



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Summary of Proceedings
***Institutes of International Affairs as Agents of International
Diffusion***

*54th Annual Convention,
International Studies Association
San Francisco, 3-6 April 2013*

Aim

More than 100 institutes of international affairs operate worldwide and play an important role as sources of information on international issues. Institutes from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas were asked to present on their current and potential roles as agents of diffusion along with specific recommendations for improving their impact.

Institutes of international affairs occupy an important space as civil society actors dealing in information on international issues. Institutes often act as a bridge between different actors in the international system and as conduits of information both nationally and internationally. This includes facilitating dialogue between the public and policy makers, acting as knowledge-brokers and providing space for second track dialogue.

Roundtable participants presented on institutes' roles as agents of international diffusion and shared specific recommendations for improving their institutes' impact. Outputs include an improved sense of the common themes and challenges faced by institutes of international affairs as agents of diffusion and the different ways that institutes deal with these common issues. More general questions were also raised such as how to remain relevant in a world of uncertainty and how then to gauge institutes' inherent importance.

This roundtable follows on from successful roundtables at the 2010 and 2012 ISA Conventions and an earlier meeting of 39 institute representatives in 2008 at the Australian Institute of International Affairs' 75th Anniversary National Conference. The ISA Convention provides a convenient forum for institutes to share experiences and identify areas for growth and collaboration.

Roundtable

Each participant was called on to speak about his or her institute including on the following:

1. Aims and Activities – What is the role of your institute and its main activities? What model does your institute follow in fulfilling its mission?
2. Institutes as Agents of International Diffusion – What is the current and potential role of your institute as an agent of diffusion? What specific recommendations do you have for improving its impact in this regard?



Australian Institute of International Affairs

Ms Melissa Conley Tyler (ceo@aiia.asn.au)

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Chair Melissa Conley Tyler opened the Roundtable discussion by outlining the characteristics of institutes of international affairs and the various models that can be identified among the more than 100 institutes worldwide. 'Diffusion' has been described by Elihu Katz as the spread of an item, idea or practice over time to adopting units embedded in channels of communication, social structures, values and culture; it is a process rather than an outcome which, in the view of Etel Solingen, has four main ingredients: an initial stimulus, a medium, social agents and an outcome. Ms Conley Tyler also quoted the ideas of Diane Stone on the role of non-governmental organisations in diffusion of policy through networking and educating and as both clearing houses for information and policy entrepreneurs.

Ms Conley Tyler outlined the work of the AIIA as an independent, non-profit organisation that provides a platform for debate on international relations. The AIIA hosts events, publishes journals and books and runs significant youth engagement programmes. The AIIA also collaborates with other institutes on second track dialogues.

Ms Conley Tyler then gave an overview of how the AIIA functions as an agent of international diffusion.

The AIIA facilitates both public events and policy events, providing a forum for debate by arranging lectures, seminars and workshops ranging from intimate discussions to large lectures. More than 180 events are held across the country annually.

The AIIA is involved in the key debates of international relations and the diffusion of ideas through its publications. The AIIA currently publishes the *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, the *Australia in World Affairs* series, *Policy Commentaries* and occasional papers, as well as reaching new audiences and stimulating debate through the use of video and audio material via the AIIA website and media partnerships.

The AIIA works to educate the community on international issues through youth activities including a schools program, careers fairs, active internship programs and young professionals' and youth membership programs in various states.

The AIIA also acts as an agent of diffusion through second track dialogue. The AIIA itself does not express any opinions about international affairs, acting as a neutral platform for debate. There are seven AIIA branches around Australia and members form a very diverse community, particularly allowing for intergenerational dialogue between retired public officials and students preparing for careers in international affairs. The AIIA maintains strong partnerships with other institutes of international affairs worldwide and has held numerous bilateral and multilateral second track dialogues over the last six years, including:

- ³⁵₁₇ Singapore-Australia Dialogue (Singapore, July 2009)
- ³⁵₁₇ Taipei Forum (Canberra, October 2010)
- ³⁵₁₇ “Going Global: Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa and South Korea in International Affairs” (Jakarta, May 2010)
- ³⁵₁₇ Inaugural Indonesia-Australia Dialogue (Jakarta, September 2011)
- ³⁵₁₇ AIIA-IFANS “Global Korea, Global Australia” Roundtable (Canberra, February 2012)
- ³⁵₁₇ AIIA-Japan Institute of International Affairs-Griffith University Forum (Brisbane, 2012)
- ³⁵₁₇ Second Indonesia-Australia Dialogue (Sydney, March 2013)
- ³⁵₁₇ ISA Roundtables (2010, 2012, 2013)



**Austrian Institute for International Affairs
(*Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik*)**

Professor Dr Otmar Höll (otmar.hoell@oiip.ac.at)
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Professor Höll outlined the work of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIIP) since its founding in 1978 and highlighted the Institute’s research focus. The OIIIP advises on public policy, conducts primary scientific research, supports the international academic exchange and plays a key role in hosting international conferences and as a venue for second track diplomacy.

