



SRN

SCREENWRITING RESEARCH NETWORK

ACTIVITIES REPORT 2020/21

Calls to Membership, amendments to SRN Constitution, and Annual General Meeting to be held online

The 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) that was due to take place in September 2020 in Oxford (UK) during the Annual International Conference was adjourned 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 to 2021 as well in the first place. Given that the pandemic is still ongoing and following the decision to turn the 2021 Annual Conference into an online event, another Call to Membership was issued in May 2021 asking the Members to vote two amendments to the SRN Constitution that will allow for the AGMs to be held online in case of force majeure. Voting closed on 20 June 2021; the Independent Scrutineer (Claus Tieber) reported the following results: 59 votes, 56 approving the amendments, 3 abstained (and therefore are to be counted as not in favour). All other members to be counted as “silent consent”. Therefore the motion carried and the amendments were approved. This means that the 2021 AGM can be held online during the SRN2021 Seminar Series: the proposed date is 13 September 2021 and it will be run twice to allow participations of Members from all time zones.

Consequently, this Activity Report is presented to the Membership a) in document form, made available via the SRN mailing list and website; and b) during the AGM itself.

Executive Council

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

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

In addition to the six members, Ann Igelström was appointed as Early Career Representative by the Executive Council and co-opted to the EC for the academic year 2020/21.

Meetings

The Executive Council has held meetings on a monthly basis (for a total of ten) from September 2020 to June 2021; all these meetings were held via Skype and/or Zoom.

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 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:

- Liaising with the new Editorial Board of and including updates on the *Journal of Screenwriting*
- Triggering automatic email alerts through our website
- Publication in multiple languages
- Feature interviews with and reflections from members around matters of importance to the SRN community

Last year we 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).

As the agreement with the University of Leeds – which has hosted the **SRN website** since its inception – was coming to an end (July 2021), in the first few months of the academic year much energy was devoted to finding a new host. A Call for Hosts was issued in December 2020: eventually, the University of Leeds expressed an interest in renewing their collaboration and in April 2021 a new agreement was reached, which will ensure a host for the SRN website for the next 5 years (until July 2026). The hosting cost (£100 yearly) will be covered by the School and Media and Communication of the University of Leeds. On behalf of the Membership, the EC wishes to express their gratitude to Dr Claudia Stenberg, Dr Alison Peirce, Prof Bethany Klein, Ian W. Macdonald and Emily Abbey at the University of Leeds, all of whom were instrumental in securing the deal.

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

Some exchanges on our **JISCmail mailing list** required some moderation as some "excessive use" was reported last Autumn. However, it was noted that no breach of etiquette, nor any abuse of the mailing list had occurred. Instead, useful information on how to filter posts was shared with the Membership so as to optimize the use of the mailing list, especially by those Members who do not wish their inbox to be overcrowded with messages.

Membership

The application process and membership form (accessed via the SRN website) was streamlined in 2020 so that members are now sent a membership form individually once they have subscribed to JISCmail. This has resulted in an increase in return of membership forms, and we thank all members who have completed and returned these forms. In an ongoing effort to keep our membership details up to date, we will be asking that all members renew their information via a google form in 2021-22. The new form will include information about nationality, country of residence, and languages spoken by our members. This extra information allows the Executive Council to monitor the composition of our Network in areas such as nationality, gender, and reach, as we seek to enhance the diversity of the Network.

As of 15 August 2021, the Network consists of **680 members**. This is an increase of 58 members overall. In real terms, we have gained 114 new members, though we have also lost some members. This growth is in line with previous years, despite the fact that we have largely had to move our activities on-line. In the past our new memberships have tended to cluster around conferences. Of course, COVID-19 has disrupted this pattern. We have yet to see what impact, if any, an online seminar series conference-equivalent will have on future memberships.

The loss of members may be accounted for by the increased call on members' time and attention by the growing number of emails and subscriptions we each administer as part of our working lives, as well as by natural attrition such as retirement, changing professional roles, and moving into different areas of research. A further factor may be the number of members who sign up to 'test the waters' to find out what we do, and then decide that the network is not aligned with their own interests.

The gender balance continues to be impressively even. Amongst new members, the genders are almost equally represented where gender is known.

Members represent 58 nations and from all continents. The Network has been working towards heightening its profile in Asia and Oceania, Africa, the Middle East and South America, and it has been pleasing to gain members from those regions. Language may remain a barrier which makes growth from these regions slow. Overall, there are 58 nations represented amongst our membership. New nations represented include China, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Slovenia and Israel.

