

ICLA Research Development Committee
Report to the Executive Council
27th June 2022

Membership of the Committee: Prof Matthew Reynolds (Chair – Oxford University); Prof Sowon Park (Secretary – University of California, Santa Barbara); Dr Baba Badji (ISGRJ, Rutgers, Early Career Member); Prof. Rosinka Chaudhuri (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta); Prof. Anne Duprat (Université de Picardie Jules Verne); Prof. Toshiko Ellis (University of Tokyo) Prof. Alessandro Grilli (Università di Pisa); Prof. May Hawas (University of Cambridge); Prof. Paolo Horta (NYU Abu Dhabi); Prof. Marko Juvan (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences); Dr Eugenia Kelbert-Rudan (HSE University, Moscow, and University of East Anglia, Early Career Member); Prof. Tong King Lee (University of Hong Kong); Prof. Wen-Chin Ouyang (SOAS, University of London).

Report

1. Short-Term Research Committees: Renewal

According to the ICLA website, the short-term research committee on Comparative African Literatures was founded in 2019, and so was due to apply for a second 3-year term this year. However, upon enquiry, it turned out that this committee had not yet become active. Of the founding Chairs, Wendy Laura Belcher expressed her wish to step down, while Brahim El Guabli said that he would like to get the committee going, though he would not be able to formulate any plans in time for RDC's deadline. Keen to support the development of this committee, RDC forwarded to Prof El Guabli the names of colleagues who might be invited to join, and agreed that he should send a report on progress direct to Executive Council. **RDC recommends that, for administrative purposes, the foundation of this committee should be dated from its first meeting (as has been the case with some other committees); and that, when that meeting happens, the committee's page on the ICLA website should be revised accordingly.**

2. Short-Term Research Committees: Conversion to a Standing Committee

The short-term research committee on Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative was founded in 2016, and so was coming to the end of its second 3-year term. Rather than apply for a third term, this large and active committee submitted an application for conversion to the status of Standing Committee. RDC asked for clarification of the committee's membership and governance procedures; once this was received, RDC expressed its support for the application, noting that 'the research field is an important one', that the committee has been 'impressively active and also well-organized, with regular online meetings and a large number of collective publications and events, social media engagement, concrete plans for dissemination etc.', and that it has 'good plans for the future'. The committee's application

is attached as Appendix A; the ICLA's criteria for forming a Standing Committee are [here](#) .
RDC recommends that EC accept the application from the Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative short-term research committee to convert to a standing committee.

3. Short-Term and Standing Research Committees: Current Status

RDC noted that the ICLA's webpage for the short-term research committee on Literary History states 'The establishment of this Committee was approved in 2018. Information will follow soon'. RDC has no information about this committee, but hopes that EC may extend to it the same sort of support that we are recommending be given to the committee on Comparative African Literatures.

The current status of the other research committees is as follows:

Short-Term Research Committees

Religion, Ethics and Literature [founded 2014]

Renewal dates: (i) 2017; (ii) 2020; ends 2023

Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative [founded 2016]

Renewal dates: (i) should have been 2019; (ii) 2022: applying to convert to a Standing Committee - see item 2 above.

Literature, Arts & Media [founded 2018]

Renewal dates: (i) 2021; (ii) 2024; ends 2027

Comparative African Literatures [founded 2019]

See item 1 above.

Literary History

ICLA website states: 'the establishment of this Committee was approved in 2018. Information will follow soon'

Standing Research Committees

(report directly to EC so not under the purview of RDC)

The Coordinating Committee for the Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages Series (CHLEL) [founded 1967]

The Research Committee on Literary Theory [founded 1985]

The Comparative Gender Studies Research Committee [founded 2004]

The ICLA Standing Research Committee on South Asian Literatures and Cultures [founded 2016]. It continues the work of the former, time-limited Research Committee on Literary and Cultural Interrelationships Between India, Its Neighboring Countries and the World [2011]

Scriptural Reasoning and Comparative Studies [converted from a short-term committee 2021]. Continues the work of the short-term committee of the same name, founded in 2011.

Translation Studies [founded 2012]

Comparative History of East Asian Literatures [founded 2014]

4. Encouraging more applications to form research committees

RDC agreed that its members would look out for promising panels at the XXIII International Congress, and invite participants to submit proposals for new research committees.

