

A brief history of the Worldwide Biography Conference

During the 1980s and 1990s, various teaching initiatives around the world began promoting different ways of working professionally with biographical development a.k.a. “biography work”. From 1990 to 1998 the “International Biography Conference” was organised annually in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, and Germany. Since 2001 the [Worldwide Biography Conference](#) is held biennially, through which colleagues strengthen international networking and share their research, development and application of biography work as well as promoting new professional training initiatives. This brief history is now presented retrospectively as series of events moving backwards through time.

June / July 2022 : Snellman-Korkeakoulu, Helsinki, Finland : 11th Worldwide Biography Conference

Directly before the conference the International Trainers Forum held their annual membership meeting and a reception to meet colleagues interested in becoming member representatives of new training initiatives.

The 20th gathering, co-ordinated and administrated by a Finnish team of seventeen professionals, was mediated in English language, working with the theme “Islands of Humanity – Vulnerable, Incomplete and Limited – Human Being in the Process of Becoming”. The conference was held by the Baltic Sea on the beautiful campus of the Finnish University dedicated to Anthroposophical Spiritual Science in the maritime capital Helsinki. For the first time in the ‘biography’ of the conferences Covid19 restrictions required waiting for three long years until colleagues could meet each other again at one location. Also, the conflict in Ukraine gave some colleagues in distant lands cause to consider even ‘daring’ to travel to Finland.

This conference was designed around the theme of “Islands of Humanity”, exploring human beings in the process of becoming with the lifelong themes of how to deal with being ‘Vulnerable’, ‘Incomplete’ and ‘Limited’ in their personal (individual), social (family, friends) and work (clients, colleagues) lives. The themes were introduced through diverse professional presentations, workshops, dialogical interactions, and meetings during the five days of the conference.

More than ninety biography professionals from 22 different countries came together in Helsinki to strengthen their international professional networking and exchange research and development of biography work. The guiding principle for these conferences was always that the participants attend not as ‘consumers’, but are invited to actively prepare, build and create together a dynamic conference programme. For WBC 2022 two thirds of the participants were able to contribute collectively to the programme: e.g., speaking about professional themes during the plena, facilitating professional workshops, co-creating dynamic social-artistic processes to generate professional interaction and working with the conference meditation.

The Finnish organising team invited contributions from colleagues practising all kinds of dialogical activities, who have been inspired by the marvellous, precious, important work that has been witnessed in previous conferences. In particular the roots of the biography movement in the Spiritual Science and Michaelic Inspiration of our time were explored; which endeavour unfolded as a ‘red thread’ throughout the conference with contemplation of the Daily Rhythms of The Foundation Stone Meditation, with recitation every morning. This became a tuning of the melody of the conference and our working into deeper and more meaningful levels of our dialogical work together.

The overarching experience of the conference, as ‘being’ a community with shared learning processes and a joyful, living organism, resounded during and after. As a community we continue building a solid foundation for creating a vessel each time to enable the ‘Being’ of the “Worldwide Biography Conference” to enfold its destiny in the present moment for the future. For the first time the conference was designed, co-ordinated and organised by a relatively large, all national group of seventeen Finnish professionals; who nurtured a strong community impulse which kept the hearth of the conference burning brightly for the Worldwide Biography Conference community, awakening interest and inspiration for the forthcoming event over three years.

For the first time an article about the conference was published in the Michaelmas edition of the newsletter *Anthroposophy Worldwide*, which appears monthly in German, English, French and Spanish for the members of the General Anthroposophical Society, which connects many groups, branches and regional societies, comprising a global community of spiritual interested and engaged people in 78 countries across all continents.

The Worldwide Biography Conference is a ‘vessel’ for dreaming and weaving and playing in which everyone should be free. It is neither a ‘political body’ nor an event in which votes must be canvassed in order to make decisions. This responsibility lies solely with individual initiatives themselves, great and small, around the world. On the 20th of October the Finnish team held their party to celebrate completion of a successful realisation of the 11th Worldwide Biography Conference. In September the transition process was carried out by Hannu and Jaana Tuovinen (FI) and Fumiko Chikami and Tomoko Kawashima (JP).

