Report on the discussion on future IAMCR publication strategy
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Background
At the IAMCR Conferences in Stockholm (2008) and Mexico (2009) members of the Association were invited by this Committee to redesign our overall publication strategy. Four options were identified and briefly discussed as far as re-thinking and expanding IAMCR publication-related activities were concerned:

i. **"Special liaison"** by Sections and Working Groups **with existing journals** in order to publish articles from Section members or edit special thematic issues;

ii. **Anthologies around IAMCR Conferences themes:** different from existing IAMCR book series these would be collections of works presented at annual conferences and or contributions from Plenaries and key note speeches;

iii. **IAMCR Working Papers series**: presenting on-going work and emerging themes, these would cover a variety of themes, be published in different languages and peer-reviewed;

iv. **A web-based portal to access regional journals and articles**: this could entail working in close connection with regional scholarly associations, cooperating to identify outstanding research, promoting abstracts of selected articles in different languages, providing access to scholarly work in the original language, thus fostering a truly international resource base that should also reflect different research traditions.

In February 2010, this Committee posted a note on the IAMCR Section heads and Working Groups chairs mailing-list asking for comments and suggestions on these options. Responses clearly showed that these options are not seen as mutually exclusive and that each could be relevant for the Association in different ways, while also present new challenges.

We believe the concept of an overall publishing strategy for IAMCR is of relevance to all IAMCR members and to the future of the Association. We therefore developed an ad hoc discussion space online and invited a number of IAMCR members to join a collective editing exercise. This took place during the period March – June 2010. This Report is a synthesis of that discussion which focused on the strengths and weaknesses of each option, as well as on the potential and challenges in developing an IAMCR strategy.

Comments have been collected concerning the possible articulation of the different options within an overall IAMCR publication strategy, as well as the implications for the composition and organization of the IAMCR Publication Committee. For each option also necessary resources have been identified. The discussion also suggested "next steps" which we reflect in this Report.

The Report is now available to IAMCR Section Heads and Working Groups Chairs for consideration at the Braga Conference, as a starting point for further discussion.

We would like to thank our colleagues Aimée Vega, Friedrich Krotz, John Downing, Keyan Tomaselli, Maria Helena Costa Carvalho Sousa, Paula Chakravartty, Pradip Thomas and Sarah Bannerman for their time and expert comments. Their generous and substantive support has been enlightening and we hope this Report, for which we assume full responsibility, reflects the stimulating plural conversation.

2. Options in detail
(In the Appendix of this narrative you will find a bullet point summary of the details below)

i. Special liaison" with existing journals
There seemed to be agreement that this option would allow Sections and Working Groups to strengthen their internal networking while promoting their research agenda within the broader scientific community. In doing this, Sections and Working Groups would have at their disposal a manageable tool for organizing and distributing interesting materials without putting too much energy in new editorial projects.

Recent growth of new journal titles may provide interesting venues and diversified readership, though concerns are expressed regarding a) how to guarantee IAMCR visibility and "branding" of these initiatives and b) how to make sure the quality of published work is reflected in the quality of journals involved in the "special liaisons."

This option is different from option 2 (Anthologies around Conference themes) in as far as it may reflect a more structured research agenda of specific Sections and WGs. This is an option IAMCR could encourage amongst Sections and WGs without being directly involved.

Pursuing this path would offer several opportunities: e.g. promotion of IAMCR thematic research in different regions/countries (also in due consideration of multi-linguistic challenges) and diversification of readership. This option may be particularly interesting for new Sections and in regard to emerging thematic issues.

Developing the necessary resources for this option would not be very demanding. The discussants agreed there is little funding involved, while committed people with expertise, editorial skills and sufficient time would be crucial. Staggered rotation within Sections and WGs would be important. They could be asked to develop a working plan indicating priorities for a period of for instance two to three years. IAMCR Publication Committee could be asked to draft such guidelines to be discussed and accepted. As an option with mainly Section/WG responsibility, it is viable though seen as a core challenge for IAMCR as a whole.

ii. Anthologies around IAMCR Conferences themes
It is recognized by some members of the advisory group that anthologies based on IAMCR conference themes may provide greater visibility of IAMCR activities, and make its research agenda more prominent – both for the scholarly community and other important partners, such as UNESCO. Promoting IAMCR intellectual work and raising the profile of annual conferences would be the main contribution of this option, alongside offering opportunities to less established scholars to have their work published. An annual anthology could become the kernel of a sensible, sophisticated and unique IAMCR theme series.

