

## **ICLA Executive Committee**

**January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 9:30-11:30, Eastern Standard Time**

**Thursday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 9:30-11:30, EST.**

Present for part or all of the meeting: William Spurlin, Xiaohong Zhang, Kitty Millet, Sandra Bermann, Rita Schmidt, Marie-Thérèse Abdelmessih, Robert Gafrik, Toshiko Ellis, Massimo Fusillo, Isabel Gil, Haun Saussy, EV Ramakrishnan, Robert JC Young, Liedeke Plate, Irma Ratiani et Tatia Oboladze (to discuss the 2022 Congress), Kathleen Komar, Takayuki Yokota- Murakami, Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, Adelaïde Russo, Paulo Horta, Tracy Lassiter, Yang Huilin, Oana Fotache-Dubalaru, Chandra Mohan, Youngmin Kim, Stefan Helgesson, Marina Grishakova, Zhang Hui, Lucia Boldrini, Anne Tomiche, Isabel Gomez, Ipshita Chanda, Marcio Seligmann, Helena Buescu, and Nicole Bergman.

Sandra Bermann opened the meeting by wishing everyone an excellent year 2022 and thanking the participants for their presence. She thanked Nicole Bergman, who had set up these virtual meetings on a voluntary basis and had helped us with tech throughout the two sessions. Finally, she thanked Irma Ratiani and Tatia Oboladze for their presence.

She indicated that the renewal of the CHLEL Executive had been accepted by the Executive Committee by an online vote and that the minutes of the June 2021 Executive Committee meeting, in both English and French versions, would soon be posted on the website.

### **Discussion of the 2022 Congress and report by Irma Ratiani and her colleagues.**

Irma Ratiani took up the report she had sent to the Executive Committee and which had been circulated prior to the meeting. All the information it contains is available on the website. The deadlines for submitting proposals had been extended to 15 February.

She then moved on to announcements, which will be posted on the website, related to the current pandemic situation: for the time being, the congress is planned to be hybrid (online sessions and face-to-face sessions - the two types of sessions are distinct); the executive committee meetings will be face-to-face; the payment procedure will be simplified; the programme will be published from 24 June; the deadline for participants to notify whether or not they will be attending is 25 May. Irma Ratiani recalled the current rules for entry into Georgia.

The decision will be made on 25 April whether the congress will be entirely online or whether it will be kept in a hybrid format.

Irma Ratiani answered the various questions:

- Robert Young asked about the requirements for leaving Georgia. A PCR test of less than 24 hours is required to return to and enter some countries, including the USA. Irma Ratiani replied that such tests would be organised locally, within the university.
- Chandra Mohan asked about whether a hybrid mode would work within the group sessions. If in a group session, 20 participants are present and 10 are at a distance,

how does the session work? Irma answered that the 25th of May is the deadline for participants to confirm their attendance. There will then be a separation between face-to-face and online sessions. What will be more difficult and for the moment remains without a real answer is how to foresee the functioning of a session of 5 people who had planned to come in person and one of whom would be prevented at the last moment and would wish to participate remotely.

- Isabel Gil raised a question related to another uncertainty besides the health situation: the political and security situation in Georgia, in a context of tension between Russia and NATO. Irma Ratiani replied that to date the situation in Georgia and between Georgia and Russia was not one of conflict. The problems are in Kazakhstan - but there is no border with Georgia. Tatia Oboladze confirms this. In case of a situation of conflict where Georgia is involved, Irma commits to inform the Executive Committee.
- Chandra Mohan asked about the date from which invitations would be issued, to allow those who needed them to obtain their visas. Irma Ratiani replied that when the registration fee is paid, an invitation will be sent in return.
- Toshiko Ellis returned to the question of hybrid sessions: she was preparing a session in person but one of the people was not sure to come. She asked if it would be possible to connect with this person via zoom. Irma Ratiani replied that it would not be impossible but that there should not be too many sessions of this type.
- Marcio Seligmann asked whether, in the event that a member of the Executive Committee could not come, there would be the possibility of hybrid meetings. Irma Ratiani replied that this was planned for the Executive Committee meetings.
- Anne Tomiche asked whether the organisers of group sessions could individually organise zoom sessions to include participants who could not come, and thus relieve the Congress organising team. Irma Ratiani thought this might be possible, but Robert Young and Lucia Boldrini pointed out that there was equipment (microphone, screen) and technology needed for this type of hybrid session and that it could hardly be done with just a laptop.