June 2019 - Pilisszentlászló, Budapest, Hungary : 10th Worldwide Biography Conference

The International Trainers Forum held their annual meeting directly before in the conference meeting hall, where a huge wall mural created by members during a social-artistic exercise remained hanging throughout.

The 19th gathering, co-ordinated and administrated by the 'Budapest Group' in collaboration with the Kékvölgy Waldorf Iskola and its community, was mediated in English and German languages, working with the theme " 'I' on the Path : Dare - Share - Care ". During the opening plenum, Anna Tóthfalusi (HU), Eszter Kökény-Hámori (HU), Anna Romanova (RU) and Victor Streza (BE) facilitated contributions from participants of the local biography training, who had just mediated a two day 'Prelude' of public biographical and cultural events in Budapest.

Immediately following this participants were invited to join an 'open conversation' in the "Michael School", for colleagues to share questions and experiences about working with the esoteric material of the School of Spiritual Science. A review of collective experiences later concluded that in the future it would be preferable to revert to holding this "conversation" prior to the beginning the conference, as was the case in 2017.

A particular feature of this conference venue is the immediate sense of connection between the inner space of the meeting hall, in particular, and the outer space of the surrounding landscape permeated with strong elemental and geomantic forces. After supper the evenings were intentionally left open for free participation in a variety of social-artistic events continuing the mediation of Hungarian culture following the 'Prelude' organised by and with contributions from the local school and village community.

Plena were accompanied by two-way simultaneous interpreting of English / German (familiar with spiritual scientific terminology) using amplified, multi-channel, wireless, audio equipment (accompanied by technical assistance), which participating 'whisper interpreters' (i.a. French, Hungarian, Russian and Spanish) were also able to use. Organisers paid particular attention to ensuring that the distribution of colleagues in group work throughout the conference was compatible with individual languages requirements.

The daily programme opened with speaking of the conference verse "Victorious Spirit ..." by Rudolf Steiner (GA 245 / 268) in different languages, with 122 participants from 12 European nations, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, India, Israel, Japan, Philippines, Russia, Thailand and USA sitting in three concentric circles. The core programme encompassed three days dedicated respectively to the title themes "Dare", "Share" and "Care". The entire content was created through the coordination of carefully prepared facilitation and contributions of over a third of the participants.

On the first morning, "Dare", colleagues joined one of 12 groups, each led by a carefully prepared 'shepherd' to a special place up to 3 km away in the surrounding wild landscape of partially forested hills and valleys. From there colleagues set out alone in nature to walk backwards through their biographies to their birth. All returned safely to share their stories with their group before or during supper. This exercise, initiated by Christopher Bee (EU), was prepared and coordinated by Victor Streza (BE) accompanied by local resident Robert Kiraly (HU), who also watchfully encircled the unfolding adventures on horseback the whole day long.

On the next morning, "Share", colleagues joined one of 12 professionally facilitated groups in which they could experience and learn how to work intensively with a professional instrument for biographical transformation. Colleagues were invited who had not previously facilitated groups in previous conferences. Identification and selection of facilitators was coordinated by Vera G. Klein (NL) and Leah Walker (US), who also assured fair distribution of participants' choices and monitored the actual work from morning to evening.

For the second time well before a current conference, a group of colleagues registered their willingness and capacity to take on the 'organising coordination' of the next conference in Finland. Therefore, they had been asked to take on responsibility for preparing the work on the third day of the conference, "Care".

Hannu and Jaana Tuovinen (FI) with Mikko Romppanen (FI), supported by nine Finnish colleagues, facilitated a series of common language group work, designed to explore future potential development of biography work across the global conference community. Participants first shared personal 'visions' for their own professional work in the next three years. After lunch participants transformed their visions to create three year scenarios based on 'stability', 'change' and 'progress'. Celebrating the day's work, each group presented a communal essence of their visions and scenarios in word and image respectively on a leaf shaped card, which the facilitators hung on the branches of a huge 'World Tree' mural (after "Yggdrasil" of Nordic mythology).

During the final morning plenum participants were invited to walk together in a Great Labyrinth created out of their very own shoes by a Hungarian social artist on the lawn outside the meeting hall.

