

IACS Board Meeting Minutes 18 March 2022 (by Skype)

Board Members Present: Esther Pascual, Jamin Pelkey, Todd Oakley, Hanna Little
Conference Organizing Committee Members Present: Martin Thiering, Gudrun Rohde (secretary)

[Minutes taken by Jamin and Todd, and revised by Esther and Todd]

Esther Pascual (IACS President) called the meeting as an emergency measure in order to address the impact on conference delivery of a severe situation affecting the local organizing committee. The meeting opened at 12:30pm UTC via Skype. Esther asked for volunteers to take minutes. Jamin Pelkey agreed to take minutes. Esther and Todd agreed to check the minutes.

Martin was representing the conference chair Irene Mittelberg. Martin reported on the deliberations and decisions that came out of a recent meeting of the conference organizing committee, including colleagues from both RWTH Aachen University and KU Leuven. The severe situation has made on-site conference delivery impossible for either Leuven or Aachen. It was also noted and agreed by all present that the rising Covid-19 cases in Germany and neighboring countries, a situation that is most likely to become more severe, make a hybrid conference unfeasible.

The organizing committee suggested postponement until October as one possibility, an online only conference as a second possibility, and cancellation as a third possibility.

The board members in attendance agreed unanimously that an online-only conference in June would be better than cancelling or postponing again until October (or later), since the conference has already been postponed once due to the pandemic, and since the organizing committee would be unable to book original facilities later in the year. Other factors, such as ongoing global instability, travel restrictions, and questions about availability of two of the plenary speakers also make an online conference seem like a better option for the current year. Todd pointed out that an emergency shift to an online format for 2022 has been acknowledged as a possibility since the first postponement in 2020.

Regarding finances, Martin reported that no flights have been booked for plenary speakers; and the German conference funding grant secured by Irene Mittelberg was awarded with the understanding that the conference would be at least partially online; so substantial funding remains to support an online only event. This support may also enable the conference to lower or waive registration fees for emerging scholars. All agreed that the conference fee will need to be significantly lower than originally planned, now that it is moved fully online. Martin notes that Gather Town software, which integrates Zoom and has good interactive features, will be used to host the event online. Grant funds can cover technical support staff for hosting the event virtually as well. All understood that the local committee will need help from the IACS board with the conference preparation for it to succeed. It was agreed that IACS board members would undertake part of the tasks (e.g. program), since these can be handled remotely.

Martin indicated being willing to shift the conference to an online-only event instead of cancelling the conference, with the help of the organizing committee, young researchers, and hired support personnel. Martin reported that 112 abstracts, written by 85-90 participants, have been accepted.

Action points:

- Esther will notify remaining IACS board members to seek approval to move the conference fully online right after the meeting and will then compose a message on behalf of the board and local organizing committee, for Sara Lenninger (IACS Secretary) to send on Monday, March 21, to inform all IACS members and presenters.
- Gudrun and Martin will finalize and send a checklist of planning tasks for shifting the conference to an online-only format, for IACS members to volunteer to undertake some.
- Gudrun will contact the German grant agency to inquire if the funds reserved for the on-site part of the hybrid conference could be used to aid emerging scholars with the conference fees.
- Martin will notify the Leuven organizing committee members and will contact plenary speakers individually before the official email to all IACS members and presenters is sent.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30pm UTC.