teaching, I recorded the lecture and posted it online making it possible for students to review it before class and as often as they wished on their own time.<sup>4</sup> There are also supporting materials in the public domain available online to students.<sup>5</sup> Students can draw upon these materials in addition to some helpful articles cited in the bibliography for additional material.

Bringing a piece of material culture from any period into the classroom and presenting sound methodology is not the limit of introducing how we explore the past, since scholars often need to exercise their imagination in interpreting artefacts. Whether it is a coin, ear scoop, figurine, or any other artefact, scholars often exercise imagination in the process of trying to understand it and how it fits into a culture. We may understand how a coin functioned in a particular period in the past, but we also need to identify the coin's types and attributes and consider what they mean in the culture, if anything.<sup>6</sup> Once we have interpreted the types, we can use the evidence they provide to piece together aspects of the past.

While it is helpful to cultivate students' historical imaginations, this must also be tempered by the limits of the evidence. For example, a metallic coin indicates something of the mint's access to raw materials and the technology for fabrication (e.g., struck or cast), but does not suggest how the metals were mined or processed. Students

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4 Lee L. Brice created the original, long version of this assignment presented here. Subsequently, he shared it with Theodora B. Kopestonsky who modified the short and simplified version using Teaching Assistants in a large archaeology survey course. This article is a result of collaborative discussions about the assignment. Specific modifications by Kopestonsky are noted by name, but otherwise Brice acts as the singular first-person voice as the author of the original idea.

5 E.g., Australian Centre for Ancient Numismatic Studies (ACANS), "An introduction to ancient numismatics"; American Numismatic Studies, "Introduction to terms and methods."

6 See for examples, Holt 2016 and 2021; Williams 2007; Noreña 2011; Yarrow 2020.

need opportunities to exercise their imagination within the boundaries of evidence analysis. We have developed and tested assignments that allow instructors to effectively introduce material culture into the classroom, teach basic methodology and provide students an opportunity to build analytical and interpretive skills.<sup>7</sup> These are the kinds of experiences that will excite students and which they will need regardless of their major or future path.

## The assignment

The need to bring material culture into the classroom can be met in the assignment we are presenting. We recognise that in order to be effective it needs to be flexible and easy to implement. Since instructors have different requirements for time and enrolment there are several versions included. Although our discussion is based on coins from modern Canada and the United States, this assignment is flexible enough to be adapted for use with coins or tokens (or some bills) from nearly any modern or historical state that issued coins. Perhaps most importantly given the current requirements for online teaching, the various versions of the assignment can be created, posted, and completed online by students.<sup>8</sup>

The basic components of the assignment are fairly straightforward. The project context is “set” in the distant future and involves results of an imagined archaeological dig (Appendices 1-3). Students are to imagine themselves as archaeologists or historians working in a future lab. They have received a packet (hoard) of coins that were recovered in an archaeological dig on a planet identified as Terra.<sup>9</sup> Their assignment is to analyse the hoard and determine as much as they can about the civilisation that minted (most of) these coins, based only on the information on the coins in the hoard. They do not have to discover the “actual” society that minted the coins, merely one supported by the evidence in the hoard.

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7 Sienkewicz 2013. The assignment we are presenting is an example of student-centered learning, sometimes connected with authentic learning or experiential learning. On student-centered learning there are numerous resources online, e.g., Oneil and McMahon 2005. On authentic learning and experiential learning see Stein, Isaacs and Andrews 2004; and Kolb 2014.

8 Online use of the coin assignments presented here is less than ideal because of the loss of tactile experience, but we recognise adjustments needed to be made during the pandemic and in larger surveys, on which see below. More about online numismatic assignments designed to be online can be found in McIntyre, Dunn, and Richardson 2020; Orchard and McIntyre this volume.

9 Because the “hoard” is supposed to have been recovered from an archaeological dig, the assignment is not designed with paper money in mind, but if an instructor wants to use modern currency that is printed on plastic-like substances that might survive burial (e.g., recent Canadian bills) then those can function too, or the hoard could have been recovered in a sealed context in which paper money survived. There is flexibility in the hoard contents. When creating a “hoard”, consider the end goals; what ideas do you want to be emphasized. Be sure to include diverse coins so students have ample options to deliberate and answer these problems. For example, to solve the problem of dates it helps to have a coin or bill that has bicentennial, two hundred years, or some other indication of date. Tailor your hoard to your own national coinage and objectives.

The assignment's goal would seem like something they could look up on the internet, but there is a necessary catch. The students are instructed to forget, for the duration of the assignment, everything they already know about the history, society, religion, and political organisation of the modern society whose coins they are examining. This condition is what requires them to use their imagination, but also their careful analysis. The students are told that previous archaeological missions and future scholarly research have correctly identified the animals, plants, and objects like cars, skyscrapers, planes, bridges, or ships on the coins; therefore, they know what an eagle, horse, sailboat, or race car is on the coins. But they do not know the identity of any individuals or states who are not explicitly identified on the coins. Similarly, if they already know the language(s) on a coin then they can read it. Since the original assignment started at an American university it assumed the students could read English, but not all students can translate the Latin on Canadian and American coins. How the coins were recovered or arrived in the student's lab is not germane to the assignment. The set of coins is important, so they must examine all the coins to draw conclusions. The parameters should be clear in the included assignment guidelines (Appendices 1-3).

