

**ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMAL LOGIC
AND CRITICAL THINKING
(AILACT)
NEWSLETTER
APRIL 2013**

Contents

- 1. From the Editor**
- 2. From the President**
- 3. A Very Short Reasoning Quiz**
- 4. AILACT @ APA Call for Submissions**
- 5. 2013 AILACT Essay Prize Call for Submissions**
- 6. Membership Form**

From the Editor

The AILACT Essay Prize jury selected "Libri ad nauseam: the critical thinking textbook glut" by Ben Hamby (Ph.D. student, Department of Philosophy, McMaster University) as the 2012 AILACT Essay Prize Paper. Congratulations, Ben! A call for submissions for the 2013 prize is included later in this newsletter.

The 2012/13 sessions of AILACT at the three APA meetings have all been completed. I have not heard how those sessions went, but Kevin has already submitted a call for suggestions for the 2014 Central APA Meeting, which can be found in section four of this newsletter.

Also included is round two of an experiment to see how well the purveyors of logic and thinking do on a brief quiz. Results from the first round are available.

A Membership Form is available at the end of this newsletter. Dues, which continue to be \$10.00, may be paid by check or credit card or PayPal; the form should be completed and sent (with a check if payment is by check) to our treasurer, Don Hatcher.

Geoff C. Goddu
Department of Philosophy
University of Richmond
ggoddu@richmond.edu

From the President

(1) *AILACT budget for 2013*

Balance at January 6, 2013	\$5,701.78
Minimum expected revenue (dues, gifts, revenues)	<u>300.00</u>
Total	6,001.78

Expenses

2012 essay prize	300.00
Total	<u>300.00</u>

Surplus (Deficit) 5,701.78

Notes: (1) The 2012 essay-prize cheque was issued in Jan. 2013 and is therefore a charge against the 2013 budget. (2) It is a policy of the Board of Directors that the budget expenses for a year should not exceed the budget revenue for the year, but during the year the Board may approve additional expenses that it considers warranted. (3) The budget revenue for 2013 is a conservative estimate.

- (2) **Essay Prize:** The Board has approved the appointment of Alec Fisher to the essay prize jury for three years (2013-15). Alec is affiliated with the University of East Anglia, U.K. The Board has also approved the appointment of Ben Hamby as publicist for the essay prize for three years (2013-15). As Geoff Goddu notes above in his Editor's report, Ben is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Philosophy at McMaster University. He won the essay prize in 2012 and in 2011 and was an "honourable mention" in 2010.

Alec Fisher succeeds Ralph Johnson, who served on the essay prize jury from 2010 to 2012. Ben Hamby succeeds Susana Nuccetelli, who was our publicist for the prize from 2009 to 2012. On behalf of the membership of our association, I want to thank Susana and Ralph for the diligent and very valuable service they performed for AILACT during their appointments.

- (3) **Textbook Review Committee:** Cate Hundleby (Department of Philosophy, University of Windsor; a member of AILACT and a member of the Textbook Review Committee) has a CT textbook webpage (webpage_to_help_instructors_choose_CT_textbooks_effectively). We will have a link to it under our existing link "IL & CT Textbooks" and a separate link to it called "Designing the IL/CT Course." In addition, the committee will solicit abstracts from the authors of texts Cate has identified on her website and add them to the current AILACT list of textbook abstracts, and will request reviews of the texts.

Critical Thinking Assessment Committee: The committee is preparing a list of CT tests and is considering the latest Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) test, which was used in the influential Academically Adrift. One issue in particular that is being considered is the appropriateness of computer grading of critical thinking essay tests.

- (4) **Recruitment:** The Board is undertaking to recruit, as members of AILACT, a number of individuals whose names have been suggested in Board correspondence, including several prominent scholars in informal logic/critical thinking/argumentation theory. If any members of AILACT know of individuals whom they think would be interested in joining the Association, please send me their names and email addresses.
- (5) **Board of Directors Election:** An election of members of AILACT to serve on the Board of Directors for a two-year term (July 2013 to June 2015) will be held in June. Details to follow.

With my best wishes,
Derek Allen
Department of Philosophy
University of Toronto
derekallen@trinity.utoronto.ca

A Very Short Reasoning Quiz

From the December 2012 Newsletter: Which is *less* probable:

(a) that there are two individuals living in Philadelphia, PA having the same number of hairs on their heads (ignoring those who are completely bald)

(b) that on a randomly chosen page from a randomly book chosen from the Library of Congress the letter ‘e’ appears.

Solution: I received two responses to this puzzle. One argued for (a) being less probable and one argued for (b). (I suspect this is not a representative sample.) In this case the correct answer is (b).

The typical head of hair has approximately 100,000 to 150,000 hairs. While there is no agreement on the upper limit, no estimates give an upper limit anywhere close to 500,000. Just to be safe, suppose the upper limit is 1 million. The population of Philadelphia, PA is approximately 1.5 million people. Hence, given that there are not over 500,000 bald people in Philadelphia, the number of people with hair is greater than the number of options available for numbers of hairs. Hence, at least one of those options must have more than one person correlated with it. Hence, it is certain that two individuals in Philadelphia, PA have the same number of hairs on their heads.

For the sake of symmetry, let us ignore books with blank pages (I leave it to your imagination what to make of pages labeled ‘This page left intentionally blank’). Even ignoring blank pages (or pages with no words on them) there are books in the Library of Congress with pages with no ‘e’s. For example, page 41 Of Dr. Suess’ *Hop on Pop*, United States Library of Congress Card Catalog Number 63-9810, reads as follows: “STOP. You must not hop on Pop.” Given that there is at least one page with words, but no ‘e’s (there are actually 17 such pages in *Hop on Pop*), it is less than certain that a randomly chosen page from a randomly chosen book from the Library of Congress contains the letter ‘e’. Hence, (b) is less probable.

