The International Academy of Health Sciences Informatics: 2021 Update

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Introduction

The International Academy of Health Sciences Informatics1 (IAHSI, also known as the Academy) was established in 2017 under the auspices of the International Medical Informatics Association2 (IMIA). The Academy aims to nominate and elect those whose contributions in biomedical and health informatics are recognized internationally. Its goal is to promote the dissemination of knowledge and best practices, foster new ideas, and encourage worldwide collaboration and sharing of expertise and resources.

The first vision for the Academy was published by Lehmann et al. in 2017 [1]. A further detailed view was set forth by Haux in 2018, who became the first elected President [2]. A strategy and focus areas process was published in 2020 [3]. The President reported on the activities in 2020 [4] and 2021 [5]. The Academy is governed by By-Laws3, and a process of nominating and electing new Fellows each year has been established and followed4.

The Academy held its first meeting, which included the induction of 118 inaugural fellows, in Gothenburg, Sweden in April, 2018. The Academy held its first Plenary in Lyon, France in August, 2019, where the By-Laws were approved. At that meeting, a new class of 26 Academy Fellows was inducted. The Lyon meeting also led to the development of strategy and focus areas for the Academy. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a shift in activities for 2020. Despite the pandemic, the work of the Academy continued in 2020 and 2021. This report describes the activities in 2021.

1 https://imia-medinfo.org/wp/iahsi/
2 https://imia-medinfo.org/
Governance

The Academy elected its first Board of Directors, including its first President, in 2019. The 2021 leadership of the Academy included:

- William Hersh, President (2020-2022);
- Reinhold Haux, Past President (2020-2022);
- Paula Otero, Secretary (2019-2022);
- Michio Kimura, Treasurer (2019-2021);
- Marion Ball, Member-at-Large (2019-2022);
- Don Detmer, Member-at-Large (2020-2023);
- Sabine Koch, IMIA President (ex officio);
- Elaine Huesing, CEO, IMIA (ex officio).

In 2021, elections resulted in a new President-Elect (Kaija K. Saranto) and Treasurer (Graham Wright). Dr. Saranto will assume the Presidency at the end of 2022, when Dr. Hersh will become the Past President and Dr. Haux’s service to the Board will end. Also in 2021, Jack Li became President of IMIA and replaced Sabine Koch as an ex officio Board member.

Strategic Activities

An important function of honorific societies is to provide scientific leadership and advocacy for its field. Now that the Academy has been established, the focus of its work has shifted from supporting activities to pursuing strategic directions. The initial strategic directions were approved in 2019 and published in 2020, and are summarized in Figure 1 [3].

In 2021, the Academy aimed to build on previous visions and planning. A key principle was to collaborate with IMIA and others, avoiding duplication of effort. Starting with Dr. Hersh assuming the Presidency, Fellows began with a focus on the high-priority activities of the initial strategic process. At the 2019 Plenary, three Task Forces had been established to focus on what were deemed the most important activities for the Academy. In 2020, these were renamed to Panels to reflect the longer-term nature of their work.

The most active panel has been the one on Data Standards and Interoperability, co-chaired by Diego Kamiker and William (Ed) Hammond. Their major activity has been the publication of podcasts, with two produced in 2021. These are available through

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**Fig. 1** Strategic directions for the Academy, from [3].
The plans for the type of Plenary to be held in 2022 are uncertain, pending the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic. Academy Board members are hopeful that an in-person plenary can take place at Medinfo 2023, which is currently scheduled to be held from 7-12 July in Sydney, Australia.

**Table 1** Academy Fellows elected in 2021 and their home regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
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<tr>
<td>APAMI</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFMI</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELINA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMIA LAC</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. America</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Activities

The Academy was involved in other activities in 2021. Many Academy Fellows made contributions to the IMIA History Book [6], which was published in 2021. The volume was edited by Academy Fellows Casimir Kulikowski, George Mihalas, Robert Greenes, Hyeoun-Ae Park, and Valerio Yacubsohn.

The Academy also took part in IMIA activities, including the virtual Medinfo 2021 and the 2021 General Assembly. The Academy President also traveled to Germany in September, 2021 to represent the Academy at the retirement ceremony of Dr. Haux at Technische Universität Braunschweig in Braunschweig, Germany (see Figure 2).

Another activity of the Academy actually took place in early 2022 but is important enough to be mentioned here. The Academy Board endorsed the statement of IMIA and the European Federation of Medical Informatics supporting the Ukrainian Society of Medical Informatics and making an appeal for peace from the hostilities of the government of Russia.

Future Directions

The Academy continues to be an important part of IMIA and the global biomedical and health informatics field. While the pandemic has impacted activities, Academy

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6. https://open.spotify.com/show/4dqIDz8b7eZkpNQyYooFh

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Fellows are still global informatics leaders. In 2022, an election of new Fellows and Board members, along with a Plenary, will take place. The panels will continue their activities.

Personal Note from the President

It is a great honor to serve as President of the Academy, and to continue its development forward. As one who has always enjoyed international travel and interaction with colleagues across the world, having to serve as President during the pandemic has required a reset of personal expectations. But I am confident that the Academy will continue to provide leadership and value to the field of biomedical and health informatics.

Acknowledgements

The activities of the Academy would not be possible without the executive support of Ms. Elaine Huesing. The Board members have enthusiastically participated in virtual bi-monthly meetings at odd hours due to time zone differences. We also appreciate Academy Fellows who have provided leadership in the panels and participated in the Plenary sessions.

References


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