English-language speaking nations account for 572 of the total 680 members. Interestingly, though over half of our members are from the USA (390 members), the scholarly concerns of Network members in general seem to remain focused towards European and other world cinemas, rather than mainstream US filmmaking.

In line with emerging technologies, it is not surprising that virtual reality and game design has been added to the list of research topics which members are actively pursuing. These include: 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.), and production/industrial issues and concerns.

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. This will be a strategic priority in the Action Plans for the forthcoming years. For instance, we will encourage colleagues from those underrepresented regions to start thinking about bidding to host a conference at the next Call in three years' time.

All in all, the SRN seems to be in good health, still expanding and its geography and

demographics quite promising as usual.

The EC thanks Rose Ferrell for her constant dedication in liaising with new and existing Members.

ACTIVITIES

Conferences and Contingency plans due to the C19 pandemic

Following the postponement of the 2020 Conference and in light of the subsequent unavailability of Oxford Brookes University (the original venue) to host it in 2021, the organizer (Paolo Russo) secured an early deal with the state-of-the-art Mathematical Institute of the University of Oxford to host the Annual Conference IRL on 30 August- 1 September 2021, and extra funding which would have ensured no extra cost to delegates.

Despite all preparations and plans having been made once again, and some good news coming from the rollout of vaccines, by Easter 2021 it became clear that the pandemic would not subside in time; that the rules on international travel and quarantining would last well into the Summer; and that the risks and uncertainties still outweighed the pros on the viability scale, resulting in the impossibility of running the Conference IRL while at the same time ensuring the health and safety of delegates. Therefore, once again, the EC had to table an emergency discussion in its March and April meetings and made the painful but necessary unanimous decision to cancel the SRN2021 Annual Conference for good with a view to replace it with an online event.

As per backup plan, in the following months the organizer has worked towards turning the Annual Conference into an online event with its own suitable format – named SRN2021 Research Seminar Series Online. Given the new medium and the virtual nature of the event, all presentations will be pre-recorded and made available online, followed by live Q&A sessions on five dates commencing on 31 August 2021. All shortlisted papers will be accepted by default: about 80 (of the original 118) confirmed their availability and willingness to still participate. The two keynote speakers confirmed their availability too. The new event will also include the AGM and the EC elections.

The EC and the organizer of SRN2021 wish to express their gratitude to the delegates and Members for their patience throughout the last two years which have forced us to make difficult decisions. Hopefully, the situation will improve worldwide in the forthcoming months and we will be able to convene again soon.

The next three annual conferences will be in Vienna, Austria (2022), Missouri, USA (2023), and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2024).

SRN Awards

The SRN Awards too had to be postponed to 2021. This means that publications eligible for submission in this round had to have been released between June 2019 and May 2021. Consequently, a new Call for Nominations has been issued and reminders were sent out throughout the year.

The Executive Council has worked throughout the year to consolidate the process by liaising with the expert jury (i.e. Professor Emerita Janet Staiger, Professor Emeritus Tom Stempel, and Associate Professor Eva Novrup Redvall) for the next edition of the SRN Awards. Furthermore, the submission guidelines have been added to the SRN website.

The novelty of this edition of the SRN Awards is the addition of Book Chapters (from edited volumes) to the same category as Journal Articles.

The SRN2021 Organizer has secured funding to cover the money prize of the two Awards (£300 for the Best Monograph category; £100 for the Best Article/Book Chapter category) which therefore this year will be sponsored by the School of Arts of Oxford Brookes University.

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

History and memory archive of the SRN

The EC has initiated a number of activities aimed at creating a historical/memory archive of the SRN, for instance through contributions/conversations from previous conference organizers (see more below); or via our newly-created Photo album (available via Google Photo), which Members can access to share their past conference photos. We will keep collecting more with a view to creating a curated photo archive. Note: Members who do not wish that photos of themselves to be made available online, can inform the EC who will take down the relevant pictures.

Website and social media

The **SRN website** has been further streamlined for clearer layout, better access to content and less fragmentation. However, following the renewal of the hosting agreement, the EC plans to update the website design next academic year.

The implementation of Google Analytics allows 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 August 2020 to July 2021, we had 3,142 users in 3,783 sessions and a total of 6,772 pageviews. The data collected so far shows us that:

- users are mostly between 25-34 years old (31.32%) or younger (21.53%)
- 53.51% female, 46.49% male (*note: the SRN plans to further expand this statistic to include non-binary gender definitions as well*)

- slightly more than a quarter of them accessed through mobile devices
- Sundays and Tuesdays are the days with most accesses
- users come from 101 different countries, mostly from the US (18.65%), UK (14.96%), China (8.77%), Australia (5.56%), Finland (5.21%), Brazil (4.96%), Netherlands (3.72%), Japan (2.89%), India (2.64%) and Austria (2.60%)

Between trivia, curiosities and really useful information, the Analytics provides several resources that will allow us to spread the word of Screenwriting Research more efficiently, as we make our website more reachable to audiences searching for related 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 run most effectively by our ECR Ann Igelström. Ann has kept the routinely scheduled weekly posts on different topics up to date alongside more “institutional” announcements/updates and teasers from the Newsletter.

