

International Students of History Association  
International Board 2005/2006



Policy Paper 2005/06

## **What to do with ISHA in 2005/2006?**

## Goals

Whereas the members of last year's International Board of ISHA were about as closely located to each other as is possible in our organisation at the moment and were keen to point out the virtues of such an arrangement, their successors in 2005/06 won't enjoy quite the same level of geographical proximity. But we're still relatively close to each other - not just geographically - and, coming from the same linguistic background (...more or less), we're confident that there'll be steady communication between us. Since we have taken up these chores to follow up the good work of our predecessors, we hope this communication will translate into us achieving a number of goals we're setting ourselves:

- Find other sources of income besides the membership fee
- Get a bunch of new sections involved and revive recently deceased sections
- Get *Carnival* off the ground once more
- Maintain our website and perhaps even increase its appeal
- Get a degree of continuity into the organisation, prevent information getting lost or forgotten, make it easier for boards to follow on from one another other

## Communication

The new ISHA website, which has been operational for approx. a year now, is a vast improvement compared to the previous state of affairs and has certainly improved the appeal of and communication within ISHA, especially thanks to the forum. However, it seems as if the forum could be slightly livelier. Perhaps ways to increase its potential should be sought.

The existence of our improved website and the forum it features hasn't made the ISHA List obsolete yet, however. The list is still our organisation's main source of communication when as large a number of people involved in ISHA as possible need to be addressed as directly as possible. Therefore, sections should continue urging their members to join the ISHA List (and the forum, of course) and we as the IB will also add the e-mail addresses of new participants after every ISHA event.

## Finances

Last year's IB proposed trying to find secondary sources of income for ISHA in addition to the membership fee. We also agree that *Carnival* should be able to sustain itself as far as possible, and that officially being a Swiss organisation with a Swiss treasurer we should try to get funding from a Swiss organisation, foundation or whatever.

As for the use of our funds, it might be helpful to have a kind of emergency fund in case the financing of an ISHA event goes terribly wrong and the organisers are faced with the possibility of ending up in debt.

We'll try to get as many of our sections as possible to pay the membership fees; not so much for financial reasons (although ISHA would have a wider range of possible activities if it had more money), but mainly because only a paying section is a section that has the right to vote in the GA and thus really participate in the inner workings of ISHA. By paying its membership fee a section shows it cares enough to invest 50-75 euros a year to be part of ISHA.

### *Carnival*

First of all, we hope that 2004/05 *Carnival* editor Ivan Dujmić will receive enough articles to publish an issue some time in 2005, while he still has funding. It would be desirable for both him and this year's editor, Maartje Vermeulen, to agree on a format and layout both can live with. After all, we still hope that we can get future issues of *Carnival* to look more or less like they belong together.

But what's more important is that we find people to actually hand in articles in the first place. Since asking for articles over the forum and the ISHA List has so far not been too successful, other ways of promoting participation in our journal will have to be examined. Before thinking of approaching lecturers and asking them to provide articles for a struggling student journal, it'll be important to get *Carnival* off the ground once more, perhaps by increasing its newsletter function once more by including news, information and reflective issues, e.g. reports of past events. We could print excerpts from academic discussions in the "current topics" part of the ISHA website's forum and ask those sections with their own journal to translate (if necessary) and send in the best articles from their current issues. Council members will be asked to function as 'local *Carnival* editors', writing articles of their own (thus setting a good example to others) or otherwise finding two articles per year to be printed in *Carnival*. Finally, when approaching lecturers, perhaps special emphasis should be placed on trying to persuade lecturers and PhD candidates with a past in ISHA to lend us a hand.

As far as the financial part goes, it looks as though both the Zagreb *Carnival* issue will be self-sufficient (if it ever appears, that is), as will the following issue produced in Utrecht. We agree with last year's IB that *Carnival* basically might even be turned into a potential source of income if we can find some sponsorship, although there are a number of obvious practical problems involved.

### *Promotion & new sections*

We once more urge all members to advertise ISHA to other history students in their respective countries, especially when another seminar or conference is scheduled to take place. Members willing to do this should be able to expect promotional material on ISHA in general as well as on specific events to be downloadable from the website at all times. In this context the general ISHA promotional flyer will be updated.

The ISHA T-shirts produced by last year's IB and sold at the Ohrid conference for 10 euros apiece didn't turn out to be a source of extra income. Instead, there was a slight financial loss. But from a promotional point of view they were still a success, enhancing our organisation's visibility and sense of community. Therefore it might be worthwhile to produce another round of ISHA T-shirts to sell at the next annual conference (esp. more in black and more sweaters), or perhaps other gimmicks like coffee mugs, hats, lighters, bottle openers or maybe even a calendar featuring ISHA members. (The old IB's idea of producing a range of home-made "ISHA beer" is likely to be frowned upon by this year's German/Swiss IB.)

