

**General Meeting of the International Small Islands Studies
Association (ISISA) – Lesvos, Greece, 25 May 2016**

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

It is my great pleasure to stand before you today and present this, my first report as President of ISISA. I was elected to the post in September 2014, following the long presidency of Dr Grant McCall, now honorary life member of ISISA. Those were very big boots to fill, and I am I sure that I speak on your behalf when I say how grateful I am to Grant for his unstinting dedication to ISISA over two decades.

One key test of an organisation – and especially one run by volunteers – is its ability to survive leadership transitions and indeed exploit new opportunities that the clutch of fresh faces and voices in leadership positions provides. Here, I was blessed to have elected with me 4 new faces to the ISISA Executive: Laurie Brinklow, Elaine Stratford, Dana Lewis Ambrose and Marina Karides. These scholars have brought a fresh dynamism to the organization. I also salute office bearers Beate Ratter, Graeme Robertson, Stephen Royle and Clyde Sakamoto for continuing to offer their services and assuring a vital continuity to the work of ISISA. Apart from these colleagues and friends, I also add my thanks to Anna Baldacchino (Newsletter Editor), Bruce Potter (ISISA listserv moderator) and Arlene Holmes-Henderson (Twitter Liaison) for their ongoing support.

Communication is a service that is front and centre of what ISISA does. We have now expanded our range of communication tools to encompass: a bi-annual newsletter; an ISISA yahoogroups list-serve; a Twitter handle (<https://twitter.com/IntSISA>); a Facebook group page; and a premier, open access, scholarly journal (Island Studies Journal) with its own Facebook page. Moreover, since January 1st 2016, we have our own website which is, of course, at: www.isisa.org

The ISISA website is now our flagship site on the world wide web. It showcases material from our own members (including many photographs), historic references to and posters about its major 'Islands of the World' conferences, its previous newsletters, and is also the repository of the documentation that ISISA has notched up over its 20 odd years. It offers a user-friendly payment system for donations or membership fees: indeed, for the first time, we have recruited so many new members without the contact afforded by our 'Islands of the World' conferences. The website also has a moderated blog that is always interested in what you have to say.

The website follows many years during which ISISA benefitted from the kind hosting services of, first, the University of Tasmania, Australia, and then Maui Community College, part of the University of Hawai'i system, USA. We thank these two institutions for their unwavering support over many years during which they also placed their web-hosting technical staff at ISISA's disposal. We would not have got here without you.

Much of the agenda of today's general meeting, including the amendments to the statute, is driven by the outcome of the strategic review exercise that was commissioned amongst all ISISA members late in 2014. This exercise highlighted many issues, which include: (1) the desire to stick, as much as possible, to a biennial series of ISISA conferences; while offering ISISA support to a regional event during ISISA non-conference years. (2) limiting membership to individuals; (3) moving to annual membership fees, starting on January 1, 2017; (4) offer more scholarships to deserving students for attending ISISA supported events; and (5) the disbanding of the Advisory Council, set up in 2010.

In our strategic review we were also encouraged by our members to seek 'win-win' arrangements with like-minded organisations. Foremost amongst these is RETI, the network of island universities pioneered by the University of Corsica, France, in 2010 (hence its French acronym:

reseau d'excellence des territoires insulaires). We are therefore quite proud that this 14th ISISA 'Islands of the World' Conference is also the first that we are running in partnership with RETI.

With your help, ISISA will continue to offer its services in order to maintain a global preeminence in the promotion of island studies, whether as a scholarly field of academic endeavour, as well as a legitimate focus of public policy.

We will also continue to approach local partners in the very many islands scattered around the world with a view to hosting an ISISA 'Islands of the World' Conference. Having hundreds of island studies scholars from all imaginable disciplines converge on the same island is a terrific experience, whether for the locals as much as for the incoming delegates. We strive to maintain a broad territorial distribution for our conferences, while always striving for a top quality experience in hospitality, local culture and island studies scholarship.

I will conclude with the statement of an anonymous ISISA member, submitted during our strategic review exercise of 2014:

To me ISISA is the banding together in unity of islands and island scholars for the betterment of islands as a whole. One island's voice is small, their troubles seem insignificant, of unimportance to the global world. But when similarities of many islands are placed before the world, the problem of one becomes the problem of many. ISISA links likeminded scholars to support each other's efforts to explore and discover similarities but also to appreciate island differences. ISISA links islands, for no island should be alone against the world. And it is my hope that our association will be perceived as a resource by islands for reliable island-focused studies; something they can find resourceful.

Thank you

Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino - ISISA President

25 May 2016