

# IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement

## November 2019



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## I. Preface

Dear Colleagues  
Officers and Individual Members of  
IAHR Member Societies and Affiliates

Dear Colleagues,

Our XXII World Congress in Otago is approaching quickly, so is the deadline for submissions (December 31). Please make sure not to miss it!

The first news of this e-Bulletin is from the Otago host, regarding travel grants for those who are planning to participate in the Congress next summer. We thank the generous donor and the Otago host for the arrangement.

The second purpose of this e-Bulletin is to bring you the nominations of the next IAHR Executive Committee, which should be sent “to the members of the International Committee ... not less than nine months prior to each quinquennial congress” (“Nomination Procedure for the Executive Committee” <http://www.iahrweb.org/nominations.php>)

Its third purpose is to preliminarily announce a few important proposals to the International Committee, which are the major outcomes of the special, Extended Executive Committee (EEC) meeting that took place in September.

It also allows me to remind you to suggest names for the IAHR Honorary Life Membership.

Let me also announce the change of a *NVMEN* managing editor and its book review editors. Professor Ülo Valk has been appointed managing editor and will succeed Professor Gregory D. Alles who is going to step down in December 2020. However, to provide for as smooth a period of transition as possible, Brill Publishers has decided that Prof. Valk will begin work in February 2020. In 2020, then, there will be three managing editors of *NVMEN*: Profs. Gregory D. Alles, Laura Feldt and Ülo Valk. Prof. Valk is professor of the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia. He has served as the President of the Estonian Society for the Study of Religions. He was the Chair of the scientific committee of the 17th annual conference of the EASR, also an IAHR Regional Conference. The IAHR Executive Committee welcomes Prof. Valk and looks forward to working together with him.

Dr. Jenny Butler has been appointed book review editor of *NVMEN*. She will succeed Professor Carole Cusack and Dr. Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, who will step down in December 2019. She is a Lecturer in the Study of Religions Department, College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences at University College Cork, Cork, Ireland. She recently served as the organizer of an IAHR Special Conference, namely the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (ISSRNC) Conference in Cork in 2019.

The IAHR Executive Committee wants to take the opportunity to extend thanks to the two

outgoing review editors for their service to *NVMEN* and thus also to the IAHR. The IAHR Executive Committee welcomes Dr. Butler and looks forward to working with her.

Lastly, to add an advance notice, various documents from the above-mentioned Extended Executive Committee meeting will be uploaded in an online folder, which will be shared with you. In that way, you will be able to get acquainted with the initial framing questions asked by the EC, papers read and used, and some of the arguments exchanged during the meeting, a meeting, the outcome of which served as a basis for several of the proposals that will be presented at the Otago International Committee meeting (see below, section IV). The folder will also include an open letter from Prof. Donald Wiebe, in which he announced his resignation from his IAHR Honorary Life Membership with reference to some of the papers and positions presented at the Extended Executive Committee meeting that he took part in. The IAHR Executive Committee, of course, deeply regrets the decision of Prof. Wiebe, and the IAHR President immediately and sincerely asked Prof. Wiebe to reconsider his decision. Unfortunately, the decision of Prof. Wiebe was firm. Therefore, the IAHR Executive Committee has painfully accepted his resignation as an IAHR Honorary Life Member and agreed to share with the IAHR membership Prof. Wiebe's letter of resignation, the response by President Jensen, Prof. Wiebe's rejoinder and the final response by the President. For the moment, please allow me to express gratitude to Prof. Wiebe for his life-long hard work for and dedication to the IAHR, a dedication rightfully acknowledged when Prof. Wiebe had the honor of becoming an IAHR Honorably Life Member conferred on him. The IAHR leadership first announced to Prof. Wiebe that the above-mentioned four letters and responses would be included in this e-Bulletin. However, after due consideration, we decided not to do so because the correspondence will be difficult to understand without the context provided by the other documents that will be uploaded in the above-mentioned online folder. Prof. Wiebe has been informed about this decision.

Please share this IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement, November 2019 with the members of your respective national or regional IAHR member associations and societies. Wide circulation of these e-Bulletins to individual members of your organization as well as to officers helps ensure that our membership is continuously being informed and updated on IAHR-related matters.

