

## ILA's Journey to Advance Literacy for All

One year ago we held our annual conference for the first time as the International Literacy Association (ILA). A new name, yes, but one that maintains 60 years of the International Reading Association's leadership in reading and literacy.

As you know, the change from "Reading" to "Literacy" came about as a result of ongoing discussions around who we are, what we do, and where we are going. The gradual shifts we have been making are both out of necessity and opportunity. They are a reflection of what will strengthen our position and ability to build a network of advocates for literacy worldwide.

The enthusiasm and energy from last year's conference was a key milestone in reinforcing ILA's standing as the leading global professional membership association for literacy teachers and leaders. It also served to remind us all of our shared vision: making literacy accessible to all.

The reception from ILA members and others in the literacy community shows excitement for ILA's reinvigorated focus and path forward. One member remarked, "It's tremendous to see the International Literacy Association with fresh energy and a revitalized purpose bring professionals together to bolster its work to better promote literacy education."

That comment sums up what we are hearing: We are poised to make a difference in the world.

### A revitalized network, positioned for action

To advance literacy across the globe, we know that action is needed at all levels—from educators to government, philanthropic, and business leaders, and especially the community at large. Through our collective efforts, we need to

- Accelerate instructional innovation and adoption of best practices
- Develop, gather, and disseminate high-quality research

- Translate research into classroom practice
- Engage educators and policymakers to advocate for students' literacy rights
- Inspire the broader community to support ILA's vision and mission

To do so, ILA serves as the global professional network of literacy educators. We provide support, evidence, and research, as well as recommendations on what we know to be effective when it comes to teaching literacy. ILA is, and will continue to be, the literacy educator's hub for resources, including research in our peer-reviewed journals and best practices for literacy education such as *Standards for Literacy Professionals*. These are currently being revised and the draft standards pertaining to specialized literacy professionals were shared at this year's conference in Boston for feedback and input.

ILA's members, councils, affiliates, and the wider literacy community form a powerful network that makes a difference in advancing literacy. By leveraging our collective strengths, we can make a positive impact on lives around the world.

### The global literacy conversation

We have recently re-upped our participation in the global conversation of building awareness and support around the importance of literacy.

Representatives of ILA and our affiliates recently convened to discuss working together to reevaluate and renew ILA's commitment to a global literacy agenda. The resulting **Frankfurt Declaration** calls for strengthened collaboration and partnership between ILA, its councils, affiliates, and partners to position ILA to support literacy education and development around the world. You can read more about this below in the piece "The Frankfurt Declaration: Putting the 'I' in ILA."

This spring, ILA convened its second **Leaders for Literacy Day** event, bringing together cross-sector literacy advocates

from USAID, Microsoft, UNESCO, Library for All, Pencils of Promise, and The Wallace Foundation to address advancing literacy leadership around the world.

ILA was invited to participate in the **World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE)** in Doha, Qatar. ILA Board Vice President William H. Teale (now ILA's President), professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, facilitated a workshop on fostering school principals as literacy instruction leaders who impact student learning.

With the launch of ILA's **30 Under 30** leaders in literacy list last year, we put the spotlight on the next generation of advocates, innovators, and educators around the world who are leading efforts to address the challenges of today's evolving education field. We're looking forward to revealing the 2016 list at the end of the summer.

Our three **peer-reviewed journals**—*The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*—remain leading sources of literacy scholarship. You may have read about some of the research in education media. Check out our News & Events webpage for the latest coverage.

### Positioning ILA for success

None of our work would be possible without the knowledge, expertise, and volunteerism of our members. ILA's Board of Directors has been working to ensure that the association is well positioned to execute its mission. These leaders have helped direct our renewed pathway and continue to ensure that the organization remains relevant and focused on our evolving vision for the future.

From all of us at ILA, we want to thank you for your commitment to literacy and education. ILA sets the standards for how literacy is defined, taught, and evaluated. At our core is a commitment to evaluation and verification of what works.

We hope you are as energized as we are about this exciting path forward. ■



## LEADER Q&A WITH BERNADETTE DWYER

### A Board member's perspective on ILA's transformation

*"Transforming ILA as the go-to organization for evidence-based best practices in literacy and as an advocacy organization is key to our ability to make a difference."*

**Q1. Your work in digital literacy is at the forefront of how literacy education is evolving with new resources and tools for learning. How do you view the role of technology in the 21st-century classroom?**

The possibilities of and affordances offered by digital tools and mobile technologies to enhance literacy and learning in the 21st-century classroom are manifold. However, we do need to explicitly develop the skills, strategies, dispositions, and social practices required by our students to fully exploit the potential of technology to progress the key 21st-century skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

**Q2. ILA continues to set the standard for how literacy is defined, taught, and evaluated. What are the new assets, resources, and support that ILA can provide to educators in this world of digital learning to advance literacy?**

As an international organization with over 300,000 educators across 75 countries, ILA is in a really unique position. ILA needs to harness the power of technology to establish professional learning communities and to build communication platforms that allow educators across the globe to forge collaborative partnerships to enhance literacy and learning in the classroom. It is so important that our students develop global literacies and global perspectives to generate cultural and linguistic awareness and respect for diversity.

