



# SRN

## SCREENWRITING RESEARCH NETWORK

### **ACTIVITIES REPORT 2019/20**

#### **Annual General Meeting postponed**

The 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) that was due to take place in September 2020 in Oxford (UK) during the Annual International Conference has been postponed to 2021 following consultation with the SRN Membership (see Call to Membership issued in May 2020). This action had become necessary in light of the COVID-19 pandemic that caused the postponement of the SRN2020 conference as well.

Consequently, this Activity Report is presented to the Membership in document form and made available via the SRN mailing list and website.

#### **Executive Council**

This year the SRN has been headed by an Executive Council of six members:

- Carmen Sofía Brenes (Chairperson), Universidad de los Andes, Santiago de Chile
- Paolo Russo (Secretary and Acting Chairperson), Oxford Brookes University
- Rose Ferrell (Membership), Edith Cowan University, Perth
- Margaret McVeigh (Newsletter Coordinator) Griffith University, Brisbane
- Rosanne Welch (Treasurer and Newsletter editor), Stephens College, USA
- Rafael Leal (Web Coordinator), Pontifical Catholic University, Rio de Janeiro

In addition to the six members, Alexandra Ksenofontova (Freie Universität Berlin), was chosen as Early Career Representative by the Executive Council and co-opted to the EC for the academic year 2019/20.

## **Meetings**

The Executive Council has held meetings on a monthly basis from September 2019 to June 2020; all these meetings were held via Skype with the exception of the first one, which took place *in presentia* during the 2019 Conference in Porto, right after the last EC elections.

In addition to the regular meetings, the Executive Council (whether in its totality or part of it) met whenever necessary, and its members maintained ongoing communication with one another and with the Membership.

Minutes of all meetings are published on the SRN website.

## **Communication (Newsletter, Website and Social media)**

All relevant activities are publicized via the SRN Newsletter, our JISCMail mailing list, and via social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) – all of which we encourage our Members to subscribe to and to make the best use of.

The **Newsletter** is regularly sent out to our Members and extracts of news items are also posted on Facebook. We wish to thank Margaret McVeigh and Rosanne Welch who collected all the news from colleagues the world over.

Over the past year, the EC has discussed and implemented ways to improve the circulation and outreach of the Newsletter, including, among other things:

- Collecting comments from the Porto conference attendees and the 2019 SRN Award winners
- Liaising with the new Editorial Board of and including updates on the *Journal of Screenwriting*
- Triggering automatic email alerts through our website

We have also revised and streamlined the news cycle as follows: all new items go to the Newsletter first, then are added to the News section on the SRN website and/or to the Local Initiative section (if any).

More details on the EC's activities regarding the Website and our Social media outlets are included in the Activities section below.

## Membership

The application process and membership form (accessed via the SRN website) has been revised and streamlined this year so that the process is now even simpler and clearer. This has resulted in an increase in return of membership forms. The forms give us important information about the interests of our members, as well as allowing the Executive Council to monitor the composition of our Network in areas such as nationality, gender and reach.

As of 5 September 2020, the Network consists of **622 members**. This is an increase of 61 members (+ 10.9%), which is generally in line with previous years' trends. The membership of the Network continues to grow particularly in response to events such as the annual conferences, and with the increased effort to invite colleagues and students to join which was begun this year.

Members come from all continents although more than half are based in Europe. We also have a small number of organisations who have subscribed. Nine world regions (and all continents) are represented across **54 nations**. English-language speaking nations account for 525 members of the total 622 membership, those nations being the USA, UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. It has been encouraging to see the increase in members from South American nations recently, due to the efforts of our members there. We have also welcomed new members from South Asia and Asia, and will be actively working to encourage greater involvement from those regions. The Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway) as well as Germany, Italy, Spain, Brazil and Portugal continue to have an important representation.

While several regions are still underrepresented, the EC has worked towards strengthening relationships and reaching out to those regions with the aim of seeing the gap decrease over the coming years.

The new EC's initiative around inclusion and diversity will be a strategic priority in the upcoming Action Plan for 2020/21 and we will encourage colleagues from those regions to start thinking about bidding to host a conference at the next Call in three years' time.

As concerns the research interests of our members, the analysis of the data we receive is of course work in progress. However, even a cursory overview of topics includes: narrative, storytelling, genre, intermediality, interactivity, documentary, cognitive studies, practice-led research and screenwriting practices, digital media, collaborative screenwriting, creative practices, transmedia, regional/transnational/transcultural screenwriting, pedagogy, history, archives, gender, adaptation, animation, TV, theory/culture (also ethics, cultural memory, etc.), production/industry and more.

Hopefully this information will bring people together or even stimulate new (international) research projects and/or working groups.

Statistics regarding membership also show that there is almost perfect gender balance.