If you have any questions regarding the IAHR, please do not hesitate to contact me (fujiwara@l.u-tokyo.ac.jp).

Respectfully yours,

Satoko Fujiwara, IAHR Acting Secretary General  
Tokyo, November 20, 2019

## II. Travel Grants for the IAHR 2020 Congress

Thanks to the IAHR and the generosity of an individual donor, we are pleased to say that we will be able to provide some travel grants to scholars who will attend the IAHR 2020 Congress in Otago, New Zealand.

If you wish to be considered for a grant, please indicate this when submitting an abstract for the conference. In addition, please note the following conditions and procedures.

- All recipients must be members in good standing of the relevant national or regional IAHR member association.
- All recipients must have a paper accepted for the Congress. Please submit your abstract in the usual way by 31 December 2019.\*
- The amount of each grants will be determined once the total number of applicants is known, but all grants will only cover part of the costs of travel to the Congress.
- Grants will be paid as reimbursement of documented expenses. Please obtain and keep receipts, and bring them to the Congress, where arrangements for reimbursement will be made.
- Some lower cost accommodation may be available, preference will be given to those who have received travel grants.
- Preference will be given to postgraduate and early career scholars, to scholars from weak currency countries and to International Committee delegates.

Applicants should submit a CV and covering letter outlining the estimated cost of their travel and what other resources they have available (or have applied for) which will enable them to attend the Congress.

The deadline for applications will be 24 February 2020. Applications should be submitted by email to [jade@dinamics.co.nz](mailto:jade@dinamics.co.nz)

\* This condition is not required for International Committee delegates.

### III. Nominations for the Next Executive Committee

In Bern, June 16-17, 2018, the IAHR Executive Committee appointed an IAHR Nominating Committee. The committee was composed of Prof. Rosalind I.J. Hackett (Chair), Prof. Brian Bocking, Prof. Majella Franzmann, Prof. Abraham Khan and Prof. Kim Chongsuh. The committee's job was to submit nominations for the next Executive Committee (2020-2025) to the members of the International Committee in accordance with the IAHR Constitution § 4c and the rules for the nomination procedure (cf. <http://www.iahrweb.org/nominations.php>).

The Nominating Committee submitted its nominations on September 26, 2019. The candidates nominated by the committee are as follows:

President: Tim Jensen (Denmark)  
Vice President: Amarjiva Lochan (India)  
Vice President: Ann Taves (USA)  
Secretary General: Satoko Fujiwara (Japan)  
Deputy Secretary General: Anna Halafoff (Australia)  
Treasurer: Andrea Rota (Switzerland)  
Deputy Treasurer: Milda Ališauskienė (Lithuania)  
Publications Officer: Katja Triplett (Germany)  
Further Members: Juan Cruz Esquivel (Argentina)  
                    James Kapalo (Ireland)  
                    Danoye Laguda (Nigeria)  
                    David Thurfjell (Sweden)

According to the mentioned §4c (and the rules for the nomination procedure), "Members of the International Committee may propose alternative nominations not less than three months prior to each international congress. The International Committee at its meeting just preceding the General Assembly, shall elect the Executive Committee and shall report this to the General Assembly."

I consequently urge members of the International Committee who want to propose alternative nominations to do so by e-mailing the IAHR Acting Secretary General no later than May 22, 2020.

On behalf of the IAHR Executive Committee, I extend my warmest greetings and thanks to the members of the Nominating Committee for their excellent service to the IAHR.

## IV. Outcomes of the Extended Executive Committee Meeting on the Future of the IAHR

As announced at the International Committee Meeting in Bern, June 2017 (Cf. *IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement Feb 2019*, p.10), a special, Extended Executive Committee meeting was held in order to discuss the future of the IAHR in a concerted and strategic manner. It took place at the European Cultural Centre of Delphi, September 13-15, 2019. To contribute to the discussion, ex-Presidents, ex-Secretary Generals, World Conference organizers, Presidents of African and Latin American associations and *NVMEN* managing editors were invited to this meeting (for the full list of participants, please see below). The meeting was followed by a regular Executive Committee meeting, during which the current members of the Committee further discussed issues and reached conclusions as to what to propose to the International Committee meeting in Otago, 2020.