ILA, through the Board's Literacy, eLearning, Communications, and Culture Committee, is currently undertaking a worldwide survey of members to assess the changes, challenges, and consequences presented by embedding digital texts, tools, and platforms into the classroom. The results of this survey

will provide valuable data for ILA as we develop new assets, resources, and support for members in a digital age. I encourage you to take the survey at [digitallyliterate.net](http://digitallyliterate.net).

**Q3. Speaking globally, how can ILA engage its vast network of educators to enhance literacy leadership?**

ILA needs to continue its transformation as the go-to organization for evidence-based best practices in literacy and as an advocacy organization. We also need to generate greater capacity across the network to influence policy decisions around literacy in schools and communities; mentor up-and-coming leaders across councils, chapters, and affiliates globally; and use technology to bridge geographical boundaries so that mentorship can occur regardless of location or time zone.

**Q4. As a longtime ILA and Board member, what is your perspective on the future direction of the organization?**

I think the future direction of the organization is twofold:

- First, as a truly global organization, ILA is an influential and powerful advocate for literacy for marginalized people and communities across the world.
- Second, ILA is a provider of research-based resources and publications developed in collaborative partnerships with educators in real classrooms and community settings and designed to enhance literacy and learning for all.

**Q5. In what ways does ILA need to evolve at the Board level to achieve its mission?**

ILA is at a unique moment in time. The move from the International Reading Association to the International Literacy Association is so much more than a name change.

The restructuring of the organization as a truly global and international organization will need strong will and resolve at the Board level. ILA needs to build its network across the globe and to mentor potential leaders for Board service so that we have a Board of Directors and executive team with the expertise and resolve to drive the organization forward.

**Q6. Which sessions did you most look forward to at this year's conference and why?**

The ILA 2016 Conference & Exhibits presented a unique opportunity for the Board to meet with various bodies, committees, and task forces, and to connect with members and listen closely to their needs, concerns, and ideas.

I loved the [Preconference Institutes](#). I looked forward to the ILA Outstanding Dissertation research poster session and presentation of awards to keep abreast of the groundbreaking work of up-and-coming researchers. I really enjoyed listening to authors discuss their creative processes at the Literature Luncheons. I have heard many inspirational speakers over the years at the General Sessions, and this year's speakers provided us with thought-provoking ideas to challenge our thinking. I loved the opportunity presented by the First-Timers Gathering and New Member Meetup to meet educators who are coming to conference for the first time. They are joining an energetic ILA community of like-minded professionals who are passionate about advancing literacy and learning. ■

*Bernadette Dwyer is a lecturer in literacy studies in education, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, Ireland.*

## THE FRANKFURT DECLARATION:

# Putting the 'I' in ILA

## Reframing commitment to global literacy

**O**n April 15, 2016, 20 representatives from the International Literacy Association and its affiliates from around the globe came together for a two-day strategy session in Frankfurt, Germany. Their goal? To take a deeper look at how the organization was structured outside of the United States—and what needed to be done to strengthen the global network from inside out.

The meeting resulted in what's being referred to as the Frankfurt Declaration, a document that not only details ILA's plan for organizational reform, but also asserts the organization's commitment to a global literacy agenda.

Creating a new operating and governance structure to better match the mission isn't a foreign concept to ILA; the U.S. councils are in the midst of a transformation to do the same.

Even so, it's interesting to look at how the Frankfurt Declaration came about, as well as what it means for the organization as a whole.

### Asking the tough questions

The majority of participants arrived in the rain on a dreary, foggy Friday. Work began early the next morning. Hunkered down in the hotel airport, soberly discussing the challenges that each constituent group faced, the energy initially seemed to echo the weather.

For the next day and a half, the team engaged in several discussions and group activities designed to give every participant a voice. What resulted was a very long list of what the organization's international affiliates wanted, needed, and expected from ILA.

"I listened attentively," says Marcie Craig Post, ILA's Executive Director, "and finally I realized things had reached the point where I simply had to say, 'Wow, we can't do [what you're asking].'"

Post explained to the group that ILA's current financial picture made it



**Front row left to right:** Bernadette Dwyer, Ireland; Sharon Warner, Barbados; William Teale, USA; Amy Schulte, Italy; Ety Hoessein, Indonesia.

**Second row left to right:** Renate Valtin, Germany; Eric McDonald, USA; Priti Sachdev, India; Tiffany Sears, USA; Chinwe A. Muodumogu, Nigeria; Cathy Collier, USA; Pehr-Olof Rönnholm, Finland; Liliana deMontenegro, Dominican Republic; Julie Scullen, USA; Merlene Alon, Philippines; Beryl Exley, Australia; Sandra Thomas, Grenada.