Professor Höll spoke about the OIIIP’s diffusion of information with members of the institute publishing widely, consulting with government and being featured regularly in the national media. Through its teaching, a whole generation of people has been introduced to the study and practice of international relations. The OIIIP builds on a broad group of friends, maintaining strong networking links to facilitate the dissemination of ideas.



Canadian International Council, Canada

Dr Jennifer Jeffs (jjeffs@canadianinternationalcouncil.org)
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The Canadian International Council is a non-partisan and non-profit institute of international affairs. It has 16 branches with more than 50 volunteers per year and a membership of 1500

people. In response to a crisis and to revitalise the brand, the CIC launched a new website (opencanada.org) that has become the Canadian hub for international relations.

Dr Jeffs spoke about how the CIC uses its deep historical roots, its cross-country network and its active research program to advance debate on international issues across academic disciplines, policy areas and economic sectors. Through its communication with various audiences (namely policy makers, students, researchers and the general public) the CIC is able to diffuse information by hosting a variety of events, putting out a major report annually and publishing the *International Journal*. The CIC's Open Canada website - including a think tank section with essays, interviews and blogs – has won the Canadian Online Publishing Award and allows a reach much greater than that of the journal and events. The CIC's use of social media and its recent partnership with Google also allows for rapid responses to questions regarding international relations, building a stronger relationship with key audiences.



Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs)

Caroline Soper (csoper@chathamhouse.org.uk)
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Chatham House, home of the Royal Institute of International Affairs which was founded in 1920, is a world-leading source of independent analysis, informed debate and influential ideas on how to build a prosperous and secure world for all. Chatham House engages governments, the private sector, civil society and its members in open debates and confidential discussions about significant developments in international affairs; produces independent analysis of critical global, regional and country-specific challenges and opportunities; and offers new ideas to decision-makers and -shapers on how these could best be tackled.

Caroline Soper spoke about the wide outreach of Chatham House through meetings, conferences and research. Chatham House publishes multiple reports, as well as the journals *International Affairs* and *The World Today*, aiming to use its academic research (focusing for example on the environment, energy, resources and regional studies) to influence policy makers. Chatham House's use of social media and podcasts works towards further increasing its global networks and diffusing information.

The challenges of the diffusion of information were also discussed, with the suggestion that some knowledge does not travel well and that institutes of international affairs must take care in considering how certain information is received by other countries. The importance of maintaining a global, rather than simply a national, perspective was emphasised in this regard.



Danish Institute for International Studies
(Dansk Institut for Internationale Studier)

Louise Andersen (lan@diis.dk)

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Louise Andersen presented on the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) and reported on its success as a relatively new organisation that is highly-ranked. It was founded after the merger of five other institutes in 2002 and has since become the big brand in international affairs in Denmark. The DIIS conducts research across eight research units.

The DIIS maintains its independence but works closely with the Danish government which asks it to produce recommendations for policy and promote debate. The institute suggests topics for research that may be of use to policy makers and representatives of various ministries are frequently invited to events and seminars. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence have non-voting representatives on the institute's board.

Ms Andersen outlined the DIIS' current focus on bridging the gap between theory and policy in order to practically influence international policy makers. The DIIS contributes to the education of researchers both at home and in developing countries and employs a number of practitioners from relevant ministries for limited periods of time; these practitioners contribute to DIIS' understanding of how its work is used outside academic circles. In addition, in order to remain relevant whilst remaining independent in its research, researchers at DIIS carry out policy-relevant and policy-orientated research within their disciplines.



Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, Belgium

Dr Sven Biscop (s.biscop@egmontinstitute.be)

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Egmont – The Royal Institute for International Relations – is an independent think tank based in Brussels which carries out interdisciplinary research. Drawing on the expertise of its own research fellows as well as that of external specialists, both Belgian and foreign, it provides analysis and suggests international policy options that are meant to be as operational as possible. Participants in the institute are given the opportunity to exchange views with other specialists and with a well-informed public made up of representatives of the political, economic and academic spheres, the media and civil society.

The institute collaborates closely with other research centres, both in Belgium and in the rest of Europe and beyond, which has resulted in a growing number of joint conferences and in more structured cooperation on research and publications.

