

MINUTES OF THE AILC/ICLA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

LOTUS HALL, DONGGUK UNIVERSITY, SEOUL

JULY 26 – 27, 2025

JULY 26, 14 TO 18 HOURS, KOREA TIME

1. Welcome

The President started the meeting with thanks to our host and Congress coordinator Youngmin Kim, and Dongguk University which was hosting the Executive Committee meeting.

2. Confirmation of votes on reports, any questions raised in responses, matters for noting

The Secretaries confirmed that all reports of the administrative and research committees were approved by the members, with no vote against. The President relayed certain observations made on the research committee reports:

- The Comparative Gender Studies committee's by-laws are due for approval before their participation in the ACLA conference in March 2026; by-laws have to be approved by the Executive Committee, so they should be submitted to the next EC meeting. Graduate students have free membership of the ICLA, so it is not a problem to offer it to the ECR on this Committee.
- The Committee on Literature, Arts and Media can submit the annual report in a more standard format – the renewal template need not be used.

The following specific observations will be implemented before upload of reports to the ICLA website:

- Annual reports of Standing Research Committees will be submitted by the Chair to the EC, as the Chair, and not others of the research committee, are members of the EC. The Chair of the Comics Studies and Graphic Narratives committee will re-submit the report, signed by him, before it is uploaded to the ICLA Website.
- The report of the Arabic Comparative Literature says that the Cttee will be ratified at the Congress in 2025, but it has already been approved by the EC in 2024, so this sentence should be deleted before upload.
- Matters arising out of the report of the South Asian Literatures and Cultures Standing Research Committee:

- a) the co-chair is Sayantan Dasgupta (the previous report for Sept 2024 was also signed by both EV Ramakrishnan and SD), but the election of Sayantan by the cttee as its co-Chair was actually never communicated to the EC. The President used this occasion to communicate this to the EC.
- b) to what extent are the activities described those of the Committee as opposed to activities of its members, independently of the Cttee? It was recommended that research actually planned as part of the Cttee's work specifically be shown more clearly in the report; other activities by the members may be added but should be kept separate from the main report
- c) a query was raised concerning "Professor Rindon Kundu" whose activities are presented on pp. 9-10; is this also the recipient of an ECR participation grant? (how can he be ECR and Professor at the same time?) EV replied he is Assistant Professor in the early stages of career. The report will be amended for clarity before being uploaded.

3. Electronic elections 2025

Liedeke Plate, Chair of the Election Committee, announced that 4630 members were on the electoral register at this time, the number having gone up during the preparation for the Congress. She explained the process worked out by the Treasurers, Chair of Participation Grants committee and the President for refunding the ICLA membership fees mistakenly added to early bird registration for all members, including those who were already members of the ICLA, and to those Early Career Researchers who were awarded registration fee waivers by the Participation Grants committee.

The President was thanked for her long hard work on the membership list which has enabled us to conduct the elections in a very efficient way. The members praised the interface and the convenience afforded to the voting process by the platform design, and appreciated the company hired for the job.

Regarding the actual voting at the Congress, a booth will be available for those who want to vote there.

It was pointed out that there were some delays in the collection of membership fees by some national associations – some were received after the opening elections (Azerbaijan), and some, it was reported, were facing obstructions in transfer. The principle here was to allow members of national associations which had confirmed their ICLA membership in good time to vote in the ICLA elections, with the understanding that the ICLA membership dues would be cleared at the earliest.

4. Congress 2025

A) Oral report on Congress preparations

Congress Coordinator Youngmin Kim gave an oral report, focusing on the last minute arrangements for hybrid sessions, saying they would be scheduled between 9am and 5pm and links would be sent to members who have registered to participate online.

It was announced that the Balakian Prize would be awarded at the Opening ceremony on the 29th at 7pm, and Dinner would be removed from the congress schedule. The venues of various events were announced.

B) Review of procedures

The President noted that there have been delays and some confusion in communicating information, and some participants contacted the ICLA's email address due to slow or no response by the Congress Secretariat to emails. We acknowledge that Congress organisers have faced challenges, but, for the future, the MoU and Hosting Guide must be more strongly worded (and the process monitored) to ensure timeliness and responsiveness.

