LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE
2020 ANNUAL REPORT

This report was prepared by Duncan Snidal, acting as the chair of the ISA Long Range Planning Committee. Members include Patrick Haney, Leslie E. Wehner, Nukhet A. Sandal, Sabine Carey, Enze Han, Jarrod Hayes, Steven B. Redd, and Laura Sjoberg, with ex-officios Patrick James, Cameron G. Thies, Helen Milner, Mark Boyer and Jennifer Fontanella. The report was submitted February 4, 2020 for the 2020 Governing Council meeting in Honolulu.

FULL REPORT

At the meeting in Toronto at the 2019 ISA convention, the long run planning committee identified three issues that we could investigate over the next year.

One was the issue of creating a permanent ISA headquarters. Upon checking with Mark Boyer, we confirmed that a separate ad hoc committee was being set up for this and so we did not pursue it.

A second topic was “Innovations to ISA Conferences.” We did not pursue this and so it remains a topic that might be investigated by subsequent Long Run Planning Committees.

The third area where we did make progress was on “Supporting Victims of Sexual Harassment/Assault at Conferences.” Credit for this goes to Leslie Wehner and his subcommittee. Their report and proposal is attached to this memo.

Finally, an issue left over is looking at “How regions operate and work within ISA.” We did not find it necessary to work on this but a subsequent long run committee might want to take up the issue, including defining the question better in terms of relations with regional ISA groups and/or non-ISA regions.

Our next meeting is Friday, March 27, 2020 from 12:30pm - 2:00 pm at A 1402, Ali‘i Tower, Hilton Hawaiian Village.
SUBCOMMITTEE 3: SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND/OR HARASSMENT

Enze Han, Patrick Haney, Laura Sjoberg & Leslie Wehner

**ACTION ITEM:** The LRPC recommends that ISA establish an Ombudsperson system which features two ombudspersons for each conference. We recognize that such a system would need to be considered by the Committee on Professional Rights and Responsibilities (given their oversight of the ISA Code of Conduct) and ISA’s legal counsel before such a system could be implemented. Nevertheless, we recommend that those deliberations occur so that a formal proposal can come forward at the 2021 Governing Council meeting.

**AIMS AND MANDATE OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE**

The subcommittee was charged with exploring the desirability and feasibility of providing on-site support to people who experience sexual assault or harassment at the conference. Desirability questions include potential utility and/or effectiveness, while feasibility issues could include whether the association has members who with training could serve in that role or whether the association might hire professionals from the outside for this purpose.

**PROCESS AND ANALYSIS**

This exploration grew out of a discussion at ISA Toronto about whether ISA should provide on-site support to victims of sexual harassment and assault. The Subcommittee exchanged emails and had some Skype meetings to discuss and propose a series of ideas to provide on-site support. In particular, this subcommittee analysed different possibilities of support to victims and surveyed and gathered experiences from different similar Associations such as APSA, ECPR and LASA. All these associations provide on-site support to their members in case they may experience harassment and assault at their annual conferences. The type of support that these associations provide is that they have onsite two Ombudspersons that are present full-time during their respective annual meetings. As we gathered information from other associations, it became clear that ISA is behind other associations in the provision of on-site support to victims. ISA having a code of conduct in place that seeks to prevent and protect victims of harassment and discrimination is good, but no longer the state of the art in terms of providing protection.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The subcommittee evaluated a number of ideas that could strengthen ISA’s commitment to prevent any form of discrimination, exclusion, and harassment during its annual meetings. After evaluating several ideas, the subcommittee’s main recommendation is to have an Ombudsperson system for each Annual Conference and (if and when possible) provide similar on-site support for the ISA Joint Conferences in coordination with the respective partner institute/university and local/regional association.

Having an ombudsperson system for each conference may discourage people from engaging in behaviour that violates the ISA code of conduct. It will also provide a safety net to any persons experiencing discrimination and/or harassment at the conference, where they can ask for advice, comfort, and assistance. It may also function to give a certain formality to the point one of the ISA code of conduct on how to address grievances. As it stands the first step of addressing grievances may deter the complainant from initiating an accusation about harassment as it will have to face the respondent on her/his own without any type of mediation and/or support. An ombudsperson creates a first step without a deterrent. In addition, an Ombudsperson system will give a symbolic statement to the members of ISA in terms of provision of support for victims and potential victims of harassment, assault, and exclusion.