The 'World Tree' was taken home by the Finnish colleagues to contemplate and draw inspiration from for the 'organising coordination' of Worldwide Biography Conference 2021.

Beginning of September 2019 the 'Budapest Group', Anna Tóthfalusi (HU), Eszter Kókény-Hámori (HU), Anna Romanova (RU), Victor Streza (BE) and Christopher Bee (EU) met at the Goetheanum to review and close their work for Worldwide Biography Conference 2019, to update the "Guiding Light Principles" and to draft their report to the conference community. In due course responsibility for the 'organising coordination' was transferred to the core group representing the Finnish colleagues: Hannu and Jaana Tuovinen (FI) with Mikko Romppanen (FI). Due to prevailing global circumstances the next Worldwide Biography Conference will be held in Helsinki Finland in 2022.

Prior to the last conference, Japanese colleagues Fumiko Chikami, Tomoko Kawashima and Yuko Hibara started exploring possibilities and have since committed to hosting the Worldwide Biography Conference in Japan in 2024. Also in consultation with their North American colleagues, Regine Kurek (CA) and Leah Walker (US) began exploring the possibility of hosting the Worldwide Biography Conference near Toronto Canada in 2026. This all naturally subject to development of the prevailing global circumstances.

June 2017 - Goetheanum near Basel, Switzerland : 9th Worldwide Biography Conference

The International Trainers Forum held their annual meeting directly before the conference.

The 18th gathering, organised and administrated in collaboration with the General Anthroposophical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, was mediated in English and German languages, working with the theme "Witness - Trust - Peace : Crafting Intentional Community" in connection with "Social Threefolding". Plena were conducted in three concentric ovals in the Schreinerei whose foci lay along the East-West axis, penetrated by aisles forming a Saint Andrews Cross. Simultaneous two-way interpreting of English and German was carried out by Rozanne Hartmann (CH) using an amplified audio system, mobile head phones and remote microphones which speakers could call on from anywhere in the hall.

Facilitation of the plenum processes was supported by Anna Tóthfalusi (HU), Eszter Kókény-Hámori (HU), Anna Romanova (RU) and Victor Streza (BE), who with Christopher Bee (EU) had formed the 'Budapest Group' at Easter 2016 to promote an initiative to bring the conference to Hungary in 2019.

Before opening the conference, an invitation was taken up widely to join an "open conversation" in the "Michael School", for any colleagues to share questions and experiences about working with the esoteric material of the "School of Spiritual Science"; concluding with a brief contribution by Paul Mackay (CH).

The daily programme opened and closed with speaking and eurythmical evocation in silence of the "Verse of Destiny" by Rudolf Steiner inside the oval plenum ring. After briefly talking about "Social Threefolding" on the first day, Paul Mackay (CH) joined in witnessing global professional initiatives embracing regional multimedia presentations arranged in the periphery by 123 participants (c. 33% German native speaking) from 12 European nations, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Russia and USA.

The core programme encompassed three days dedicated respectively to the Social Threefolding themes "Freedom", "Equality" and "Humanity". Each morning opened with four very brief contributions on the theme of the day, followed by a unique social dynamic artistic process leading to the formation of 12 facilitated groups, which then worked more intimately with the daily theme. During an open space for initiatives after lunch many colleagues joined an ongoing conversation about conference fellowship and community building. For the rest of each afternoon participants joined their chosen research group, one of 12 facilitated by participating colleagues dedicated to research and development of specialised fields of work with biographical development. The original intention for this conference was fulfilled by securing maximum facilitation and contribution by over one third of its participants. Three evening plena were dedicated to the social artistic sharing of the daily group experiences for all to witness.

The conference concluded with final plena during which the 12 research and development groups shared their experiences in a multitude of social artistic ways. The ongoing conversation about "Building Intentional Community" culminated with impassioned calls to continue seeking further ways to serve the practical needs of networking in the growing global community of the Worldwide Biography Conference. At the invitation of the organisers, Leah Walker (US) took these "calls" further in her review of the conference, which was circulated with their report end of December 2017.

