

Secretary's Report for (calendar year) 2018

- **Membership:**
 - Full: 2018 = 147 (paid-up 90); 2017 = 111 (paid-up 37)
 - Associate: 2018 = 144 (paid-up 78); 2017 = 106 (paid-up 40)
 - Student: 2018 = 171 (paid up 102); 2017 = 122 (paid-up 54)
 - Total: 2018 = 462 (paid-up 270); 2017 = 339 (paid-up 131)
- During the year the **Executive Officers** of BRAIS have met monthly via Skype with a summer break in July and August.
- A BRAIS Officers and Admin Hub **Away Day** was held at the University of Leeds on 23 May 2018. Matters discussed included:
 - Annual planning, officer/admin hub roles and workloads/efficiency
 - Making use of Council members' capacity and involving them in discussions about strategy
 - Disbanding the Advisory Board
 - Membership management processes
 - Redesign and refresh of the BRAIS brand and website (including new webforms/software to rationalise/automate conference processes)
- **Executive Committee Roles:**
 - Omar Anchassi replaced Saeko Yazaki as Treasurer/Membership officer after she stepped down at the 2018 AGM.
 - Following approval by the Council, Ferial Bouhafa filled a new ad hoc role of Events officer and Usaama al-Azami became ad hoc Communications officer (formerly Web Officer). These ad hoc changes in types of officer roles/descriptions are now being put before the Council and AGM as formal amendments to the constitution.
 - After several years of service and leadership, Ayman Shihadeh recently announced that he will be stepping down as BRAIS Chair a year earlier than originally planned. Ayman is taking-up a one-year fellowship overseas and departs his role with our gratitude and all best wishes.
 - Given very limited time for succession planning, an ad hoc arrangement proposing that former Co-Chair, Shuruq Naguib, return as interim Chair 2019/20 is being put before the Council and AGM, with elections for a new Chair proposed to take place as planned at the 2020 AGM.

- **Administrator, Alwaleed Centre:**
 - Lilly Jenkins moved to another post at the University of Edinburgh. Many thanks to Lilly for her valued contributions.
 - Nadin Adka has been appointed as her replacement.
- **Council:**
 - Roy Jackson has resigned from the BRAIS Council. Thanks to him
 - Thanks also to Jaakko Hameen-Anttila, acting Director of the Alwaleed Centre, Edinburgh, for serving as a co-opted member on the Council.
 - As advertised, we are seeking nominations for a new Council member, while the new Alwaleed Centre Director, Frédéric Volpi, has already been co-opted.
 - Further to the introduction of an Equalities policy introduced in 2018, the Executive Officers will be exploring with Council members the appointment of an Equalities Advisor to support BRAIS across various aspects of its work.
- **Conferences:**
 - The programme of the fifth BRAIS Annual Conference, held at the University of Exeter, Monday 9th – Wednesday 11th April, comprised 3 plenary panels and 6 parallel panel sessions encompassing 112 papers. It was attended by at least 181 people (109 residential registrations + 72 day registrations + additional walk-ups). With very many thanks to Omar Anchassi, Robert Gleave, Pam Navran and team.
 - A conference committee was established to plan the 2019 BRAIS conference at the University of Nottingham. We had 219 individual abstract submissions and 6 prearranged panels, totalling 241 abstracts. The final version of the programme now includes 108 papers. With very many thanks for all their efforts to the Conference Planning Committee: Nadin Akta, Mohammed Aldhfar, Omar Anchassi, Ali-Reza Bhojani, Jon Hoover (Chair), Alexandra Khan, Tom Lea, and Abida Malik. Additionally, thanks for Abstract vetting to: Ferial Bouhafa, Carool Kersten and Shuruq Naguib (the latter also worked with Jon Hoover on programme management). We are grateful to Asya Alanazi for helping on the registration desk, and to Mel Wheatley from Nottingham Conferences for all their assistance.
- **BRAIS-De Gruyter Prize:**
 - Assessment of 17 PhD theses submitted for the BRAIS-De Gruyter Prize under new Prize Chair, Saeko Yazaki, who replaced founding Prize Chair, Ayman Shihadeh. Thanks to both and to Prize Co-ordinator, Omar Anchassi (who is being replaced by Anthony Allison),

as well as to all the other members of the Prize Committee (Robert Gleave, Carool Kersten, Judith Pfeiffer, and Nicolai Sinai).

- **Other Activities:**

- A rescheduled public lecture by Prof Olivier Roy, co-organised with BRISMES, was held on 11 May 2018.
- Agreement to co-host a public lecture by Dr Ina Merdjanova on 'Islam in the Balkans: between nationalism and transnationalism' at Coventry University's London campus. With thanks to Ferial Bouhafa for agreeing to chair.
- Grants were awarded to hold two workshops on different aspects of Islamic Studies: "The "Ethical" and the "Everyday": Interrogating analytical turns for/in the study of Islam and Muslims in Europe" + "Religion as a changing category of Muslim practice".
- Ayman Shihadeh represented BRAIS on the TRSUK committee.

- **Ongoing Strategic Projects:**

- BRAIS-De Gruyter Book Series: there is still goodwill in taking such a partnership forward in the future. Nicolai Sinai and Amira Bennison, together with Sophie Wagenhofer, have sought to take it forward in the last 12 months. Very many thanks to them all for their industry. However, establishing a fully-functioning editorial board has proven challenging due to the time-consuming nature of the editorial work involved. Thus, for the time being a more flexible co-operation will continue in respect of the prize (see above) and other joint marketing as appropriate, with the option to resume work on joint publications at a later stage.
- BRAIS Journal: at least one publisher is keen to develop an Islamic Studies journal in partnership with BRAIS. Ideally a member of the Council would be appointed to take this project forward as editor. Initial enquiries have not been immediately fruitful. An honorarium may be necessary and/or an Associate Editors model could also be considered. Like the annual conference, a journal could represent a flagship activity for BRAIS and there is evidence of journals still being profitable. However, there remains some difference of opinion concerning the desirability of another new Islamic Studies journal. A clear identity in terms of how the study of Islam is framed is key.

Prof Seán McLoughlin (BRAIS Secretary) 2nd April 2018