Along with research and meetings, the institute has also developed specialised training activities, both in Brussels and abroad. It can, on request, offer specific programs for visiting and resident diplomats and foreign professionals.

Dr Bishop spoke about the need for institutes of international affairs to target a wide market and range of audiences in order to remain relevant as agents of diffusion. Egmont primarily focuses on the research and training side but also emphasises its publications: namely *Studia Diplomatica* and a variety of policy papers. Discussions are also underway for a blog.



Global Studies Institute Hong Kong

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www.glocal.org.hk/gsi

The Global Studies Institute in Hong Kong (GSI) is a recently-formed independent, non-profit and non-partisan organisation devoted to the promotion of global studies in Hong Kong and the undertaking of scholarly research, event planning and publishing in the Greater China Region. Initiated by more than 40 local and overseas scholars and staffed by specialists from various sectors in academia, business, government and the military, the GSI aims to provide innovative and practical solutions to the challenges of today's world through high quality research.

Simon Shen discussed the role of the GSI as a bridge between East and West, aiming to build a global community and disseminate ideas about international relations. Although the institute faces the challenge of attracting a wider demographic of people interested in foreign activity, particularly the younger generation, progress has already been made towards an online radio station and a YouTube channel in order to provide the kind of instant information that is now demanded. The GSI has also established a campaign to sponsor young people for internships in other countries, allowing for broader international experience and the broadening of their information networks.



Israel Council on Foreign Relations

Dr Laurence Weinbaum (Laurence@wjc.co.il)

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The Israel Council on Foreign Relations (ICFR) was founded in 1989 by the late Dr. Dave Kimche, a legendary figure in the annals of Israeli diplomacy and intelligence, as a strictly non-political, non-governmental organization to promote independent discourse on international affairs. As such, it is not subsidized by the Israeli government. The lion's share of funding comes from the World Jewish Congress. This gives the ICFR autonomy and the ability to set its own program.

Modeled on Chatham House and other councils on foreign relations, the ICFR is neither an academic institution nor a think tank. Its role is to bring policy-makers, academics, diplomats, the media and scholars together. The council frequently hosts public events and provides a platform for visiting foreign ministers and heads of state to deliver addresses as they visit Israel. The media is often invited to events and good coverage is received. The ICFR prepares a transcript of each event.

Dr. Weinbaum outlined a program designed to reach out to younger diplomats. Funded by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, the Delegation of the European Union to Israel and many EU-member embassies, the program arranges policy meetings once a month at the residence of a foreign ambassador. The objective of these monthly policy talks is for young foreign diplomats under 40 to meet with their counterparts in the Israeli Foreign Service and other ministries to learn about important issues of the day and to socialize. Speakers at these events are often outstanding representative of civil society. The ICFR also engages with senior ambassadors through its regular events and its publication.

Dr. Weinbaum spoke about the diffusion of information through the publication of The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs, and acknowledged that the electronic version of the journal is destined to play an ever greater role. The ICFR recognizes the challenges it faces in a 'changing world' and in redefining its role in the modern age. Certainly the quality of analysis (and the way it is articulated) suffers when consumers demand almost instant reaction to events.



Mexican Council on Foreign Affairs (COMEXI)

Dr Claudia Calvin (direccion@consejomexicano.org)

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COMEXI was established in 2001 as a civic association, non-profit and independent of government. It is focused on the debate and analysis of Mexico's role in the world and the growing influence of international events on the national agenda.

COMEXI's objectives include creating a forum to bring together different sectors of Mexican society and facilitating meetings between them and their international counterparts. It organises seminars, workshops and working meetings to exchange ideas and experiences that can be useful for those who are in charge of Mexico's international relations or those interested in that process; creates institutional linkages with similar organisations around the world; and develops research projects about relevant issues that become tools for decision- and policy-makers.

Dr Calvin spoke about the role of institutions of international affairs as ideas interpreters in a world of great uncertainty and with a new market of ideas. New technologies or actors on the world stage should be embraced and incorporated into institutions' dealings with international affairs; this must be the most effective way of remaining relevant and for the presence of such institutes to help to define new power – the power of ideas.



Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)

Dr Ulf Sverdrup (Ulf.Sverdrup@nupi.no)
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The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) is Norway's leading independent centre for research and information on international political and economic issues and on areas of central relevance to Norwegian foreign policy. NUPI was established by the Norwegian Parliament in 1959 and is organised as a state body under the Ministry of Education and Research, despite operating as an independent, non-political institute. It undertakes long term basic research as well as short term applied research and advisory services. Central to NUPI's work is interdisciplinary and international collaboration, both within the institute and with other institutes and bodies in Norway and abroad.