Where new sections are concerned, there was only one real acquisition in 2004/05: ISHA Utrecht. But this section has already shown a lot of great potential, with a steady attendance at ISHA seminars and through providing the *Carnival* editor for 2005/06, Maartje Vermeulen, as well as taking on the organisation of the 2006 annual conference. That's the way to go! For 2005/06, potential new sections in Serbia, Italy and Bulgaria seem to be looming on the horizon. Plus, there are a number of other specific universities or general regions that will be

targeted, such as Montpellier, Germany, Israel and Romania, and wherever else active ISHA people manage to leave an impression.

But just as important as acquiring new sections is the task of reminding existing sections to avoid dying out or to take care of good generation changes. Organising one's own ISHA events are usually quite handy in this respect, as is trying to convince potential recruits of participating in seminars and conferences elsewhere, or even just taking potential recruits out drinking in one's own university town to get them used to their local ISHA presence.

### *Cooperation with other organisations*

Cooperation with other organisations like our own can be beneficial for ISHA. In any case we'll try to re-establish contact with *CLIOHnet*, a big European organisation of teachers of history. Contacts in the past looked like they might be useful for us, and we for them. Maybe we'll manage to get our events advertised through their members? Especially now that *CLIOHnet* has launched its own student organisation it will be very important to explore the possibilities of co-operation with *CLIOHnet Students* and see how it might affect ISHA.

A lot of countries have national history organisations, something like ISHA but on a national level. If we can get into contact with them, we might be able to get to a lot of people at once, stimulating several sections to be created simultaneously.

Besides that we'll approach the *Informal Forum of International Students' Organisations* (IFISO) to get our officials included on their mailing list and have them include ISHA and our logo on their website.

### *Continuity*

While writing this policy paper we encountered the problem of whether we're expected to pick up on what was written in the last one, including such stuff as we consider worthwhile and only dropping what has already been achieved or doesn't seem too relevant. For the sake of continuity it would seem entirely permissible and even advisable to react to the previous policy paper, since there is no point in losing important ideas that just haven't quite been put into practice yet thus becoming obsolete in a way.

ISHA has a rather short memory, rather obvious since the majority of the ISHA people have only been involved in the organisation for a few years. Consequently, if something is done in a certain way for a few years in a row it is considered "normal" by most people, since it's been done this way for as long as most folks can remember. That's why it is very important to do things "the way they should be done" for a few years in a row. So basically, if a Council and an IB do what they are supposed to for a few years, everybody will expect those things to happen; if a newsletter is sent for a year every 6 weeks, people will expect that newsletter, if a draft-budget and policy paper is presented at the beginning of a new academic year for a few years, ISHA people will expect that, if the Council is very active through mail and forum, commenting, giving advice and doing things, people will expect it after a few years, maybe even less. And well, people SHOULD expect all these things!

Also, there could be advantages if the members of the IB are located in each other's vicinity. So when looking for suitable candidates for the IB, special attention could be paid on trying to find people located in the same region. We think this would be desirable since it's hardly possible to run an organisation with all board members hundreds or even thousands of

kilometres from each other. In that situation you can only have a maximum of a few meetings of the IB each year, which is much too few, as the only other communication possible is through the internet (slow) and telephone (expensive). Further, an IB that is located at one section has that section to back it up with volunteers and facilities. Also people who see each other on a regular basis can motivate each other when motivation of one of the members should flag noticeably. Nevertheless, of course every motivated individual in ISHA is welcome to stand for election, regardless of location.

Also there should be much more documentation in ISHA. At the moment we have the Statutes and the Standing Orders (that probably only about a dozen people have read, and that's rather optimistic). We should produce some more text about how things are done best, such as "What to do as an IB member", "What to do being in the Council", "How to organise a seminar/conference". Short documents about relevant subjects like this should ensure, if read, that people don't make the same mistakes twice or invent the wheel several years in a row. We especially hope that a manual for organising ISHA seminars and conferences might be helpful in trying to raise and then maintain academic standards.

Another part of this "continuity thing" is that our website should be easy to update, so that anybody with some basic web-building skills can continue to work on it in the following years. However, in our term we'll probably still try to rely on the former Secretary and new Council member Dominic to remain partially responsible for the website for at least this coming year, while nonetheless passing on part of the workload to his successor Christian Schlag.

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