Here too, we have implemented analytical tools to gather insights on the usefulness of the Facebook page. This has once again shown that regular, planned activity on the page has led to a steady growth in the number of followers: around 250 new followers since October 2020 (or 20 every month), all of which “organic”, which is almost double the number from the previous year, and four times as many from two years ago.

Generally speaking, our FB followers are:

- 43% female vs. 57% male;
- come mostly from USA, UK, India and Australia, but also from 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.

As usual, we will take all this information in account when scheduling FB posts in the new academic year so as to continue improving our following and the engagement with our page.

Steps were taken to revive the **SRN Twitter account** along a similar line by setting up a Developer’s account, which has been working well. This allows, for instance, to

automatically retweet posts that are added on the website, so the outlets feed each other. Despite this, the SRN Twitter account is still much underused; one reason being that it tends to be more “active” and useful for us when specific events (e.g. the conference) are taking place, which has not happened for the last two years for obvious reasons.

This last year we have launched our new **YouTube Channel**, which should work as our main repository for video messages and similar content. The EC has start using it as a trial run to enhance communications/updates with the Membership, especially in the absence of in-person events. However, it was also used to post the first of a series of “Conversations with...” the Organizers of the SRN Annual Conferences – featuring Ian Macdonald, Kirsi Rinne, Ronald Geerts and Eva Novrup Redvall – who shared their memories of the first few years of the SRN.

The EC wish to thank Carmen Sofia Brenes and Rose Ferrell for organizing the first episode. More episodes will follow in the forthcoming months/years.

The YouTube Channel will also be used as the main repository for the pre-recorded presentations as well as all the recordings of the live sessions of the SRN2021 Seminar Series Online. Access will be for registered delegates/members only.

As a general reminder, the SRN YouTube can be used by Members to view video content and post comments, but it will not be a place for Members to upload their own content as this would make it unmanageable. Members can still post links on the Facebook page instead.

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 (again) to reconsider investigating applying for networking funding (e.g. to COST) 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 Ann Igelström 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-appointment). The Call for Nominations for the new academic year was issued in June 2020: the EC will appoint the new ECR in the September 2021 meeting and will inform the appointee promptly. The new ECR will liaise with Ann Igelström to further strengthen the role’s activities and to foster their input and visibility into the wider activities of the SRN.

Diversity and inclusivity

The title of the Membership officer role (currently Rose Ferrell) is now the ‘Membership and Inclusion’ officer, a name which was felt to better reflect the expanded role of engagement of scholars in regions which are currently under-represented amongst our membership. The EC will continue to develop initiatives which increase the visibility and representation of more diverse groups over the coming year.

Design/Implementation of new slogan/banner “We Welcome All”.

One of the initiatives begun during 2021 was to add the phrase “We Welcome All” in different languages and scripts to our banner. This is an ongoing action and long-term strategic objective for the EC. The EC welcomes further suggestions from members on other strategies we could implement. Most important however, is that all members to recognise that we can each take responsibility for increasing diversity when we speak to colleagues in other regions about the Screenwriting Research Network. A personal encouragement to join and to mention the Network to their students can be all that is required, to show that we really care about diversity and the inclusion of all.

ELECTIONS

Following the May 2020 consultation with the Membership, the mandate of the current members of the Executive Council was extended by one year due to force majeure. 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. Last year’s resolution also included a mandate for the EC to consider alternative actions, including amending the SRN Constitution to cater for extraordinary situations such as the current pandemic. As a result, a new

consultation with the Membership was carried out via the CtM issued in May 2021 which resulted in the amendments to the SRN Constitution mentioned above. In addition to allowing for the AGM to be held online, the EC elections too can now be held virtually when necessary, provided that secret ballot is guaranteed, and within and in accordance with all the other principles of the SRN Constitution.

In view of the above:

- Three members of the EC will be standing down this year: these are Carmen Sofia Brenes, Paolo Russo and Margaret McVeigh;
- A Call for Nominations was regularly posted on 21 June 2021 to fill the above vacancies;
- Claus Tieber and Alexandra Ksenofontova have kindly accepted to act as independent scrutineers.

The EC encourage all members to consider standing for elections so 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

30 August 2021