All in all, the SRN seems to be in good health and its geography and demographics quite promising as usual.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Conferences and Contingency plans due to C19 pandemic**

The 12<sup>th</sup> SRN conference took place at the Catholic University of Porto, Portugal, from September 13 to 15 in 2019. The Executive Council has already recorded grateful thanks and recognition to Daniel Ribas, Maria Guilhermina Castro and their team (Rita, Pedro, Jorge, Fatima, Carlos and Jaime) for their remarkable work in the organization of this event and for welcoming all the delegates so warmly!

Over the course of the last year, preparations for the 2020 Conference scheduled to take place in the second week of September at Oxford Brookes University in the United Kingdom were well underway – with an unprecedented number of submissions, delegates and sessions – and registrations had just started when the C19 pandemic broke out. Given the unprecedented circumstances that affected colleagues all over the world, and the impossibility to ensure the health and safety of delegates, the EC held an emergency discussion in March and made the painful but necessary unanimous decision to postpone SRN2020.

The EC and the organizer of the Oxford Conference wish to express their gratitude to the organizers of the conferences scheduled to take place between 2021 and 2023 (i.e. Vienna, Missouri, Rio de Janeiro) for accepting to push their dates forward by one respectively, so as to accommodate the option of squeezing in Oxford in September 2021. As of now (late August 2020) many critical factors are still unknown, and it is difficult to confirm the actual viability of such option; this remains, of course, an ongoing priority for the EC and members will be informed of any developments promptly in the upcoming months. Should the pandemic persist into 2021, alternative options will be considered and discussed.

In the eventuality that the Oxford conference can take place as hoped in September 2021, priority will be given to delegates/papers who had already been shortlisted before issuing any new CfP, if needed.

### **Awards**

The Executive Council has worked throughout the year to consolidate the process and to liaise with the expert jury (i.e. Janet Staiger, Tom Stempel, Eva Novrup Redvall) for the next edition of the SRN Awards. The Call for Nominations has been

and will be publicized more throughout the year and the whole process and submission guidelines have been added to the SRN website.

However, since the Awards are due to be announced during the Annual Conference, they have been postponed to 2021 as well. This means that publications eligible for submission will have to have been released between June 2019 and May 2021.

The novelty of the next edition of the SRN Awards is the addition of Book Chapters (from edited volumes) to the same category as Journal Articles. Therefore, we encourage all members to nominate (or self-nominate) eligible publications in the forthcoming months).

The EC also discussed the possibility of including publications in languages other than English, but concluded that for the time being this is not a viable option.

### **Website and social media**

The SRN website has been revised and streamlined as well for clearer layout, better access to content and less fragmentation. In particular, the Resources section now combines Bibliography, archives, SARP and similar information. New pages on PhD/ERC and Local initiatives – e.g. links to local networks in Falmouth and in Germany – have been added as well.

We have also implemented the use of Google Analytics to allow us to gather useful statistics on our users' engagement with the website, which we plan on putting to good use as part of our new inclusivity and diversity strategy. From January to August 2020, we had 1,679 users in 2,046 sessions and a total of 3,812 pageviews, and the data collected so far shows us that:

- users are mostly between 25-34 years old (33.5%) or younger (27.5%);
- 45.85% female, 54.15% male;
- a quarter of them accessed through mobile devices;
- Tuesdays 9 AM is the time of most accesses;
- users come from 92 different countries;
- most from the US (18.56%), UK (17.73%), Australia (5.52%), Brazil (4.51%), China (4.15%), Finland (3.97%), Germany (3.56%), India (3.20%), Japan (3.14%) and Argentina (2.55%).

Between trivia, curiosities and really useful information, the Analytics provides several resources that will allow us to spread the word of Screenwriting more efficiently, as we make our website more reachable to internet audience searching for Screenwriting content.

The EC wishes to thank Rafael Leal for his excellent coordination and management of our website.

Our social media activities (with particular emphasis on our Facebook presence) were reorganized and run effectively by our ECR Alexandra Ksenofontova. At the start of the academic year, she ran a poll asking members what they wanted to see more on our Facebook page: e.g. what others are doing research on and/or book suggestions. Based also on the responses obtained, Alexandra has introduced a routine a scheduled weekly posts on different topics which have been run alongside more “institutional” announcements and teasers from the Newsletter.

Here too, we have implemented analytical tools to gather insights on the usefulness of the Facebook page. This has shown that regular activity on the page as a result of the above-mentioned planning and of “reviving” our Facebook presence has led to a steady growth in the number of followers: around 100 new followers since November 2019 (or 10 every month), all of which “organic”, which is almost double the number from the previous year.

Generally speaking, our FB followers are:

- 43% female vs. 56% male;
- come mostly from USA, UK and Australia (in line with our membership) but also from India, Germany, Brazil, Portugal, Canada, Chile, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Austria, Sweden, Colombia, and Egypt;
- mostly speak English and prefer posts about “international” content (e.g. CfPs, trade news, new publications, etc.)
- distributed rather evenly between age groups, which means that the page ideally offers content that is interesting for both young and advanced researchers.