### **ECARE and Early Career Awards: William Spurlin**

William Spurlin has been working with Irma Ratiani to ensure a strong presence and visibility at the Congress for early career researchers. A welcome reception is planned and a special session, Next Gen, has been set up. The call for proposals has been launched but so far only 4 proposals have been received, all from the same country and all very close to each other. William Spurlin therefore suggested extending the deadline for receiving proposals to 15 February. He hopes to have more proposals.

Regarding the prizes for early career researchers, which had been approved by the Executive Committee, again very few proposals had been received (1 for the translation prize and 1 for the prize for a first book). William Spurlin suggested extending the deadline to 1 March. He also urged the members of the Executive Committee to publicise the awards.

Irma Ratiani confirmed that the change in deadlines would be incorporated into the Congress website.

Sandra Bermann encouraged word of mouth to spread the word. Early career researchers have not submitted proposals because they are not aware of the awards...

Lucia Boldrini apologised for the delay in sending out the newsletter. She proposed to send the call for the various awards to all ICLA members. As soon as William Spurlin had sent her the text of the call, she would circulate it rapidly.

### **Travel grants: Helena Buescu**

- The Executive Committee had decided at its last meeting to fund researchers at the beginning of their careers as well as researchers at any stage of their careers in countries or contexts that do not allow them to finance travel.
- Helena raised a number of questions about the wording of the committee's rules of procedure, which have not yet been validated by the Executive Committee:
  - o Who is eligible for funding? The wording of Article 2 of the rules of procedure needs to be clarified.
  - o What is the amount available for this year?
  - o To date, Helena Buescu has received one application. What is the timetable for the award of these grants?
  - o To date, Helena Buescu is the only member of the committee;
  - o The mention in the rules of procedure of the committee that votes are decided by simple majority may lead to difficulties in a committee of 4 people. Helena Buescu suggested that the chairperson should have a casting vote.
- Paulo Horta did not want to spend too much time discussing the rules of procedure of the committee at the expense of issues directly related to the Congress. He pointed out that in the current health context, there was a lot of uncertainty about travel. Furthermore, he pointed out that the system was not very fair, precisely because of the vagueness of the rules of procedure. He suggested that, rather than allocating a few grants for trips that might not take place in the end, one could consider exempting students from the registration fee and paying it for them.
- Lucia Boldrini clarified that the recipients of these grants had been clearly designated by the Executive Committee last June and that they were students, early career researchers and senior members in countries or contexts that did not allow them to finance the trip. This is what is stated on the website. She also clarified that Article 2 of the Rules of Procedure does not restrict eligibility to members of national associations, but suggested that the ICLA website will disseminate the information and that the ICLA will work with national associations to do so. Any clarifications and rewordings could be made before submitting the bylaws to the Executive Committee for approval.
- Kathleen Komar does not know how much money is available. It is up to the Executive Committee to set an amount.
- Chandra Mohan said that there are 75 students in India who are willing to come to the Congress. What is the deadline for applying for a travel grant? Helena Buescu

said she did not have the answer and asked the Executive Committee to resolve any points of ambiguity or uncertainty.

- Sandra Bermann referred the discussions and decisions to the committee, which in addition to Helena Buescu would consist of Paulo Horta, Adelaide Russo and Oana Fotache-Dubalaru.

### **Elections and online voting: Kathleen Komar**

Before handing things over to Kathleen Komar, Sandra Bermann began by asking Lucia Boldrini to give an update on the membership lists, and she thanked her warmly because, despite the work overload due to the problems at Goldsmiths College, she had ensured that the lists were set up.

