

IRSA

Secretary-Treasurer

Quadrennial Report: 2012-2016

(1) IRSA Web Site

Mr. Kjartan Anthun continues to serve as the IRSA web master. He is located in Trondheim, Norway, and is in easy contact with former IRSA President Reidar Almas. Throughout the past four years, Mr. Anthun has responded in a timely manner to requests by the President and Secretary-Treasurer to update the web site (IRSA-world.org). Maintaining the web site is one of IRSA's two most significant expenses. Over the past four years, IRSA has spent \$11,000 for this purpose.

(2) Constitution, By-laws and Procedural Manuel

No changes have been made to the Constitution and By-laws over the past quadrennial period. At its 2006 meeting, IRSA Council agreed to allow Regional Association members to forego payment of annual dues if payment was deemed to be of undue hardship and a formal request for such was submitted to the Secretary-Treasurer. This policy continues to be followed.

(3) Annual Dues

As of the opening of the 2016 World Congress, all member association annual dues payments are up to date (through 2015). RSS has may its dues payments for 2016 and the ESRS dues payment for 2016 is expected shortly. ARSA paid its dues for the 2012 to 2015 at the 2012 World Congress and AFRN (which replaced the former AON) recently has paid its dues until 2019. ALASRU requested a waiver from dues payment in 2012. Current practice is for ESRS and RSS to pay on an annual basis because of their relatively higher level of payment, while all other associations pay on a quadrennial basis. This also helps minimize exchange rate costs.

(4) Mid-Term Council Meeting

The Mid-Term Council Meeting was held in conjunction with the Congress of the International Sociology Association in Yokohama, Japan on July 15, 2014. During that meeting, Council continued its discussion of developing stronger ties with African scholars and the possibility of helping those scholars develop an African Rural Sociology Association. Keith Moore has taken leadership on this initiative for IRSA. The Program and Local Arrangements Committees reported on progress being made for the 2016 World Congress. Members of regional associations reported out on their associations' activities. The secretary-treasurer reported that IRSAs tax status with the US Internal Revenue Service had been resolved.

(5) IRSA Interaction with Regional Associations

The IRSA website has proven to be a highly valuable means of communicating forthcoming conferences and new publications, as well as highlighting the activities and achievements of individual rural sociologists. A number of face-to-face meetings of IRSA officers and counterparts in regional associations occurred during 2012-2016. President Lawrence attended and spoke at the following conferences: XXV and XXVI Congresses of the European Society for Rural Sociology (Florence, Italy, 2013 and Aberdeen, Scotland, 2015); XVIII World Congress of Sociology (Yokohama, Japan, 2014); Fifth International Conference of the Asian Rural Sociology Association (Vientiane, Laos, 2014); and XIX, XX and XXI Australasian Agrifood Research Network Conferences (Melbourne, Australia, 2013; Sydney, Australia, 2014; Queenstown, New Zealand, 2015). The Secretary-Treasurer attended RSS meetings, and also conducted a site visit of Toronto/Ryerson University in the summer of 2015 in preparation for the 2016 World Congress.

Council members were also actively involved in regional conference activities – Ray Jussaume with RSS, Mark Shucksmith with ESRS, Lutgarda Tolentino with ARSA, Sergio Schneider with ALASRU and Vaughan Higgins with AFRN, among others. During his term as President, Geoff Lawrence wrote eight ‘President Corner’ columns for the IRSA website. Topics were: ‘Address to the General Assembly of IRSA from the Incoming President’ (2012); ‘De Schutter’s Mandate’ (2012); “‘Land grabs’ and Rural Sociology’ (2013); ‘CAFO Contradictions and Test-tube Meat’ (2013); ‘The International Year of Family Farming’ (2014); ‘A Prosperous Future for Rural Asia?’ (2014); ‘Food People Planet’ (2014); ‘International Year of Soils’ (2015); ‘Neoliberalism, Agriculture and Rural Society: Reaching Some Conclusions’ (2015); ‘Neoliberalism – Growing Resistance?’ (2016).

(6) Bid for 2020 World Congress

President Lawrence has been exploring the possibility of having the 2020 World Congress held in Cairns, Queensland, Australia. A bid has been put forward by Professor Stewart Lockie from James Cook University and has been supported by both the Australasian Agrifood Research Network and by the Asian Rural Sociology Association. Cairns is a major hub of the Asia-Pacific region, has a modern convention center that can accommodate up to 3,000 delegates, and has an international airport with direct flights from Asia, Japan and New Zealand, and with connections to Europe and North America. It is a multi-cultural city and has many tourist attractions – including the Great Barrier Reef, rainforests, and Indigenous sites and cultures. It is a very safe location. Weather-wise, mid-year in Cairns is equivalent to summer in the northern hemisphere (average daily temperature 17-26 C, or 64-79 F). There is little rainfall during the period. The organisers have obtained approximately US \$70,000 to help promote and host the Congress. There will be some challenges for the organisers: a viable Congress requires about 700 paid participants. One question is whether this number is likely given the large distances and costs associated with travel from Europe and Latin America? Relatedly, can registration fees be set at a level that is affordable for potential delegates, but still

provides IRSA with the required surplus that is needed to sustain its budget? Finally, will a ‘tropical’ theme be sufficiently broad to attract global interest? These issues will need to be addressed over the next two years.

(7) International Sociological Association Membership

IRSA continued its formal association as an Affiliate member of the International Sociological Association (ISA). Mid-term IRSA Council meetings are planned to coincide with ISA World Congresses, the next of which will be held here in Toronto, from July 15 to 21, 2018. ISA’s membership list can be reviewed at (<http://www.ucm.es/info/isa/>).

(8) IRSA Income, Sponsorships and Conference Rates

IRSA faces a looming financial issue. Association membership rates have not risen for the past 12 years, when they were lowered from previous years. Maintaining the web site has become a major expense for the Association. Over the past four years, limited funds were spent on travel for the President, and the Secretary-Treasurer received no financial support to conduct a Toronto site visit in 2015. In addition, for this year’s Congress in Toronto, concerns were raised by numerous potential attendees, including senior (retired) scholars, contract faculty, non-academics, NGO members, farmers or those who are partially employed that the registration rates for the Congress were not affordable and not fair. Also, the Program Committee for Toronto was faced with questions about IRSA’s policy regarding the acceptance of sponsors for the World Congress.

While current IRSA accounts show a positive balance, over the last quadrennial period, income from the 2012 World Congress and dues memberships was less than what was spent on expenses. Income from the Congress and memberships was \$18,458.17 while payments for the web site and for Presidential travel to regional RSS meetings was \$22,571.75.