In terms of engagement, about 10% are “active” followers, which is generally a good result for a Facebook page. In general, posts with clearly defined content yield more and better engagement than link only posts.

We will take all this information in account when scheduling FB posts in the new academic year so as to continue improving the following and the engagement with our page. Hopefully, next year we will also be able to revive the SRN Twitter account along a similar line, although Twitter probably tends to be more “active” and useful for us when specific events (e.g. the conference) are taking place.

## **Working Groups**

At the moment we have four active working groups: one focused on Practice-led research, one on Collaborative Screenwriting, another one on Women and Screenwriting, and last but not least, one on Teaching Screenwriting.

Information about content and contact of working groups can be found on our website (<http://screenwritingresearch.com/working-groups/>).

The EC encourages working groups to make their activities visible at our conferences, and organisers to give them special time and place for panels and meetings.

We encourage anybody who wishes to join any of the current groups to contact the relevant coordinators; or, conversely, anybody who would like to establish a new working group to initiate discussion among the members so as to set it up.

We also recommend that the next Executive Council should send out a further Call for Working Groups as a way of energizing activity in specialist areas and research questions; and to reconsider investigating applying for networking funding to COST (again) and other sources, to support travel for meetings of working groups.

### **Early Career Representative**

The role of the Early Career Representative was introduced to explore pathways that could showcase the work of our early career and PhD candidate members.

This last year the role was taken on by Alexandra Ksenofontova who has done a terrific job in coordinating the SRN social media presence as well as contributing to all EC discussions.

Unlike the “regular” members of the EC, the ECR is not elected and remains in post for one year (although they can stand up for re-induction). The Call for Nominations for the new academic year was issued in late June 2020. Three nominations were received by the deadline: the EC will appoint the new ECR in the September 2020 meeting and will inform the appointee promptly.

The new ECR will liaise with Alexandra Ksenofontova to further strengthen the role’s activities and to foster their input and visibility into the wider activities of the SRN.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

One of the key commitment of last year by the EC has been to foster membership in under-represented regions. Our Membership officer Rose Ferrell has started to reach out to contacts and researchers in Asia, and Rafael Leal has done the same in Latin America.

We propose that the title of the Membership officer will be changed to Membership and Inclusion officer as of the 2020-2021 Executive Council, to better reflect the expanding role of engagement of scholars in regions which are under-represented to date.

This is an ongoing action for the EC and will be a strategic objective in the new academic year. The EC is currently working on a number of ideas to further this, but of course we welcome suggestions from members.

## ELECTIONS

Having had to postpone this year's conference due to the C19 crisis, the EC put considerable effort into considering the best course of action for the Elections to EC roles. As a reminder: the Early Career Representative is a one-year position, whereas the other members of the Executive Council remain in charge for two years, although as per the SRN Constitution we renew three of the six posts each year to ensure regular rotation. Also, elections take place during the AGM.

Eventually, the EC issued a special Call to Membership in May (with a deadline of 16 June) to ensure the widest possible consultation before making a decision with regards to the AGM and the Elections. Although the number of responses was not high, 100% of respondents voted to postpone both the AGM and the Elections to the 2021 Conference. This assumes that the C19 pandemic will have subsided by then and that the Annual Conference and the AGM will take place. Should the pandemic persist into the new year thus increasing the likelihood of further cancellation and/or postponement (e.g. due to travel restrictions, funding etc.), the EC will consider alternative actions, including amending the SRN Constitution to cater for extraordinary situations due to force majeure as well as holding a virtual AGM and Elections, regardless of a physical conference actually taking place. Any decision will be subject to consultation of the Membership.

As a result of the CTM, the mandate of the current members of the Executive Council is extended by one year, including the three members who were due to step down this year (i.e. Carmen Sofia Brenes, Paolo Russo and Margaret McVeigh – pending individual availability) as well as the other three members due to step down in 2021 (i.e. their mandate will extend until September 2022) so as to ensure that the new members elected in 2021 are supported by the extant members with more experience of the roles and duties.

In September 2020, some of the roles within the EC will be reshuffled, with Paolo Russo to become Chairperson, Rosanne Welch as Secretary, Rose Ferrell's role to be renamed as Membership and Inclusion Officer, and Carmen Sofia Brenes to become Treasurer and Resources Officer.

We would like to encourage all members to consider standing for elections next year. We can assure you it is a very pleasurable task with light duties. Furthermore, given the size of the Network's membership and the extraordinary situation we had to face this last year, it is all the more important that there is a regular rotation in the Executive Council and that the Executive Council itself can continue its role of coordination and steering.

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We submit this Annual Report to the members of the SRN for their consideration. Should any member wish to raise any issues in regard to any of the above, please contact the SRN Secretary via email.

The Executive Council of the Screenwriting Research Network

*15 September 2020*