5. A Panel at the XXIII Congress

RDC is holding an online panel (039) on Futures for Comparative Literary Research. Speakers: Sowon S. Park, 'The Problem of "Minoritization" in Comparative and World Literary Studies'; Baba Badji, 'Négritude Today'; Eugenia Kelbert, 'Translation as a Metaphor in Comparative Literature'; Isabel Gómez, 'Multilingual Pedagogies and the Public Humanities'; Yingy Zhang, 'Interliterariness' and Comparative Literature: Romantic Poetics, Systemic Approach, and Humanistic Ideals'; Matthew Reynolds 'Collaborative Language(s)'; Stefan Helgesson, 'The Role of Africa in Comparative Literature (and vice versa)'; Anne Duprat, 'Thinking about Comparative Literature Today: Shifting Objects, Changing Methods'. All welcome!

Appendix A

Request to Convert from a Short-Term Research Committee to a Standing Research Committee of ICLA

Application for the Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative Research Committee to become a Standing Research Committee

Executive Committee and Program Committee Members: Tracy Lassiter (co-chair), Stefan Buchenberger (co-chair; program committee leader), Lisa DeTora (secretary) Angelo Piepoli (communications officer) Umberto Rossi (program committee) Fernanda Diaz-Basteris (program committee)

Committee Members: 16 Established career (ie, tenured or equivalent) and 16 early career and independent scholars

Established career members:

Maaheen Ahmed (University of Ghent)
Hans-Joachim Backe (University of Copenhagen)
Stefan Buchenberger (Kanagawa University)
David Coughlan (University of Limerick)
Lisa DeTora (Hofstra University)
Barbara Gruning (Bicocca University of Milan)
Alison Halsall (York University)
Noriko Hiraishi (University of Tsukuba)
Anna-Sophie Jurgens (Australian National University)
Hiroko Katsuyama (Ibaraki Christian University)
Adnan Mahmutovic (Stockholm University)
Micaela Manansala (University of the Philippines)
Kai Mikkonen (University of Helsinki)
Francesco-Alessio Ursini (Central China Normal University)
Takayuki Yokota-Murakami (Osaka University)

Early career members:

Mattia Arioli (University of Bologna)
Denise Ask Nunes (Independent Scholar)
Maria F Diaz Basteris (Georgia State University)
Davide Carnevale (Sapienza University of Rome)
Rikke Platz Cortsen (University of Texas - Austin)
Tracy Lassiter (University of New-Mexico Gallup)
Nicola Paladin (G. d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara)
Lea Pao (Stanford University)
Chiara Patrizi (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Guilherme Couto Pereira (Universidade de São Paulo)
Marco Petrelli (University of Turin)
Angelo Piepoli (Independent Scholar)
Lauren Rizzuto (Nicholls State University)
Umberto Rossi (Sapienza University of Rome ; Independent Scholar)
Giacomo Traina (Sapienza University of Rome)
Petros Tsakaliadis Sotirakoglou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)
Leonardo Vidal (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul)

1. Please give a brief account of your committee's activities in the past year.

As shown in our annual report, the Graphic Narrative Research Group has published several books and edited collections, organized one conference and some additional conference seminars, engaged in outside (invited) talks, and presented at national, local, and international conferences. Numerous peer-reviewed papers and book chapters have appeared, as well as a special issue of a journal.

The committee has also made efforts to expand RC's work to cover more areas of comics and graphic narrative that have been underrepresented in previous years, thus supporting the mission of ICLA.

We propose a name confirmation, following the scholarly conventions of the field, to include various kinds of comics works and graphic narrative.

2. What do you consider to be the most important aspects of your committee's work since its inception?

Publications: Several books and dozens of peer-reviewed publications and book chapters by members have appeared since 2020

Congresses and conference presence: The members routinely organize conferences, seminars, workshops and present at conferences. This activity takes place in multiple languages (thereby reaching varied audiences) and at local, regional, national, and international levels. Activities occur across continents, as consistent with the international mission of ICLA

Pedagogical activities: members of the research group use this research to reach undergraduate and graduate students in various disciplines. Of note, these disciplines include the sciences, expanding the influence of ICLA scholarship

Interdisciplinary collaborations: Members routinely collaborate with colleagues in various disciplines, including gender studies, rhetorical studies, and sciences, including biomedicine. It is worthy of note that members have published and presented in medical humanities and presented on graphic medicine.

