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## **FIVE YEARS OF RIAS**

Editors' Picks



## THE FIFTH BIRTHDAY

September 2004. The autumnal aura, blurring venerable spires of the academic Mecca of all English majors of the world, added to the sense excitement among the participants of a meeting of the IASA Executive Council at the Rothermere American Institute of the University of Oxford, where the idea of the official periodical of IASA was first formed.

*Paweł Jędrzejko  
RIAS Associate Editor  
University of Silesia  
in Katowice, Poland*

The excitement notwithstanding, initially, our ambitions were rather unassuming. For obvious reasons, IASA, then still young, needed online presence: a website and a newsletter designed to facilitate the exchange of information between the Executive Council and the organization's membership. In the aftermath of our Oxford debate, I was charged with the duty of implementing the IASA Online Center for Thought Exchange, whose function was to warrant the organization's visibility on the World-Wide-Web and to facilitate our communications. The system, based on a relatively complex CMS created by Wojciech Małota and installed on the servers of the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, offered our members individual pages, a bulletin board, a chatroom, a forum, a book display and a resource centre. Yet, despite all the modern technology involved, it failed to offer us what we needed most: a fully-fledged journal of our own, a real *presence*.

By 2006, IASA was already a world-recognized organization, its membership growing with every passing year. By then, all of us realized that the unique de-centeredness of our research called for a unique venue: a journal that would specifi-

cally reflect the philosophy of the International American Studies Association, and one properly catering to the mission of the Organization. In February of the same year, Michael Boyden and myself submitted a complete proposal to the IASA Executive Council and soon thereafter, in March 2006, we were able to present it to Paul Giles, the then IASA President, and Theo D'haen, IASA Founding Executive Director, during a seminal meeting at the Catholic University of Leuven.

The decision was made: as of September 2006, the *Review of International American Studies* officially became the organ of the International American Studies Association, with Michael Boyden as its Editor-in-Chief, myself as the Associate Editor, Tomasz Adamczewski and Wojciech Liber of the Soft for Humans as the Journal's IT advisors, Karolina Wojdała as its graphic designer and Michał Derda-Nowakowski of ExMachina Publishers as our DTP specialist. The original RIAS Editorial Board consisted of Theo D'haen, Anders Olsson, Liam Kennedy, Sieglinde Lemke, Giorgio Mariani, Ian Tyrrell, Helmbrecht Breinig, Rosario Faraudo, and the IASA Founding President and the ideological forefather of RIAS, Djelal Kadir. Soon, the President's decision was ratified by the whole of the Executive Council. As a result, IASA commissioned the design of the RIAS CMS System, which was launched at the end of August 2006 by the Soft For Humans. At the same time, the first call for papers was sent out to the IASA members. In September 2006, the inaugural issue of the *Review of International American Studies* finally saw the light of day.

In his 'President's Welcome', Paul Giles explained the role of the Journal thus:

Welcome to RIAS, the *Review of International American Studies*, the online journal of the International American Studies Association. IASA, which held its first conference in Leiden in 2003, is organized around the understanding that in the twenty-first century American Studies, however that term is defined, can be properly discussed only in a global perspective. Many different views have been put forward as to what 'America' should mean—country, continent, hemisphere?—but the one thing on which most people are agreed is that in an era of increasing global circulation the international dimensions of American Studies can no longer be ignored.

RIAS, which will be available free to all members of IASA, is designed to facilitate that conversation. National associations of American Studies continue to make very valuable contributions to the subject, but much of their focus is necessarily on matters close to home: the protection of local programs, safeguarding faculty positions, attempting to raise the subject's profile in often difficult circumstances, and so on. IASA by contrast, offers the possibility of complementary or contrary perspectives which can expose practitioners of American Studies to intellectual outlooks very different from their own. This is not an 'export' model of American Studies, but one based upon the idea of reciprocal interaction, of mutual exchange and enlightenment. For academics based in North America or Europe, seeing how things appear from Australasia or Asia, Latin America or Africa, can often appear as a salutary corrective to the insularity of ideas often assumed, wrongly, to enjoy universal validity. From an ideological point of view, IASA might in this sense be said to be an almost deliberately incoherent organization, one that offers its members the prospect of finding their home-grown views colliding with others working from very different premises.