NUPI acts as an agent of diffusion by organising approximately 90 seminars and conferences annually and by publishing 63 articles in journals, 29 international journals and 45 internal publications. This includes a twice-monthly newsletter to students and teachers in order to provide teachers with more information and encourage young people into the study and practice of international relations.

Dr Sverdrup also spoke about the challenges facing institutes of international affairs, including the question of how to quantify the success of the dissemination of ideas and the relevance of such institutes in both the short and the long term. It is particularly difficult to measure the effect of publications and second track dialogues where the aim of the institute is to influence the decision-making and thought processes of others.

Dr Sverdrup pointed out that it seems to be the case that institutes of international affairs are most successful as agents of diffusion in the early stages of the policy cycle – in agenda-setting rather than the implementation of policy. This should be built upon to achieve the greatest relevance.



South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)

Dr Martha Bridgman (sajia.editor@saiia.org.za)
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The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) is an independent, non-governmental think tank whose purpose is to encourage wider and more informed awareness of the importance of international affairs. It is both a centre for research excellence and a home for stimulating public debate. From the early 1990s onwards the Institute's strategy has shifted from speakers' meetings and a general conference program to a more focused research agenda; the major research projects within the institute produce

a range of deliverables to its funders and the wider public in the form of publications, policy briefs, workshops and conferences catering for a cross-constituency audience.

Dr Bridgman spoke about the need for institutes to act as agents of diffusion by focusing attention on youth programs exposing young people to international affairs; education regarding these issues is a general weakness. The SAIIA consequently organises a leadership program for postgraduate interns as well as various outreach programs for university students and high school students. She described SAIIA's highly successful school and media engagement which culminates in a high profile Quiz Night.

It was emphasised that the long term value of institutes of international affairs must be evaluated and maintained in order to remain relevant in today's political system. Dr Bridgman described the importance of contextual reinvention – adapting to international changes in technology and society just as the SAIIA did in the 1990s.



**Swedish Institute of International Affairs
(Utrikespolitiska Institutet)**

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The Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI) was established in 1938 as a non-governmental organisation owned by the Swedish Society for Foreign Affairs. The UI conducts research from a Swedish perspective on Russia, East Asia, Security and Defence and Development. In addition to countries, the UI also follows more than 30 key international organisations and conflicts around the globe. 30% of the institute's funding comes from a grant from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is then supplemented by grants from private foundations and sales of its own products and services. The UI has between 40 and 50 employees.

The UI's events are achieving an increasingly mixed demographic which would indicate that the institute has a broad outreach. The demographic is getting younger and younger.

The UI's research mandate was added in the 1960s but the UI also maintains its original public information mandate. It maintains a library as well as running seminars, executive education programs and mentorships. It publishes journals as well as country information booklets. While information activities are primarily geared towards the Swedish general public, the UI also has an important function as a forum for debate on international issues and a meeting place for academics and practitioners, journalists and politicians.

Dr Andersson spoke about how the UI was founded as a place for research dissemination, promoting the democratic reach of thinking on international affairs. Modern technology now enables institutes to access a wider range of audiences and make information more easily accessible to others. Questions were raised about how to remain relevant as an institute, gain access to corporate funding and find a balance between research and policy advice.

Discussion

Discussion identified a number of common themes and challenges faced by institutes of international affairs from around the world as agents of diffusion:

- ³⁵₁₇ Reaching a wide range of audiences;
- ³⁵₁₇ Affecting policy makers through research;
- ³⁵₁₇ Independence conflicting with political relevance;
- ³⁵₁₇ Diffusion of ideas through technology;
- ³⁵₁₇ Building up a community of networks;
- ³⁵₁₇ Speed of information conflicting with depth and detail provided;
- ³⁵₁₇ Focus on youth outreach and education.

An interesting aspect of the discussion was to see the different ways that various institutes deal with these common issues.

All agreed on the value of the role that institutes play – and the difficulties inherent – in their role “in the middle” between academics and government.

It was agreed by participants that the discussion had been valuable with a number of concrete ideas shared as confirmation of the challenges that all institutes face. It was suggested that more work should be done to assess under which conditions institutes spread ideas most successfully, how to deal with a world of great uncertainty and how to gauge institutes’ importance in both the short and the long term.

It was suggested that more opportunities be developed to exchange experiences and views between institutes of international affairs. Specifically, it was proposed that a similar roundtable be held at the next International Studies Association Convention in Toronto in 2014.