The publication of such an anthology, however, is seen as problematic in a number of aspects: the selection process would require clear guidelines; editing and coordinating would be a major challenge; funding is also seen as a challenge. Overall this does not seem to be an option that attract much support, unless it would be seen as a responsibility of the Local Organizing Conference Committee, as a part of the Conference Plan and covered by the Conference budget. In such case, it would mostly be focused on material from plenary interventions and key-note speeches. In spite of all objections, it was also recognized that a highly competitive anthology of high standards, following a rigorous selection, might attract libraries.

During the online discussion, especially the younger participants outlined the possibility of on-line publishing, as long as high standards of quality in selecting and editing material would be applied. This would also offer the opportunity to adopt an open-access policy. This option would allow fewer limitations on the length and number of accepted materials, while making themes immediately available to a much broader readership.

Concluding: this option faces severe challenges as far as funding, time and commitment are concerned. The anthology would still run a risk of not encountering readership interest. The IAMCR Publication Committee and Local Organizing Committee would be responsible for

financial support and finding an interested publisher.

iii. **An IAMCR Working Papers series**

This is seen as a low-cost/risk option to promote work in progress (particularly by, but not limited to, emerging scholars); give visibility to thematic trends in IAMCR intellectual work; and to quickly finalize and make accessible papers presented at annual Conferences according to common guidelines and standards.

The selection process would have to be worked out carefully as, for some, this option would mainly be the responsibility of Sections and WGs, while others see it as an IAMCR Publication Committee task. Suggestions have been made in terms of sharing the task, and therefore articulating interaction, between the Publication Committee and Sections/WGs.

Overall this option seems to be not difficult to handle, would allow working in different languages (funds would need to be identified to provide at least translation of abstracts), thus promoting works by scholars from regions outside Anglo-American circuits. Hopefully access in Global South economies would be made easier, both for writers and readers.

There was strong support for a well-planned/organized on-line series through IAMCR website. Of course, its potential for feedback as well as visibility would depend on the web design. At the same time, making such a knowledge resource available on the Association's website would foster its use and visibility.

The discussants agreed that such an option would require careful organization and precise guidelines in order to meet quality standards; while a strategic publicity would need to be developed an pursued. Also, copyright issues would need to be addressed, especially in the case of on-line materials.

The concern was expressed that the often perceived lower "status" of a Working Paper Series may not justify the kind of energy and commitment which a quality working paper series require.

Option 3 seems to be viable for emerging scholars who try to build up a basic publication portfolio as well as for more experienced authors whose work – in draft and not ready yet for publication in a journal – needs to be debated. These authors would need to retail copyright so that they can republish in revised form elsewhere.

An edited, peer reviewed Working Paper Series, based on intellectual work in Sections and Working Groups; made available as Open Source; with responsibility of Section chairs to identify contributors, would imply minimum costs.

iv. **A web-based portal to access regional journals and articles**

Option 4 is probably the most ambitious and innovative proposal, and therefore the most challenging in many aspects. It would respond to several needs within the international scholarly community: addressing the challenges of multi-cultural, multi-vocal intellectual production and exchange; creating a hub space, accessible in different languages through different search functions, allowing southern and regional journals a totally different visibility: and fostering a model that has not yet been developed elsewhere. All of this would imply creativity, specific skills, vision ...

The portal should not be considered as just a list of existing resources but an articulated space to coordinate, connect and access knowledge and to expand scholarly understanding of issues, methods and research traditions.

This option is very demanding in terms of time, resources and networking: who would be in charge of development and handling? (probably an ad hoc team with specific competences, including technical and linguistic); what would be IAMCR leadership in this initiative, and what collaborative model with different regional academic associations? Who would be in charge of selecting the journals to be included, on the bases of what criteria to guarantee consistency and quality standards? Again, issues related to copyright would need to be addressed.

This initiative would, in the long term, need to be a joint effort amongst a plurality of regional interested organizations, but suggestions were made to realize this option in gradual steps (see End Note on page 7).

This option would require relevant and diversified resources, specific expertise (handling web-based archives and web-mapping); political will; strategic vision; planning (by the Publication committee, EB and interested IAMCR members); financial resources (for start-up plus sustainability) and networking with regional associations to create connections and goodwill towards cooperation.

