



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

*Summary of Proceedings*  
***Institutes of International Affairs in the Information Age***

*53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention,  
International Studies Association  
San Diego, Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, 2012*

## **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 and the Americas were asked to present on their adaptation to the global information age.

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. All these roles have been enhanced by information and communications technologies.

Roundtable participants presented on institutes' current and potential use of new technologies and shared specific recommendations for improving their institutes' impact. Outputs include an improved sense of how new technologies have affected institutes of international affairs as civil society organisations.

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

## Discussion



### Australian Institute of International Affairs

Ms Melissa Conley Tyler (ceo@aiaa.asn.au)  
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Ms Conley Tyler opened the Roundtable with 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.

Each participant was then 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 in the Information Age – How does your institute use technology to achieve its aims and what are some potential new technologies that may be of use to international affairs institutes.

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 more than 200 events around the country for the public as well as policy audiences. It publishes the highly ranked *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, policy commentaries and a series of books on Australian foreign policy.

The AIIA runs youth engagement programs and provides outlets for emerging scholars in its *Quarterly Access*, *Monthly Access* and *Emerging Scholars* series. The AIIA also collaborates with other institutes of international affairs on second track dialogues.

Ms Conley Tyler then gave an overview of how the AIIA is using technology to promote interest in and an understanding of international affairs in Australia.

The AIIA maintains a central website for the national office and seven AIIA branches. It provides easy access on the front page to upcoming events, news and ways to get involved. It also has copies of event transcriptions and multimedia resources. Most individual branches have their own Twitter and Facebook presence.

The AIIA has recently put emphasis on capturing events on video and uploading them to the institute's YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/aiaavision](http://www.youtube.com/aiaavision)). The AIIA was granted non-profit status which means that there are no restrictions on the length or resolution of videos it can upload. The AIIA also works with media partners to have these events broadcast on pay TV.



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

*Professor Dr Otmar Höll (otmar.hoell@oiip.ac.at)*  
www.oiip.ac.at

Professor Höll outlined the work of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIIP) and highlighted the institute's research focus. OIIP is focusing on second track diplomatic dialogues as well as on the situation in the Koreas and the Balkans.

Professor Höll spoke about the OIIP online presence. The OIIP maintains a website where newsletters and publications are made available to the public but Professor Höll said that the institute's greatest achievements are still produced from face-to-face interactions. For example, the OIIP's success in building confidence in conflict situations.

The institute operated in a party-political environment but its research is rigorously independent.



**Canadian International Council, Canada**

*Dr Jennifer Jeffs (jjeffs@canadianinternationalcouncil.org)*  
www.opencanada.org

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.

The contributors to the website come from more than 160 countries and represent 11 nationalities. The majority of contributors come from the academic sector, followed by the NGO sector, media, business and government.

The site features a virtual think tank that has tackles subjects by engaging on Twitter and featuring short interviews. Another feature is a virtual roundtable that features quick responses from an established cadre of experienced commentators from around the world. The website also acts as an aggregator, linking to various articles around the internet that deal with international affairs under its 'readings' section.

Dr Jeffs highlighted some future possibilities for the website including data visualisation, infographics and animations. She also envisions expanding the reach of the website by attracting foreign correspondents in key foreign affairs centres such as Washington DC and London. The live video broadcast possibilities of Google+ Hangouts and Facebook video also

raise interesting possibilities for engaging with young global influencers. A writing prize for long-form non-fiction in international affairs is being considered.



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

*Dr Trine Flockhart (tfl@diis.dk)*  
www.diis.dk

Dr Trine Flockhart 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. The institute has become the big brand in international affairs in Denmark. The institute conducts research across eight research units.

The institute maintains its independence from government but works closely with the Danish government which asks it to produce recommendations for policy and promote debate. The institute also suggests topics for research that may be of use to policy makers. 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.

Dr Flockhart outlined the funding structure of the DIIS. The institute receives government funding but researchers must also seek funding from external sources. The DIIS has a relatively large budget compared to other institutes of international affairs but there are concerns about possible budget cuts.

The institute faces challenges as it tries to engage with new technologies. Dr Flockhart gave a researcher's view of the pressure to do more on the web and engage with new technologies. She gave a sceptical perspective. The problem for researchers is that they must publish in academic journals if they are to advance their careers. Resources are the issue and researchers are not motivated to engage on platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. An example of this was We-NATO ([www.we-nato.org](http://www.we-nato.org)), established as a platform to solicit submissions from scholars. It has required significant resources and Dr Flockhart is sceptical of the likely results.



**Israel Council on Foreign Relations**

*Dr Laurence Weinbaum (lweinbaum@hotmail.com)*  
www.israelcfr.com

The Israel Council on Foreign Relations (ICFR) was founded in 1989 as an independent non-governmental organization. The Council operates under the auspices of the World Jewish Congress, an international Jewish umbrella organization, which provides most of its funding.

This gives the council autonomy and the ability to set its own program. Although the Council does not receive funding from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on occasion the ministry does sponsor specific activities.

