

President's End-of-Term Report, 2014-2016
Association for Iranian Studies

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It was an honor for me to serve the **International Society for Iranian Studies**, or what is now called, the **Association for Iranian Studies (AIS)** as president. I had the privilege to succeed my good friend and colleague, Mehrzad Boroujerdi, who during his presidency took major steps to codifying the society's rules and procedures in order to achieve the outmost transparency. During my tenure, enjoying the consultation of the Past-President and the enduring support and assistance of our proficient Executive Director and Treasurer, Rivanne Sandler, I was able to maintain and envision the way forward.

In 2017, AIS, with more than 700 memberships is heading to celebrate its fifty years of life. As a major and prestigious academic platform in the field of Middle East studies, connecting the most serious and established scholars of Iranian studies, AIS needs to endorse both a short and long term strategy and to be more institutionalized both in administration as well as in publications. Our membership should look at the AIS as an academic platform where they can share their experiences and expertise with students, teachers, and all who are occupied with the academic inquiry on Iran. The presence of AIS in the cyberspace through different channels, has made AIS a primary and reliable source of information. In addition to the AIS Journal of ***Iranian Studies*** and ***Newsletter***, during my tenure, thanks to Pendar Yousefi and Hamoun Hayati, our colleagues in charge of the AIS cyberspace activities, an **AIS Academia** was added to our website, where our membership could share their works, in all formats, with visitors from all over the world. Furthermore, during our Biennial Conference in Vienna, the live streams of prime sessions and some panels were offered on YouTube and on our website, with the aim of constructing more substantial interaction with all those engaged and interested in the past and present of Iran.

The AIS *Newsletter* continued its biannual digital publication, thanks to Mirjam Künkler, its dedicated editor, covering news and views about Iran and Iranian studies. In addition to the Newsletter and AIS, our journal, *Iranian Studies* under the authoritative editorship of Dr Homa Katouzian, continued to publish six issues a year. In 2015, according to a report by our publisher, Taylor & Francis Group, *Iranian Studies* increased its Impact Factor in the category of Area Studies. These were the improvements and achievements of Homa Katouzian and his competent editorial team. However, to honor the guideline of institutionalizing our activities and adopting the By-Laws approved earlier by the Council, the election of the new Editor-in-Chief, replacing Homa whose term of office extended beyond the stipulated two terms of five years, became one of the priorities of the Presidency.

I. *Iranian Studies*

In February 2015 with reference to articles 3 and 4 of the Council Journal By-Laws, I requested the five Past-Presidents of AIS to establish a Search Committee for nominating qualified scholars for the position of the new Editor-in-Chief of *Iranian Studies*. To observe the outmost smooth transition, I called on the Search Committee to name their nominee before November 2015 when the Council meet in MESA-Denver. I envisioned that between November 2015 and August 2016, the new Editor-in-Chief would work closely with the current acting Editor-in-Chief, Homa Katouzian in order to avoid any possible rupture in the publication of *Iranian Studies*. With the remarkable effort of the Search Committee, for which I am very grateful to all its members, the final choice was Ali Gheissari, a very dear and qualified friend and colleague with extensive editorial experience and a long record of activities in AIS, and he was elected as the new Editor-in-Chief. Passing through one year of transition period in order to become familiar with the activities of the journal, Ali Gheissari officially takes up the new position in January 2017. Furthermore, to appreciate and acknowledge Homa Katouzian's thirteen-year tenure, a special session was organised at the Vienna conference when Homa's wonderful efforts to elevate the status of the Journal was acknowledged by the AIS President, the Executive Director, the new Editor-in-Chief and other AIS colleagues.

In addition to the appointment of the new Journal Editor-in-Chief, AIS negotiated an updated version of the former contract with Taylor & Francis which had expired. The new contract was finalized and signed by the President in 2016 for five years.

II. Membership

Presently, our association membership stands 762. Of the total membership, students compose 25%. The AIS membership includes also independent scholars, lifetime and institutional memberships.

