

## **Minutes of the meeting of the new ICLA Executive Council (2022-2025), Tbilisi, Georgia (Zoom), 29 July 2022.**

Present: Lucia BOLDRINI, Márcio SELIGMAN-SILVA, Haun SAUSSY, Anne TOMICHE, Ipshita CHANDA, Anne DUPRAT, Adelaide RUSSO, Toshiko ELLIS, Oana FOTACHE, Isabel GÓMEZ, Marko JUVAN, Youngmin KIM, Raul CALZONI, Sayantan DASGUPTA, Lobna ISMAIL, Irma RATIANI, Fatiha TAIB, Matthew REYNOLDS, Noriko HIRAISHI, Takayuki YOKOTA-MURAKAMI, Yuriko YAMANAKA, Helga MITTERBAUER

The new President, Lucia Boldrini, welcomed the Executive Council, congratulating the members who have been newly elected and those who have been elected again. She began by announcing that a meeting of the Executive Council would probably take place online in September 2022, but the objective of the present meeting was for the members of the EC to get to know one another and also to start establishing priorities for this term. She invited the new EC members to pose any questions they had about the organization and functioning of the ICLA, which might seem complicated at first.

The President then indicated what she considers priorities regarding, broadly, administration, people and research for the three years to come:

1. Continuing the work accomplished by the previous Council, retaining the focus on procedures that would facilitate the transition from one mandate to the next (compiling a description of the duties of the officers, preparing a calendar of the activities to be accomplished during the mandate, rationalising and clarifying organizational processes, etc.)

- Enhancing communications both internal (especially the maintenance of the membership list) and external, via the website, the Newsletter and the mailing list of the AILC/ICLA.

2. Continuing the work to support early career researchers, a task which the President hopes Emmanuelle SANTOS, chair of the ECARE committee, will take the lead on.

- Strengthening the links with National Associations as well as with research organizations and bodies working on literary, cultural and linguistic issues from a comparative perspective, so as to facilitate collaborations and allow new ideas and projects to emerge. Toshiko Ellis and Haun Saussy, who have already been involved in this work, are invited to lead on this.

3. Encouraging the creation of new research committees, particularly in areas such as digital, medical and environmental humanities. This can also take the form of shared thematic foci between committees, for example, through collaboration between existing committees.

- Increasing the visibility of the work of existing committees: currently, existing research committees publish their reports once a year, and if some make their work visible throughout the year, others do so to a lesser extent. It would be good to communicate more about the work they do, via the website and/or the Newsletter, and perhaps via lectures sponsored by them, or workshops, in order to make their work better known. This may in turn

attract more members and generated ideas for new committees. Matthew Reynolds, as chair of the Research Development Committee, would be the ideal person to take the lead on this.

4. Planning for future ICLA congresses: the Congress Hosting Guide needs to be updated, based on the experience of the recent Congress. This will allow us to prepare efficiently for 2025 (Seoul), in particular to sign the Memorandum of Understanding as soon as feasible. Ideally, we should be ready before 2025 to confirm the candidature for 2028, including by continuing to explore a new candidature by India to host the 2028 Congress.

Before moving on to the discussion of communication strategies and in particular of the website, the President invited the members of the EC to a discussion on the preceding points and to make any other suggestion for priorities for this term.

Syantana Dasgupta asked about the frequency of EC meetings: can we take advantage of the annual symposia or seminars (often online) of the national associations to meet more frequently?

The President answered that the EC used to meet once a year in person before the Covid crisis at conferences hosted by different associations/universities, which allowed for intellectual rather than just organisational planning and exchanges. The annual EC meetings have been held on Zoom during the Covid crisis, lasting 2 hours per day, for two days, to allow for members located in different time zones to participate. The President stated that she was very much in favor of resuming the annual in-person EC meetings, although we would have to expect a hybrid format to be more likely at least for the immediate future; the hybrid format would serve to limit both zoom fatigue and the environmental and financial costs of travelling to attend in person.

Anne Tomiche remarked that an online conference was also organised at Princeton University for early career researchers in 2021, focusing on publication strategies and career progression (Princeton are interested in repeating the experience). The EC met online at this time, as well as on the occasion of the CLAM Research Committee's conference, hosted by the university of l'Aquila.

Marko Juvan added that the ICLA Research Committees and the national associations hold annual meetings and workshops, and that we could coordinate meetings of the ICLA EC with these meetings in years between congresses; Noriko Hiraishi confirms this point.

Yuriko Yamanaka, new Treasurer for Asia-Pacific, asked about the turnout in the recent elections. The President noted that about 29% of the c. 5400 members of the AILC/ICLA voted, which is a higher turnout than previous elections, when only members attending the congress in person could vote (along with some proxies). Even in those cases, the percentage of voters was generally lower than 29% or congress participants. For the first time the 2022 election was conducted online, via Election Buddy, and supported by Digimentors. The Certification and information on the conduct of this election will be provided shortly to the Nominating Committee, chaired by Isabel Capeloa Gil.

Lobna ISMAIL asked if we could publish on the website a calendar of all the conferences held annually by the National Associations, and provide the abstracts of the papers presented at these conferences in the Newsletter; it would also be good if the organizers of these conferences could give the members of the ICLA access to the proceedings of these conferences, when they are published online. The President agreed, and asked Lobna Ismail if she would be ready to be part of the group working on the website and maintaining liaison with the National Associations. She remarked that we had tried to publish such information in the Newsletter, but that information was not always forthcoming in timely manner from NAs. Now that we have a world-wide mailing list, it should be easier to gather this information as the NAS will see that their work is being disseminated widely.