The ICFR is neither an academic institution nor, strictly speaking, a think tank. Its role is to serve as a forum for the study and debate of foreign policy, with special emphasis on the Middle East, Israel, and international Jewish issues. The Council brings together policy-makers, diplomats, scholars and students, and representatives of the media. The Council regularly hosts public events and provides a platform for distinguished foreign visitors who wish to present their views in a non-governmental setting. In recent years, foreign statesmen have shortened their visits abroad, and as such, the number of appearances before the Council has diminished.

The Council publishes *The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* three times per annum, in which many outstanding Israeli and foreign scholars and practitioners of diplomacy present their views and review contemporary literature in the field. The proceedings of lectures presented at the Council are regularly published. These constitute an important record of the remarks of visiting foreign officials. The ICFR is tackling the problems faced by many other institutions as they seek to find an appropriate balance between printed materials and online publications. Dr. Weinbaum is wary of making all the material available online gratis, as he fears people would lose the incentive to subscribe. Therefore, the Council is contemplating a subscription in electronic format. The Council maintains a website and is enhancing its Facebook presence.

Dr Weinbaum outlined a new and promising program, the Israeli-European Young Diplomats Forum, created to reach out to younger diplomats from foreign missions serving in Israel. Funded by the European Union, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and European embassies in Israel, the program arranges meetings once a month at the residences of foreign ambassadors, in which foreign diplomats under the age of 40 meet with their counterparts in the Israeli foreign service and other ministries. Speakers at these Chatham House-style events are often drawn from civil society. This model has proven sufficiently attractive as to warrant the attention of embassies representing countries outside Europe.



**Institute of International Relations, Czech Republic**  
**(Ústav mezinárodních vztahů)**

Mr Mats Braun ([braun@iir.cz](mailto:braun@iir.cz)) and Mr Vít Beneš ([benes@iir.cz](mailto:benes@iir.cz))  
[www.iir.cz](http://www.iir.cz)

The Czech Institute of International Relations is an independent policy oriented research institute founded by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr Braun reported that the Institute has an exhaustive research agenda with a strong policy orientation. The institute aims to produce quality research on international relations, build the prestige and status of international relations as a science, assist the conduct of Czech Republic policy making and promote public awareness of international issues. The focus is on both global and regional issues.

The institute views itself as on the periphery of the academic community. Science in the Czech Republic is funded on the western model with scholars focusing on publishing in rated journals in ISI. The budget of the institute is low and most funds are spent on research. There are only limited funds for promotional activities.

The institute has a web presence and uses its website and Facebook to advertise events. The institute does not use its website as a platform for discussion but does have a unified subject gateway for university students and the public that is available online.

The institute produces policy papers for policy makers and makes them available online for the wider public. The institute produces two scholarly journals, one in Czech and one in English. It also publishes a journal for the general public which will soon finish as funding will not continue. These journals are available online and are indexed through Google Scholar. Mr Beneš went over some of the requirements Google has for indexing publications, such as not publishing in PDF. He also said that in order for their publications to be indexed by Scopus and ISI a good website is needed.

Mr Beneš then outlined the Public Knowledge Project (<http://pkp.sfu.ca>) run by the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University Library, Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing, the University of Pittsburgh, Stanford University and the California Digital Library. It is an open source conference and journal system that provides software for journal management. Thousands of journals already use the system and it is easy to set up a journal presence. There were some downsides in that the open source software is not perfect and the website looks basic, so someone needs to redesign the style sheets and customise the logo. However, this provides a great potential asset for institutes that publish their own journals.



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

*Dr Gunilla Reischl (gunilla.reischl@ui.se) and Dr Jan Joel Andersson (andersson@ui.se)*  
www.ui.se

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 institute conducts research from a Swedish perspective on Russia, East Asia, Security and Defence and Development. 30% of the institute's funding comes from a grant from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is supplemented by grants from private foundations and sales of its own products and services. It has between 40 to 50 employees.

Dr Reischl noted that the institute'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.

Its research mandate was added in the 1960s but the institute also maintains its original public information mandate. It maintains a library, runs seminars, executive education and mentorships. It publishes journals as well as country information booklets.

Dr Andersson presented on the institute's highly successful country booklets. They are pocket size booklets that cover 18 topics for each country and allow comparison of statistics between countries. In addition to countries, it also follows more than 30 key international organisations and conflicts around the globe.

To overcome the high cost of printing and delivery, country booklets have been transformed into one of the world's most frequently updated online country databases, similar to the CIA World Factbook and the Economist Intelligence Unit. Staff and consultants are hired specifically to monitor and update with new developments and breaking news.

The penetration of this service is quite phenomenal. It is available in every school and public library through subscriptions organised by cities and municipalities. The municipalities pay a subscription based on the number of citizens in their jurisdiction. Subscriptions are also available on a daily, weekly and yearly basis. This service makes a profit for the institute.

## Conclusion

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

- funding is a key preoccupation and priority of all institutes;
- issues of independence, linked with funding, was also a concern for all of the institutes;
- there has been some uptake of new technologies with some very successful examples but there are still some hesitations about implementation;
- institutes are aware of the importance of harnessing new technologies for their work.

An interesting aspect of 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 government and academics.

It was agreed by participants that the discussion had been valuable. 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 San Francisco in 2013.

The participants agreed that the discussion had been valuable and a number of concrete ideas were shared as confirmation of the challenges that all institutes face.