In particular, publication of Congress website, deadlines for session and papers, approval and programme, etc., must be at least 6 months earlier than it has been for the Seoul Congress; a larger team with professional support (whether by University Conference Services or a PCO) must support the academic organisers – not as an emergency measure, and with the consequent higher costs / losses than happened on this occasion, but from early on.

There are reasons to some of the delays, such as delay to funding decisions caused by the impact of the attempted coup by the former Korean president; the funds granted were then less than applied for. However, planning must include the possibility of set-backs and failure to obtain additional funding (if then there is more money than expected, more can be offered as part of registration fee, such as meals, excursions, more online support, etc).

Many of these issues have already been taken into account when discussing 2028 proposals with the bidding teams, learning from the problems of the Seoul Congress. Although of course we cannot predict geopolitical or domestic political upheavals, it will be important to have clarity about all these issues in the MoU and Hosting Guide in the future.

5. Congress 2028

Anne Duprat presented a preliminary survey of the proposals for hosting the Congress in 2028, followed by online interaction with each proposing team. The Universities of Rome and Naples, the University of Glasgow and the University of Birmingham presented their

proposals and answered questions and concerns raised by the EC. The members appreciated the efforts, high professionalism, precision and commitment of the colleagues who had crafted the bids, and discussed the different proposals. The selection of the winning bid was postponed to the next day.

The meeting adjourned until 1pm on July 27, 2025

JULY 27, 2025, 13.30 HOURS TO 17 HOURS KOREA TIME

5. Congress 2028 (resumed)

The proposals discussed on July 26 were put to vote, and the University of Glasgow was voted as the venue for the 25th Congress of the AILC/ICLA in 2028.

6. *Recherche Littéraire/Literary Research*

The outgoing Editor or RL/LR Marc Maufort informed the EC of the process of inducting the newly selected Chief Editor of RL/LR, Dr Alice Pick Duhan, and of his willingness to support her through the transition period until the 2026 issue.

He also informed the meeting that the contract with Peter Lang was due for renewal, the new contract beginning from January 1st 2026 until end of 2028.

The EC recoded its appreciations for the outgoing editor's dedicated and outstanding service to RL/LR.

The EC voted to renew the contract with Peter Lang for 2026-28, disbursing Euro 4000 for open access + other publishing costs.

Proposed by Marc Maufort and seconded by Liedeke Plate, passed by 17 votes for the proposal, none against.

The EC voted to authorise the sum of Euro 5000 to be disbursed yearly for editorial support. Marc Maufort explained that this annual budget received from ICLA for editorial support is used for funding such activities as:

- Stylistic copy-editing
- Text formatting
- Source-checking
- securing required permissions
- bibliographical harmonization
- promotion of the journal
- purchase of books

- Proofreading
- Correspondence with publishers and indexing agencies.

Proposed by Marc Maufort and seconded by Anne Duprat. Passed by 18 Votes.

7. Update on Communications (website, newsletter, communication & storage / archiving package, mailing lists), and update on membership matters

A) The President reported on the development of the new website, which is delayed, but advancing. Thanking the “website working group” (Lobna Ismail, Youngmin Kim, Anca Mihalache, Clotilde Thouret and Anne Tomiche), she noted that they have been underemployed in the last year but they, or a new team nominated by the new president, will have a site to look at soon.

As already mentioned before, there is going to be a section for our National Associations, to which we can also add various groups that do not have a home and that we can host, such as the group in Indonesia for example, or the group of Iranian scholars, etc. (see also CAAO report).

B) Regarding the Communications package and related issues: The EC had already agreed at our meeting in March 2025 to apply for a non-profit version of Microsoft Office for our internal EC communications, management of shared documents and information, archive space, and communications with members who contact us individually through our email address, or who apply for funding, submit applications to our prizes, etc. The email system attached to our current website, in particular, is no longer adequate for our requirements (we had some potentially serious technical problems with it). Progress on this front has been slow and at times frustratingly Kafkaian, because of a constant stream of unexpected bureaucratic hurdles raised as soon as we thought we had got over the last hurdle. However, there is progress:

- we now have a tax accountant supporting us (Yassine El Jouaidi, of Dinergie), thanks especially to the good offices Anne Duprat with the support of Anca Mihalache;
- we have, as of 2 days ago, a new address in Amiens;
- now that we have the address, we can obtain the “SIRET” number required for associations and companies in France; this will in turn allow us to request the non-profit Microsoft account, as well as comply with other fiscal and legal requirements.
- And we shall also be able to at that point to open a new bank account, preferably online.