Beginning November 2017 Christopher Bee (EU), Fumiko Chikami (JP), Joop Grün (CH), Josien de Vries (NL) and Leo Beth (NL), concluded their organisation of the conference in consultation with Paul Mackay (CH), culminating with the dissolution of their 'coordination group'. The resulting report declared a commitment to transmit responsibility for coordination and organisation of the next conference in 2019 in Hungary, in such a way so as to preserve continuity, encourage initiative and ensure practise of due diligence, by formulating

essential “Guiding Light Principles” based on many years of experience accumulated since the inception of the Worldwide Biography Conference.

Beginning February 2018 members of the former ‘coordination group’ personally transmitted their “Guiding Light Principles” to the ‘Budapest Group’, in a meeting with Anna Tóthfalusi (HU), Eszter Kökény-Hámori (HU), Anna Romanova (RU) and Victor Streza (BE) at the venue of the next conference, the Kékvölgy Waldorf Iskola (school), in Pilisszentlászló, near Budapest in Hungary.

June 2015 - Gut Froberg near Dresden, Germany : 8th Worldwide Biography Conference

The International Trainers Forum held their annual meeting directly before the conference.

The 17th gathering was mediated in English and German with the theme “Wounds and Wonders”. The 1st half of the conference (3 nights) was dedicated to seven two-day professional workshops; followed by a one-day excursion to Dresden. During the 2nd half of the conference (3 nights) Christine Gruwez (BE) contributed two morning sessions about the Manichaeian schooling path, incorporating pictures of adversary beings by Gerhard Reisch (1899-1975) and intensive group work in plenum. Dani Aman (IL) talked about “working with the wound”. Afternoon sessions with short workshops, professional initiatives and community building processes, an evening of artistic performances, and a three-day exhibition of original pictures by Gerhard Reisch (1899-1975) were all appreciated. 156 colleagues from 14 European nations (c. 40% German native speaking), Brazil, Canada, Chili, China, India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Russia and USA attended.

The ‘fellowship’ initiative had been explored during a conference plenum session. In October 2015 the ‘coordination (formerly continuity) group’ of the ‘fellowship’ initiative met in Berlin, Germany to review the last conference, bid farewell to Elaine Beadle (NZ) and Rinke Visser (NL), who accompanied the conferences since their inception, and consider future continuity. During the review process, including meeting with some of the colleagues who carried the 2015 conference organisation, fundamental challenges manifested.

In Arlesheim Switzerland, March 2016, the ‘coordination group’, Christopher Bee (EU), Fumiko Chikami (JP), Joop Grün (CH), Josien de Vries (NL) and Leo Beth (NL), began work to consolidate the foundation of a conference community which promotes professionalism through global networking, whilst nurturing ongoing collaboration with the General Anthroposophical Section of the School of Spiritual Science. To serve this purpose the ‘coordination group’ committed to organising the next conference in June 2017 at the Goetheanum in collaboration with Paul Mackay (CH) to promote development of an innovative social artistic process which can be embraced by this worldwide conference community.

June 2013 - Emerson College, United Kingdom : 7th Worldwide Biography Conference

The International Trainers Forum held their annual meeting directly before the conference.

The 16th gathering was promoted in English and German with the theme “‘I’ on the Threshold”, group work with the Foundation Stone Meditation facilitated by Joop Grün (CH), keynote talks about therapeutic biography work by Tali Sella (IL) and Michaela Glöckler (CH), and moderation by Anita Charton (CH). The effort to provide once again simultaneous translation English / German was welcome. Financial assistance for participation was generously supported. Pre-conference seminars, workshops, interest group reports, presentations and artistic performances were all much appreciated. The intention to practise ‘conversation’ / ‘dialogue’ as a professional community on the 2nd evening was not realised. 112 colleagues from 10 European nations (c. 27% German native speaking), Brazil, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa and USA attended.

Directly after the conference the ‘continuity group’ invited interested colleagues to meet and share ideas about where to hold the 2015 conference. In a circle of circa 27 colleagues an initiative to move East to Dresden, Germany was taken up enthusiastically by colleagues from all over Europe, who subsequently formed the largest ever group of 10 colleagues to organise a conference to date: Carine Biessels (DE), Lothar Flachmann (DE), Gabriele Hardner (DE), Maarten Moens (NL), Camelia and George Oprea (RO), Gemma Priess (DE), Anna Romanova (RU), Karin Weber (DE), Rita Weber-Wied, (DE).