Imagination is encouraged, but any conclusions must fit the evidence of the coins. Hoards are pre-set by the instructor to include coins that will provide diversity of coin types and denominations. Some information common to most coins, such as minting authority (ethnic) or whether the four-digit combinations on coins are dates, has to be interpreted by the students exercising their powers of reason, unless the instructor chooses to give them this information. For example, if the students want to argue that the words "dollar" and "cent" on the coins they received in past iterations indicate denominations of the same monetary system, they have to show how they came to that conclusion. Students need only draw conclusions supported by the evidence and not the correct "actual" interpretation of the society minting the coins, giving them flexibility in exploring possible interpretations.

Since imagination of the sort necessary for this assignment may need to be stimulated among students accustomed to strictly analytical assignments with objectively correct answers, I assign David Macaulay's book *Motel of the Mysteries* as additional reading in the longer version of the assignment.<sup>10</sup> It is a humorous treatment of a future archaeology dig that in part satirises Howard Carter at Tutankhamun's tomb. But Macaulay's work is also stimulating along the lines of this assignment since he uses numerous line drawings to illustrate how archaeologists might draw insights and conclusions from material culture with which they are unfamiliar. An additional bonus of Macaulay's book is that it shows how difficult and deceptive artefacts can be when it comes to

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10 Macaulay 1979. Results have been better in the long version of the assignment when Macaulay is part of the assignment. In order to reduce costs to students we have made sure the book is available in the library reserve collection.

interpretation. Like the artefacts in his book, the information carried by coins can be extremely misleading. American coins, for example, carry English and Latin legends which suggests the United States is at least bilingual, but few Americans speak or even read Latin. Through its light approach it encourages students to think about the process and its pitfalls, as well as use their imagination in interpretation.

The methodological aspects of the assignment provide students with opportunities for some hands-on experience with numismatics and the nature of professional research. We do not necessarily expect them to use numismatic methodology perfectly, but they need to use the correct terminology in reporting their findings – obverse, reverse, type, attribute, field, legend, and ethnic. When working with larger hoards in the longer version of the assignment, they must also provide an inventory of the hoard, but in order to facilitate this part of the project a sample with the correct formatting is provided. In upper-level classes, I spend some class time introducing numismatics and coinage as well as the terms and their appropriate use. I usually ask students in all classes to view the assignment video the night before and think about the coins with which they are familiar. A key idea they need to understand is that no feature appears on a coin by accident, and some aspects can be extremely small. Some classes have more opportunity to explore the language of numismatics since the number of coins in the hoard, the amount of time they have with them, and the end result of the assignment is set by the instructor and is dependent on the needs of the class material.

### **Hoard assignment–long version**

Upper-level classes on Greek or Roman history, archaeology, or civilisation are a location where the students and the course material both benefit from having more time to work on the coins and produce written papers (Appendix 1). In this instance the hoard consists of more coins of diverse denominations and often there are a few examples from a neighbouring state in order to stimulate students to think about the contrasts and relationships between the states. This version of the assignment has repeatedly functioned well in classes of 12-35 students.

Students tackle the assignment alone or in teams of up to four persons. One advantage of teams is that there are more student brains to work on the problem. Another advantage of teams is that they can divide the discussion into four components. Teams of four have each member choose to focus on different historical specialisations – political, economic, social, and artistic – allowing the team to provide broader coverage. The larger number of coins gives the teams room to explore iconography. Although the version provided by each student in the team is graded individually, the papers need to present a consistent overall interpretation of the minting society and the meaning

of the coin types and iconographic program.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, when students work alone in this long version, they may choose one of the four specialisations and thus avoid getting overwhelmed. The hoard is available both physically in the instructor's office for examination by appointment and scanned as two images (reverse and obverse) which students may access online and enlarge for close examination (Figs. 1 and 2). These images have proven sufficient to keep the hoard available for online teaching without diminishing the quality of student work or the accessibility for group work. During this longer version, students have several weeks for analysis and writing up their reports as papers. More recently, students (both individual and teams) had the option of presenting their interpretations in a video posted online for the class as a whole. We anticipated that future assignments will draw more heavily on multimedia presentations.



Figs. 1 and 2 – Images of the obverses and reverses of coins in a hoard provided to students for a long version of the assignment.

### **Hoard assignment – short versions**

The coin hoard assignment can still be effective in large general studies survey classes, whether held as a large group or split into TA-led discussion sections. We have tested the

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11 To encourage actual rather than imagined competition I usually add an incentive by offering extra credit or a treat for the best team interpretation (based on originality consistent with the evidence).

assignment in classes during a World History survey with groups of up to 45 students, as well as in a large introductory Greek and Roman archaeology course in which students regularly met in smaller 22-person discussion sections with graduate teaching assistants (TAs). In these scenarios the goal is usually to get students to handle material culture, think about what we can learn from it, and explore methodologies including analysis and interpretation of artefacts.