A “NA+” Committee was specifically organized to develop relations with national associations, but it has not been able to function for various reasons. The President will discuss with Toshiko Ellis, a member of this committee, and with Haun Saussy, who developed contacts with “friendly” associations, whether to keep these as separate committees or whether it is preferable to merge them. At the moment, the website is not configured to allow associations to directly publish their own information on it; but what Lobna suggested would be helpful in developing relations with national associations.

The President then presented the main questions concerning “communications” for the AILC/ICLA. During the last term, she ended up being responsible for the website, the Association’s email account, then the membership list, the Newsletter, and finally the mailing list. It was too much for one person, especially since, when the ICLA-funded assistant left at the end of July 2021, due to various issues at her institution she was not able to replace the assistant for 5 months, and this was only on a more limited contract. The publication of the Newsletter could therefore not be continued, but we have undertaken to relaunch it from September.

In the future, we will need:

- A Newsletter Editor, who will be in charge of publishing the Newsletter (It was meant to be every 6 weeks, whether it should be more or less can be discussed)

- a Membership Secretary, who has to work with the treasurers to coordinate, collect and keep up-to-date all the data on membership status, payments etc. received from national associations;

- a Website Editor to update and develop the website; the website was reconstructed about six years ago but is in real need of updating, both in terms of aesthetic and of functionality; better integration between newsletter and website, if possible, may be considered as we redevelop the site;

- One of the above-mentioned personnel (Website Editor, Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary), should also oversee the updating of the mailing list (probably the Membership Secretary as all updates of the membership list have to be reflected in the mailing list);

– One among them should also undertake to maintain the Association's email correspondence, responding to inquiries received.

In other words there should be a team of (at least) three people for five connected roles, with one taking, ideally, the role of Communications Officer to coordinate the activities in these areas.

The last meeting of the EC in its 2019-22 term had discussed two possible developments to help realise the tasks above:

- A) Recruitment of someone to deal with the day-to-day business and as many of the tasks described above as possible: answering emails, keeping the website up to date, adding new members to the membership list, possibly maintaining this list, or help to write the Newsletter and send it. The help of students may not be enough, and would lack continuity; someone should be employed who is able to do this job on a more permanent basis and who has experience in managing websites, mailing lists, simple databases, etc. The extent of the tasks that could be assigned to this person would depend on the funds available.
- B) purchase of a software package, such as Microsoft Office (or other) to support our communication. It would include email software, storage and sharing space for use by the officers and the EC. This would enable the AILC/ICLA to have a number of dedicated addresses (for example, for the President, the Secretaries, the Membership Secretary, the Treasurers... and for specific activities, such as "ECARE\_Translation\_Prize\_2022 @ ailc-icla.org", "Balakian-Prize-2025...", etc.). This would also allow all documents (including, for example, reports of the Association's committees) to be preserved in a permanent library/archive. The new officers would be able to access and consult previous correspondence and documents, for example to find information and decisions taken previously, thus avoiding the loss of historical information. This would prevent us moving the membership list database from one server to another each time the relevant officers change, which can lead to data loss, data breaches, etc., as well as a lot of wasted time and trouble for everyone. The President had started to inquire about the possible costs, but the new team of colleagues mentioned above should investigate further to help the EC make a decision.

We will probably not have the money for everything, and we will need to decide our priorities. The discussion can be resumed at the next meeting, to be held in a couple of months.

In the meantime, the President invited EC members to come forward if they have the required skills, for example in managing a Newsletter or a Website, and if they are willing to take on one of these tasks.

To Adelaide Russo, Treasurer for the Americas, who asked why we do not have a quarterly newsletter with news about conferences organized by member associations and individual members, the President answered that the publication gap between issues may make the content obsolete by the time it was published; A. Russo then suggested publishing these

announcements on the website – but the President observed that, although this would shorten the time between receipt and dissemination, the task itself would take the same time as a publication via the Newsletter, especially since the website is bilingual and the translation also takes time. One of the new features of the redeveloped website could be to implement an automatic feed into the newsletter from the information placed in the news section of the website.

Marko Juvan asked about the preparation of future congresses. The President repeated her intention to update the existing Congress Hosting Guide, and to clarify the procedure for applying. Marko Juvan suggested that we could avoid a competitive bidding situation, and proposed a two-stage process: those wanting to host a congress could first present some data on their infrastructure and facilities, with a basic outline of their proposal. The proposals could then be discussed at the EC, and the two or three hosts selected could then prepare and submit a more elaborate and detailed proposal. Another suggestion was that there could be more flexibility regarding the timeline for the submission of proposals.

The President agreed that clarifying procedures is important, and invited Marko Juvan to participate in the process of revising the bidding procedure for congresses.

Anne Tomiche, who was in charge of liaising with the organizers of the Tbilisi Congress, pointed out that the process described by Marko is indeed what was envisaged, but that an insufficient number of offers had been received by the original deadline. She pointed out that the correspondence with the organizers is demanding work and that the process itself begins well before the announced deadline.

The President agreed that we must start planning Congresses much earlier than usual (about 5-6 years in advance).

Youngmin Kim, who will be in charge of organising the 24th Congress in 2025 in Seoul confirmed that the bidding procedure required a lot of time and effort. He then asked about the deadline for signing the Memorandum of Understanding between the host South Korea and AILC/ICLA. Anne Tomiche answered that it could be done as soon as possible (next few weeks).

The meeting ended with mutual thanks and general good wishes.