
SRN2020 POSTPONED - IMPORTANT

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To: SCREENWRITING-RESEARCH-NETWORK@jiscmail.ac.uk

* * * with apologies for cross-posting * * *

Dear SRN Members and SRN2020 Delegates

I hope this finds you well despite everything that is going on. I am aware that you were awaiting this with some understandable trepidation, and given that there is no way of sugar-coating this, I'll cut straight to the chase.

Here's the tagline version:

SRN2020 WILL BE POSTPONED TO SEPTEMBER 2021

And here are the (rather) lengthier, but important details.

Yesterday the Executive Council of the SRN discussed as a matter of urgency the current emergency caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. After careful evaluation of all possible scenarios, data and information available thus far, the EC has come to the conclusion that running SRN2020 in September 2020 as per plan is no longer a viable and safe option. Under no circumstance, even assuming the most optimistic outcome in the shortest period of time, we will put the safety and wellbeing of our members/colleagues/friends at risk; at the moment and for the foreseeable future, there is no way of guaranteeing that if we were to still run the conference next September.

The situation so far shows that:

- All 35 countries the SRN2020 delegates come from have been affected, some in a very significant way;
- Around 20 have now closed borders and/or banned flights from some/all countries, and this number is increasing daily;
- Almost all 35 countries have introduced some form of lockdown, plus quarantining for incoming visitors, and self-isolation;
- Universities from almost all 35 countries have suspended all travel abroad until at least end of April or indefinitely;
- Insurances (both via university or private) are not guaranteeing cover anymore or refusing flat out at the moment;
- According to most reliable data (which I have narrowed down to the WHO and

the CSSE at Johns Hopkins University), the peak is yet to come in most countries and is to be expected between now and the early Summer, depending on the country. Other projections seem to indicate a risk in some countries (including the UK) for the outbreak to last until or have a double peak into the Autumn, or to subside by the Summer to then come back in the Winter;

- Adding to that, the official position of UK authorities so far has caused no little extra uncertainty and the situation is still escalating pretty much everywhere.

In light of the above, the EC has considered other options but none seemed viable or offer any certainty.

Postponing would only be possible by moving the Oxford dates to January 2021, but this would most certainly have a rather negative impact on the Vienna conference and delegates would still have to start making plans in the middle of the crisis; furthermore, should the more negative projections prove true, we would still have to cancel or postpone again with even less time to do so.

We also considered whether we could save SRN2020 by the bell by turning it into a virtual conference and still run it this year, but the resources, time and infrastructure will simply not be there.

Most colleagues and universities all over the world (including Oxford Brookes) will spend the next few months having to deal with very serious circumstances and work hard at all sorts of backup plans, with added pressure on already heavy workloads, and with all the resources available prioritized to this purpose.

The good news is that all colleagues who were set to organize the Annual Conference in the 2021-23 cycle came to my help and generously agreed to push their events forward by one year in order to free up 2021 for Oxford. I therefore wish to express my deep gratitude to (in chronological order) Claus Tieber, Rosanne Welch, and Rafael Leal. I owe you. This means, to sum up, that our conference agenda for the forthcoming years will be:

- September 2020 – No International conference (local conferences might still happen later in the year but will be discussed in their respective fora)
- September 2021 – Oxford (possible dates: either 1-4 or, more likely, 8-11 September)
- Early October 2022 – Vienna
- 2023 – Missouri, US
- 2024 – Rio de Janeiro

I also want to thank everyone for their patience and understanding, and for the many supportive messages and emails received in the past few days.

SO, WHAT NEXT?

- As of today, registration, on-campus accommodation booking and dinner booking are suspended
- Delegates who have already registered or booked their on-campus

accommodation via Brookes's online facilities will be reimbursed – I will send out instructions and contact details soon

- The conference theme (i.e. Pushing Boundaries) will remain the same – and, perhaps, now more than ever sounds appropriate
- Delegates already shortlisted for this year's original dates are automatically confirmed but will have to confirm their intention to attend in 2021; should any delegates decline for whatever reason, a new CfP will be issued later in the year and we will accept new submissions accordingly to add to the current shortlist
- Delegates who qualified for the student rate this year will be automatically considered eligible next year too, regardless of whether their status will have changed by then
- Keynotes will be re-invited with the awareness that they might not be able to confirm availability until nearer the new date next year
- The SRN Awards 2020 will be pushed to 2021, and will therefore cover a two-year time period with submissions extended until May 2021
- The website will be updated in the forthcoming days and will remain available at all times

New deadlines will be set up for all stages of the lead-up to the Conference but I will have to rework and restart the whole planning machine all over again and this will surely take some time. My hope is to get everything geared up by the Summer so as to give everyone plenty of time to adjust their plans. So, please bear with me until then. I will be in touch every now and then anyway.

In the meantime, if you have queries or need any further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me either at info@srn2020.com or paolo.russo@brookes.ac.uk and I will do my best to help.

Finally, without a conference being held this year, it means that we don't know yet whether the AGM (and therefore the EC elections) may take place. The EC will discuss this next month and we will inform all Members once a decision has been made on this matter. One tough bite to swallow at a time!

So... I have managed to draft all this without a hint of irony and it's been as tough as I had imagined it last night. Apologies for the unusually sombre tone of this announcement but given this is an unprecedented situation for everyone, clarity is paramount. You will allow me one last remark: for all the thinking, planning and energy I have been putting into this in the past few months, this is the one email I never thought I would have to send out.

May all of you be well and safe!
Take care

SRN2020 Organizing Committee

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