One in-class short version supplements prior in-class introduction with the coin assignment video, which is available online beforehand. Upon arriving to class, the students are divided into groups of 4-6 people sitting together. After the instructor briefly explains the assignment and the parameters (Appendix 2), each group receives a packet (hoard) of up to six coins in which there is some diversity. The group then works through the hoard quickly (20-25 minutes) trying to learn as much as they can about the society that minted the coins. Teams come up with their own strategies for working together. The instructor is present to answer questions and keep everyone on track. Each team must write down its conclusions in two copies, one of which is given to the instructor before presentation to the class. Each team presents its findings to the class and must stick to the findings it has presented to the instructor. Once complete, the class may vote on the best set of findings. Afterwards, students write up a short response discussing an aspect of the assignment such as the strengths and weaknesses of using artefacts.

Larger general survey classes delivered online or which have smaller discussion sessions can still use the short assignment format, albeit simplified. In this version (Appendix 3), the assignment can be completed in one class session with small groups of 2-3 students in discussion sections led by TAs, through breakout rooms, or modified for individual work. Starting in a similar fashion as before, the instructor offers a short lecture (or video when online) providing background information about ancient coins, terminology, context, and role, but highlighting the valuable iconographic data. Turning to three modern coins (e.g., U.S. state quarters), the instructor explains the parameters of the assignment, models the methods of interpreting coin imagery through the use of this sample hoard and asking pointed questions with full class involvement to spark imaginations, before offering possible interpretations. The same basic assignment context of an archaeological lab remains. Then, the groups are provided with their own hoards (packets),<sup>12</sup> filled with five modern coins which they must analyse for information about the minting society. Students fill out a worksheet culminating in a

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12 In Kopestonsky's short version, the coins were selected so that the packets uniformly had at least one consistent theme such as the natural landscape, architecture, monuments, patterns, etc. to assist students in their interpretations. Instructors also can curate coins to emphasize different aspects or themes. For example, by selecting representations of only one gender or creating an equal distribution, students can be encouraged to discuss gender dynamics in society. A variety of denominations and coin sizes were chosen. Multiple different iterations of the hoard are possible with endless interpretations.

short interpretation explaining their reasoning (Appendix 3). Ultimately, the goal is the same, but more directed questions and visual analysis are emphasised here.

However, some general studies survey classes are simply too large for in-class groups to be practical, and may run without small discussion sections, or be run fully online. In these cases, the instructor assigns the coin assignment video and briefly presents during class the nature and parameters of the assignment. Then if there are no discussion sections, images of a small hoard or several small hoard images are distributed online to the class members who analyse the hoard alone outside class and write a short paper outlining their findings due in the next class period. This format has been found to be effective without losing class time, though it sacrifices the tactile component of the exercise and is, therefore, less desirable. Nevertheless, the learning objective can still be achieved.

## **Conclusion**

How we know what we think we know about the past is an important part of teaching about the past. Following through on this aspect of instruction includes sharing our sources, presenting our methods, and acknowledging their limits. Providing students with literary and epigraphic texts and discussing how to read critically and carefully for historical details is a common means of giving students a chance to experiment with our sources and the process. They build some skills and insights into the scholarly process. Documents are accessible and therefore pragmatic. But these efforts, while entirely appropriate, are open to improvement.

The focus on documents omits a large category of sources – material culture. These include all kinds of objects representing many aspects of life and events in the past. While material culture is not entirely unbiased, it can shed light on facets of the past that documentary sources omit or gloss over. Indeed, it is often our only historical evidence for entire swathes of history and culture. The methodologies for studying these objects are also an aspect of the field to which students should be exposed. Material culture is necessarily tactile in a way documents are not. Students who have a chance to handle artefacts can benefit in various ways from the experience. They tend to get excited about the learning, retain more information about it, and develop additional analytical skills they need to thrive.

Bringing material culture into the classroom provides numerous benefits but it is generally thought to be impractical because of the associated difficulties. Artefacts are often inaccessible in a classroom setting for a variety of reasons not limited to availability, expense, or class size. Methodologies for interrogating material culture properly can seem daunting, which contributes to limiting engagement with artefacts during class. As a result, students usually remain unexposed to material culture, especially in large



general-studies survey classes. But we have shown above that this attitude of exclusion is unnecessary.

We have presented here an assignment which is designed to bring material culture directly into the classroom. Since instructors' and students' needs differ, the assignment is designed in three formats depending on class size and structure. The formats can work together in the same program. We have observed instances in which students who encountered the short version of the assignment in a survey class and later the long version in an upper-level course have demonstrated greater engagement with not only the assignment, but the course material generally and superior retention of the related information. The appendices include handouts we have used to guide the assignments. With these materials readers can adapt the assignment to their courses and needs.

