The global impact of COVID-19 is enormous, and the world of Asian Studies has not been spared. This pandemic is more than a crisis: it is a wake-up call that forces us to re-examine our assumptions about the future of scholarly gatherings. While some may wish for the return to the traditional conference format, we must face the reality that virtual conferences are here to stay, and we must adapt to this new normal.

The ICAS vibe

I might be prejudiced, but I believe that (small) gatherings of scholars can more easily become virtual, since they aim to consolidate and expand their agenda within a certain discipline, and do not expect to transcend borders of disciplines and regions. They tend to work within their own well-defined areas of expertise. However, anyone who has ever attended one of the ICAS biennial meetings knows that the ICAS vibe is the result of the multiple interactions between participants, who are open to engage with others beyond their own discipline (workshop, famous conference, etc.) and also to interact with the human and natural environment of the particular location in which the conference is held.

Virtual elements are not something completely new to ICAS, since we have streamed opening sessions before. But, future editions of ICAS will aim to incorporate many more virtual and hybrid elements (combining in-person and online characteristics). At this very moment the ICAS team is studying the various ways in which to ensure a vivid and highly interactive hybrid conference format for ICAS 12. My hope for the future is that the desire to meet in person; this was made evident it is future-proof. Taking the meeting side of Asian Studies (workshops, seminars, conferences, etc.) and also to interact with the human and natural environment of the place in which it is held, with other practitioners such as artists, artisans, musicians, museum curators, librarians, civil society representatives, advocates, and many more. Additionally, ICAS can always connect with the citizenry of the place in which it is held, with the aim to share the knowledge on Asia with the local community, but also to benefit from the local knowledge on Asia. For ICAS 12 in Kyoto, this knowledge abundantly resides in its great culinary, garden and craft traditions, just to name a few. The motto of ICAS 12, 'Crafting a Global Future', was not casually chosen!

Stay updated

As preparations for ICAS 12 advance, and as we observe the developments of the pandemic, we will be continuously adjusting our programme, accommodating any uncertainties, and all possibilities and global restrictions. To stay informed, please make sure to add yourself to our mailing list and receive our ICAS Matters’ updates. You can subscribe here: https://icas.asia/forms/mailinglist

Paul van der Weele, ICAS Secretary and IBP General Secretary

Alongside the astonishing number of submissions for ICAS 12, we have also been observing another record-breaking interest in the ICAS Book Prize (IBP). Each year the number of titles rises!

The IBP was originally launched to bring a focus to academic publications on Asia; to increase their worldwide visibility, and to encourage a further interest in the world of Asian Studies. Organised every two years, together with the ICAS conference, the IBP has grown from a small experiment, to one of the largest book prizes of its kind. Along the way, we expanded to include, in addition to the English Book and Dissertation prizes, prizes for publications in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

The English language edition is the most mature, and naturally receives a substantially larger number of submissions. But the other language editions, still in their infancy, are proving to be worthy contenders. Each language edition has its own secretariat and sponsor. The intention is to create sustainable and lasting partnerships with secretariats and sponsors who make the prize ‘their own’. You can find details on their respective pages online: https://icas.asia/icas-book-prize-2021.

This year we have added yet one more prize to the group. Organised and sponsored by the Society for Hong Kong Studies (SHKS), the newest addition to the ICAS Book Prize family is the IBP for Best Article on Global Hong Kong Studies. According to the prize’s description, scholarly articles in any social science or humanities discipline are eligible as long as they take Hong Kong as the primary subject of inquiry. SHKS particularly welcomes articles that place Hong Kong in global, comparative and theoretical perspectives. Although an entirely new format for us, we find this to be a timely and exciting category. We have no doubt it will attract a large number of article submissions in the coming months.

The deadline to submit your books or dissertations to the English language edition of the IBP has passed. However, you are still able to take part in the other language editions.

The deadlines are:
1 Dec 2020: French language edition
1 Feb 2021: Chinese, German, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish/Portuguese language editions
1 Feb 2021: Hong Kong article prize

2. Create an account here https://icas.asia/user/login
3. Log in to your account.
4. Select your language.
5. Click on the button ‘Submit publication’.
6. Fill in the form and click on ‘Save’.

The secretariat will follow up per email with instructions for shipping hard copies.

Questions can be sent to ibp@iias.nl or to the relevant language secretariat (find contact details online).