**Third row left to right:** Scott Walter, Canada; Marcie Craig Post, USA; Grant Webb, Australia.

**Not pictured:** Zaynidin Mukhtorov, Tajikistan.

impossible to consider the majority of the ideas presented.

"ILA spends more than \$3,000,000 annually to support our council and affiliate network," she says. "But we don't receive a single dollar of direct revenue from the investment."

Beyond that, she adds, "ILA is set up to publish journals, manage memberships, and host an annual conference—not much else."

But the results of the exercise also showed that many of ILA's affiliates were producing amazing results and had much to offer. This got Post thinking. She leaned back in her chair, tapping her pen, and chewed things over. In a flash, an idea

started to form, and Post posed a radical question.

"What if we're doing this all wrong?" she asked them. "What if ILA served as a platform for connection of our network of literacy educators? What if we directed our future efforts to strengthening the connection among organizations in a robust network to share what they do, so that the content is generated within the network, rather than by ILA?"

### Envisioning the future

More group work followed. Most of it centered on questions such as, "How do we look at what we want to do and create

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—WILLIAM TEALE, PRESIDENT, ILA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

a structure that makes it possible?” says ILA Council Advisor Tiffany Sears.

“One of the best exercises conducted at this meeting was one where we looked into the future and asked ourselves, ‘If this same group was sitting around this table three years from now, what would we be celebrating as our achievements?’” says Amy Schulte, ILA Global Operations Manager.

It was clear that ILA’s overarching goal—to advance literacy worldwide—is one shared by all of the affiliate groups. What was missing, says Pehr-Olof Rönholm of Finland, was the governance model to support this global agenda.

This is where the Frankfurt Declaration comes into play.

## **Embracing collaboration and change**

Transparency. Collaboration. A true partnership. These are just some of the things that the Frankfurt Declaration calls for. It stands as a clear statement on what the team agreed should be done “to ensure that ILA is best positioned to support quality literacy education and development across the world.”

To this end, the Frankfurt Declaration calls for creating a “national partnership membership.” This marks a radical

shift from ILA’s current membership structure—moving beyond the individual member to include networked associations.

“The current model is not a collaborative one,” says Grant Webb of Australia. He says he hopes that the result of the Frankfurt meeting will ultimately be “to establish a platform under equal participation at all levels—locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally—that will allow partners to share expertise on literacy around the world.”

Chinwe Muodumogu of Nigeria says, “The proposed new ILA will be able to provide literacy leadership that will accommodate every member association...in ways that will be socially and culturally appropriate.”

She also sees the potential for stronger affiliates to support struggling ones “through provision of human and material resources.”

William H. Teale, President of ILA’s Board of Directors, says he’s energized by the “great enthusiasm for this global initiative.

“The goal for us to put the ‘I’ in ILA will result in ILA becoming bigger, stronger, and more recognized as the go-to source for literacy knowledge and expertise around the world,” he says.

## **Getting there from here**

“The two most important shifts are mindset and structure,” says Rönholm. “The shift in mindset is from a perspective seen from one continent to a global vision in which partner organizations around the world collaborate to advance the cause of literacy everywhere.”



In terms of structure, he continues, the Frankfurt Declaration moves ILA from a “hub and spokes” model to one comprised of “like-minded autonomous partner associations forming a network united in purpose.”

Of course, getting there will take a sustained effort. Webb sees two critical conditions that need to be satisfied for the Frankfurt vision to come to fruition: “A commitment to collaborative work and a lack of ‘nervousness’ about change.” Rönholm echoes this sentiment, observing that success will require “courage and vision on the part of the ILA Board and a determination not to waste this chance for radical change.”

Schulte also views a deep openness to change as essential for reaching Frankfurt’s ambitious goals: “Change is difficult and will require resolve, creativity, and a willingness to embrace new ways of doing things while still acknowledging the successes of the past.”

“No one has any delusion that it will be easy to establish this improved network, but we realize that ILA is the group of professionals to make it work,” adds Teale. “The sleeves have been rolled up and everyone is already involved in making it happen—and happen in the right way.”

Download the full text of the Frankfurt Declaration at [literacyworldwide.org/frankfurtdeclaration](http://literacyworldwide.org/frankfurtdeclaration). ■

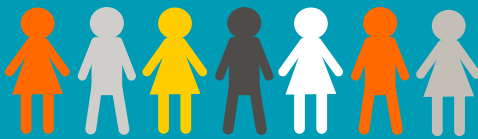


## FRANKFURT BY THE NUMBERS

Stakeholders  
in Attendance



**11** ILA Affiliates  
Represented



**7** Regions  
Represented

Africa, Asia, Caribbean,  
Europe, Latin America,  
North America, Oceania

**13** Countries  
Represented



Australia, Barbados, Canada,  
Dominican Republic, Finland, Germany,  
Grenada, India, Indonesia, Ireland,  
Nigeria, Philippines, United States

Distance Traveled  
to Attend



**134,114 km**  
**(83,335 miles)**