During the 17 years this assignment has been tested, we have found it continues to pay dividends in all kinds of classes and all students, not just history or archaeology majors. With an assignment such as this, students develop their analytical skills while also engaging their creativity, a much underused, but important tool in a changeable world where innovation triumphs. Learning to see and describe details, employing clear and understandable language, and explaining and supporting arguments with evidence are all valuable abilities that can be employed universally in research, writing, and speech. These skills are essential for any job outside of university or college and are not just limited to history. Moreover, this assignment is a chance for students to have a little professional "practice". Today, professionals, just as our students, regularly work in groups, share ideas, and communicate in order to be successful. While the focus here has been on coins, the skills used in this assignment are transferable across disciplines. This interdisciplinarity reinforces why historical studies and interpreting historical evidence of all kinds are useful to all students.

## Authors

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## Appendix 1: The long hoard assignment

### Sources and methodology- numismatics: coin hoard project

Historians of all periods must rely on a variety of types of evidence. One of the skills I strive to teach in upper-level classes is the use of evidence, especially material culture. Evidence is a fundamental component of what historians do and how we do it. Documentary evidence (letters, books, texts, etc.) may be the type with which you are most familiar, but there are many other types including photographs and other forms of art, inscriptions, papyri, architecture, material culture in general, and more. Material culture is made up of artefacts of all types, usually recovered by archaeologists. The older the time period on which an historian works, the more likely they rely on material culture for evidence. I devised this exercise as a means to introduce you to some of the strengths and weaknesses of using material culture as sources.

Numismatics is the study of all aspects of coinage and money. Such study can vary from examination of artistic style to statistical analysis of use and distribution of money. While numismatics can be an aid to various specialists including historians, archaeologists, and art historians, it remains a distinct field with its own techniques and specialisations. One of the most significant sources of data for numismatists is the coin hoard. In the fields of archaeology and history, hoards are assemblages of valuable articles (*e.g.*, money, jewellery, or documents) purposely gathered, usually stored or hidden, and later recovered. For example, if you hide under the floorboard a box that contains something of value (*nb*: value is defined by the hoarder), then you are creating a hoard. Once you begin filling a piggybank, it becomes a hoard. If you were excavating a site and found a container with four coins and an earring in it, that would constitute a hoard, as would a larger sample of hundreds or thousands of valuables. Typically, we find hoards because the original owners lost them. Such losses occurred when the owners fled the original site without recovering their wealth or died without exposing the hoard to survivors, heirs, etc.

Because of their potential breadth over time or space or both, hoards (and the coins in them) are useful sources of information for understanding a variety of facets of history including: trade and economy (weight standards, denominations or fractions, metals, purity of silver/gold, origins and distribution of coins, occupations, trading partners, etc.); society (fashions, status, gender roles, literacy, individual wealth, occupations, language, stratification, etc.); religion (deities, temples, themes, rituals, symbols, meaning, dogma, etc.); political organisation (stability, wealth, development, international relations, etc.); and art (portraits, iconography, architecture, monuments, style, colours, etc.). As a result of the accidental nature of hoards, they can be a fascinating mixture of material accumulated over time and space.

*The assignment is as follows:*

Familiarise yourself with the Numismatic Terms and Methods handout, especially the sections on hoards and on archaeology. You should also view the Coin Hoard Project video posted on the website and review the book *Motel of the Mysteries*, available on reserve in the library. You must analyse the supplied hoard of coins to determine a variety of facts about the civilisation that produced the hoard. Follow the General and Specific parameters that follow.

*General assignment parameters:*

First, you must choose whether to work alone or be part of a team. No matter which you choose, everyone will only be graded on their own work. The advantage of working as a team is that you have up to four minds working on the problem – figure out as much as you can about the civilisation that produced this hoard. Those of you who choose to work in a team must post your team roster (up to four) in an online discussion post. I will meet with any teams or contractors to discuss any odd peculiarities or questions. The advantage of working alone is (obvious in a pandemic) you do not have to try to interact with anyone else. It is up to you which path you choose.

Second, you (and your associates, if any) must imagine yourself as an archaeological contractor (e.g., Indiana Jones or Lara Croft) or archaeological company (e.g., Pastwatch Inc) from a galaxy and time far, far away. You and your company have been chosen for your particular skills to complete this task. If you are completing this assignment alone then you must write your paper from the perspective of one of the following four specialisations (you should not try to write all four). If you are part of a team, then the team must divide that perspective across the team with only one member per one specialisation (a team may be less than four members):

1. Social History (analyse and explain societal/sociological concerns including but not limited to questions of status, iconography, hierarchy, gender roles, literacy, individual wealth, occupations, language, stratification, religion, spiritualism, belief systems, rituals, etc.).
2. Economic History (analyse and explain economic topics including but not limited to questions on topics like denominations, metals, origins and distribution of coins, fractions, trade, occupations, trading partners, technology, wealth, etc.).
3. Political History (analyse and explain historical topics including but not limited to historical record, political organisation, stability, wealth, development, international relations, technological development, etc.).

