



THE NEW OPENING

Presidential Address

for the 11th World Congress of the IASA

Katowice, Poland, 7–10 September 2023

In a recent informal debate held at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Dariusz Kubok, an expert in ancient Greek philosophy, has pointed out that the noun “crisis” derives from the Greek word κρίσις, which could be translated as “breakthrough,” “change,” “new opening.”¹ This sense of the word beautifully resonates with the present issue of the *Review of International American Studies*, which not only marks a new chapter in the journal’s 17-years’ history, but also a new leaf in the history of the International American Studies Association. “Sacred Spaces in North America,” conceptualized and edited by Lucie Kýrová and Nathaniel R. Racine, is the first issue published under the auspices of the University of Silesia Press in Katowice, Poland, and, equally importantly, under the supervision of a reorganized largely expanded, and internationalized Editorial Team. At the same time, IASA itself progresses, hand in hand with the evolution of its own *RIAS*.

The radical change that we have recently undergone as an Organization does not only warrant the durability of IASA and its philosophy, but also the stability of the *Review of International American Studies* as its voice. It seems clear that without the prospect of unhindered evolution based on generational succession no organization may last, which in itself calls for measures that would attract scholars of the younger cohort to IASA. Responding to this concern, György Tóth and Jessica Syers proved instrumental

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1. See also Kubok 2021: 27–8, 538.

in calling into existence the IASA Emerging Scholars Fellowship Programme. Wholeheartedly supporting the initiative, the IASA Executive Council declared thus:

We wish to reiterate that in IASA, senior, managerial, and leadership positions are not restricted to established professorship only. Our Organization recognizes that many of our Emerging Scholars, often denied permanent positions at their own universities, have made groundbreaking contributions to the present-day state of knowledge, despite which many of them remain invisible. To help remedy the situation, IASA aims to be the space in which Emerging Scholars can thrive. Gradually, but without delay, younger colleagues with exemplary leadership skills and excellent professional record will assume leadership positions in our Organization: first, shadowing our current leaders, and then taking over their responsibilities. The thus rejuvenated International American Studies Association will certainly be in good hands for decades to come.

With such a goal in view, the IASA proposes to call into existence a cohort of the “IASA Early Career Fellows” for two year appointments, assuming that this title will enhance our younger Colleagues employment prospects, or—if they are already employed—help increase their visibility. This cohort could be offered opportunities for mentoring in areas they desire, and for active engagement with the organization. In addition, they could be the source of planning for events that would serve their particular interests, and potentially, put together webinars as well as other events that would enhance their own and their cohort’s visibility. IASA Early Career fellows could thus highlight their work while building ongoing engagement with the Organization. Monthly online meetings, in shifting time zone calculations, could facilitate getting to know one another within the cohort, as well as energize building cross-national and cross regional connections that are one of the great joys of the in-person Congresses. Many other projects, including podcasts, publications, promotion of special issue ideas developed by the cohort, would then have a chance to develop. (IASA Executive Council 2022: 260–261)

The Emerging Scholars Programme Fellows have almost immediately become involved in the co-creation of mentoring programmes, based on the intellectual resources of the IASA. Shadowing their more senior colleagues and participating in webinars, the Fellows become familiar with the complexity of the practical functioning of an international organization and learn leadership directly from IASA Officers and Executives, but, at the same time, become actively involved in the life of their Organization. Furthermore, they expand their experience of academic publishing, acquiring knowledge

of essential value for the future of the *RIAS*. Initiates in academic publishing share the opinion that without the influx of new ideas and regular funding no Open Access periodical forgoing authorship fees could survive in the context of the contemporary, corporate, model of the academe. The Emerging Scholars Programme warrants much more than mere survival: with the implementation of the Programme, a new vista has opened both for IASA and for the *RIAS*.

Most IASA members realize that since its modest beginnings as an online newsletter of the International American Studies Association the very existence of *RIAS* has depended on the dedication of a small, close-knit group of individuals: scholars responsible for countless academic projects of their own, who would nonetheless invest their time, energy, and—not infrequently—their private funds in transforming the basic idea of making research available to everyone into a cultural practice. Such work is rarely appreciated by the larger academic community. No wonder: when we submit our texts for publication, we simply visit a journal's website, fill out an uncomplicated form with essential metadata, attach an editable document, hope for positive reviews, and once these arrive, introduce minor revisions, and await the publication, which, somehow... *happens*.

