LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

This report was prepared by Jennifer Sterling-Folker, acting as the chair of the ISA Long Range Planning Committee. Members include Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, Deborah Larson, Pascal Venesson, Carolyn Shaw, Michelle Scobie, Matthew Hoffmann, Raul Pacheco-Vega, and Adrienne L. Roberts, with ex-officios T.V. Paul, Brett Ashley Leeds, Patrick James, Mark Boyer and Jennifer Fontanella. The final report was submitted December 20, 2017 for the 2018 Governing Council meeting in San Francisco.

FULL REPORT

The ISA Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) met at Baltimore ISA Annual Convention in February 2017 and subsequently held several exchanges by email. The LRPC discussed a wide range of topics and ultimately focused on two – the development of a Non-English Book Award (discussed by the prior LRPC) and ideas about a broader societal engagement for ISA. These discussions resulted in one proposal that the LRPC is recommending to the Governing Council. The following report includes very brief overviews of both discussions, followed by a proposal to establish a Non-English Book Award, followed by a fuller account of our discussion regarding broader social engagement.

NON-ENGLISH BOOK AWARD DISCUSSION

The Governing Council referred the idea of a non-English Book Award to the LRPC in 2016. The LRPC was asked to explore whether other academic organizations offer book awards for scholarship in different languages, how their process is structured, and how this might be applied by ISA. Building on the data collected by the prior LRPC chair and committee members, the current LRPC committee considered how to develop a structure and process for a non-English book award committee within ISA. Considerable committee discussion ensued over the committee's structure, how to identify appropriate languages for the award and whether further data collection was needed prior to the initiation of a Non-English Book Award. Ultimately the majority of the LRPC chose to propose a pilot awards structure and process to be initiated immediately, but with a four-year sunset date at which time the language selection and committee structure would be reassessed and require re-approval from the Governing Council.

BROADER SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT DISCUSSION

The LRPC discussed a subcommittee-generated proposal to encourage broader ISA social engagement. This proposal grew out of ISA Baltimore committee discussions about whether ISA should do more to encourage and protect the free exchange of ideas and the pursuit of knowledge from external interference. The subcommittee proposed a number of ideas that would strengthen ISA’s process for taking public positions on issues that are of broad concern to all ISA members as scholars. Several committee members raised concerns about the specifics of these proposals and ultimately agreed to table them for further discussion.

PROPOSAL FOR A NON-ENGLISH BOOK AWARD

We recommend the following action item:
The Governing Council approves the creation of two annual Non-English Book Awards with specific languages rotating on a pre-determined basis and with language selection based on the most widely used non-English languages spoken among ISA members. We recommend this be a pilot program for a 4 year period, at which time the Governing Council would assess it for possible revisions and renewal. Data collected by ISA headquarters on membership languages during the four years would assist the assessment and potential renewal process.

Each year the incoming President would form two non-English book award committees comprised of 2-4 scholars fluent in one of the two languages designated for that year. Each committee would operate as any other ISA book award committee with ISA headquarters support. Given that the languages would rotate annually, membership on the committee would be a one-year appointment. The committee reports would be presented annually to the Governing Council. As we propose to create two awards each year selected from the 8 different languages most widely used by ISA members, the rotation of languages would follow a 4 year cycle (please see below for our rationale).

**Design**

Two annual non-English book award committees would be formed each year by the incoming President and comprised of 2-4 scholars fluent in one of the two languages for that year. Given that languages are selected on the presumption that a sizeable portion of the ISA membership speaks that particular non-English language, there should be enough members willing and able to serve on the committees for that year. The committees would operate as any other ISA book award committee. This would be a one-year appointment for each language committee’s members since the composition of the committee would change annually with the next languages in the rotation.

Publishers could nominate books but authors could also self-nominate their own books. Nominations would be limited to books published in the period since the last time a prize was given in that particular language. For the first four rounds of awards beginning in 2019, book nominations would be limited to books published in the four years just prior to the award year.

The standard ISA book award amount is $500 and a commemorative plaque. In keeping with this standard, the committee recommends the same amount for each of the languages awarded every year, for a total of $1000 annually for the two language awards plus a plaque for each recipient.

**Language Selection & Rotation Rationale**

Ideally, the non-English languages to rotate would be selected based on the primary languages spoken by members and the languages most widely used among members. Unfortunately ISA does not currently collect information on languages when a member joins, only their nationality, and it utilizes generic category totals for each country’s membership numbers in order to protect member identities.

Relying on this data for award language selection presents problems. An ISA member’s nationality may not indicate which language they write or publish in, particularly in countries with more than one official or de facto language. Some languages such as Chinese and Hindi have multiple dialects. And the current ISA numerical membership ranges for each country are quite wide (ie: 50-100; 100-1,000), with no indication of the actual variance within each category.