4. Art History (must analyse and explain artistic concerns, including but not limited to portraits, iconography, architecture, monuments, style, media, colours, fashion, fad, composition, symbology, techniques, etc.).

Imagine the star-date is well into the distant future. Your team has received the latest coin hoard recovered from the Terran planet, known in antiquity as Earth. Your (or your team's) mission (assignment) is to examine the hoard and see what conclusions you can draw, generally and specifically, about the civilisation in which the hoard was gathered; you must then write up a report reflecting your conclusions based on your specialised perspective. You and your team should critically examine and analyse the hoard and arrive at some conclusions (together if a team), but each member of the team must submit an individual report on one of the four specialisations of the hoard. The hoard, given the name and number "Terran Hoard, number 2020," contains 55+ items. Images of the hoard and its contents are on the website for your examination. Because of the importance of the Terran Hoard, the Director of Inter-Planetary Archaeology has made the stakes high indeed and your team is one of several that applied to examine the hoard. Contractors and teams are competing for an exclusive government contract for archaeological work and salvage rights on the planet as a whole (=bonus grade points); therefore, the stakes are high, and the separate teams must not work together. The hoard is so valuable each team must examine the hoard in isolation and so has no access to the internet other than the course website during the analysis and report writing phases of the project.

*Specific assignment parameters:*

- Declare yourself an individual contractor or join a team of four or fewer students.
- Each team must divide itself so that each team member is responsible for one of the four specialties listed above in the general assignment.
- Each contractor and team must produce, in addition to their report, one inventory of the entire hoard contents. The inventory does not count toward the six-page minimum for the assignment. This catalogue should be shared within the team and attached to the end of each report. The catalogue style should follow standards for the field (an example is posted online), but you should feel free to be more detailed than the example if you wish and if it will help.
- Each person must produce their own report on her or his assigned aspect of the hoard.
- Your individual report will discuss, in six or more pages, the civilisation that produced the hoard, focusing on your particular specialty. As guidance you can start by considering the facets of each specialty listed parenthetically above, but do not be constricted by my suggested sub-categories. For example, if your specialty is ART then you might examine the items in the hoard in terms of artistic style, fashion, and

iconography, but there are many other aspects of art that you might also consider as you proceed.

- Imagination and critical thinking are also significant skills in many careers, not just history; indeed, a recent government-business commission concluded there was a failure of imagination in schools and business. Think of this assignment as on-the-job training: exercise your imagination and critical thinking skills. While imagination is important you also want to make sure your explanation of the civilisation is supported by the evidence. For example, if you want to conclude that the four-digit combinations on all the coins in the hoard were annual dates then you need to find evidence in the coins to support that interpretation.
- The assignment is not asking you to figure out what is actually on these coins. Your conclusions about the civilisation are determined by your analysis and your creativity. You can be as imaginative as you want, but you are bound by the laws of physics, common-sense, and the evidence. You cannot exceed the available evidence (the hoard) and any conclusion must make sense given the evidence. E.g., if there is nothing in the coins to suggest the Terrans could breathe underwater then you should not conclude that they could do so.
- If you are part of a team, you will each present only your own individual final report to the director, but the reports of the team should reflect a consensus in overall reconstructions of the society that gathered the hoard. If you are working in a team then all team members' reports need to agree on the general particulars and parameters of the civilisation. It will stand out as an indication that the team did not work together if team reports do not share the same general conclusions. For example, if you as a group conclude that the portraits are of political leaders, then no one should draw opposing conclusions. Failure to reach consensus will have an adverse impact on individual grades within a team.
- External research is forbidden. Absolutely no external research is permitted. You must display the results of your critical thought process without recourse to search engines and other external resources. Besides, you are each supposed to be an expert so no extra research should be necessary.
- The Director expects authors to use the standard stylistic and grammatical requirements for all reports. Each report should be six or more pages long. Because these reports will be sent to the highest level of your field and perhaps presented publicly, clear and correct prose is required and will be a basis for evaluation. Do not use any images or coloured text in the report. There should be a cover sheet with your name, your company name, this class, and date of submission in the centre bottom of the page; this is the only place in the report where your name should appear. If you use any sources other than the hoard and term handout then you must include a bibliography.

- Because there are no absolute objective criteria, the Director will read each report and assign it a numerical evaluation based on a variety of factors including but not limited to: quality of the prose; the creativity of the analysis and conclusions, construction of the arguments, and completion of the assignment. The project grade for each student is based on the student's report alone and will not rely on the reports of other team members (if any) except in the case of academic violation.
- Two contractors or one team with the highest overall average paper grade will win the contract. The contract includes five points of extra credit. There is no runner-up award so guard your secrets well.
- Plagiarism, the use of another person's original works as your own, is not tolerated by the professional and academic communities and will constitute academic dishonesty. Violators will face the full consequences set forth by the institutional governing body (WIU).
- **Your report and inventory are due in the dropbox by the date assigned.** Don't forget to submit an inventory with your report.