A gradual approach seems to be more viable: starting from a "place" on IAMCR's Website where an initial selection of journals would be presented. IAMCR needs people to organize this, care for common formats, build up a common data file for all abstracts, and liaise with the publishers. The Association could perhaps invest in this as a community looking for several library subscriptions. Members of the discussion group agreed that more thinking is needed to identify and properly consider all pros- and cons- of this kind of proposal. Suggestions are made to continue the discussion in a face-to-face traditional mode.

3. Assessing the options

In general there seem to be space available for Option 1: the Publication Committee (and the IC) may encourage Sections and WGs to develop linkages with existing journals, it should support this decentralized effort by providing general guidelines (building on IAMCR's strengths of international and critical scholarship and therefore some policy measures that encourage representation and diversity in terms of work from emerging scholars).

There is no strong support for Option 2.

Options 3 and 4 are the ones perceived as more relevant for IAMCR as a whole.

As for Option 3 a space on the IAMCR website could be created to host Working Papers (WPs). Further discussion is needed to define according to which criteria this is to be structured and how WPs are to be organized (conference theme, IAMCR thematic strands, Sections' research agenda…). The Publication Committee could develop general guidelines for these works (basic principles to reflect the aspiration to foster critical reflections, multi-lingual and inter-disciplinary contributions, open access to intellectual work and structure, minimum requirements). Editorial responsibility could reside with Section heads and WG chairs, while publicity would depend on IAMCR effort.

As for Option 4, definitely more discussion is needed to address the many open and critical issues outlined above. Nevertheless there is shared understanding that in facing the challenges posed by developments in university systems worldwide, and attempts to foster scientific production as an "industry of knowledge", innovative thinking is a must, to continue raising awareness while remaining coherent with IAMCR's mission. Issues of feasibility, requirements and implications of the portal project would therefore go together with broader reflections on the future of communication scholarship in a complex world.

4. Future scenarios and next steps

Different activities can be considered and included in an overall IAMCR publication strategy and related plan, depending on the needs to which such a plan aims at and the goals it sets for itself.

We have collected comments and suggestions concerning possible scenarios for IAMCR publication-related activities, which may include different combinations of the above-mentioned options, as well as other activities (for instance in cooperation with other academic organizations).

Comments have been made to stress the role of IAMCR in fostering critical thinking within a truly trans-national scholarly community, in light of current communication trends and challenges brought about by globalizing processes to the development of independent and critical scientific work in the different and interconnected areas of communication studies.

Some of the topics for such discussion are outlined below.

i. First it has been outlined that we need a broader discussion to address developments that may change the publication habits of the academics: the growing pressure to (commercial) indices of impact on people working in universities, online journals and free access journals requiring payment for publication and the prevailing "instrumental logic" of much current publishing posed threats to critical thinking and on. The task of IAMCR, perhaps together with ECREA and other international and regional institutions, is to support publication policies that care for a broad discussion in an academic public sphere. Thus we should open the discussion in such a direction - not to concentrate on only English language publishers and a universalistic understanding of academic culture, but referring to accountability and democratic goals, with support and participation also of the smaller cultural groups. Challenges such as multi-lingualism in academia, Global South involvement and focus on quality analyses should be at the core of further discussion: how are we to imagine a democratic culture of academic publications and who should decide?

ii. Secondly we are to address the issue of how IAMCR can make a difference by both assessing existing practices (including publication series and related activities) and asking the question of how to better serve the members and our "field". As of now the Publication Committee has mostly worked in a re-active manner but it needs to have a more in-depth discussion from various angles to spot the "burning issues and questions". Suggestions were made to revitalize this discussion through existing tools: the IAMCR newsletter, the website, Facebook spaces. This Report shows that a loosely coordinated effort in fostering collective contributions can be manageable and fruitful.

iii. A proposal has been made with regard to the future composition of a revised IAMCR Publication Committee: it seems that a core committee of 6 people – each one responsible for enlisting a further 3-5 to serve as reviewers in an ad hoc advisory capacity. The core and the advisory group would need to be able to represent particular areas of expertise as well as regional/country networks and perspectives. The core would be elected by the IC E.G. to serve for six years (2 people), four years (2 people) and two years (2 people), in order to provide for a 'staggered' continuity system.

iv. Finally, suggestions have been offered concerning basic policy guidelines that should inform IAMCR publication activities in the future:
- *multilingualism* (or, at least, the commitment to publish all material in the three IAMCR official languages, thus reaching out to develop appropriate funding for this task);
- *regional representativity* in scholarship and issues through outreach to new scholars as well as under-represented scholarship from the global South. (On a specific note: IAMCR members have a strong research research profile in less developed countries, but participation from Africa especially is low. The reasons relate to low resources and lack of research drive, cost of accessing internet, poor libraries, First World prejudices, limited publication channels, etc. Some efforts need to be made to invite representatives of African countries to participate in IAMCR publishing projects;
- *gender representativeness*;
- *outreach to emergent scholars,* especially with regard to gender;
- commitment to *free sharing of information and open access to knowledge (*this being absolutely critical for J&C schools in the South who have limited access to resources that some of us take for granted).