In fact, as many of us know only too well, the process involves countless hours of work on the part of Issue Editors (responsible for the concept of the issue, for the CFPs, for the correspondence with Authors and Referees, for the merit-related editing of submitted texts, and, last but not least, for the workflow within the Open Journal System), Publishing Editors (transforming imperfect texts into linguistic, stylistic, and factually reliable gems of academic writing), Copyeditors (spending hours eliminating possible typographic or stylesheet-related errors), Typesetters and Graphic Designers (who transform editable documents into finely arranged galleys), Associate Editors (who plan the work for and collaborate with Issue Editors, guard the quality of the final output, and organize the workflow), the Editors-in-Chief (who must ensure the funding for each subsequent issue, warrant the adherence of each issue to the journal's overall profile, the correspondence of each to the global mission of the Organization, the growth of the international standing

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of the title, and who, not infrequently, put out fires, struggling to minimize delays in the publishing process). Of pivotal importance is the journal's Academic Secretary (navigating the journal through the straits and narrows of constantly changing regulations, system updates, and serving as an intermediary between the bibliometric institutions, the publishing house, the Editorial team, and the Authors. Last but not least, there are the IT wizards and OJS Coordinators, whose work guarantees that the journal meets the COPE standards of ethics, that each article is attributed a DOI number, that the metadata of each issue and each article is harvested by the search engines and that the contents is available to as many content aggregators in the world as possible.

Let us take a trip down the memory lane to celebrate the individual scholars, whose tireless work made the *Review of International American Studies* the ranking periodical that it is today. The "About the Journal" section of the *RIAS* website (here quoted *in extenso*), reminds us that

[t]he idea of the official periodical of IASA was first formed among the participants of a meeting of the IASA Executive Council at the Rothermere American Institute of the University of Oxford, in September 2004. It was during that meeting that Djelal Kadir, IASA Founding President, Barbara Buchenau and Marietta Messmer (then of the Georg-August University) raised the issue of the necessity of launching a newsletter, which would facilitate communications among the IASA members. Yet, it was only in the beginning of 2006, that Michael Boyden (at the time of the University College Ghent, Belgium, now Uppsala University, Sweden) and Paweł Jędrzejko (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland) submitted a complete proposal to the IASA to launch a periodical, which would cater to the needs of the International American Studies Association to the Organization's Executive Council. In March 2006, the founders were able to present it to Paul Giles, the then IASA President, and Theo D'Haen, then IASA Founding Executive Director, during a seminal meeting at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. As of September 2006, the *Review of International American Studies* officially became the organ of the International American Studies Association, with Michael Boyden as its Editor-in-Chief, Paweł Jędrzejko as the Associate Editor, Tomasz Adamczewski and Wojciech Liber of the Soft for Humans, Inc., as the Journal's IT advisors, Karolina Wojdała as its graphic designer and Michał Derda-Nowakowski of ExMachina Publishers as our DTP specialist. The original *RIAS* Editorial Board consisted of Theo D'haen, Anders Olsson, Liam Kennedy, Sieglinde Lemke, Giorgio Mariani, Ian Tyr-

rell, Helmbrecht Breinig, Rosario Faraudo, the IASA Founding President and ideological forefather of *RIAS*, Djelal Kadir. Soon, the President's decision was ratified by the whole of the Executive Council. As a result, IASA commissioned the design of the *RIAS* CMS System, which was launched at the end of August 2006 by the Soft For Humans, Inc. At the same time, the first call for papers was sent out to the IASA members. In September 2006, the inaugural issue of the *Review of International American Studies* finally saw the light of day.

In 2009, the Editors' Team was strengthened by Cyraina Johnson-Roullier (Notre Dame University, USA), who joined the *Review* as Associate Editor. A year later, after three years of brilliant service, Michael Boyden stepped down, handing the leadership of the Journal to Cyraina Johnson-Roullier. In the same year, Nancy Earle (Memorial University of Newfoundland St. John's, Canada), joined the team as the second Associate Editor.

2010 was a year of a radical transformation of the *Review of International American Studies*. With the Ex-Machina [publishers] changing their profile and [after] the switch from the original CMS to Korora Systems, Paweł Jędrzejko was authorized by the IASA Executive Council to sign a contract with another DTP company, the M-Studio, Inc. The *RIAS* received a brand new graphic design by Hania Traczyk (then of the M-Studio) and implemented strict procedures of double-blind peer-reference for the feature texts submitted.