To overcome some of these issues, the LRPC researched the official or de facto majority language of each country for which we have ISA members. SEE ATTACHED DATA SHEET. We then added the upper membership totals for countries which had the same languages. For countries that had more than 1 official language (Canada for example), we counted those countries in the relevant non-English language totals. Based on this data, the most widely spoken non-English languages among our membership are:
French (1215 possible members across 7 countries),
German (1200 possible members across 4 countries),
Portuguese (1055 possible members across 3 countries),
Turkish (1015 possible members across 2 countries),
Hindi (1000 possible members across 1 country),
Japanese (1000 possible members across 1 country),
Spanish (310 possible members across 12 countries),
Chinese (255 members across 5 countries),

These membership/language totals are followed by Arabic (195 possible members across 12 countries), Italian (150 possible members across 2 countries), Dutch (105 possible members across 2 countries), and Russian (60 possible members across 3 countries). Based on this data, and the desire to be as inclusive as is reasonably possible with these awards, the LRPC proposes that book awards be given on a rotating basis in the 8 most-widely spoken languages among ISA members listed above: French, German, Portuguese, Turkish, Hindi, Japanese, Spanish and Chinese.

Additionally, the LRPC proposes that each year there be a book award given in two separate languages. The rationale for this is that a book award for 1 language each year would mean an 8 year rotation, which is too long a time period for non-English speakers to wait before they can nominate their book. By awarding in two languages each year, the rotation of languages is cut from an 8 year cycle to a 4 year cycle. This cycle is also more beneficial for faculty who are facing tenure and promotion pressures. With this in mind, we propose the following initial rotation:

2019: French; Chinese
2020: German; Hindi
2021: Portuguese; Japanese
2022: Turkish; Spanish;

Given the language rotation schedule of every four years, eligible books would have to be published in the four year period since the last time an award was given for that language. For the first four rounds of awards beginning in 2019, books would be nominated from the four years prior to the award year.

The committee decided not to include any languages in the rotation which had less than 250 members. Relatively low membership numbers for a given language means there would be fewer books nominated and fewer members able to serve on the language decision committee that year. For many languages this makes logistical sense, for example Serbian which has only 25 possible ISA members. This decision may be more questionable for countries that were closer to the mark, such as China (which is just over it at 255) or Arabic (which is under it by 55 possible members).

Re-Assessment & Data Collection
The LRPC recommends that the proposed committee structure, language selections and language rotations be approved for a four year period. At that time the Governing Council would reassess it for revisions and potential renewal. If this pilot program is renewed, the LRPC recommends that the Governing Council establish periodic evaluations of it thereafter to ensure that the awards reflect ISA membership demographics. We recommend that ISA headquarters immediately add a question to membership forms and/or renewals about a member’s primary language. This data could then be used by the Governing Council in four years to determine if the languages selected are reflective of membership demographics and whether adjustments need to be made to these awards and the committee structure.
SUPPORT BY ISA HQ
ISA headquarters would assist the Non-English Book Award committee, as it does for other ISA award committees, in acquiring copies of the books and coordinating the prize checks and plaques once the committees made final decisions. It would also collect additional information on membership languages to assist the Governing Council in making any changes to the language selection or committee structure.

ADDENDUM
An alternative model for a rotating non-English book award might have been to rely on the regional sections within ISA to nominate and judge non-English books. We rejected this option because the language selection issues seemed relatively insurmountable given that multiple languages are often spoken within a region or across different regions. While there is an attraction to relying on ISA regional sections to assist the nominating/decision process, the LRPC felt that the logistical problems were more difficult with this model and chose instead to proposed a Presidential selection process which we felt was more amenable to structural and procedural solutions.

BROADER SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT DISCUSSION
The LRPC discussed a subcommittee-generated proposal to encourage broader ISA social engagement. This proposal grew out of ISA Baltimore committee discussions about whether ISA should do more to encourage and protect the free exchange of ideas and the pursuit of knowledge from external interference. In particular, the subcommittee focused on policy stances as a consequence of academic freedom restrictions and whether ISA needed to do more on this front.

After consulting with the Academic Freedom Committee (AFC), the LRPC subcommittee proposed a number of ideas that would strengthen ISA’s process for taking public positions on issues that are of broad concern to all ISA members as scholars. These proposals included the further delineation of the AFC’s mandate, the hiring of an ISA HQ staff member to assist the AFC in the investigative collection of data, requiring that the ISA President be the sole signatory on ISA policy statements, and directing ISA HQ to develop a media strategy for publicizing and distributing policy statements in order to better inform ISA members of the ISA rules and initiatives in these matters. The rationale for these proposals was to strengthen the AFC’s capacity to investigate cases and to strengthen the impact of the ISA’s statements in general (since they would be issued from a single, highest ISA authority).

Several concerns were raised in subsequent discussions of these proposals. The first involved whether the goal was to clarify the work in which the AFC was already engaged or to expand the AFC’s mandate and scope to include proactive investigation of cases. A second was whether additional ISA headquarter staff were needed to support the AFC’s work either as it currently stands or with an expanded mandate. A third was whether it was appropriate or desirable to have the ISA President be a single signatory on ISA policy statements.

While there was general agreement within the committee that the wording of the AFC mandate could be minimally updated to better reflect what the committee does at present (for example, adding the phrase “restrictions on travel for scholarly purposes”), ultimately the LRPC decided to table these proposals for further discussion. There remains disagreement within the committee over whether expanding the AFC’s mandate is appropriate and in what direction it should do so. These disagreements are compounded in the absence of additional information from and greater participation by the AFC. For these reasons, the LRPC decided to hold off on making any proposals on this issue at this time.