As the President had been involved with these various interconnected matters, she offered to continue to help Anca, Anne D, the new secretaries and the new president with getting to the finish line.

C) Regarding the Membership: As of 17 July 2025 we had 4630 members (1370, i.e. c. 30%, are students). $4630 - 1370 = 3260$ paying members. (By the time of the EC the number had increased somewhat.) Of these, very nearly half (c. 1560) pay in Euros and the rest in dollars; c. 170 pay a reduced fee. Overall, if sustained, this should give us a yearly income of c. \$/€ 34,000. (But many of those who acquired membership via the congress – over 200 – may not renew it, so there may be a drop in income in 2026).

In the 2022 register we had c. 5330 members. So it looks like we lost c. 700. This is because we have temporarily lost ABRALIC (Brazil), though it aims to rejoin in late 2026. In 2022 ABRALIC had 1749 members (the majority were students). Now they have 727, of whom 323 are students. If we put ABRALIC to one side, in 2022 we would have had c. 3550 members: since then, therefore, we have a net gain of over 1000 members outside of ABRALIC – which should also come back on board in 2026. So the situation is healthy.

We have agreed to share our Newsletter with ABRALIC officers for distribution to their members to continue sustaining the relationship with them. (Students can continue to register for free via the ICLA website, so Brazilian students that do this can continue to access ICLA dedicated grants / prizes; and individuals can register individually and access all other ICLA opportunities).

The President emphasised the need to invest efforts into developing our presence in various parts of the world where there is interest in CL but no association, or there are associations that are not our members – Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, for example; Middle Eastern/ Central Asian countries such as Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan... as well as Africa and Latin America.

Regarding “member” associations, it was recorded that the ACLA is a supporting and not a member association. This involves 2 guaranteed spots for the ICLA research committees at the annual ACLA conference (more than 2 research committees can certainly take part) and the circulation of ICLA information through ACLA channels.

8. Finances: Current position

The state of the finances reported on by the treasurers is healthy at the moment, though expenses for the website have yet to be paid. The other large expense, the renewal of the contract of Anca Mihalache, the administrator, will have to be approved by the next EC on an urgent basis.

The President reported that we had a couple of difficult years at the start of this mandate, but things have settled and the overall income we have is about the same that was reported in 2022 (\$180K). We have not spent yet the money we were expecting to spend for the new website; we have expenses for Anca Mihalache's payment, and while we expect to get the free non-profit version of MS Office, and will not have the expected outlay for this, we will now have the payment of the tax accountant. Hence we cannot afford not to contact and request fees from our member associations, but the membership appears solid, and we have committed to use some of the reserves in ways that are useful to our large community.

After discussion of the finances of the 2025 Congress and the expectation of a significant deficit, it was agreed that in order to help the organisers, on an exceptional basis that should not constitute precedent, the ICLA would not request the transfer of membership fees collected on its behalf by the Congress, if the deficit is substantially higher than that sum. The next EC will take the relevant decisions regarding following financial transactions between the ICLA and the 2025 Congress organisers, based upon the expected total deficit of the 2025 Congress (as declared by the organisers) and the membership amount due to ICLA collected during the registration of Congress participants.

The President proposed this and was seconded by Oana Fotache, passed by 17 votes.

9. Research Development Committee

A new Forum of Chairs of Research Committees had been convened by the President, with the aim, among other things, of discussing and planning for the AILC/ICLA Annual lecture. The proposals from the Digital Comparative Literature and the Arabic Comparative Literature committees had been received; both were approved by the EC, and the DCL proposal was scheduled for November, while that received from the Arabic Comparative Literature committee was scheduled for 2026.

The Forum of RC Chairs should plan for and decide on, by vote, subsequent Lectures.

10 Revision of the by-laws of the Digital Comparative Literature Committee

The amendments to the by-laws of the Digital Comparative Literature committee (to remove a top limit to the number of members of the committee) were presented and proposed by Simone Reborá and seconded by Anne Duprat, passed by 19 votes.