In October 2013 the ‘continuity group’ met in Basel, Switzerland. Anita Charton (CH), who had accompanied the conferences from their inception, resigned. Elaine Beadle (DE) and Rinke Visser (NL) announced their intention to resign after the next conference. During this gathering a ‘fellowship’ initiative was conceived to further continuity and nurture quality for the future of the Worldwide Biography Conference. In addition the dissolution of the carrying group for the International Professional Forum website was announced, and it was formerly proposed and agreed that the ‘continuity group’ would henceforth take on responsibility for developing and maintaining a website for the international representation of professional biography work based on anthroposophical spiritual science.

During 2014 some 21 colleagues and 7 institutions engaged with the 'fellowship' initiative, thereby enabling the 'continuity group' to formally mandate Albert Schmalhofer (DE), as chairman of the Professional Association for Biography Work in Germany, with the task of hosting the organisation of the 2015 conference near Dresden.

June / July 2011 - Emerson College, United Kingdom : 6th Worldwide Biography Conference

The International Trainers Forum held their annual meeting directly before the conference.

The 15th gathering was promoted in English and German with the theme "Living in an Awareness of Karma", to which Michaela Glöckler (CH) and Anita Charton (CH) contributed respectively as keynote speaker and facilitator of a social artistic process during the morning plenum. The plenum language was English only, simultaneous translations were not available; some financial assistance for travel was possible. Pre-conference 'master classes' and a 'class meeting', the 'market place', reports from interest groups and short presentations were all encompassed. The practise of 'conversation' / 'dialogue' as a professional community during two full evening plena was developed further. Circa 110 colleagues from 10 European nations (c. 15% German native speaking), Australia, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, South Africa and USA were in attendance.

In the meantime, as a result of concern expressed by various language groups in connection with the last two conferences in the United Kingdom, the 'continuity group' prevailed upon the 'organisation group' for the 7th Worldwide Biography Conference at Emerson College to budget for and guarantee practical installation of simultaneous translation facilities in 2013.

June / July 2009 - Emerson College, United Kingdom : 5th Worldwide Biography Conference

The International Trainers Forum held their annual meeting directly before the conference.

The 14th gathering was promoted in English and German with the theme "Practising Awareness", to which Christine Gruwez (BE) and Arthur Zajonc (US) contributed respectively as keynote speaker and facilitator of a meditative consciousness schooling process during the morning plenum. The plenum language was English only, simultaneous translations were not available; the availability of financial assistance was supported through sponsorship by the Iona Stichting (NL). In addition to the pre-conference 'master classes' and a 'class meeting', and the 'market place', separate sessions were formally introduced to look at professional issues, to hear from interest groups and to enable 30 minute short presentations. The conference process was also developed further by dedicating two full evening plena to the practise of 'conversation' ('dialogue') as a professional community. Attention was paid to facilitating exchange between the different national groupings represented by c. 130 colleagues from 11 European nations (c. 15% German native speaking), Australia, Brazil, India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa and USA.

June 2007 - Rolduc, Kerkrade, Netherlands : 4th Worldwide Biography Conference

The 13th gathering was organised in a Catholic Seminary and promoted in English and German with the working title "Inside Out". It was attended by c. 130 colleagues from 12 European nations (c. 50% Dutch and c. 20% German native speaking), Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Russia and the USA. Conference plena were held in English and German; simultaneous translation facilities were not provided. Sponsorship by the Iona Stichting (NL) enabled financial help for those travelling long distances or from countries with limited resources. Much thought and care went into facilitating group work with social artistic content created around themes inspired by Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist". Whilst a 'market place' was held, pre-conference 'master classes' and a 'class meeting' were not available. Working with the principle that all participants are co-creators, contributions from keynote speakers were also not invited; instead emphasis was placed on nurturing work in smaller coherent groups throughout the conference.