In 2011, Nancy Earle stepped down from her position as Associate Editor and György "George" Tóth (then of the Charles University of Prague, Czech Republic) joined the Editors' team in her place. The Editors' work was then supported by the expanded Editorial Board, consisting of Amy Kaplan, Maureen Montgomery, Enikő Bollobás, Ulf Hannerz, Sun Youzhong, Jørn Brøndal, Amanda Lagerkvist, Christopher Saunders, Theo D'Haen, Liam Kennedy, Sieglinde Lemke, Ian Tyrell, Helmbrecht Breinig, Rosario Faraudo, Djelal Kadir, Anders Olsson, and Giorgio Mariani. Two years later, the Editor's team expanded [even further] to include Meghan McKinney of the Notre Dame University as Senior Copyeditor.

[...] Beginning with Vol. 7. No. 1 (2014), titled *Oceans Apart: In Search of New Wor(l)ds* (guest-edited by Agnieszka Woźniakowska and Anna Łakowicz-Dopiera), the journal's production was taken over by the University of Silesia Press in Katowice, Poland, which incorporated it in its online distribution and evaluation systems, thus granting the *Review of International American Studies* the much-needed visibility, and warranting its readiness for international evaluation. Distributed via the University of Silesia Press network, the *RIAS* became available through such important institutions as CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library) and BazHum, thus reaching thousands of readers worldwide.

In mid-2016, when Giorgio Mariani's term as President of the International American Studies Association came to its end, the Journal transformed again [...]. Giorgio, who formerly served as guest-editor

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and at times as a peer-referee, joined the team as the *RIAS* Associate Editor, contributing his experience and enthusiasm.

In January 2017, after eight years of dedicated service, Cyraina Johnson-Roullier handed the leadership of the *Review of International American Studies* to Giorgio Mariani, who, supported by [Paweł Jędrzejko György Tóth, and John E. Dean, took the responsibility] [...] for the growth of the *Review of International American Studies* and its continued service to the International American Studies Association and [other] academics specializing in hemispheric and transoceanic American studies worldwide.

In September 2020, the *RIAS* Editorial Team welcomed three new Associate Editors: Dr. Nathaniel R. Racine of the Texas A&M International University, USA, Dr. Lucie Kýrová of the Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic, and Dr. Justin Michael Batting of the RMIT International University Vietnam. The new Associate Editors assumed the duties thus far carried out by Professor John E. Dean and Dr. György Tóth [...].

In March 2023, the Executive Board of the International American Studies Association resolved that the Editors of the *Review of International American Studies* apply to the Publishing College of the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, to become the official Publisher of the journal by registering it in the Polish Court. As a result of mutual consent, the Journal would become a title of the University of Silesia Press with full financing of the editorial process, simultaneously retaining intellectual autonomy as the official organ of the International American Studies Association. [Consequently,] the restructuring of the Editorial Team and editorial procedures was implemented, including the expansion of the Editorial Team.

[Also i]n March 2023, professor Giorgio Mariani, the *RIAS* Editor-in-Chief stepped down after eight years of stellar service [...]. [He] was succeeded by two Co-Editors-in-Chief: professor Paweł Jędrzejko (*RIAS* Co-Founding Editor, former Managing Editor) and Dr. Nathaniel R. Racine (former *RIAS* Associate Editor). As a result of the structural transformation, the positions of *RIAS* Managing Editor and Senior Copyeditor were eliminated. The *RIAS* Editorial Team was strengthened by Professor Eugenia Sojka (Academic Secretary of *RIAS*) and two new Associate Editors: Dr. J.D. Schnepf of the University of Groningen and prof. Gabriela Vargas-Cetina (Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mexico). It was further expanded by new nominations: Dr. Anna Maj and Dr. Małgorzata Poks of the University of Silesia, and Dr. Anjali Singh of the Mohanlal Sukhadia University, India [Issue Editors]. (“About the Journal”).

The nutshell history of *RIAS* demonstrates that the present-day status of the journal is a function of the dynamics among dedicated people: of friendships that evolved over the years, of trust that emerged in the process, of the mutual sense of responsibility

for the public face of our Organization whose mission, concerning the future of humankind *in toto*, goes far beyond American Studies. And beyond doubt, those who invested significant parts of their lives in the fostering of cordial relations in IASA and in the world—are our own unsung heroes.