11. Future of the Comparative African Literature Research Committee

The President reported that the committee chairs had requested to step down for personal reasons – the President had suggested that they step aside with a view to returning when

they are able to; however for the moment, the committee should be paused and new chairs should be found. She now invited the EC to share their views on the reinstatement of this committee and the ICLA's outreach into the area it covers.

The current page for this research committee on the website must be updated to state that the committee is being paused with a view to re-launch it with new chairs.

Members felt that a combination of individual outreach and an open call for an Expression of Interest could be used for reconstitution of this committee. The Chair of the Research Development Committee suggested that Early Career Researchers could be included in the starting process of a research committee.

Liedeke Plate suggested that we could invite an Expression of Interest in a comparative project on literatures, cultures and/or media in the African continent and across the world. The invitation could be drafted by the Research Development Committee and disseminated through the website and other means. But it was undecided how the selection of a particular proposal would be made.

It was suggested that some funds be allocated for the project as seed money.

Members also suggested that additional directed funding sources be explored for participants in precarious positions and areas.

The discussion on the Research Committee on Comparative African Literature also brought forth the concern of the EC members for the outreach of the AILC/ICLA into areas not yet actively visible in the association.

12. Brief presentation of and vote on the CHLEL report

The Chair of CHLEL, Florian Mussgnug, reported orally on the Committee's activity, as he had been unable to submit the written report in time. In reply to his query on support for the many CHLEL projects, it was pointed out that publication costs can be applied for – the EC had voted to offer every research committee a certain sum which could be applied for every three years (two research committees could also pool their money in a given year), but publication costs can be applied for additionally to this sum.

Approval of the CHLEL report was proposed by the President and seconded by Ipshtita Chanda. Passed by 16 votes.

13. ECARE matters

The Chair of ECARE, Emanuelle Santos, reported on the state of the prizes and grants offered by the committee. She reported that the 2025 first book subvention (a subvention offered every year) would be given by the end of the calendar year.

She also requested that the newly elected EC regularise the procedure of carrying over the annual grant for the book subvention into the next financial year if an award cannot be made within the calendar year.

She reported that the ECARE committee is due for reconstitution and expansion in the term of the next EC.

14. Participation Grants

The report on Participation Grants by Oana Fotache was followed by questions for discussion: Should we look at ways of restricting the number of applications? How? Should some preferential consideration be given to scholars and students from countries that have more difficult conditions (e.g., low income countries / countries where academics have no support / war-torn countries / countries where CL is not supported as a discipline, e.g. there are no CL PhD programmes) and/or countries where the ICLA has a lesser presence, to attract them into the ICLA sphere? How do we balance support for those that have weaker structures (whether financially or academically – and whose applications may as a consequence look weaker), with the attention to quality and commitment to continuing in the discipline? (if we only go on strict quality, may this simply entrench the privilege of those who have good structures of support such as on writing applications, reviewing them, etc)?

There was discussion about the allocation of funding support and the criteria used for awards. Emanuelle dos Santos, Liedeke Plate, Kitty Millet and Matthew Reynolds participated in underlining the ways and means for targeted support of early career researchers and members from unrepresented and precarious areas and structuring the support we can offer to be most effective.

All this is to be borne in mind in preparing the next round of PG applications.

15. Relationships with other organisations

As the Chairs of this Committee were not present and the report had been unanimously approved, this item did not require discussion.

16. Preparation for General Assembly

Lucia Boldrini explained that she would like to return to the pre-Covid practice of various officers speaking at the GA rather than the President reporting on everything. She had already contacted various colleagues who had all agreed to report on behalf of the treasury,

of ECR-related matters, on the congress 2028, on the results of the elections, and thanked these colleagues.

17. Open discussion and any other business

The President reminded everyone that a Collaboration with UNESCO Memory of the World programme would be signed at the Congress on Tuesday 29 July and invited everyone to take part in the collaboration as they could.

As the bus to the Congress site was already waiting for EC members and as no AOB had been communicated to the Chair, the meeting was closed shortly after 5pm KST.

Addition to the minutes:

On Wednesday 30 July, a quick email vote by the current EC was requested by the president to redirect \$300 of an unclaimed Travel Participation Grant (the recipient was not able to attend the congress) to supporting expenses for the winner of the Balakian Prize, in addition to the \$1000 already included in the terms of the award. This was unanimously passed.