Since the Instituut voor Biografie could only organise one gathering, colleagues committed to maintaining the continuity of these international gatherings as a service to the worldwide development of biography work based on anthroposophical spiritual science began looking at how to create an organ which ensures and monitors the organisation of conferences according to minimum standards evolving out of 17 years of experience.

To this purpose a group, including Anita Charton (CH), Christopher Bee (EU), Elaine Beadle (DE), Fumiko Chikami (JP), Joop Grün (CH), Josien de Vries (NL) and Rinke Visser (NL), initiated a gathering in Driebergen, Netherlands in December 2007. An initiative carried by Christopher Bee (EU) and Fumiko Chikami (JP) to facilitate the organisation of the 5th Worldwide Biography Conference in the UK at Emerson College in 2009 was explored and supported. In this way a 'continuity group' was formed, to ensure selection of suitable locations and venues for future conferences, as well as to recognise and monitor each 'organisation group', which is then responsible for creating, administrating and documenting a conference. Membership of the 'continuity group' is augmented by co-opting colleagues with experience of organising conferences and the

independence to be able to fulfil this commitment realistically on a long term basis.

June 2005 - Goetheanum, Dornach Switzerland: 3rd Worldwide Biography Conference

The International Trainers Forum held their annual meeting directly after the conference.

The 12th gathering was promoted in English and German with the theme “Global Turbulence”, during which Christine Gruwez (BE), Jaap van der Haar (NL), Manfred van Doorn (NL) and Rinke Visser (NL) served as keynote speakers. Simultaneous translation and limited financial assistance were facilitated; enabling c. 100 colleagues from 10 European nations (c. 50% German native speaking), Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Russia and the USA, to take part in pre-conference Master Classes and “Class Meeting”, Marketplace Workshops and social artistic activities in plenum.

During preparations leading up to this conference, it became apparent for different reasons, that after holding three consecutive conferences at the Goetheanum, it would be prudent to hold the next conferences somewhere else in Europe. So responsibility for the organisation of the next conference was formally passed to Rinke Visser (NL) and then subsequently organised by the Instituut voor Biografie in Driebergen, Netherlands represented at that time by Marijke Steenbruggen (NL) and Leo Beth (NL), amongst others.

May / June 2003 - Goetheanum, Dornach Switzerland : 2nd Worldwide Biography Conference

The 11th gathering was promoted in English and German with the theme “Anchored in Life - Committed to Spirit - Towards the Future”. Albrecht Hemming (DE), Coenraad van Houten (DE) and Michaela Glöckler (CH) contributed as keynote speakers. Simultaneous translation and limited financial assistance were facilitated; enabling c. 100 colleagues from 9 European nations (c. 50% German native speaking), Australia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Russia and the USA, to take part in the pre-conference ‘master classes’ and ‘class meeting’, ‘marketplace workshops’ and social artistic activities in plenum.

During this conference, the dissolution of the “Association for Biography Work” (“Biographieverein”), originally set up by Gudrun Burkhard (BR), was formally announced (see above 1995). Simultaneously colleagues were invited to come forward, who would be capable of contributing to the process of creating new organs of international collaboration to serve the professional development of biography work on a worldwide platform.

Directly after this conference Anita Charton (CH) hosted the first gathering at the Goetheanum of the “International Trainers Forum” (ITF), attended by representatives of training programmes in 13 nations. The ITF meets annually, and operates as an organ within the General Anthroposophical Section of the School of Spiritual Science under the mentorship of Paul Mackay (CH), representing the ‘department’ of Reincarnation and Karma. Members, who are responsible for carrying certified training programmes, engage in spiritual scientific research together, exchange professional experience about the development of trainings, monitor the goals and quality of each other’s trainings, mentor new trainings, accompany transition in training faculties and negotiate the peer recognition of trainings in collaboration with the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum. www.internationaltrainersforum.com

In November 2003 a carrying group met in Mannheim to establish the “International Professional Forum” as a world-wide-web based platform facilitated by Walter Seyffer (DE) for the purpose of networking professional developments in biography work. This forum co-ordinates its activities particularly with a view to serving national professional associations as well as individual colleagues. The impulse to found the German and Swiss professional associations also originated at this gathering. Meanwhile professional associations have also been established in Japan, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom.