Public engagement: Several members of the research group have presented on the importance of comics studies and graphic narrative to public forums, spreading the influence of this work beyond academic and scholarly circles

Archive support: Members of the group support the work of comics archives, such as the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum

Multimedia and multimodality: The group has shown resilience and flexibility, especially in creating hybrid and virtual meeting and congress activities. This affordance is especially important given the goal of the committee to expand membership and offer opportunities to new and under-resourced scholars

Commitment to global scope: Members of the committee live and work on several continents and in several languages. The committee is committed to expanding this scope to include scholars from around the world, particularly the Global South.

3. A Standing Research Committee is not time-limited. Please explain the need for your committee to continue its work indefinitely.

The area of Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative has expanded in influence and scope in all areas of scholarship in the current century. At this time, the comics studies and graphic narratives industries are presenting academics with new and exciting scholarly opportunities. While various popular culture forms, such as television and movies, are interpreting and reinventing these texts in creative ways, at the same time, new forms of storytelling, from new voices around the world, are entering the

academic discourse. Establishing a standing research committee would benefit ICLA's membership by providing a platform for work in various areas of comparatist study and also creating a group with which members might consult on their projects.

We are but one academic body exploring this field. While other groups address comics in terms of a singular, more monographic, exploration, we are comparatists. Comparative Literature combines the rigor of literary theory and analysis to open academic discourse expansively. It opens it to forms (film, digital comics, Twitter posts, medical pamphlets, etc.), it opens it to global range (different perspectives on the same historical event; texts beyond the traditional Western canon; indigenous voices), and it opens it to subject matter (current events like the COVID pandemic, LGBTQIA concerns). While as a body we are not unique in exploring these texts, our comparatist training and perspective is; we juxtapose and analyze these texts through this specialized disciplinary lens. This interdisciplinarity is reflected in the kinds of presentations or publications we've organized over the years. For example, we've hosted presentations on linguistics and semiotics, which are core fields in Comparative Literature training, but which aren't likely seen in other comics/graphic narrative groups associated with traditional English or cultural studies scholars. This perspective also is present in the way we organize presentations at our conferences -- to wit, how we arrange presentations so that the scholars' arguments are in dialogue.

The core leadership of the committee met nearly twenty years ago and since then the membership has consistently expanded in scope and numbers. The committee has current plans to expand its presence online, to foster additional engagement in public forums, and to maintain its current levels of engagement in publications, presentations, and congress organization. In addition, the committee is committed to founding a scholarship fund for students who lack the resources to attend congresses such as ICLA. We feel certain that our network is vast, dedicated, and engaged enough to find members interested in continuing the good work we've undertaken for nearly twenty years.

Given the active and expanding engagement of the group, which has been evident every year since the present RC was founded in 2014, standing committee status is warranted. Our combination of constant academic presence, disciplinary rigor and scholarship, and open, friendly camaraderie, makes us unique in the comics studies and graphic narrative world, a combination the ICLA likely supports in both principle and practice. We hope our continued efforts allow the ICLA to grow its numbers as well through our membership, and we think our status as a Standing Committee would give us more credence in our efforts to do so.

4. What are your committee's research plans for the next three years?

The committee is proposing an edited volume to mark twenty years of successful collaborations.

At least one monograph is anticipated to appear in 2023 and at least two edited collections led by and including the work of various committee members are already ongoing.

Various members of the committee will continue to organize seminars and panels at ICLA and associated congresses, especially the ACLA, and ESLC, as well as at other venues. A congress is also being planned.

Many members of the committee are working on peer-reviewed publications and book chapters. These are numerous and prohibitive to list individually.

5. Please outline your committee's governance procedures, including any processes for electing the Chair and other officers and for admitting new members to the committee.

Leadership roles: The group began with a smaller leadership framework but roles have been added as needs emerged.

- Co-chairs (2; since 2013)
- ICLA Program Committee (3, including at least one graduate student; since 2013)
- Secretary (1; since 2016)
- Communications Officer (1; since 2018)

Leadership meetings: The current committee leadership meets at least quarterly, via Zoom, and in-person meetings are held at various congresses (ESLC, ACLA, ICLA): All members present at the given congress are invited to the in-person leadership meeting.

