



Dear ARLE Members,

On behalf of the ARLE Board, we send you all best wishes hoping that you are healthy, despite the Covid-19 pandemic. In this email the ARLE Board will communicate an important postponement decision related to the planned ARLE Conference in Melbourne 2020. We will also propose a rescheduling of the SIGs that had to be cancelled this Spring. First, we communicate the decision and proposal. Secondly, we explain the reflections and procedures leading to the decision. Thirdly, and finally, we offer additional reflections for future planning.

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#### **Decision to postpone the ARLE 2022 conference**

The ARLE Board has decided, in accordance with the ARLE Advisory Board and the local organizing team of the ARLE 2021 Melbourne Conference chaired by Larissa McLean, that the next ARLE conference is postponed until June 2022. This conference is still to be held in Melbourne and organized by the same chair and the same local team.

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#### **Proposal to reschedule the cancelled SIGs**

The ARLE Board proposes, in accordance with the Advisory Board, that the SIG events that were cancelled this year, are rescheduled for Spring and Summer of 2021.

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#### **Reflections leading to this decision and proposal**

As we all know, the Covid-19 crisis has spread across the globe and continues to do so. This has led to unprecedented political decisions and economic crisis as well as closing of societies, home schooling and numerous cancellations of conferences and other events, including all ARLE SIG events this Spring.

Due to this very disturbing and uncharted situation, we started to ask ourselves within the ARLE Board whether this situation would have any consequences for the planning of the future ARLE conference in Melbourne June 2021. During these discussions, we have been in close dialogue with the Melbourne local team planning for the next ARLE conference, including chair Larissa McLean, as well as ARLE's Advisory Board.

Specifically, the reasons for our considerations were the following: In a European context, there is talk about a second wave of the pandemic that might occur in the Autumn of 2020; the pandemic seems to develop in different tempi across the globe; and a vaccine is not likely to be available earlier than one year from now, optimistically speaking. Also, all countries expect a more or less dramatic decline in economy, which has the potential to affect everybody's economy and has implications for local funding at universities and thus for L1 scholars that would like to participate in the ARLE conference.

Due to these circumstances, we sketched three potential scenarios within the ARLE Board and in dialogue with the ARLE Advisory Board as well as the local Melbourne team, and eventually agreed that none of them were viable:

1. To close our eyes and hope for a 'normal' conference with the same amount of people, attending the conference physically in Melbourne
2. A conference situation in which some sessions were designed both as normal and virtual sessions. In the case of many colleagues not being able to attend and travel, we could open for a semi-virtual conference
3. In the case of a cancellation of the conference due to few attendees, we could plan for a 100% virtual conference.

As said, none of these scenarios seemed attractive for any of us. We know that the Melbourne team wants to create an amazing experience for as many L1 scholars as possible of going to an ARLE conference in Australia for the first time. There is a real risk that this is not going to be possible. Considering the virtual conference idea, there are many downsides. One is the lack of social gathering, another is the time difference, as many of us come from a different hemisphere.

So, after having had a long dialogue within the ARLE Board, and after consulting the Advisory Board and the Melbourne team, whose members had also been discussing this internally, and found none of the above scenarios good, we developed and have now decided on a fourth solution, which we all support:

**The next ARLE conference is postponed until June 2022. This conference is still to be held in Melbourne and organized by the same chair and the same local team.**

We hope that things have calmed down at that time, in many ways, and that as many L1 scholars as possible will be able to attend. We have encouraged the Melbourne team to consider a specific date, which will be announced later.

In addition, in order to avoid losing momentum for ARLE in general, and for SIGs in particular, we propose a fifth solution too:

**The SIG events that were cancelled this Spring, are encouraged to take place in the Spring and Summer of 2021.**

We imagine that many of these SIG events (if not all) will take place in Europe, where the majority of ARLE members live. Nonetheless, in order to give access to members who do not have resources for travelling, not the least members from other regions in the world, we encourage SIG coordinators and organizers to include virtual sessions as part of the program. This would also offer experiences for testing and integrating virtual sessions at the next ARLE conference planned to take place in Melbourne. Even before the Covid-19 crisis, we did estimate that less people from Europe and elsewhere would be able to travel to Australia. This will still be

the case. Also, there is a sustainability issue to consider, a point that was raised at the General meeting in Lisbon, that we would be able to address this way.

We further encourage SIG coordinators to link future SIG events with special issues published in *L1*. Please, contact SIG Portfolio holder Xavier Fontich and *L1* co-editor Reinold Funke, if you consider such plans.

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### **Further reflections: Unprecedented times require unprecedented decisions**

Within the ARLE Board, we are quite aware that this decision is unprecedented and quite dramatic. However, unprecedented times require unprecedented decisions. Also for ARLE. Before taking a big and serious decision like this, it was important for the Board to have as broad a mandate as possible. This is the reason why we engaged the Advisory board and asked them to consider the proposal above, and the reason why intense dialogue with the Melbourne team was vital. We very much appreciated the swift response from all members and the local team, which was unanimous and unequivocal, supporting the proposal of the ARLE Board.

Finally, we should note that we are, of course, quite sad that we are not able to carry through initial plans with the Melbourne team. They have already done a great job, as they were well ahead in their planning suggesting a title, a list of invited keynotes etc. In fact, we were about to send out the first call to all ARLE members. Then came the pandemic. Our doubts. And now this decision. However, we are certain that this preparatory work is not lost. On the contrary, it will be taken up and further developed in the lead up to the ARLE Conference 2022 in Melbourne!

Once again, we hope you are all well, doing excellent L1 research – however, keeping a distance, probably staying at home, at least for now. You might consider using this opportunity to write the L1 article you planned last year or have dreamed about for a long time.

Kind regards,  
On behalf of the ARLE Board,  
Nikolaj Elf, chair

PS. We are currently experiencing a problem with the L1 website [l1research.org](http://l1research.org). The website is simply not online. With the assistance of our web provider, we are working on fixing it. It appears that the problem is related to (and now it gets technical) a non-valid SSL-certificate. Please note, however, that you are still able to submit and read L1 papers on the journal's publication archive by clicking here: <https://l1.publication-archive.com/login>. Our apologies for any inconvenience.

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This newsletter was originally sent via email in April 2020.