International Trainers Forum and International Professional Forum report on their development and make contributions during the Worldwide Biography Conferences.

June / July 2001 - Goetheanum, Dornach Switzerland : 1st Worldwide Biography Conference

The 10th gathering was promoted in both English and German with the theme “Pathways to New Community”, to which Gudrun Burkhard (BR), Michaela Glöckler (CH) and Paul Mackay (CH) contributed as keynote speakers. Simultaneous translation between various languages was facilitated in the plenum sessions: English, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish. Circa 110 colleagues attended from 10 European nations (c. 50% German native speaking), Argentina, Australia, Brasil, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa and the USA. The intention of this new series of conferences was to further build up a worldwide network for the development of biography work based on anthroposophical spiritual scientific research.

The first three Worldwide Biography Conferences were carried by Elaine Beadle (DE) and Krista Braun (UK), jointly hosted by Paul Mackay (CH) from the Social Section and Michaela Glöckler (CH) from the Medical

Section, on behalf of the General Anthroposophical Section of the School of Spiritual Science and facilitated by the Goetheanum Conference Offices. The familiar programme continued with pre-conference 'master classes' and a 'class meeting', keynote speakers, a 'market place' and further development of social artistic contributions by Christopher Bee (EU), Christine Gruwez (BE) and Rinke Visser (NL) during plenum sessions. The principle of providing financial assistance to colleagues from nations with limited resources, or travelling intercontinental, was made possible through the further development, management and transfer of resources generated by, and through, the organisation of this new series of conferences.

July 1998 - Freiburg im Breisgau, St. Georgien, Germany : 6th International Biography Conference

The 9th gathering was held in English at Albertus Magnus Haus, for a network of c. 50 colleague from 9 European nations, South Africa and New Zealand. This series of conferences was perceived to be evolving in alignment with the "Seven Sacraments" (see above: 'Recognition' and 'Offering'), so the theme of "Transformation - Stepping into the Future" was chosen. Albrecht Hemming (DE) and Blanca Sanchez de Muniain (ES) served as keynote speakers; Christopher Bee (EU) and Elaine Beadle (DE) facilitated integration of original paintings by Gerhard Reisch (1899-1975) "A Path of Knowledge in Pictures" into the conference process.

The 'organisation group', Christine Pflug (DE), Elaine Beadle (DE), Gudrun Korte (DE), Josien de Vries (NL), Rinke Visser (NL) and Sigrun Hardardottir (DK), asked other colleagues to take on responsibility for organising a 7th International Biography Conference in 1999 or 2000, dedicated to the Sacrament of 'Communion'. Also Anita Charton (CH) appealed for the integration of the English and German gatherings (see above 1992) into one conference.

When it became clear, however, that the new 'organisation group' would not be able to fulfil its task, Elaine Beadle (DE) and Krista Braun (UK) took up the initiative to create the next gathering in 2001 at the Goetheanum.

June / July 1997 - Land en Bos, Netherlands : 5th International Biography Conference

The 8th gathering was again held in English at the same venue, with 'master classes' and a 'class meeting' before the opening. The theme "Mind the Gap - Dealing with the Abyss" ('Offering' - see below) continued to address the current world situation before the turn of the Millennium, to which Elaine Beadle (DE) and Sigrun Hardardottir (DK) contributed as keynote speakers; once again a 'market place' was organised.

June / July 1996 - Land en Bos, Netherlands : 4th International Biography Conference

The 7th gathering was held in English at a Christian Community Conference Centre, with 'master classes' and a 'class meeting' before the opening. The theme "Signs of Our Time" ('Recognition' - see below) referred to the current world situation approaching the turn of the Millennium. Felicitas Vogt (DE) served as a keynote speaker, and a 'market place' was introduced to enable the wider sharing of professional experience and issues through c. 90 minute workshops and presentations.

Summer 1995 - Centre for Social Development, UK : 3rd International Biography Conference

The 6th gathering was held in English and attended by c. 50 colleagues. Keynote speaker Rinke Visser (NL) picked up on the contribution by Michaela Glöckler (CH) in 1993. Before the conference, in addition to a 'class meeting', two day 'master classes' were introduced to replace the informal 'workdays' of the previous year.

