ISAGA

International Simulation And Gaming Association

ANNUAL REPORT ISAGA 2025-26 (REPORTING YEAR)

Authors: Heide Lukosch, Birgit Zuern, for the ISAGA EB

Period: 07/2025 - 06/2026

This annual report covers the ISAGA activities between the member meetings of 2025 and 2026, as required by the bylaws of ISAGA, to give the general member assembly an up-to-date version of the work of the executive board (EB).

This report serves as a comprehensive overview of ISAGA's achievements, initiatives, and progress over the past year. ISAGA remains committed to fostering innovation, collaboration, and excellence in the field of Simulation and Gaming. Throughout the year, ISAGA has continued to bring together professionals, researchers, and enthusiasts from diverse backgrounds, creating a vibrant and dynamic community. We strive to provide a platform for knowledge exchange, networking, and the advancement of simulation and gaming methodologies across various domains. We are happy that the ISAGA conferences continue to be successful in-person meetings of lively exchanges between researchers and practitioners, the summer schools' opportunities to learn, and the special interests groups places of connection and exchange.

We actively promote interdisciplinary collaboration and encourage the exploration of new frontiers within the simulation and gaming landscape. By fostering partnerships with academic institutions, industry leaders, and governmental organizations, ISAGA plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of this rapidly evolving field.

The related financial report for the period 2025-2026 provides an overview of the financial performance of ISAGA, showcasing our commitment to transparency and accountability.

We invite you to explore this report and celebrate the accomplishments of ISAGA and its community.

The past period can be characterized by ongoing intensive work of the EB, around six themes: regular ISAGA EB (online) meetings, outreach activities, conferences, summer school and SG competition, and special interest groups, all of which are described below.

Theme 1: Regular ISAGA EB online meetings

The EB has met on a regular basis via Teams, mostly every 4-6 weeks, to discuss matters of ISAGA. All agendas and notes are stored for insight if requested. Usually, the EB has discussed the themes outlined below, leading to maintaining and improving the associations' activities and developments for added value for its members.

During the 2025-2026 period, the Simulation and Gaming journal as major scientific outlet for our community was also discussed, and how the ISAGA community can work more closely with the editors to maintain and increase the quality and rankings of the journal (again).

We have also discussed new outreach materials, and how to clearly show the benefits of an ISAGA membership. You will be able to see some results of this activity at the 2026 ISAGA conference and on our website.

The EB has started working on quality assessment criteria, to find accessible and transparent ways to evaluate the quality of the ISAGA activities and their alignment with the needs of the community. This is an ongoing process, and while some instruments and processes have been developed, no tangible outcomes can be presented just yet. Please reach out to the EB (Heide) if you want to learn more, and/or if you have any suggestions.

The ISAGA EB and its advisory board and honorary members are currently working through a process to realign both groups, and to make sure the EB is best supported by the work of the advisory board. In addition to its description in the association's bylaws, we are working on a document to describe the communication and collaboration structures between the two groups. The honorary member group has met, and will look into ideas to establish and maintain an archive for ISAGA, as it is a community with a wealth of resources worth collecting and sharing.

Theme 2: Outreach activities - ISAGA Home Page and Newsletter

Birgit and Marieke are the main driving force of the ISAGA newsletter, with other board members supporting the creation and distribution. Birgit, Marieke and Nettie take care of the website. The EB works continuously on updating and improving the content of both the newsletter and the website, and to make information on the field of SG available to the association's members.

Still, this work requires a lot of time and effort, and if any ISAGA member had a number of hours to spare on the project, please get in touch with the EB (Birgit). The EB will follow up with this action item to update and fill the website to support member presentation, information exchange, and collaboration. We have also included a section of the 'article of the month' in the newsletter, to showcase relevant work from the Simulation & Gaming journal as the major scientific outlet of our community.

Please submit any content and/or idea you may have for both the newsletter and the website to the board.

Theme 3: ISAGA Conference 2025

The ISAGA EB has as a responsibility to coordinate the yearly allocation of a conference to an organizing committee or organization. Traditionally this coordination has been done through a system of formal letters in which potential organizers describe their plans and the EB then decides that official ISAGA conference of that particular year.

For 2025, the EB supported the local conference organisers at DHBW Stuttgart, with organising the annual ISAGA conference in conjunction with the German Simulation and Gaming Forum (Europäisches Planspielforum mit dem Deutschen Planspielpreis).

The 56th ISAGA conference in Stuttgart, Germany (15.-18. July 2025), was a very successful event, joined by more than 200 participants, including a number of long-standing ISAGA members, and many newcomers. The conference had parallel streams of paper sessions, interactive workshops, a public gaming exhibition and research lab tour, and an engaging social program. In addition to of keynote talks, there were interactive keynote actions, that helped making new connections and strengthening old ones. 47 papers and 16 posters were presented, next to interactive workshops and game demos. For the first time, there was a Global Simulation and Gaming Award competition for outstanding academic theses. All presenta-

tions and keynotes can be found on the conference website, and the proceedings have been published with Springer in an open access format.

For the upcoming two years, one conference is scheduled to happen very soon, and one more is planned:

2026: Stockholm, Sweden (22-25 June) – KTH Royal Institute of Technology; conference with focus on Game Science, chaired by Prof. Sebastiaan Meijer

2027: Tokyo, Japan, (23-27 August) - Shibaura Institute of Technology, Toyosu Campus, Tokyo, chaired by Prof. Junkichi Sugiura

Theme 4: Summer School

In 2025, the Summer School took place from 07. to 11. July, in the week before the conference, in Stuttgart, Germany, in close proximity to the ISAGA conference, so teachers and students who wanted to participate in both events had to travel to that part of the world only once. The Summer School focused on design and research of/with Simulation Games, allowing newcomers to the field of Simulation Gaming to learn the basics of the methods through an interactive program. The Summer School was organised by Helmut Wittenzellner and Marcin Wardaszko and supported by the Stuttgart Media University.

