From the Vice President

Ida Yoshinaga

As we head to our first truly hybrid conference, in Oslo and online this summer, it is my pleasure to facilitate a follow-up discussion on diversity and inclusion for the global SF studies community that is the Science Fiction Research Association. Last year’s organizers—in response to critical, helpful feedback on the conference program by our membership—started this conversation on how our association can perform social justice in its institutional practice in addition to appreciating it in textual analyses. We hope to become the sort of organization that puts the “Co” in “CoFuturisms,” in other words.

Such conversations have been transpiring in traditional academic disciplines as well as our modest field of speculative/fantastic studies. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) issues are not exclusive of other, related discussions we have been holding among the SFRA Executive Committee—for instance, how to widen our scope of country representatives so as to include more participants who are not from the Global North. How to conduct better outreach to members of non-traditional class-, gender-, sexuality-, age-, ability-, and other thriving communities of intellectuals, educators, and artists who love our family of genres. How to support our rich breadth of scholars through more extensive networking and mentorship activities as well as improved travel and research funds. And so on.

At SFRA 2022 this summer, there will be a DEIB panel that invites you to share suggestions and proposals for widening the reach of our organization, for making it more safe and encouraging to join for diverse thinkers and creatives in SF studies, and for reflecting conscientiously on the outcomes of such efforts as we move together into the future. I take my lead from observing other academic associations—for instance, the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, which in the mid-2010s advanced a free trial 2-year membership for Indigenous scholars as a way to signal a welcoming space for Native, Aboriginal, First Nations, and similar researchers. For many, an SFRA membership might come secondarily after signing up to belong to a key association in one’s discipline (e.g., the MLA or ASA)—or inter-discipline (e.g., in the field of Native studies, NAISA; or of film/media studies, SCMS), as the case may be. For “alt-ac” researchers and adjuncts; for BIPOC and first-generation college-graduate scholars; for LGBTQIA faculty and storytellers working under varied social conditions, how do we facilitate membership in a vibrant, nourishing organization, so as to be competitive with other associations?

Come with your concrete suggestions for practice, policy, evaluation, finance, organizing. Come with your experiences with, and knowledge of, other associations’ (or programs’/institutions’) imaginative, effective DEIB changes. If you can, reduce it to ONE page—outline, paragraph summary, bulleted list—to share online onscreen and in our Oslo meeting room with fellow attendees. And come with your curiosity for the future.