After this gathering it was decided that International Biography Conferences should not be held in one place more than three times in a row. An initiative to bring the conference to Brazil could not be implemented.

February 1995 - Goetheanum, Dornach Switzerland : Biographie Konferenz

The 5th gathering was hosted in German by the Medical Section (not attended by Michaela Glöckler) for members only of the School of Spiritual Science with the theme "Working hygienically and therapeutically with biography work as a path of self knowledge and understanding of destiny". The enthusiastic attendance also by many members without any immediate professional connection to biography work was observed.

Parallel to the three German language only gatherings at the Goetheanum an impulse emerged, which was subsequently directed by Gudrun Burkhard (BR) into the formation of a "Association for Biography Work" (a.k.a. "Biographieverein"). This association was intended to function as an international umbrella organisation to regulate certification of trainings in biography work and maintenance of quality in professional practice (see below: dissolution of Association for Biography Work in 2003).

Summer 1994 - Centre for Social Development, UK : 2nd International Biography Conference

The 4th gathering was held in English and attended by c. 50 colleagues. Afterwards, in addition to a 'class meeting', informal 'workdays' were organised to work with experienced colleagues on professional issues.

June 1993 - Centre for Social Development, UK : 1st International Biography Conference

The 3rd gathering was held in English and attended by c. 50 colleagues. As keynote speakers Michaela Glöckler (CH) contributed "Biography Work in relation to the Christ in the Etheric", and Coenraad van Houten (UK) contributed "How to Train Biography Workers". Artistic work was introduced into plenum activities and 'class meetings' were held for members of the School of Spiritual Science before and after the conference.

November 1991 - Goetheanum, Dornach Switzerland : Biographie Konferenz

The 2nd gathering, hosted in German by the Medical Section, was originally intended only for members of the School of Spiritual Science. However, because some attending were not members, Bernard Lievegoed (NL) withdrew his contribution especially prepared for 'class members'. This raised questions about how to nurture relations with the School of Spiritual Science whilst opening up of biography work to the wider world.

This gathering was different, partly because, of 42 colleagues attending 32 came from Germany and Switzerland. Many missed the atmosphere of openness experienced in the 1st gathering, so some colleagues, including Albrecht Hemming (DE), Anita Charton (UK), Elaine Beadle (DE), Josien de Vries (NL) and Krista Braun (UK), decided to open up such gatherings to a wider world through the English language.

November 1990 - Goetheanum, Dornach Switzerland : Workshop ...

The 1st gathering was hosted by Michaela Glöckler (CH) and Gudrun Burkhard (BR) in the Medical Section of the School of Spiritual Science as a workshop for individuals, who are experienced in, and dedicated to, the development of biography work held in German. Prof. Dr. med. psych. Bernard Lievegoed (NL) was joined by 36 colleagues from 11 nations; the majority having been trained at the Netherlands Pedagogical Institute (NPI) or at the Centre for Social Development in the UK. Anita Charton (UK) and Josien de Vries (NL) reported on this gathering in the journals *Das Goetheanum* and *Merkurstab*.

Some two thirds of those who attended went on to nurture their professional connections with each other by attending and contributing to further conferences. As in the early years Michaela Glöckler (CH) and Gudrun Burkhard (BR) actively promoted a growing international biography movement, so also Anita Charton (CH), Christopher Bee (EU), Elaine Beadle (DE), Fumiko Chikami (JP), Joop Grün (CH), Josien de Vries (NL), Krista Braun (UK), Leo Beth (NL) and Rinke Visser (NL) promoted collaboration in the coordination of responsibility for maintaining continuity and organisation of these professional gatherings.

This rendering of a brief history of the development of the Worldwide Biography Conference has been compiled and maintained by Christopher Bee on behalf of respective conference organisation groups to serve continuity of experience between conferences (from 1990 to 1998 details were recorded in collaboration with Elaine Beadle (NZ), Josien de Vries (NL) and Anita Charton (CH)). Should anyone find error or omission, they are heartily invited to email the relevant information to admin@worldwidebiographyconference.com. 31.10.2022