As for the **next steps** that should be considered, we propose the following topics for discussion by the International Council as well as within the Sections' and Working Groups' business meetings during the Braga conference:

a) Create a space for further discussion of the basic principles and the core concerns that have been raised in relation to IAMCR publication strategy;

b) Establish a clear mission and policy for a revised Publication Committee

c) Identify and appoint members of this newly established Publication Committee, along the lines proposed in this document;

d) Invite the new Committee to develop an outline for publication strategy on the basis of this document and discussions in Braga. (This outline would include a paragraph on basic policy principles for action, an overview or mission statement concerning IAMCR publication strategy and an agenda for action to be developed in the course of the coming years, indicating priorities, responsibilities, resource needed, outreach opportunities);

e) Circulate this proposal among Section Heads and Working Groups Chairs for suggestions and approval before the Istanbul Conference, where decisions should be made and a refined Plan for Action should be adopted.

As stated above, this Report offers to IAMCR Section Heads and Working Groups Chairs elements for consideration during meetings on the occasion of the Braga Conference and beyond. We hope this may be a useful contribution to expand and make relevant the role IAMCR is expected to play as a point of reference to the international scholarly community.

End Note
Friedrich Krotz has suggested gradual steps to realize Option 4 - **A web-based portal to access regional journals and articles -** First step: only journals that present themselves by a mission statement and abstracts of articles, all in English, would be included and - access because of control and copyright only for IAMCR members. Perhaps in a second step the same in the two other official languages of IAMCR, adopting a common search function for all abstracts. Third step: if a journal is open access, full articles can become downloaded. For the others, may be that IAMCR may buy access for members, or the respective publishers will sell the articles on demand (need to approach publishers and discuss solutions). Of course, a quality control of the participating journals will be necessary, so maybe better to begin with not more then a dozen form different parts of the world, and let things grow then. In addition, if we have such a portal we must find out what are the interests of the users and the participating journals - discussion, evaluation, translation, exchange and so on - but how and what?

Appendix
Bullet point summary of the 4 Options exposed above

1. **Special liaison" with existing journals**
Strengths:
- strengthens the internal networking of sections and WGs
- promotes the research agenda of sections and WGs in the wider academic community
- has the potential to increase IAMCR's leadership among scholars
- takes advantage of existing and diversified readership interested in specific area of interest
- provides a manageable tool for organizing and distributing interesting material
- efficient – not requiring much energy for new editorial projects
- would encourage sections and WGs to develop a publication agenda/ plan indicating priorities for a period (2-3 years)
- can happen – and should happen – at a decentralized basis

Concerns/weaknesses:
- no certainty about guaranteed IAMCR visibility and "branding"
- publications may happen in low quality journals (and through the sections and WGs connection with IAMCR reflect badly on the organization)
- how to make sure the quality of published work is reflected in the quality of journals the "special liaisons" is created with.
- some themes of sections and WGs may not be covered by specialized journals
- no final editorial control

Opportunities:
- promote IAMCR thematic research in different regions/countries (also in due consideration of multi-linguistic challenges)
- diversification of readership
- IAMCR able to contribute to high quality journals; not necessarily limited focus on high impact journals
- particularly interesting for new Sections and in regard to newer/emerging thematic issues

Resources needed:
- does not require a demanding budget
- committed people with expertise, editorial skills and sufficient time would be crucial
- rotation of resources within the sections needed

General impression:
As mainly a Section/WG responsibility, the option is viable, though seen as a core challenge for IAMCR as a whole.