New Puzzle: While the planet Loki is Earth-like in most respects, it has no stable magnetic pole (which rarely matches with the geographic north pole anyway) and is subject to violent electrical storms that wreak havoc on navigation systems, as the first Terran Planetary Survey mission to Loki discovered. Prior to the dispatch of a rescue team, the last transmission from the Survey mission was as follows: *Most of supplies lost in earthquake—current location unknown. Yesterday went ten kilometers due south, ten kilometers due east, and ten kilometers due north and arrived right back at starting point, but location still unknown. Send help.*

Assuming all the statements made in the transmission are true, is it possible to determine, with an accuracy of within a ten-mile radius, where to look for the Survey team?

Answers (or guesses), along with any justification you care to offer, should be sent to Geoff Goddu at ggoddu@richmond.edu by May 25th, 2013.

AILACT @ APA Call for Submissions

Call for Papers and Panel Discussions for the AILACT Group Session at the American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting, February 26 through March 1, 2014, at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel, Chicago, IL.

Please send your suggestions on any topic in informal logic, critical thinking, or argumentation, its instruction, assessment, or application to various disciplines and world events. Ideas regarding a guest speaker, author-meets-critics, or a joint session with another Group Meeting are very welcome. Please also forward this invitation to anyone else you think might be interested in submitting or attending.

Deadlines: Please send emails of interest by August 1, 2013. Papers and [confirmed] speaker lists should be submitted by September 30, 2013. Send papers as attachments in pdf or MS Word. Send all emails and submissions to the Program Director, Kevin Possin, kpossin@winona.edu

2013 AILACT Essay Prize Call for Submissions

The Association for Informal Logic and Critical Thinking (AILACT) invites submissions for the 2013 AILACT Essay Prize. This will be the ninth year in which the prize has been offered.

- Value: \$300 U.S.
- The prize-winning paper, and any “honourable mention” paper, will be considered for publication in *Informal Logic* upon the conditions listed below.*
- Papers related to the teaching or theory of informal logic or critical thinking, and papers on argumentation theory, will be considered for the prize.
- There are no restrictions on authorship. Authors need not be members of AILACT.

- Previously unpublished papers, and papers published or accepted for publication between January 1, 2010 and October 31, 2013, are eligible. Maximum length: 6,000 words.
- Entries will be assessed on the basis of their argument, scholarship, style, and importance to the field.
- The jury members for the 2013 AILACT essay prize, approved by the AILACT Board of Directors, are Alec Fisher (Department of Philosophy, University of East Anglia), Trudy Govier (Department of Philosophy, University of Lethbridge), and Larry Wright (Department of Philosophy, University of California, Riverside). The decision of the jury is final.
- To submit a paper, attach a PDF (preferred) or MS Word or RTF document to an email with AILACT ESSAY ENTRY on the “subject” line and send it to Derek Allen (derekallen@trinity.utoronto.ca) with a covering note giving your name and a mailing address. Please send the paper ready for blind-reviewing (the author not identified on the paper or file containing the paper or in the description of the document’s properties that is part of the file, and self-identifying references removed from the text, notes and references).
- There is a limit of one entry per author.
- The deadline for receipt of submissions is October 31, 2013. The winner will be announced by January 15, 2014. AILACT will publicize the name of the winner on its web site and at AILACT sessions held at APA divisional meetings in 2014.
- For further information about the essay prize, please contact Ben Hamby (hambyb@mcmaster.ca). For information about AILACT, visit our web site: <http://ailact.wordpress.com/>

*The prize-winning paper, and any “honourable mention” paper, will be eligible for consideration for publication in *Informal Logic* if it has not already been published or accepted or committed for publication elsewhere and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and if the author consents to its consideration for publication in *Informal Logic*. The editors of *Informal Logic* will arrange for blind review of the paper if these conditions are met. The author will be expected to revise the paper in light of the reviewers’ suggestions, or to justify not doing so.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE: MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Form
The Association for Informal Logic and Critical Thinking

The Association (AILACT) was formed in 1983 to promote research on, and teaching and testing of, informal logic and critical thinking at all levels; to increase the extent and quality of such research, teaching, and testing; and to facilitate discussion among its members. AILACT sponsors sessions at each APA divisional meeting and other meetings; has a Web site, <http://ailact.wordpress.com/> that provides a wide variety of information about AILACT, informal logic, and critical thinking, and posts papers and other members' materials; has an e-mail discussion list for discussion of topics of interest to members; and holds an annual essay prize competition.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL FOR 2013

I would like to become a member of AILACT (US\$10 or equivalent)

I would like to renew my membership (US\$10 or equivalent)

I am a student and would like to become a member of AILACT (Fees waived)

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Institutional affiliation (if any): _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____ (Please print clearly. Much of our business is conducted electronically. However, you will not be disenfranchised if you do not have an e-mail address.)

Payment Options: **Check:** Make checks (US or Canadian only) payable to AILACT

Credit Card Payment: Please deduct US \$10 from

Credit Card: __ Visa __ MasterCard

Account Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

PayPal: log in to your account and send the payment to Don Hatcher's email address (dhatcher@bakeru.edu). PayPal will indicate that your payment is to AILACT.

What would you like to see AILACT do, or do better?

Mail to: Donald Hatcher, AILACT Treasurer, Department of Philosophy, Baker University, Baldwin City, KS 66006 USA. Email: <dhatcher@bakeru.edu>