Lucia Boldrini reported on the progress in membership numbers, made possible by the introduction of individual payment by credit card. More than 150 individual memberships to date, 120 payments by credit card or bank transfer to the treasurers, memberships that continue to arrive on a regular basis, and 210 memberships also linked to the 2021 Princeton Conference (members whose membership card expires in April and who will all be contacted before that date to renew their membership). In addition, the national associations have been or will soon be asked to update the lists. Lucia Boldrini raised the problem of low-income countries that cannot pay the membership fee, however small. Lucia Boldrini asked that the Executive Committee authorise the Finance and National Associations Task Force and the Elections Committee to reduce the fees for members in low-income countries.

The proposal was put to the vote and adopted unanimously by those voting.

Kathleen Komar took the floor. She reminded the meeting that the committee she chaired, which had worked on e-voting, was composed of Isabel Gil, Ipshita Chanda and herself. She thanked Lucia Boldrini for the work done on the membership lists, which was a precondition for any possibility of online voting.

The committee has been working with a company, Digimentors, with whom Nicole Bergman has put them in touch. The aim is to find a platform that allows online voting, which will make the elections much fairer as absentees will be able to vote. The cost is not negligible but the functioning of the electoral system will be much improved.

Kathleen Komar asked a first question concerning the students' vote: is there a problem with them taking part in the vote as they are members of the association? Adelaide Russo pointed out that while in institutions with a very hierarchical structure there might be a difference in the weight of the student vote, she was not personally in favour of such a system. The executive committee was unanimously in favour of student participation in the elections, with an equal vote with other members.

Chandra Mohan raised the question of voting by those present at the Congress. Kathleen Komar replied that they would vote online as well, either on their own computers or on computers provided at the Congress venue.

E.V. Ramakrishnan asked about the length of the voting period. Kathleen Komar replied that it would be 2 to 3 weeks before the Congress date, and would therefore last well into July.

Kathleen Komar presented the financial proposal from Digimentors to the Executive Committee. The proposal consisted of 4 stages, which could be separated, and the total amount would be \$11,475. Kathleen Komar pointed out that the investment is heavy but that the tool will be useful. She asked the Executive Committee to approve the electronic voting project and the funds requested.

Lucia Boldrini intervened to stress that the future usefulness of this tool was not guaranteed. In fact, the ICLA needs a new website, where members can enter directly and vote from the site. At the moment this is not the case and the tool that will be put in place for this 2022 election will not necessarily be operational with a new site where members can vote directly. She asked that the discussion on electronic voting take into account the question of the website and the members' lists.

The discussion started in the Executive Committee. Reservations were expressed about the imprecise figures in Digimentors' proposal and the precise nature of the different stages proposed (and the actual difference, for example between stage 1 and stage 2).

Kathleen Komar asked for the Executive Committee's approval of the process and the funding. The proposal was adopted by a majority (1 abstention and 1 no).

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM EST.

Friday 21 January 2022, 9:30-11:30 (EST)

Present for all or part of the meeting: William Spurlin, Kitty Millet, Sandra Bermann, Rita Schmidt, Marie-Thérèse Abdelmessih, Robert Gafrik, Toshiko Ellis, Massimo Fusillo, Isabel Gil, Haun Saussy, EV Ramakrishnan, Robert JC Young, Liedeke Plate, Kathleen Komar, Takayuki Yokota- Murakami, Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, Adelaide Russo, Paulo Horta, Tracy Lassiter, Oana Dubalaru, Chandra Mohan, Youngmin Kim, Stefan Helgesson, Zhang Hui, Lucia Boldrini, Anne Tomiche, Isabel Gomez, Ipshita Chanda, Marcio Seligmann. Helga Mitterbauer, Marko Juvan, Xiaohong Zhang, Helena Buescu, Matthew Reynolds.

Nicole Bergman

Toshiko Ellis said that Noriko Hiraishi, who was still feeling ill, could not attend. Sandra Bermann asked her to convey the best wishes of the Executive Committee.

### **Electronic voting.**

The meeting resumed at 9.30 a.m. on the issue of electronic voting. Kathleen Komar reopened the discussion and reminded the meeting that "in person" voting was impossible due to the hybrid nature of the congress. Digimentors was asked after the end of the January 20th meeting about the cost of the voting platform itself (which would be in addition to the cost of their service) but Digimentors had no idea. Nor can they know in advance whether the platform would be reusable or not. What the company did confirm, however, was that the implementation of the platform (not the cost per se) was included in the financial proposal submitted. Kathleen Komar said that she was more concerned about the tight timetable than the money and the cost of the operation.

