

President's Report September 2022

It has been my great pleasure to serve as ISCA President and Chair of the Board since the association was incorporated in December 2021. It has been a very busy first 9 months for the new association, and we have come a long way in a short time. In this report, I review our accomplishments and assess the state of our association.

Achievements

We have been busy establishing the association, including developing a website and membership system, establishing financial accounts and systems, establishing committees, setting up IT systems, developing procedures, and many other tasks too numerous to mention. Below are some highlights.

Website and membership system

Developing a membership website is a major undertaking, and we started working on it from day 1. The website was ready in early 2022, but we had to wait for the approval of our financial systems before we could launch the website and open membership. The website is built on the WordPress content management system, allowing for flexible updating and ongoing development as required to meet the association's needs.

Events

Our webinar series has been the backbone of our community and was an important thread to keep members engaged as the association was established. We have hosted 18 webinars so far in 2022 by leading scholars and practitioners. More recently, we established a range of other events catering for more diverse interests and with greater opportunities for collaboration. These include networking events, PhD sessions, discussion group sessions, research design workshops, and an introductory session for researchers. The events committee is working on new ideas to organise important events on social capital for members and the wider community, including the possibility of a 2023 international conference on social capital.

Membership

Membership opened on June 1st and has rapidly grown to approximately 160 members in less than four months. Not only are our membership fees tiered by country income level, but we have also established a fee reduction program to make membership even more accessible. One of ISCA's values is inclusion, and we do not want financial reasons to be a barrier to accessing membership in the association. We also received an anonymous donation for 20 memberships for students from low-income countries. So far, 11 people have been

granted free membership under this program. This is a fantastic initiative, and we hope to expand this program in the next year.

Volunteer recruitment

In March 2022, we launched an invitation for people to get involved in the association. We had 84 responses, and subsequently, approximately 30 people joined committees. There continues to be a great deal of interest in contributing to and participating in the association, and we are looking for better ways to provide these opportunities. To support effective engagement, we have developed an onboarding process to help volunteers get to know each other, become familiar with our processes and get started with confidence. We have introduced a bi-monthly Volunteer Meetup event to support our volunteers to develop and build their social capital. We want to embrace the benefits of social capital, and inclusive engagement and involvement are key priorities.

Nomination process

Starting several months ago, we developed a robust and transparent nomination process for office holder and board positions. We had 22 applications, and the Nomination Committee reviewed and shortlisted the nominees, including conducting interviews with the prospective nominees. This process, now established, will be reiterated for nominations in future years. Directors of ISCA hold a three-year term; however, our Constitution calls for staggered terms, so there is continuity of governance. The directors elected this year will have terms between one and three years to create this stagger.

Governance

The Board has maintained regular meetings for over 18 months now, including the temporary informal Board that was established prior to incorporation and the formal Board since December. The Board initially met every second week before reducing to regular monthly meetings once committees were established to progress specific tasks and initiatives. The board meetings have been well attended, and detailed minutes have been kept.

The committees have been established to progress the operational tasks of the association. Each committee was chaired by a board member, and members have volunteered to join these committees. There are currently six operational committees: Administration, Human Resources, Marketing & Communications, Events, Membership, and Nomination.

Challenges

There has been an enormous amount of work to establish the association, and at times, I have felt impatience or overwhelmed by how much needed to be done. Some members of the Board have perhaps done too much work at times, myself included, and we need to be mindful of burnout. Our active members are our most valuable resource and we need to ensure their

volunteer efforts are sustainable. We can do better at sharing the work and acting more collaboratively with more members getting involved.

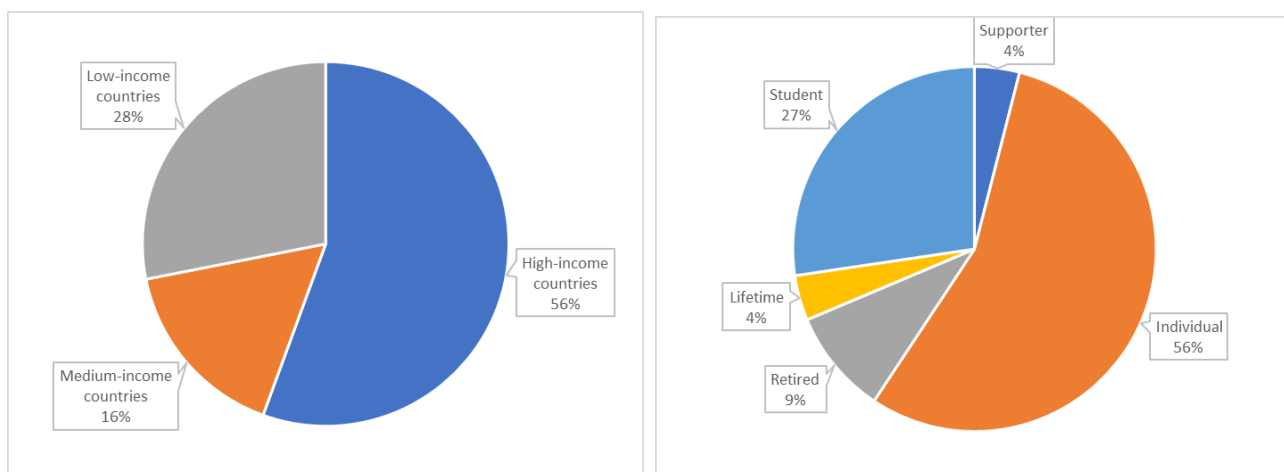
We have had to adjust to the change from an informal group to an incorporated association while also establishing all the required systems, processes, and procedures. We have been careful to establish and observe our core values of democratic governance and inclusion. We have constantly had to develop new processes, for example, for membership, events, volunteers, and board nominations, to name a few.