In 2026, the ISAGA Summer School will be held in Warsaw, Poland, on 6 to 10 July – shortly after the conference, so interested participants can easily travel to Warsaw from Stockholm. The Summer School is again organised by Marcin Wardaszko and a team of experienced game developers and researchers under the theme “Simulation game design and research for organizational and communal interventions”.

Theme 5: Simulation Gaming Competition

In 2025, the ISAGA Simulation Gaming Competition was organised by Ryoju Hamada and carried out in October (with presentations and an award ceremony). In total, 8 teams competed with their game designs, of which 5 teams had a professional background, and 3 were comprised of students. The results were presented in a hybrid form and judged by the international committee. Prof. Hamada will serve as chair for the ISAGA Simulation and Gaming Competition in the future. Please reach out to the EB if you want to support his work and/or be part of the competition.

In 2026, the ISAGA Simulation Gaming Competition will be with support from the Indonesian Government, in Jakarta on September 26-27. Ryoju Hamada will remain the chair for the competition, supported by Hidehiko Kanega and Tomomi Kaneko. Most probably, there will be one stream for digital and one stream for analogue/board games.

Theme 6: Special Interest Groups

Marieke de Wijse-van Heeswijk is the EB member who is responsible for coordinating the Special Interest Groups (SIGs). Currently, there are three active SIGs.

Special Interest Group Game Science

This group has been initiated by Prof. Jan Klabbers. A group of ISAGA researchers exchanges perspectives on the science of SG, and aims to share the results of their discussion as scientific publication(s) with the community. Three publications have been published so far, and the 2026 ISAGA conference will use the work of the SIG as foundation to look deeper into the science of our field:

Meijer, S., Lukosch, H., de Wijse-van Heeswijk, M., & Klabbers, J. (2025, December). Positioning Game Science for Gaming and Simulation: A Reflection on the Research Philosophical Underpinnings. In *2025 Winter Simulation Conference (WSC)* (pp. 2204-2215). IEEE.

de Wijse-van Heeswijk, M., Klabbers, J. H., & Meijer, S. (2025). Advancing the Role of the Facilitator in Game Science: A Systems Theory Approach to Learning and Adaptation in Rule-Based and Open Games. *Simulation & Gaming*, *57*(2), 276-298.

Lukosch, H., Meijer, S., de Wijse-van Heeswijk, M., & Klabbers, J. H. (2026). Media of Representation in Game Science. *Simulation & Gaming*, 10468781261443353.

Special Interest Group Games for Sustainability

This group has ongoing meetings with expert talks, developed a website, and aims to share their knowledge in upcoming scientific publication(s).

Special Interest Group on Facilitation

The main aim of this group is to exchange experiences and best practices/approaches towards the facilitation of simulation games.

ISAGA members can reach out to marieke@isaga.net if they are interested in participating in one of the groups, or would like to propose a new SIG.

Theme 7: The Simulation & Gaming journal as key outlet for the ISAGA community

Marieke and Heide opened the conversation with Toshiko Kikkawa, one of the two editors of the Sage journal, which has a special and close relationship with the ISAGA community, as some of our core work has been published in the journal. However, in the last years, the impact factor of the journal has decreased, and review processes take a longer time.

As ISAGA board, we are currently working on possible strategies to raise the awareness of the journal's needs for high-quality and original contributions, as well as hard-working and dedicated reviewers and associated editors together with Prof. Kikkawa. The communication is ongoing, and the EB has suggested several ways of engaging the ISAGA community as active authors, reviewers, and associated editors. The inclusion of 'the article of the month' in the ISAGA newsletter is one outcome of this, to raise awareness for this journal amongst the ISAGA community.

Summary

2025-26 has been a successful period for the ISAGA EB, with maintaining and improving activities that were introduced in previous years.

In 2025, the elected period for four EB members ended, and these places were filled after a discussion on the process of putting candidates forward and voting during the general member assembly in Stuttgart.

We would like to express our gratitude to two leaving members of the EB:

A huge thank you to **Ryoju Hamada**, who has supported the activities of the EB during a long term and who has invented and organised the ISAGA games competition since 2021. This is a great new way for the ISAGA community to learn about games by developing SG in a competitive environment. Roy will continue this work, for which we are very grateful.

We would like to express a very special thank you to **Sebastiaan Meijer**, who has been part of the EB for more than 16 years, of which serving as our chair for a long time. Sebas still supports the EB with ongoing advice, and the community by organising the 2026 ISAGA conference. Words are coming short for our gratitude, and for everything that Sebas has meant for shaping, maintaining and growing the field of Simulation Gaming and its scientific foundations. THANK YOU

EB Members during this period

Heide Lukosch (chair – term ends in 2027)

Nettie Wester (treasurer - term ended in 2025, re-elected)

Birgit Zuern (outreach - term ended in 2025, re-elected)

Marcin Wardaszko (summer school - term ended in 2025, re-elected)

Marieke de Wijse-van Heeswijk (outreach, SIGs - term ends in 2026)

Roy Hamada (ISAGA competition - term ended in 2025)

Sebastiaan Meijer (secretary - term ended in 2025)

Manabu Ichikawa (conference – term started in 2025)

Ivo Wenzler (secretary – term started in 2025)