Kathleen Komar proposed that her committee should take things step by step: that Digimentors should first see if it was possible to find, and at what cost, a platform that could be used by the ICLA given the nature of the website and membership lists.

In response to a question from Adelaide Russo suggesting the use of the MLA platform, Kathleen Komar clarified that the MLA platform, like those of all other organisations consulted, requires members to vote on the organisation's website, which is not possible with the current ICLA website.

Isabel Gil emphasised that another reason why technical help and advice is needed is the issue of data protection. We need guidance and professional advice on this point.

Lucia Boldrini recalled that in the past year, the way in which ICLA members join has changed, moving towards more individual members. It is becoming increasingly necessary to evolve the website as well, and to do so at the same time as the reflection on the electronic voting platform. Lucia Boldrini suggested attending a meeting with Digimentors along with Kathleen Komar, to move forward together on the website and the e-voting issue.

Kathleen Komar presented a fallback and last resort plan, in the event that the implementation of electronic voting for the 2022 congress proved impossible. This would involve the use of email ballots. The vote would not be completely anonymous, there would be many disadvantages, but it is a last resort solution.

Other alternatives were mentioned (general meeting by zoom and voting on zoom; postponement of the elections by a few months to give time for the platform to be set up).

Sandra Bermann proposed that the Executive Committee confirm its vote of the previous day and approve a first phase of exploration by Digimentors. If there is no compatible platform, the research will stop there. The resolution was approved (unanimity of voters minus one abstention).

### **Amendment to the Statutes and By-laws**

**Amendment to the ICLA statutes for proxy voting: Kathleen Komar.**

In the current ICLA statutes, proxy voting is possible (maximum of 2 proxies per voter). In the event of a switch to electronic voting, the notion of proxy voting is no longer relevant. Kathleen Komar suggested that the relevant article of the statutes be reworded to take account of this situation. Such a modification of the statutes would have to be ratified by the General Assembly. Kathleen Komar therefore asked the Executive Committee to give its approval for her to make a proposal to amend the statutes, which would be presented to the General Assembly. The Executive Committee voted unanimously in favour.

**Amendment to the By-laws of the Nomination Committee: Isabel Gil**

Isabel Gil, Chair of the Nomination Committee, indicated the need to amend the description of the electoral process in the Nomination Committee statutes, which at this stage only refers to voting "in person". The mention of electronic voting should be added. Should the mention of in-person voting be kept? Should both be mentioned?

Lucia Boldrini pointed out that the notion of "in person" would have to be rethought in relation to the General Assembly, as defined in the current statutes as the entity of participants in person.

Isabel Gil suggested waiting for the outcome of the first Digimentors investigations before amending the statutes, while proposing the wording "by electronic means", which is open enough to include people voting in person (on a computer) and those voting remotely. The vote was postponed to a later date.

Helena Buescu intervened to remind the meeting of the importance of deciding, before the end of the meeting, on the amount of money allocated to the Travel Grants Committee

### **Congress 2025: expressions of interest and proposals**

Anne Tomiche presented the situation to date: she and Paulo Horta had received a significant number of expressions of interest (Edmonton, Budapest, Kobe, London, Amsterdam, Birmingham, Tel Aviv, Indian Association of Comparative Literature) but only one formal proposal, from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) in Seoul, submitted by Yougmin Kim. On behalf of the executive committee, Anne Tomiche warmly thanks him for this beautiful, very complete and detailed proposal. The deadline for submitting proposals had been set for 15 December 2021. She pointed out that, apart from the expression of interest from the Indian association, which had asked for a deadline extension to submit its proposal, all the other expressions of interest had come from professional conference organizers that were not necessarily able to find contacts in local universities (although, where possible, the names of colleagues who could serve as contacts were forwarded to them). Anne Tomiche proposed to the Executive Committee to postpone the deadline for the receipt of finalised proposals, in order to give Indian colleagues time to finalise their proposals and, perhaps, to receive others.