As an international organisation, we have the challenge of operating across various time zones and languages. Organising events and meetings can be a challenge and inevitably can result in some people being excluded or having to join in the middle of the night. We have attempted to vary times and offer multiple times to ensure everyone has access. There is more to be done to overcome the barriers of time zones and languages.

We have also had considerable delays in establishing our financial systems, particularly establishing and gaining access to the bank account. The anti-money laundering laws in New Zealand are very strict and require all directors to be identified and verified. Coordinating multiple signatures on the same document has been a challenge, but fortunately, this process was recently completed. We would also like to be able to offer tax-deductible status to our donors; however, this will require further work to make this possible. We have also discovered there are some barriers to receiving membership payments from some parts of the world, and we are working to resolve this to ensure membership in our association is accessible for everyone.

Membership

The number of ISCA members has increased rapidly since membership opened on June 1st. At the time of writing, we have 162 members including 150 individual members and 12 organisational members. We have members from 51 different countries.



Financial position

ISCA is in a strong financial position. Since opening membership on June 1st until now, we have received membership and donation revenue of NZ\$13,247.88. So far, we have not received any other form of revenue. We have incurred expenses of NZ\$5,547.68 leaving us with NZ\$7,700.20 cash on hand. These figures are preliminary numbers that are not yet fully reconciled or audited. We are using Xero accounting software to manage the finances of the association. A full financial statement will be produced for the next AGM in September 2023.

Our Future

Our new association is still in its infancy, and there is still a great deal of work to be done. We are incredibly fortunate to have a hardworking Board and dedicated volunteers. Our incoming Board is full of passion and drive, with extensive and diverse experiences and skills. By joining forces and collaborating in diverse and creative ways, we can expand our reach, improve our capacities, and achieve our aims.

Below are a few key initiatives that members have told us they want and that are currently underway.

Community building and interest groups

We want to build social capital in our association by developing a community to facilitate meaningful relationships with opportunities for interaction, exchange, collaboration, and cooperation. One of ISCA's aims is to "cultivate a thriving global community focused on social capital research and practice". Many of the people I talk to have described feeling isolated. Social capital is one of the most popular concepts across the social sciences, but often only one or two people in a department are researching it, leaving people feeling alone. We believe establishing a strong community is an important priority for ISCA.

We initially considered a website-based forum system. However, this is an old technology with several limitations for flexible use and engagement. Instead, we are considering a 'web application' that has the benefits of being accessible from any web browser as well as a downloadable app.

Our members have extremely diverse interests, with social capital having applications to virtually every area of the social sciences and every human activity. To facilitate more engagement between members who share similar interests, we intend to establish collaborative networks based on members' interests.

Newsletter and member communications

Communication is a critical part of building an association, and we have been working to establish a regular newsletter that not only keeps members up to date on association activities but is a resource about social capital and the latest developments.

International conference on social capital

There is a great deal of interest in an international conference on social capital, and I am regularly asked about when we will host one. We see this as a priority for 2023, if possible, to give people an opportunity to gather in person and remotely, share their work on social capital, and identify opportunities for collaboration. This aligns with several ISCA aims, particularly our aims to "facilitate opportunities to publish, present, and promote social capital research and practical application" and to "advance the scholarship of social capital through development and clarification of conceptual and methodological approaches".

Social capital resources

Social capital is complex and multidimensional, with many different meanings and applications. Members have expressed a desire for ISCA to develop resources on social capital, and this aligns with our aim to "be a trusted and accessible source for social capital theory, research, practice, and policy advice". This will take a lot of work and will be best achieved with many people contributing. We're working on a plan and technology solutions to support this initiative.

Not all of this can happen at once, but by working together, we can achieve all of the above and more. If you want to get involved, please get in touch with any member of the Board.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge a number of people for their continuing support of ISCA and their work.

To the Board - you are an amazing group of people, and I feel very honoured to have worked with you during the past year. I have really appreciated your ongoing support. I want to acknowledge and thank all Board members for their service and support over this period - Jacob Spanke, Ramu Bishwakarma, Rick Mask, Emily Pitts, Marion Cornish, Garrett Schiche, and Mike Unrau.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the significant and ongoing support of Jacob Spanke, our current Vice President. He has been the primary advocate for the development of the association over the last few years and, for me, an extremely important ally and collaborator. He often works behind the scenes, so many of our members may not be aware of the crucial role he has played. ISCA owes a big debt of gratitude to Jacob for everything he has done for our association.

There are many other people to thank and acknowledge. Emily Pitts has done a mountain of work, having been a Director and Chair of the very busy Marketing Committee, and she has also facilitated the Networking Sessions, PhD Sessions, and Volunteers Sessions, as well as being heavily involved in the volunteer onboarding, member survey, and numerous other initiatives.

I also want to acknowledge Beverly Sloan, who has run Research Design and Methods Sessions and has helped and mentored numerous members and prospective members. Her guidance has been invaluable to many people.

Also, thank you to all our volunteers, admin assistants, and to our members, many of whom made additional donations when they joined.

And finally, all the people who nominated for the Board and office holder positions have ensured our association will continue to grow and prosper. Whoever is elected today, our Board will be passionate and experienced. The future of ISCA is looking very promising!

I look forward to seeing the association continue to grow and develop and having more opportunities to connect and collaborate with other members.

Ngā mihi (kind regards)
Tristan Claridge
President