I will give you a more detailed report on the outcomes of the meetings and the reasons and rationales of the proposals, first in an email in the beginning of 2020, then in the Otago edition of the e-Bulletin, as well as in my oral presentation during the International Committee meeting in August. However, since the proposals include a few major and important issues, I would like to preliminarily announce key points at this moment so that the officers of the IAHR member societies/associations and affiliates will be able to start sharing news with their members. Many may want to discuss the proposals with their members before the Otago International Committee meeting.

### 1. Proposal to change the name of the IAHR

The Executive Committee will recommend to the Otago International Committee that the IAHR change its name from the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) to the International Association for the Study of Religions (IASR).

This may be a surprising proposal to many of you because it was only four years ago that the proposal to change the name given by Prof. Donald Wiebe and Prof. Luther Martin was rejected by a majority of the members of the International Committee in Erfurt. However, the situation surrounding the IAHR has been changing more rapidly than was imagined in 2015, and the term “history of religions”, formerly often seen as an apt umbrella term, nowadays more and more often tends to be seen as one of many approaches in the study of religion. Therefore, even Executive Committee members who voted against the name change in 2015 have decided to support the change.

It is true that the name “study” was once rejected by the IAHR International Committee in 1992 because it was considered to be too generic and amorphous (Cf. *IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement Aug 2017*, p.23). Nevertheless, since then many of the IAHR member societies and associations have adopted “study of religion(s)” for their official names or their English translations. The EASR, i.e. the “European Association for the Study of Religions” and the DVRW, i.e. the “Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionswissenschaft” (“German Association for the Study of Religion” as its official English translation) may serve as examples. Therefore, the proposed change to the “International Association for the Study of Religions” will hopefully function as an up-to-date umbrella term in the same way as the “history of religions”

did in the past. In addition, the plural of “religions” is intended to signal some continuity with the current name.

The proposal will be first discussed by the International Committee, and if a majority is in favor, the proposal will then be presented to the General Assembly, which will adopt it with a 2/3 majority in favor.

The Executive Committee is consulting IAHR member associations that use French as their primary language as to what the French equivalent should be for the “study of religions.”

## *2. Proposal to insert “scientific” into the IAHR Constitution*

As indicated above, the Executive Committee did not decide to recommend the name “study of religions” in order to signal an “anything goes” policy in regard to the approaches to religion pursued and promoted by the IAHR. On the contrary, discussions in Delphi, continued afterwards online, resulted in unanimous agreement to signal a wish to tighten up the academic, scientific profile of the IAHR in various ways, and one of these was by way of a proposal to insert the word “scientific” in Article 1 of the IAHR Constitution:

### Original Article 1

“[...] The IAHR is a nonprofit worldwide organization which has as its objective the promotion of **the academic study of religions** through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject. The IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns.”

### Proposal

#### “Article 1

[...] The IAHR is a nonprofit worldwide organization which has as its objective the promotion of **the scientific study of religions (“Religionswissenschaft”)** through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject. The IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns.”

In order to avoid giving the impression that the word “scientific” refers only to the natural sciences, the Executive Committee also suggests adding “Religionswissenschaft.” In this way, hopefully, it is also signaled that the IAHR despite timely innovations and changes stays in line with the “ethos” of the Marburg 1960 statement (Cf. A. Schimmel, “Summary of Discussion,” *NVMEN* Vol.VII, Fasc. 2, Dec 1960, 236-7) on the “identity” and specific task of the IAHR.

## *3. Proposal to change Rules for hosting an IAHR Special and Regional Conference*

Closely related to the second proposal and its rationale, the Executive Committee proposes that it becomes part of the requirements for hosting an IAHR Special or Regional Conference that one or more Executive Committee members become members of its organizing committee.

Currently, the IAHR Deputy Secretary General functions as the co-chair of the Academic Program Committee of every IAHR World Congress, and other officers, e.g. the President and the Secretary General, also function as co-chairs of various World Congress committees. The EC will draft a proposal (to be presented to the International Committee in Otago 2020) that

will introduce something similar to the Rules for IAHR Special and Regional Conferences. The exact wording of the proposal is under discussion.