Paulo Horta considered that the wording of the Guide for potential organisers was too rigid in requiring an academic institution to be the project leader (while relying on an organizing partner) and that if the organizing partner was the project leader and had responsibility for the financial losses and gains, we would have more proposals.

Lucia Boldrini pointed out that the risk with a professional conference organization was that costs would skyrocket and that the focus of the Congress would change, as profit would become the main issue for the professional conference organizer. She also pointed out that the London body that had approached her had not been able to follow up and that, in the current context at Goldsmiths, organising a Congress was unthinkable. She suggested that for 2028, we should start disseminating information and calling for expressions of interest earlier, and that we should make a more militant effort to activate our contacts.

EV Ramakrishnan and Chandra Mohan intervened to indicate that they needed the institutional support of the Indian Comparative Literature Association, which was meeting in early February, in order to submit their proposal. For this reason, they requested an extension of the deadline.

Kitty Millet indicated that as far as Tel Aviv was concerned, the expression of interest had not gone unheeded. The colleagues contacted were interested, but had to overcome the lack of coordination of comparatists in Israel and the particular conditions linked to the

pandemic. They need time, but Kitty Millet does not despair that a proposal from Israel can be submitted to the executive committee.

Since the only requirement is that the Executive Committee should be able to give its opinion to the General Assembly which will take place at the end of July and which will make the final decision, Anne Tomiche proposed to vote for a postponement of the deadline for submission of proposals to June. This would allow time for the proposal(s) to be circulated within the Executive Committee and for electronic voting. The postponement of the deadline was adopted unanimously by those voting.

### **Partner organisations: Haun Saussy**

Sandra Bermann gave the floor to Haun Saussy, who had suggested opening the ICLA to other organisations, close to us without being specifically comparative, and which could be associated with our activities. Haun Saussy said that he had worked with a committee made up of all the volunteers who had come forward. It would be a kind of partnership with these close organisations (associations of translators, performing arts, for example): we could thus propose to them to present speakers at our congresses, invite them between two congresses during an intermediate event (of the type of the Princeton conference and workshop of June 2021), and envisage common publication projects... The forms of collaboration can be plural and are to be developed. In concrete terms, Haun Saussy, who is also a member of ALTA (American Literary Translators Association), has prepared a letter to ALTA suggesting such collaboration and inviting them to explore the idea. Haun Saussy submitted the letter to the executive committee, which was reviewed and amended by her entire committee. His idea was that this letter could serve as a model for others to follow and that this would provide a procedure for establishing partnerships: make the suggestion to the partner organisation; get approval at the committee level; and then at the level of the ALTA Executive Committee.

Chandra Mohan asked what the difference was between the committee chaired by Haun Saussy and the standing committee working on relations with national associations. Haun Saussy replied that the standing committee works with comparative literature associations and that the aim of the committee for the development of relations with partner associations is precisely to work with associations that are not specifically comparative.

A discussion about the possible membership fee that these partners would pay led to the point that in a reciprocal relationship, reciprocal agreements means that the partnership need not involve financial contributions.

Lucia Boldrini pointed out that if the partnership is, in fact, synonymous with a reciprocal exemption from membership fees, a financial benefit could nevertheless result from the fact that individual members of these other organisations would participate in our congresses and thus become members of the ICLA.

EV Ramakrishnan suggested looking at all so-called "minor language" associations for such partnerships.

Haun Saussy asked the Executive Committee for encouragement to continue to build this kind of link and asked whether this informal committee should become official. The Executive Committee thanked him warmly and encouraged him to continue the work of building partnerships.



Finally, Sandra Bermann returned to Helena Buescu's question about the amount to be allocated to the travel grant fund.

None of the donations were made to be specifically earmarked for travel grants. The Executive Committee should therefore decide how much to allocate. The sum of \$2500 is proposed for the committee to use.

Sandra Bermann thanked all participants and closed the meeting at 11.30 am (EST).

Minutes by Anne Tomiche (31 January 2022). Translation Paulo Horta.