**Because you need to use your imagination for this assignment there are certain ground rules about the present. Since this is supposed to be set in the future, you must assume the following as facts and presuppositions:**

- You know the inhabitants of Terra to be human, much like yourselves.
- You know the items in the hoard are coins and you are familiar with how money functioned as a unit of exchange, value, and identity in general in the period that produced the hoard though the specific kind of monetary units are unknown.
- For this exercise, assume you recognise and understand the English language and know that it was the dominant language in the region from which your hoard was probably recovered. You recognise Latin, French, and Spanish if you already know them right now. Do not use the internet as a universal translator. If you do not already know languages other than English, then there are still conclusions you can draw even without translating them.
- **Anything you already know about coins, iconography, political organisation and history of the United States of America must be forgotten or ignored for the duration of this assignment.** Your only source for analysis is the hoard. (e.g., some of the coins carry the legend "ONE DIME"; unless you can determine through examination of the coins themselves or the hoard as a whole what this means, then you cannot determine its meaning or significance). No internet searches for lost information.
- The hoard was recovered from an excavation on the barren planet Terra. Because of an accident in transport to the lab the hoard find spot is lost and the contents were in two crates. The hoard is assumed to be complete without later additions. The director has a few details on the probable recovery area.

- No element appears by accident on a coin (usually). Every word, image, letter, and feature are selected on purpose so you cannot ignore little details. If you are confused as to what I mean, then ask.
- As a result of previous work by future archaeologists, there are certain animals on the coins you can identify. You know what a horse, eagle, bison, fish, bear, sea gull, and other animals are, but not their actual significance to the places or persons identified on the coins. Similarly, plants are known to be plants such as laurel, olives, oak, grasses, tropical trees, etc., just not their significance as icons.
- We can also accept there are certain objects which other archaeologists from the future have identified for the coins. These known artefacts include race cars, buildings, bridges, spacecrafts, space suits, musical instruments and notes, arrows, clothing, pipes, guns, ploughs, roads, boats, and planes.
- Your additional knowledge base consists of what you have picked up in your class and the “Numismatic terms and methods” materials on the website. On the planet where your team is writing up the report you do not have access to sources of information other than the hoard.
- Since we do not have access to complex metallurgical facilities, you will have to guess what kind of metals make up the coins if that seems important to you. Do not hesitate to weigh them if you think it would be useful.
- Remember your audience. The Director is your audience and she also has access to the hoard; therefore, you do not need to spend valuable space describing each coin in detail. This is why an inventory is necessary.
- The numerous objects may seem like an enormous quantity, but you will find there is much duplication.
- For more information on numismatics, see the “Numismatic terms and methods” handouts and the Coin Project video posted for you.
- If something is odd or you are confused about anything regarding the assignment or the hoard, then ask the Director. She can meet with you via video conference; just ask for an appointment time.

## **Appendix 2: Short, in-class hoard assignment**

### *Numismatic methodology: coin hoard assignment*

As you may have noticed, coins are valuable sources of information. They tell you much if you can figure out how to ‘read’ them. Numismatics is the study of all aspects of coinage and money. Such study can vary from examination of artistic style to statistical analysis of use and distribution of money. A significant source of data for numismatists are coin hoards. In the fields of archaeology and history, hoards are assemblages of valuable articles (*e.g.*, money, jewellery, or documents) purposely hidden and later recovered. If you hide a box containing something of value under the floorboard, then you are creating a hoard. Numismatists tend to be most concerned with hoards of coins.



If you were excavating a site and found a container with four coins and an earring in it, that would constitute a hoard, as would a larger sample of hundreds or thousands of valuables. Typically, we find hoards because the original owners have lost them. This loss occurred when the owners fled the original site without recovering their wealth or died without exposing the wealth to survivors, heirs, etc. As a result of the accidental nature of hoards, they can be a fascinating mixture of material accumulated over time and space. Numismatists use data from coin hoards for the following purposes:

- Hoard data is invaluable for assigning dates to coin issues where the dating of some issues in a hoard is unknown, but other dates in the same hoard are known.
- Less often, information from hoards is used to date the archaeological site or at least assign a *terminus post quem* (“point after which” items were deposited) and/or *ante quem* (point before which”) to the site.

Because of their potential breadth over time or space or both, hoard date is a useful source of information for understanding a variety of facets of history including: trade and economy (weight standards, purity of silver/gold, origins and distribution of coins, occupations, etc.); society (fashions, status, gender roles, individual wealth, occupations, architecture, monuments, etc.); religion (deities, temples, themes, rituals, symbols, etc.); and political organisation (Government type, stability, wealth, development, international relations, etc.).

Your assignment is as follows:

Imagine that you and your associates are a team of archaeologists from a galaxy/time far, far away. Your team has been given a small coin hoard recovered from the planet Terra. Your team must analyse the entire sample of coins that you have and see what you can determine about the society that produced your hoard. Each team has a particular specialisation, be sure to focus on yours. Think of this as a puzzle. Use your collective imagination to solve the puzzle and devise a plausible and entertaining solution. By the way, the director of the Archaeological Guild will be visiting in 15-20 minutes to assess your team’s progress. You will present your findings to the entire department, and your team must find a consensus – all findings must be unanimous.