But even the heroes deserve a moment away from permanent crisis: the comfort of the vision of safer future. The structural transformations of *RIAS*, necessary to warrant the journal's compliance with the requirements of the University of Silesia Press, will eventually allow our Editorial Team to enjoy a degree of freedom from pedestrian concerns. Finally, the gnawing uncertainty concerning the journal's year-to-year survival is about to vanish. Henceforth, the *RIAS* Editors will be able to concentrate on the profundity of the journal's merit and its international standing. The transitory period, anticipated to last until the end of December 2023, will allow us to unify the *RIAS* procedures with the routines of the USP, to update the information available on the *RIAS* websites, upgrade the stylesheet, prepare new electronic peer-reference forms (related to the mandatory evaluation of texts other than research articles, such as book reviews, introductory essays, original materials, or interviews), and to work out efficient channels of communication between Issue Editors and Publishing Editors, OJS Coordinators, and Copyeditors, professional employees of the University of Silesia Press. Within the next few months, the new members of the *RIAS* Editorial Team will undergo technical training to quickly gain fluency in the Open Journal System workflow, and their meetings with the Co-Editors-in-Chief will help them understand the mechanisms and time constraints of the document flow. Yet, irrespective of the unquestionably substantial amount of work ahead of us, we will not compromise the journal's quality, continuing to strictly observe the principles of publication ethics, and strive for the constant increase of our journal's visibility in the academe world wide.

Our efforts to date, admittedly, have not gone unnoticed. Today, the *Review of International American Studies* enjoys the status of the "A" Class Journal in Italy and, as of July 17th, 2023, the Polish Ministry of Science and Education has granted the *RIAS* 100 points in parametric evaluation, which places our periodical among

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the highest-ranking journals of arts, humanities, and social sciences in Poland.² Such recognition leads to the intensification of international interest in the contents we offer, and, consequently, to the increase of the bibliometric parameters of the texts published in the *RIAS*. It also results in the fact that the number of high quality submissions increases every year, and that IASA's international status as an Organization continues to grow.

These developments, however, carry significant consequences. For several years now we have realized that the management of the *RIAS* must, inevitably, become professional—both in terms of the knowledge of the ins and outs of academic publishing, and in terms of the building of the journal's international standing. Especially now, in the context of our newly formed affiliation with the University of Silesia Press, the bylaws specifying the structure of the *Review of International American Studies*, the principles of nominating its Editors-in-Chief and regulating their succession must be revised to eliminate the peril of the journal's de-professionalization.

Until now, the recruitment of *RIAS* team members has depended almost entirely on the declarations of will and ability to serve. Today, enthusiasm and readiness to commit time must be supplemented by training, which will inevitably affect the mechanisms of succession. Furthermore, because the institutional funding of *RIAS* is contingent on the registration of the journal in the Polish court, by law, one of the *RIAS* Co-Editors-in-Chief must be a Polish citizen. Eventually, regular formal reporting to the Publishing College is now a duty regulated by the bylaws of the University of Silesia Press. In other words, although IASA, represented by the *RIAS* Academic Board as the body exercising the oversight over the journal, remains in control of its intellectual level, program, and compliance with the mission of the Organization, the formal aspects of its functioning must be attended to by professionals.

2. See: *Komunikat Ministra Edukacji i Nauki z dnia 17 lipca 2023 r. w sprawie wykazu czasopism naukowych i recenzowanych materiałów z konferencji międzynarodowych*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/komunikat-ministra-edukacji-i-nauki-z-dnia-17-lipca-2023-r-w-sprawie-wykazu-czasopism-naukowych-i-recenzowanych-materialow-z-konferencji-miedzynarodowych>. Accessed 20 Jul. 2023.

This, however, is only one of many problems that the newly elected IASA Board and Executive Council will have to formally resolve in the course of their term in office. Others will involve the formalization of the fiscal procedures with the Spanish Tax Office, the revision of the Organization's bylaws in compliance with the IASA Registraton Certificate from the Spanish Home Ministry (Ministerio del Interior), and the adaptation of our internal regulations to the reality of the requirements of the Spanish fiscal law. Beyond doubt, the amount of work ahead of us may seem enormous, but an equally massive tasks have already been tackled. Over the past two years, we have created a modern website connected with social media, set up a modern banking account, and guaranteed the financing of the *Review of International American Studies*, which has thereby entered the professional stage of its development. With the COVID pandemic abating, we were able to organize two World Congresses in two years, putting IASA back on schedule in terms of its most widely recognized events. Most importantly, we have the Emerging Scholars' Programme, whose Fellows train for the future. For this, we must be grateful to all of former and present Officers and Members of the Board, Executive Council Members, Congress Organizers, and *RIAS* Editors, whose commitment and passion have been nothing short of exemplary.

IASA, therefore, is no longer "in crisis" in the English sense of the word. Rather, it enjoys "the new opening." Let us make the most of it for the common good.

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