We recommend an Ombudsperson system which features two ombudspersons for each conference. One of those will be a professional that is to be hired for each annual meeting. This professional ombudsperson should have possibly
experience in University conflict mediation, University education systems, and mediations. The other ombudsperson should be an impartial member of the ISA. The latter should be an ISA member that has no official role in committees, governing council and subsections to prevent any conflict of interest and keep total independence while in the position of Ombuds. The ISA member should be a full professor or chair as to reduce possible asymmetrical dependence from one of the parties involved in a case of harassment and assault. Both Ombudspersons should abide and be part of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and thus follow the IOA Standards of Practice (see annex 1). One professional ombudsman secures further impartiality and above all years of experience in mediating and supporting victims in different contexts, while the ISA member secures knowledge of the practices, codes and internal aspects of the ISA. In fact, this is the model used by APSA for the last three years with significant success. We have been able to talk to both the professional and APSA-member ombudspersons.

In order to make this work, ISA should be able to cover the annual fees for the ISA person and cover the necessary training to be an IOA member (annual fee of $195 a year plus an administrative fee of $25 for joining the IOA, plus courses provided to IOA members at a reduced cost to train).

In this recommendation of providing in situ support to victims of harassment and assault, there are three key issues to be considered to secure the institutional support of ISA for the Ombudsperson system:

- ISA should develop a policy to support Ombudsman and incorporate the IOA standards of practice. Moreover, the code of conduct (especially its section on addressing grievances) should be updated to include the mediating figure of the Ombuds. ISA new policy should empower the Ombuds to operate in and around ISA conferences.
- There should also be a call of expression of interest to appoint the ISA member Ombudsperson.
- Once the Ombuds is introduced and relevant policies are in place, ISA should provide a platform to inform membership of this on-site support. The initiative should be informed and promoted to all members. Moreover, ISA should make clear what the ombudspersons DO or are expected to do for eventual victims, as much as the aspects that CANNOT DO that are part of IOA Standards of Practice.
- In the first conference with ombudspersons (which we hope is ISA 2020) and subsequent ones, ISA should provide all necessary logistical support in each conference:
  - In the provision of a private and discreet office space for the Ombuds in which they can receive and talk to victims and complainants.
  - Reserve a space in the Exhibit Hall with print-outs about the ombudsman role as well as detailed information in the provision of support to ISA members.
  - Provide room space for seminars and talks to first year attendees to ISA, junior scholars, and membership in general about the Ombuds and provision of support from the ISA and Ombuds.
ANNEX 1

IOA STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

PREAMBLE
The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics.

Each Ombudsman office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

INDEPENDENCE

1.1 The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational entities.

1.2 The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.

1.3 The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual’s concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman’ direct observation.

1.4 The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.

1.5 The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

2.1 The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.

2.2 The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.

2.3 The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independent of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombudsman should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.

2.4 The Ombudsman serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombudsman’ neutrality. The Ombudsman should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.

2.5 The Ombudsman has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.

2.6 The Ombudsman helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.
CONFIDENTIALITY

3.1 The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following: The Ombudsman does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, nor does the Ombudsman reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, without that individual’s express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombudsman; the Ombudsman takes specific action related to an individual’s issue only with the individual’s express permission and only to the extent permitted, and even then at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombudsman Office. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no other reasonable option. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.

3.2 Communications between the Ombudsman and others (made while the Ombudsman is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.

3.3 The Ombudsman does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and resists testifying in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor’s contact with the Ombudsman or confidential information communicated to the Ombudsman, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombudsman may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.

3.4 If the Ombudsman pursues an issue systemically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombudsman does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.

3.5 The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.

3.6 The Ombudsman maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.

3.7 The Ombudsman prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.

3.8 Communications made to the ombudsman are not notice to the organization. The ombudsman neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and shall not serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization. However, the ombudsman may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

INFORMALITY AND OTHER STANDARDS

4.1 The Ombudsman functions on an informal basis by such means as: listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at Ombudsman discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombudsman helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.

4.2 The Ombudsman as an informal and off-the-record resource pursues resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.
4.3 The Ombudsman does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.

4.4 The Ombudsman supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombudsman Office is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.

4.5 The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombudsman refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.

4.6 The Ombudsman identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.

4.7 The Ombudsman acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.

4.8 The Ombudsman endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombudsman Office.

www.ombudsassociation.org

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