

ISHA IB policy paper 2006/2007:

What to do with ISHA in 2006/2007???

Goals

Since we have taken up these chores to follow up the wonderful work of our predecessors, we hope this communication will translate into us achieving a number of goals we're setting ourselves:

- both issues of *Carnival*, stabilisation of the magazine
- finding other sources of income besides the membership fee
- revival and fortifying already existing but deceased sections
- improving our means of communication and sense of community: website, forum, ISHA- list
- keeping a degree of continuity in the organisation, prevent information getting lost or forgotten, making it easier for boards to follow on from one another other
- cooperation with other student organizations

Communication

The existence of our improved website and the forum it features hasn't made the ISHA List obsolete yet. The forum is still quite under populated and should be in some way animated, so that more people participate actively in it. It is a powerful tool for keeping together such a sprawling organisation as is ours, so we should definitely try to use it more effectively.

The ISHA 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.

We will actively try to step up communication within ISHA, as well as official communication of ISHA with outside organisations and groups.

Finances

We would like to stress the importance of finding alternative means of funding (besides membership fees). Like our predecessors, we will continue trying to get funding from EU funds, despite the fact that such previous attempts have been unsuccessful. We will also look into the possibilities offered by different foundations. We would also like to make one final attempt at getting to the funds ISHA has, that are currently stuck in a Belgian bank somewhere. We feel that *Carnival* should be able to sustain itself as far as possible, with assistance from the central account only in exceptional circumstances.

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. The emergency fund could also be used to help out officials in attending events related to ISHA (like IFISO meetings, etc., where official representation is necessary, for example covering participation fees)

We'll try to get as many of our sections as possible to pay the membership fees. By paying its membership fee a section shows it cares enough to invest 50-75 euros a year to be part of ISHA.

Carnival

With the two back issues of *Carnival* (Maartje and Ivan's) finally (almost) done, we can only hope that this year's editor Mladen has more luck printing his in time. Hopefully, *Carnival* can get back on track and finally become periodical and we hope that we can get future issues of *Carnival* to look more or less like they belong together in the sense of following issues keeping to a more or less agreed-on layout and format.

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 might be asked to function as 'local *Carnival* editors', or otherwise they could delegate the task writing articles of their own (thus setting a good example to others) or otherwise finding two articles per year to be printed in *Carnival* to someone else. 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.

We will try to make contact with certain universities with international programmes in order to find another possible source for articles and maybe even some funding (by offering them space to advertise their programmes).

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. Work is also proceeding on the creation of a promotional package that might be sent to organisations we wish to have better relations with. We believe we should be more aggressive in our propaganda, both inward (fortifying sections, reviving them) and outward (to organisations we wish to cooperate with).

The ISHA T-shirts 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, seeing as a lot of people already have the shirts. It might be a nice refreshment.

Where new sections are concerned, we feel that while expansion should continue steadily, we should also focus more on reviving and strengthening existing sections. There are also some nominal new ones (like Italy, Bulgaria, etc.) that have yet to activate themselves in year-round ISHA life. Plus, there are a number of other specific universities or general regions that will be targeted, and the previous IB's subterfuge has provided us with some contacts that have the potential of proving quite fruitful recruitment-wise.

The task of reminding existing sections to avoid dying out or to take care of good generation changes is therefore very important. Organising one's own ISHA events is 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. For one, Zagreb and Nijmegen have shown such initiative, with a very lively collection of young blood...

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?

We would also like to establish a stronger collaboration with the European Sociology Students Association (ESSA), and contacts in this direction already exist.

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.

The *Informal Forum of International Students' Organisations* (IFISO) we would like to use to promote ISHA further and form some kind of cooperation – hopefully ISHA officials in the future will be able to attend more of their meetings.

Of course, we will support any section's initiative to cooperate with different student organisations wholeheartedly.

Continuity

The previous IB put this following text together in their own policy paper, and we felt there is little to add to it, so we quote:

“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."

The manuals on ISHA events have not yet been completed, but work on them is well underway by our diligent ex-officials, so we trust they will soon be available for the next generation of ISHA activists.

Another neat feature for ensuring continuity, at least between ISHA officials is an annual meeting between an outgoing and incoming IB taking place during summer. So far, two such meetings were held, last year in Spain, organised by the then upcoming president, the honourable Mr. Alan Götz, and this year in Croatia, organised by this year's IB. The report from this meeting is already online, and the minutes will follow within a matter of weeks. This form of meeting has proven quite valuable in giving incoming officials a sense of direction and helping them grasp the intricacies of ISHA functioning. Therefore it might be helpful to make this a regular feature in the ISHA yearly calendar, while perhaps expanding the meeting to include Council members, or perhaps organising a separate Council meeting. In any case, we feel that an annual incoming/outgoing IB meeting, organised regularly by the next incoming IB is a minimum that should be maintained.*

* This policy paper was drafted at the beginning of our mandate and presented at the ISHA Summer/Autumn seminar in Pula, September 2006, where it was subsequently approved by the General Assembly on September 5th, 2006. It is a natural continuation of previous IBs' ones, made in the hope that we will continue along the path to ISHA's ultimate glory in the direction pointed by the footsteps of those who came before us.

Branimir Bekavac, Jasmina Skočilić, Iva Žutić (ISHA Zagreb)
International Board 2006/2007