Term of service: Leadership positions require a commitment of at least one year and renewal is automatic between ICLA meetings.

Nominations and election structure: Nomination of leadership positions occurs after ICLA meetings in consultation with the full RC (generally via email). The group is tight-knit, with many members actively collaborating and working together. Therefore, nominations and elections for leadership positions have been accomplished through volunteerism and open discussion, based to some degree on prior succession planning by the founding committee members. As the committee grows, plans for anonymous elections will be enacted to enable a secret ballot via an online platform such as Poll Everywhere.

In general, new members of the leadership group have emerged through their participation in panels or seminars at ACLA or ICLA, and leadership has emerged as a result of scholarly engagement, collaborations, and level of research productivity.

Replacement of leadership positions: If a co-chair steps down, the full RC is consulted as to the replacement. For the other leadership positions, if someone steps down, the co-chairs evaluate whether a replacement is needed before the next ICLA meeting.

Means to join the committee: The committee considers any participant at a sponsored panel at ACLA, ICLA, or ESCL to be a member of the research committee should they so desire. Additional members have joined the committee based on their participation in collections edited by members of the committee.

6. What opportunities does your committee provide for early-career academics and postgraduate students?

The committee encourages students and pre-tenure faculty to present at congresses, participate in edited volumes, and to lead panels and co-lead seminars. Graduate students have been invited to peer review for our edited volumes. Committee members with tenured positions have invited graduate students and early career members to present their research to students at their home institutions. Graduate student members of the committee have gone on to responsible positions and tenure track jobs in the field. As noted above, graduate students and early career faculty are treated as full members of the research committee and may volunteer for leadership positions.

We're launching a website dedicated to networking scholars and artists around the world. Our upcoming ICLA Congress panel, instead of exploring history as members have done with other recent projects, looks to the future of comics: the authors and creators, the subject matter, and -- indeed - the very form of comics in terms of digital and other modalities of creation. In combination, our work continues to be timely and holistic in scope: examining the past while looking forward to what the future allows for these texts.

7. What arrangements do you have in place to enable ICLA members to participate in and benefit from the work of your committee if they are unable to travel to physical meetings?

The committee has offered various arrangements, including Zoom, prerecording of presentations, and allowing another member to read a prepared paper. The committee also maintains an active Facebook group, which provides opportunities for exchange before, during, and after conferences and other in-person meetings. The committee has acquired a domain and is planning to complete a new website by 2023.

ADDENDUM (3 July 2022)

ICLA Research Committee on Comparative African Literatures

This committee was put in place in 2019 with the aim of fostering and strengthening the presence of African comparative literature at the ICLA. Open to all scholars working on African literatures, the committee will play a crucial role in initiating and enhancing local, regional, and transnational dialogues between the students of this very rich literary tradition, which, in reality, encompasses different time periods, languages, and geographical locations. The committee's importance is all the more apparent when we understand that comparative literature as such is not as fully developed throughout the continent despite the existence of departments or programs that use comparative methodologies. Hence, the committee will also serve as a springboard for comparative methodological and interdisciplinary discussions that will anchor comparative approaches to the study of literature in the different parts of Africa.

Since Wendy Belcher and I co-chaired it in May 2020, we sought to organize the committee, define its goals further, and develop a vision for its work. Our call for members elicited a significant number of applications, which we organized in an electronic database. We also designed a very detailed questionnaire that we intended to send to each individual applicant to request information that would help us map out the geography of African comparative literature, its languages, and disciplinary boundaries. Unfortunately for us, we took on this task as the Covid-19 was unfolding, and the pandemic has since stalled our efforts, limiting what we could achieve during the last two years. Additionally, Professor Wendy Belcher has since received a NEH grant, requiring the dedication of her full attention to the research that she received the funding for.

Moving forward, I would like to continue co-chairing the committee and working with the different members to implement its goals.

I will invite a new co-chair and will work with them to:

- Re-establish contact with all the scholars who expressed interest in the committee
- Send out the questionnaire Wendy and I prepared to receive the necessary data from the applicants
- Organize some Zoom meetings with potential members
- Structure the committee in a representative way that takes into account disciplinary, regional, and linguistic diversity
- Propose a conference an ICLA conference in Africa

Committee co-chair
Brahim El Guabli