III. Biennial Conferences

The Eleventh Biennial Conference of the International Society for Iranian Studies was another successful conference that brought a large number of our members together from 3rd to 5th August 2016 in Vienna. This conference was undoubtedly one of the best attended conferences with over 500 participants and presenters from all parts of the world. What made the Eleventh Biennial Conference of AIS different was that it was held in a European country with a long history of political, economic and cultural interaction with Iran. The move of the Biennial Conference of AIS to Vienna had a twofold target. Firstly, we wished to highlight the transcontinental and inclusive dimension of our society, going once more beyond the North Atlantic world. Secondly the society wanted to draw attention to the unique status of Austria as a major Germanophone country with a long standing history of bringing East and West together, even before the time of the Habsburg Empire. The Austrian venue provided opportunities for conference participants to become more acquainted with the academic research activities of scholars in Europe in general and the Germanophone countries in particular.

The organization of the Eleventh Biennial Conference of AIS was the result of the

assiduous endeavor and devotion of many colleagues. In addition to Florian Schwarz, the Conference Chair, Camron Amin, the Programme Committee Chair and Rivanne Sandler, our Executive Director, other colleagues both in Vienna and beyond significantly contributed to the admirable organization of this conference. Pendar Yousefi and Hamoun Hayati and Siavush Randjbar-Daemi made every effort to bring the conference to cyberspace, enabling people around the world to follow selected panels of the conference. The presence of all major publishers in the field of Iranian Studies at the conference should also to be mentioned with appreciation.

IV. From International Society for Iranian Studies to Association for Iranian Studies

For some years the name of our society and its ISIS acronym created problems with the society's necessary transactions, and inhibited internet interaction with the society. In these circumstances I found it prudent to change the society's name. Following the meeting of Council in Vienna, prior to the General Meeting, when the need for changing the name was discussed and overwhelmingly approved by the members of the Council, on the final day of the conference, the General Meeting unanimously voted for changing our society's name to **Association for Iranian Studies (AIS)** (انجمن ایران پژوهی) .

V. Securing Grants for the AIS Biennial Conferences

The Eleventh Biennial Conference in Vienna was initially supported by the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Roshan Institute. In various meetings I had with some individuals and institutions, Iran Heritage Foundation, Roxcel Group of Companies and Simorgh Foundation were added to the list of the conference supporters. In a meeting that I had with the Iran Heritage Foundation, the Iran Heritage Foundation graciously undertook to support every AIS Biennial conference with a grant of US \$ 20,000. Later in another meeting with the Roxcel Group of Companies, a regular grant of US \$ 20,000-25,000 for our future conferences was approved by the Roxcel Group of Companies.

VI. Awards

In acknowledgment of enduring academic achievements, and pursuant to the resolution endorsed by the Council, the AIS Honorary Membership Award Committee was conferred upon Bert Fagner in recognition of his substantial contribution to the field of Iranian Studies. Similarly, in acknowledgment of enduring artistic achievement, and pursuant to the resolution endorsed by the Council, the AIS Lifetime Achievement Award in Arts was conveyed upon Sima Bina. The AIS offered both Awardees, the new statuette of our association designed by Kambiz Sabri. Kambiz Sabri's design proposal was selected amongst the number of designs we received from all over the world. I would like here to thank the members of the Award Statuette Committee for their refined artistic advice.

VII. Challenges

Celebrating the fifty years' birthday of our association is an occasion to look back and see our achievements during the last fifty years and the challenges which the rapid expansion of our association, especially during the last 16 years have created for us. A universally recognized institutionalized and professional platform for Iranian Studies creates many expectations in the

Persianate world and beyond. Improving and constantly updating our presence in cyberspace to make an active and dynamic interaction with our members and those who are interested in our activities should be considered as a major priority. We need to solidify our activities in the internet world in order to benefit even more from all the new potential accumulated there.

I am confident that my good friend, colleague, and successor, Touraj Daryaei, in his coming term of office will successfully tackle these challenges and add more bright pages to the history of our association.

Touraj Atabaki,
Amsterdam, 15 November 2016