Assume the following facts and presuppositions:

- You know the inhabitants to be humans much like yourselves.
- For this exercise, assume you know how to read the English language and know that it was the dominant language in the region from which your hoard was recovered. You recognise Latin and other languages. If a member of your team knows foreign languages then fine.
- You have a reasonable grasp on the animals and many artefacts from the planet that appear on the coins.

- Since we do not have complex metallurgical facilities, then you will have to guess the metal makeup of the coins.

### Appendix 3: Short, larger class hoard assignment

#### Coinage Interpretation Exercise

Directions for Teaching Assistant:
<p><b>OVERVIEW:</b></p> <p>This week, we will be discussing Roman coins. While I have included coins in the lectures previously, this is the first time that we are going to focus on them. Students should have watched a video about how coins are produced before coming to class.</p>
<p><b>LECTURE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First, give some background about production, Roman coin denominations, terminology (obverse/reverse and legend), importance of coins (for dating purposes, economy/trade, &amp; details about culture), and types of information about culture provided through iconography (including events, rituals, customs, honours, architecture, symbols, valued qualities, and words/abbreviations).</li><li>• Then look at three modern quarters and systematically describe them, make general observations about connected images/themes, highlight what is important, and then with class involvement suggest an interpretation. The example three coins include on the reverse 1) detail of two faces from an over life-size sculpture, one of which has ropes hanging near the eye and some barrier fence near the lips (e.g. it's under construction), 2) a long-haired figure with a wreath in the hair, wearing a short-sleeved flowing garment, approaching a multi-tiered podium topped with five flags which is bracketed by trees, and 3) a landscape with mountains, central lake, and a pine forest framed by three thin tall leafy trees on either side. These images could suggest the elevation of nature in this culture, some sort of journey or quest, the placement and creation of a monument, pilgrimage to a sacred site or anything else they might suggest. The emphasis on the trees and stone could say something about the importance of the environment or perhaps the emphasis on the faces similar to the obverse may be referencing an important person of this culture. Play with this to give the students ideas. This lecture portion of class should be 10-15 minutes at most. You are modelling the exercise here.</li></ul>

**GROUP WORK:**

- Break the class up into groups of 2-3. Make sure they actually move their chairs so that they will be able to handle the material. Then pass out the worksheet and the small bag of coins to each group.
- Students should easily be able to do the examination portion of the exercise, but keep a look out for oversimplified descriptions. You may need to ask them to clarify the images and iconography they see. Be sure to reiterate the correct terminology especially obverse/reverse for the sides of the coins as you talk to the groups.
- Once the students begin the interpretation portion of the assignment, try (if you can) to spend a moment with each group to talk them through their thinking. Some may need help to think through their ideas. I put coins together in the “hoards” with overlapping/connecting imagery. Try to move them through the process of what is consistently represented, why that might be important, and what that might mean. A shorthand would be to ask them to list what they have and think about how those are connected or have them reorder the coins like a storyboard. Remind them that usually the scenes on the reverse are significant monuments, places, events, or symbols of the culture. They can be real or symbolic. We really just want them to think about the types of values/ideas/messages a culture sends through the coins.
- It does not matter if they are “right” (they can look up the coins afterward, if they want), I just want them to look closely at the coins. While archaeologists and numismatists recognise many things/events/places/concepts on coins and material culture, we regularly have to interpret a lot based on very little information.

Names of Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

## Coinage Interpretation Worksheet (20 points)

**Due Friday, Nov. 1 at end of class**

**Numismatics** is the study of all aspects of coinage and money. Such study can vary from examination of artistic style to statistical analysis of use and distribution of money. Because of their potential breadth over time or space or both, coins are useful sources of information for understanding a variety of facets of history including: trade and economy, society (fashions, status, gender roles, literacy, occupations, language, etc.), religion (deities, temples, themes, rituals, symbols, meaning, etc.); political organisation (stability, wealth, development, international relations, etc.); and art (portraits, iconography, architecture, monuments, style, colours, etc.).

Imagine the year is 2250. Your team of 2-3 members has received the latest coins excavated from a deposit, a hoard, recovered from the Terran planet, known in antiquity as Earth. You do know that the inhabitants were humans like you. Your team's project mission is to examine these coins and see what conclusions you can draw, generally and specifically, about the civilisation in which the coins were gathered. **Anything you know about the iconography and the history of the United States & Europe should be forgotten for the duration of this assignment.** For this exercise, assume you know how to read the English language and know that it was the dominant language in the region from which your hoard was recovered. You recognise Latin and other languages. If a member of your team knows foreign languages then fine; if not, then not a problem.