2. **Anthologies around IAMCR Conferences themes**
Strengths:
- may provide greater visibility of IAMCR activities, and make its research agenda more prominent for relevant parties
- promotes IAMCR intellectual work and raise the profile of annual conferences
- offers opportunities to less established scholars to have their work published.
- a yearly collection of works selected from annual conferences could be the start of an on-going IAMCR series
- attractive through on-line publishing, if high standard selection processes and quality editing is guaranteed and an open-access policy in relation to these materials would be adopted
- on-line would be immediate and widely accessible

Concerns/weaknesses:

- the selection process will require clear guidelines (who would select? according to which criteria? How to guarantee consistency?)
- editing and coordinating would be a major challenge
- due to general and wide themes readership may not be too large
- anthologies not an easy format to market

Resources:
- funding is seen as a challenge for hard copy anthologies
- less if a concern when on-line anthologies are considered
- time and energy by members of IAMCR Publication Committee and Local Organizing Committee, who would also be responsible for financial support

General impression:
- not attractive for wider readership and publishers if in print format only
- conceived as mainly a responsibility of the Local Organizing Committee, as part of the Conference Plan and budget, and mostly focused on collecting plenary interventions and key note speeches
- however, with a rigorous selection process a highly competitive anthology of high standards might attract libraries
- online options would have more advantages

- **An IAMCR Working Papers series**

Strengths:
- a low-cost/risk to promote work in progress (particularly but not only emerging scholars)
- giving visibility to thematic trends in IAMCR activities
- possibility to incorporate more immediately papers intended for annual conference
- seems to be easier to handle
- would allow working in different languages
- promotes works by scholars from regions outside Anglo-American circuits
- access in Global South economies will be easier, both for writers and readers
- special preference for a well-planned/organized on-line series (quality of web design crucial: – potential for feedback as well as visibility would depend on web design)
- if on IAMCR website – would foster its use and visibility.

Concerns/ weaknesses:
- responsibility would need to be clear (Sections and WG? IAMCR Publication Committee? Shared responsibility between these two?)
- the lower "status" of such publication may not justify the kind of energy and commitment which a quality working paper series would require
- copyright issues should be addressed (especially in the case of on-line materials and when papers are to be developed into final publications)

Resources:
- funds should be used to provide at least translation of abstracts
- would require careful organization and precise guidelines in order to meet quality standards; strategic publicity should be pursued.

General impression:
- This option seems to be viable and attractive, especially for emergent scholars trying to build up a publication portfolio as well as for more experienced authors whose work needs to be debated but which is not yet ready for final publication in a journal.
- An edited, peer reviewed, working series, based on emerging thinking in the sections and working groups; made available as Open Source; with responsibility of Section chairs to identify contributors, would imply minimum costs. If this is conceived as a quality series, with IAMCR specific responsibility in promoting effective publicity and guaranteeing quality. This may be accomplished by identifying single themes (emerging, problematic..) for all

Working Papers, cutting across Sections and WGs.

4. **A web-based portal to access regional journals and articles**

Strengths:
- responding to several needs within the international scholarly community
- addressing the challenges of multi-cultural, multi-vocal intellectual production and exchange
- creating a hub space, accessible in different languages through different search functions
- allowing southern and regional journals a totally different visibility
- fostering a model that has not yet been developed elsewhere.

Concerns:
- very demanding in terms of time, resources, networking: who would be in charge of development and handling? (probably an ad hoc team with specific competences, including technical and linguistic);
- what would be IAMCR leadership in this initiative?
- what collaborative model with different regional academic associations cold be worked with? who would be in charge of selecting the journals to be included, on the bases of what criteria to guarantee consistency and quality standards?
- issues related to copyright would need to be addressed

Resources:
- requires creativity, specific skills (handling web-based archives and web-mapping), vision
- requires relevant and diversified resources: political will, strategic vision and planning (Publication committee plus EB plus interested IAMCR members...)
- financial resources (for start-up plus sustainability
- networking efforts (to create connections an trust towards cooperation with regional associations)
- IAMCR needs people to organizes this, care for common formats, build up a common data file for all abstracts, and take care of the publishers… (perhaps IAMCR could invest in this as a community looking for several library subscriptions.)

General impression:
- this portal should not be considered as just a list of existing resources but an articulated space to connect and access knowledge, expand scholarly understanding on issues, methods and research traditions
- eventually this needs to be a joint effort amongst a plurality of regional interested organizations. Gradual approach is more viable. Other option is: starting from a "place" on IAMCR's Website where a selection of Journals present themselves
- more thinking is needed to identify and properly consider all pros- and cons- of this kind of proposal; the discussion needs to be continued in a face-to-face traditional mode.