

Chairman's Report.

For IPAN, our member organisations and each of our individual members, 2020 has been a year like no other in living memory. With the travel and meeting restrictions imposed to control the Covid-19 virus, it quickly became apparent that our planned programme of events and meetings would not be possible. Conscious of both the need to evolve a new way of delivering IP awareness and of the constraints that member organisations may be under, we decided as a Board, to cancel all membership fees for 2020.

We have been able to do this because our financial reserves are sound for servicing the organisation and our operational costs are relatively low. Board members work on an entirely pro-bono basis.

Board meetings continued on-line via Zoom and we increased the frequency of meetings from quarterly to monthly as we worked on a new programme. The result is a more modern delivery of our meetings and messages, while keeping to our core values, objectives and purpose.

On Tuesday 24th November, we partnered with the IET (Institution of Engineering and Technology), to deliver an on-line seminar on "5G mobile networks and intellectual property rights: winner takes all?". The seminar was chaired by Alessandro Hatami, as our expert panel considered the advantages and risks of the digital, data driven society we are entering. A move which in many cases has already been accelerated by the pandemic. Over 200 attended the seminar, across European, US and Asian continents. This reach and audience diversity is something that would not have been possible with our traditional model of network meetings in London.

Alessandro returns as a speaker in our forthcoming seminar in 2021 on Wednesday 20th January, when we will be hosting a Fintech event organised by Janice Denoncourt, Associate Professor at Nottingham Trent University. Details will be circulated shortly. We hope you will be able to join us.

In 2020 IPAN committed to supporting IP inclusive. In this IPAN seeks to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in our membership and activities, encouraging all to contribute fully on an equal basis.

We were therefore delighted to support the excellent work of Dr. Bola Olabisi by participating in the Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network (GWIIN). Professor Ruth Soetendorp, one of our Board members, joined the judging panel. The IP award went to Patience Nwodu from London, who developed a high quality, reusable versatile carrier made from sustainable and biodegradable cotton canvas. To protect her brand identity, she has registered her trademark and has also successfully registered for patent protection. We hope that inventors and innovators like Patience, will not only be successful in their businesses, but will become ambassadors for women entrepreneurs demonstrating the value of IP in the world of business and commerce.

We have continued our working relationship with the UK IPO. In November, we were pleased to submit IPAN's contribution to the UKIPO's open consultation on artificial intelligence and IP. We look forward to results of the consultation to better fit the IP world to the emerging technologies at the Technology /AI / Human interface.

This AGM, there are some governance matters to address to better align our articles with our operational practice. These are being recommended by the Board to comply with the changes in law that have been brought in to better regulate charities, as distinct from not-for-profit organisations with educational and development objectives, such as IPAN. None of the changes will affect IPAN's educational objects or modus operandi and I hope they will be supported in our AGM today.

Both personally, and on behalf of the Board, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Stephen Smith, a founding member of IPAN LBG and a former director who will be ending his active role in the IPAN secretariat at the end of this year. "Steve" is someone who is in a very real sense "irreplaceable". However, I am very pleased to report that IPAN has made provision for a new secretariat. In October, we welcomed Janet Burgess as Membership Officer and Jonathan Pooley as Communications Officer. Both are already making valuable contributions to the work of IPAN, it's website and in service to our members.

I also want to thank Peter Prowse, a former Chairman of IPAN, who is consulting with us for the excellent work and diligence he has shown in helping us develop and deliver together our new programme.

For 2021 we are planning a new and exciting programme of events and communications. These will be based around IP and the strategic role it will play in education, innovation, our creative industries and new export opportunities, (whatever the Brexit trade outcome with the EU).

Finally, I want to thank you, our membership for your continued support and participation. At some point in 2021, we hope it will be possible to resume some direct meetings. Building on the changes we have made, I am sure we will also stream to our wider on-line audience.

If we can meet in person, I will then be able to thank you personally, but until then, stay safe and connected with IPAN's work.

J. P. Ogier.
Chairman IPAN.

10th December 2020.