FUTURE LITERACY
It is my pleasure to introduce you to ILA—the International Literacy Association.

Two years of comprehensive data-gathering and analysis, intensive probing and questioning, and creative exploration and idea generation has resulted in what you are about to discover—a rebooted, rejuvenated global professional membership association for leaders in literacy education.

It was a monumental task, and we are proud to now share with you what it took to get here.

This transformation is the culmination of an intensive exercise of questioning, self-examination, and honest reflection. We left no stone unturned, and did not shy away from the tough questions. We took on this task with a dedication to preserve the 60-year legacy of the International Reading Association and a determination to solidify—for the next 60 years and beyond—the International Literacy Association’s future as the leading world organization for literacy professionals.

WE ASKED FOR YOUR INPUT. We talked to current and past board members, past presidents, and our staff. Council, affiliate, and provincial members and leaders. Members-at-large.

We reached beyond our membership, too. We talked to
our partners and our competitors. We even heard from our nonmembers—those who had joined and left IRA, and even those who had never been a part of the organization.

WE CAST A WIDE NET to gather your feedback, including:

- E-mailing 80,000 members and nonmembers a survey to gather impressions of IRA
- Conducting a Twitter survey of 300 attendees at the 2014 Annual Conference
- Reviewing survey feedback conducted by McKinley Advisors
- Analyzing multiple years of post-conference data collected annually

More importantly, we listened.

We knew we wanted rounded, balanced input from a broad representation of those most dedicated to our mission and purpose—members who would work along with us to take on this monumental task of establishing a renewed brand for IRA. In April of last year, we reached out to 20 IRA members, representing past and current board members and past presidents, council leaders, staff, and at-large, longtime members. This volunteer group was dubbed ILA’s Brand Ambassadors and, over six months, in an intensive process guided by consultants from Ideon, they devoted hundreds of hours to responding to questions, poring over data, and analyzing responses.

WE SOLICITED YOUR INPUT everywhere we went: every conference, workshop, and casual conversation. And you gave us your opinions, both positive and negative.

WE LEARNED—a lot—including that IRA was viewed by members as a sales organization. We were pitching you to buy in every e-mail and touchpoint, when what you really wanted from us was support to fulfill your purpose of teaching literacy well so your students can achieve. We needed to lead the cause to transform lives through literacy.

The time to do that is now, and not a minute later.

WE’VE EXPLORED IDEAS and we will launch experimental programs. We’ve designated goals, restructured staff, and aligned resources. We examined every penny spent and found ways to generate greater cost efficiencies. We are in lockstep with our financial advisors, who have worked alongside us to lay out a conservative plan that ensures smart use of our funds for future growth, and it’s working: We posted a surplus last year.

At the same time, we are responding to your needs. We moved the conference to July so more teachers can attend. We’re experimenting with new formats for professional development and learning. Oh, and we’re (finally) redesigning the website to make it more user-friendly.

We’re also working with our network—affiliates, councils, provincials—to build their capacity to serve their members. We’re looking for new ways to strengthen all we do and everyone who is connected to us by ensuring we are creating pathways for more members to access leadership opportunities, by structuring our
network to produce mutually beneficial relationships, and, ultimately, generate unparalleled value to those who join us.

We ask that you bear with us in the coming year as we complete our transformation. We’re training staff and preparing our ILA Brand Ambassadors—who will now grow to include an even broader array of members—to carry forth our message and cause. There will likely be snags along the way as we work through the complex task of the makeover. The website redesign will take some time, but we’re certain that once we’re done, you will enjoy a virtual space and have a user experience worth the wait.

It’s easy to view this transition as merely a change of name and a new color. Some will like it and some will not. The ILA Brand Ambassadors weighed in on many versions, colors, and typesets. We all had opinions of what we liked and what we didn’t like, and in the end there was not total agreement on all particulars.

But there was and is total consensus on what ILA means. All of those involved in this intense (and sometimes frustrating) yet exhilarating process will tell you that what is happening to ILA isn’t about visuals. What is most exciting to us is the development of a vibrant new meaning for being here—what ILA is determined to stand for as we look to extend our legacy into the next 60 years and beyond as a true champion for literacy and literacy educators around the world.

We can no longer sit quiet and safe on the sidelines.

We will be conveners of dialogue, discussion, and debate on literacy education. We will pose the

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From IRA to ILA

The decisions that led to our transformation have been part of a natural evolution, guiding us as we strive to serve, educate, and inspire. As it should, the process included a great deal of member feedback along the way. As we continue to evolve, your voice will continue to be heard. The following is just a sampling of the events that led to where we stand today.

**2013**

**SEPTEMBER** The strategic planning committee concludes its research and raises the question of whether or not IRA’s name reflects its current mission scope and values.

**OCTOBER** IRA Board of Directors recognizes the need to broaden its reach when it approves the motion to become the International Literacy Association.

**NOVEMBER** “Transforming Lives Through Literacy” is chosen as the 2015 conference theme, with an overwhelmingly positive response from members.

**2012**

**FEBRUARY** A joint board/staff strategic planning committee is formed to examine IRA’s strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in order to guide its future direction.

**JULY** McKinley Advisors, a consulting firm for associations, begins a learning analysis survey to help IRA discern what its members need and value most. This includes in-person discussions, an online survey, and two focus groups over the next nine-month period.
questions, probe the responses, and propose actions and solutions. We will support research and evidence-based instruction, and we will disseminate what we know in every possible way to ensure teachers get what they need.

We are energized and galvanized in thinking about the endless possibilities of how this storied organization can build upon its legacy and truly transform literacy and education.

ILA is about standing out. ILA is about leading and leadership—not following. ILA is about setting the standard for teaching literacy and serving as an unfailing advocate of literacy educators who strive to effectively teach students worldwide, so they can be and will continue to become engaged, contributing global citizens.

That is our focus. We are ILA, and this is the future of literacy.

**2014**

**JANUARY**
A satisfaction survey is sent out to ensure members continue to be part of the process ahead.

**FEBRUARY**
The announcement is made that the annual conference will be moved to July in 2015, in response to high interest from members for a shift to a summer date.

**APRIL**
Invitations are sent to a pool of members and past leaders to join the rebranding research team as ILA Brand Ambassadors.

**2015**

**JANUARY**
The official transformation to ILA begins!

**MAY**
A kick off for the rebranding team is held at the 2014 conference in New Orleans. Later, a “brand equity survey” is sent to members and nonmembers to find out how the organization is viewed. The team pores over the data collected.

Months of interviews and workshops begin. The results of these efforts help inform everything that comes after.

**OCTOBER**
Everything about what it means to be part of ILA—down to the passionate mission statement and the eye-catching visuals—is presented to a supportive Board of Directors.

**NOW–JULY**
The new website will be unveiled, along with newly redesigned journals, *Reading Today*, membership cards, e-blasts, newsletters, and more.

**JULY**
Join us in St. Louis for the first-ever ILA conference, the first of many transformational opportunities to come.