The purpose of RIAS is simply to enable and promote the wide circulation of different ideas, so as to achieve more of a global balance in the rapidly internationalizing field of American Studies. Many interesting topics have been discussed and debated recently on the IASA Executive Council e-mail discussion list, and we hope that RIAS will help to bring these and other important issues to the attention of a wider audience. We invite contributions, both in the form of short position papers on topics of general interest, or through notices of forthcoming conferences, calls for papers, observations on developments in scholarship in different parts of the world, and so on. The function of RIAS, as indeed of IASA in general, is to enhance channels of communication among scholars concerned with American Studies in different parts of the world, so as to enable the subject to grow and develop in ways that may not be visible to any of us at the present time. While RIAS has no preconceived academic agenda, it will of course depend crucially for its usefulness on the participation of scholars in many different parts of the world. We hope that this e-journal will become a network of global intellectual exchange in American Studies, and, to this end, we warmly welcome contributions from all quarters.

Paul Giles  
President, IASA

Participation, indeed, confirms the Journal's usefulness. Since its inception, we have published five volumes of RIAS, comprising 12 issues. The Editorial Board expanded to include such eminent scholars as Amy Kaplan, Maureen Montgom-

*Paweł Jędrzejko*  
*RIAS Associate Editor*  
*University of Silesia*  
*in Katowice, Poland*

ery, Enikő Bollobás, Ulf Hannerz, Sun Youzhong, Jørn Brøndal, Amanda Lagerkvist, Christopher Saunders, Theo D'haen, Liam Kennedy, Sieglinde Lemke, Ian Tyrell, Helmbrecht Breinig, Rosario Faraudo, Djelal Kadir, Anders Olsson and our own President, Giorgio Mariani. Today, RIAS, indeed, is the global entity it was meant to be, recognized by specialists in hemispheric, transatlantic and transpacific research world-wide: specialists in American Studies in multiple countries, who bring multiple critical perspectives to the field, as these are inflected by their own cultural and national contexts.

Published between September 2006 and September 2011, each issue of the Journal has proven to serve the IASA mission well; with each year we offer our readership more and more value. Today, the online version of RIAS is available free of charge not only to IASA members, but to all colleagues world-wide.

In 2007, RIAS began to move beyond its first incarnation toward its present form as a fully refereed journal with its first peer-reviewed issue, guest-edited by Cyraina Johnson-Roullier. Today, the Journal grants international academics and students access to excellent texts by scholars representing both the pantheon of American Studies and the younger generation of Americanists of various nationalities and academic profiles. Today, as well as the online version, we offer our readership the print-on-demand option, thus offering 'traditionalists' professionally produced hard copies of the Journal. Today we flourish, although we do realize that our journey toward perfection will never end.

Scholars from numerous countries respond to our Calls for Papers, send in their articles, and help propagate the Journal among their own colleagues, thus further reinforcing its reputation. The recognition of RIAS constantly increases: with Cyraina Johnson-Roullier—once guest-editor, now the Journal's indefatigable Editor in Chief—at the helm, the journal fares better than ever before.

Professionally produced, RIAS will hopefully receive a new online submissions and work-flow-support system, which will facilitate the work of the Editors and speed up the efforts of the production team.

As the journal continues to expand, strong support from the membership will continue to be welcomed, especially in the form of service on the Editorial Board. Colleagues willing to donate their time and energy as multilingual Review Editors, Issue Editors, Copy Editors, PR Specialists and Peer Reviewers, or to assist the Journal in other possible ways will always be appreciated as team-members.

Let's continue working together towards the constant betterment of the fully-refereed, multilingual, multifaceted, top-quality Journal that belongs to all of us.

Happy birthday, RIAS!

*Paweł Jędrzejko*  
RIAS Associate Editor

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