### Part I: Examination

1. Examine the coins assigned to your group. Look at all the details. I suggest that everyone look over the coins and then each group member be in charge of examining a single coin in more detail.
2. Consider the following questions: Are the portraits consistent on the obverse? Who are these people? (What does their clothing, fashion, accessories suggest?) How should we interpret their presence on the coins? What images do you see on the reverse? What do you think these images mean? What does the writing, if there is any, say? Does it help in your interpretation of the coins? Does the colour of coins mean anything? What is the connected narrative or story or themes that you can see in your coins?

Part II: Interpretation & Report

1. Write up your observations on the back of this sheet and turn it (& the coins) in at the end of class. Remember to write the letter of your coin group on the back. You do not need to reference every coin in your interpretation but try to create a story from at least 3 of the coins. Your analysis should fill the back sheet.

**NOTE:** Each group will have a slightly different assortment of coins. Be creative!

Assignment Rubric

Category	Points	Comments
Names of group members recorded	/5	
Coin group recorded	/5	
Q1: Coin's measurements, material, & iconography described (½ pt for size & material, 1 pt for iconography [both sides: obverse/reverse] for each coin)	/7.5	
Q2: Identification of connected elements & possible significance (1 pt for recognition & 1 pt for explanation)	/2	
Q3: Two values/ideas about culture from coins (1 pt for idea, 1 pt for explanation)	/2	
Q4: Three coins minimum addressed in discussion of iconography (½ pt per each coin referenced up to 1.5pts)	/1.5	
Q4: Interpretation/Explanation of coins' iconography 5-6= Interpretation is feasible and well-supported by at least three of the coins' iconography with a thoughtful, creative, and interesting analysis 3-4= Interpretation is reasonable, has some support from the iconography but perhaps not from three coins, provides basic analysis 2 or less=Interpretation is illogical, unsupported, & strays to far from the iconography with limited or no analysis, three coins not referenced	/6	

## LETTER OF COIN GROUP \_\_\_\_\_

1. **EXAMINATION:** Measure each coin (diameter & thickness) with callipers and then describe the material (colour and substance) & iconography (e.g. imagery) on each of the coins in your set (i.e. hoard). Be specific and note words, numbers, and each iconographic element.

	Measurements	Material	Imagery
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			

2. **EXAMINATION/ANALYSIS:** What consistent elements, themes, words, or images are on some or all of the coins? Why might this be important? Note at least one, but there should be multiple examples.
3. **INTERPRETATION:** What can we learn about this culture from these coins? (e.g. What values or ideas do you think are being represented?) Note at least two and explain each.
4. **INTERPRETATION:** Provide an interpretation/explanation for the iconography using at least three of the coins in your assemblage as evidence. In your opinion, supported by the iconography, consider the following questions:

What messages are being transmitted? What has this culture emphasised in their iconography and why might that be? What is a possible story told by these coins?



## Ray Jewell Award Recipients

### Silver Medal (for services to the NAA)

Raymond T N Jewell (posthumously), 1998	Leslie J Carlisle, 2011
John Hope, 2003	Walter R Bloom, 2013
W James Noble, 2004	Peter D Lane, 2015
John R Melville-Jones, 2011	

### Bronze Medal (for best article from two journals)

John Sharples. Vol 7, *Catalogue of Victorian trade tokens*.  
 Paul M Holland. Vol 9, *Master die types of Australian halfpennies*.  
 Peter Lane and Peter Fleig. Vol 12, *London private museums and their tokens*.  
 Richard A J O'Hair and Antoinette Tordesillas. Vol 13, *Aristocrats of crime*.  
 Peter Lane and Peter Fleig. Vol. 15 *William Henshall*.  
 Christopher Addams. Vol 18, *Counterfeiting on the Bermuda convict hulk Dromedary*.  
 Mark Stocker. Vol. 19, *The Empire Strikes Back*.  
 Helen Walpole. Vol 22, *The role of sporting medals in a sports museum*.  
 Peter Lane. Vol 23, *S. Schlank & Co Ltd: medal and badge makers of Adelaide 1887-1971*.



## Paul Simon Memorial Award Honour Roll

The Paul Simon Award was established in 1977 by Mrs Jessica Simon of Ballarat, Victoria, in memory of her late husband, Paul Simon. The award is given for outstanding contribution to the Australian numismatic fraternity.

**Special Silver Award:** 1977, R T N (Ray) Jewell, Australia

### Bronze Award

1. 1977, J Gartner	Vic	25. 1996, J Chapman	Vic
2. 1977, W J Mira	NSW	26. 1997, S McAskill	WA
3. 1977, R M Greig	SA	27. 2001, D Junge	Vic
4. 1977, R V McNeice	Tas	28. 2001, F Dobbins	NSW
5. 1977, G D Dean	Qld	29. 2001, G Farrington-Davis	Vic
6. 1977, S J Wilson	WA	30. 2003, P Lane	SA
7. (Allocated as the silver award to Ray Jewell)		31. 2004, F Gare	WA
8. 1978, O C Fleming	NSW	32. 2006, M C Williams	Qld
9. 1978, M B Keain	SA	33. 2006, J A Hanley	NSW
10. 1979, T M Hanley	NSW	34. 2007, G Shea	Qld
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