The above three proposals are intended to update, enhance, and maintain the profile and status of the IAHR as the “preeminent international forum for the critical, analytical and cross-cultural study of religion past and present.”

We plan to bring more initiatives and more good news to Otago.

#### Participants of the Extended Executive Committee Meeting

##### *Invitees*

Prof. Michael Pye (former IAHR President/GS)  
Prof. Peter Antes (former IAHR President)  
Prof. Rosalind I. J. Hackett (former IAHR President)  
Prof. Armin Geertz (former IAHR GS)  
Prof. Yolotl González Torres (Director of the 1995 World Congress)  
Prof. Yoshio Tsuruoka (Program Chair of the 2005 World Congress)  
Prof. Donald Wiebe (Director of the 2010 World Congress)  
Prof. Christoph Bochinger (Director of the 2015 World Congress)  
Prof. Will Sweetman (Director of the 2020 World Congress)  
Prof. Gregory D. Alles (NVMEN Managing Editor)  
Prof. Elias K. Bongmba (President of African Association for the Study of Religions)  
Prof. Panayotis Pachis (President of Greek Society for the Study of Culture and Religion)

##### *Executive Committee*

Prof. Tim Jensen (President)  
Prof. Veikko Anttonen (Vice-President)  
Prof. Satoko Fujiwara (Acting Secretary General)  
Prof. Ann Taves (Deputy Secretary General)  
Prof. Philippe Bornet (Treasurer)  
Prof. Milda Ališauskienė (Member)  
Prof. Amarjiva Lochan (Member)  
Prof. David Thurfjell (Member)



## V. IAHR Honorary Life Membership: Call for Suggestions

As can be seen from the relevant IAHR rules ([http://www.iahrweb.org/honorary\\_nominations.php](http://www.iahrweb.org/honorary_nominations.php)), “recommendations for honorary life membership should be presented to the International Committee at its meetings during quinquennial congresses and in between two consecutive congresses.”

In November 2016 the IAHR Executive Committee appointed the Honorary Life Membership Advisory Committee 2016-2020, with the IAHR Honorary Life Members Professor Jan Platvoet, Professor Susumu Shimazono, and Professor Yolotl González Torres as its members. The time has now come for the IAHR Secretary General “to request the IAHR constituent member societies and associations to suggest one or two names and the Executive Committee to suggest up to three names. These names will be forwarded to the Advisory Committee, which will choose up to three names. The General Secretary will then present their recommendation to the International Committee”, - that is to the International Committee at its meeting in Otago 2020.

I therefore sincerely request officers of the IAHR member societies and associations to consider this matter. In case they want to suggest one or two names, they are kindly asked to send the suggestions and names, with a brief argument in favor of the named, to the IAHR Acting Secretary General no later than January 31, 2020.

## **VI. Invitation for Letters of Interest for Hosting the IAHR XXIII World Congress 2025**

As it was done so in 2014, the IAHR Executive Committee would now like to invite “letters of interest” for hosting the IAHR XXIII Quinquennial World Congress in 2025.

The procedure of issuing a call for bids for hosting an IAHR Quinquennial World Congress, initiated out of a necessity after Tokyo 2005, will be continued.

However, the Executive Committee hopes to make the process less burdensome for applicants by way of first issuing an invitation for less demanding “letters of interest” rather than for a full-fledged and time consuming bid or application.

Letters of interest, received in advance of the IAHR XXII World Congress in Otago, will then be handed over to the incoming 2020--2025 Executive Committee for its consideration.

Consequently, I herewith ask the officers of the IAHR member societies and associations to consider whether you and your members might be interested in hosting the IAHR World Congress 2025.

In case you decide to ponder the matter and maybe even send a letter of interest, I recommend that you take a look at the guidelines for running an IAHR World Congress. You can find the guidelines at the IAHR website under the heading "A Basic Framework for Running an IAHR World Congress" (<http://www.iahrweb.org/congress.php>).

Letters of interest should be sent by e-mail to the Acting Secretary General of the IAHR, Satoko Fujiwara ([fujiwara@l.u-tokyo.ac.jp](mailto:fujiwara@l.u-tokyo.ac.jp)).

Deadline for Letters of Interest: June 1st, 2020