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## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

**Welcome to** *RIAS*, the *Review of International American Studies*, the online journal of the International American Studies Association (IASA). IASA, which held its first conference in Leiden in 2003, is organized around the understanding that in the twenty-first century American Studies, however that term is defined, can be properly discussed only in a global perspective. Many different views have been put forward as to what 'America' should mean—country, continent, hemisphere?—but the one thing on which most people are agreed is that in an era of increasing global circulation the international dimensions of American Studies can no longer be ignored.

*RIAS*, which will be available free to all members of IASA, is designed to facilitate that conversation. National associations of American Studies continue to make very valuable contributions to the subject, but much of their focus is necessarily on matters close to home: the protection of local programs, safeguarding faculty positions, attempting to raise the subject's profile in often difficult circumstances, and so on. IASA, by contrast, offers the possibility of complementary or contrary perspectives which can expose practitioners of American Studies to intellectual outlooks very different from their own. This is not an 'export' model of American Studies, but one based upon the idea of reciprocal interaction, of mutual exchange and enlightenment. For academics based in North America or Europe, seeing how things appear from Australasia or Asia, Latin America or Africa, can often appear as a salutary corrective to the insularity of ideas often assumed, wrongly, to enjoy universal validity. From an ideological point of view, IASA might in this sense be said to be an almost deliberately incoherent organization, one that offers its members the prospect of finding their home-grown views colliding with others working from very different premises.

The purpose of *RIAS* is simply to enable and promote the wide circulation of different ideas, so as to achieve more of a global balance in the rapidly internationalizing field of American Studies. Many interesting topics have been discussed and debated recently on the IASA Executive Council e-mail discussion list, and we hope that *RIAS* will help to bring these and other important issues to the attention of a wider audience. We invite contributions, both in the form of short position papers on topics of general interest, or through notices of forthcoming conferences, calls for papers, observations on developments in scholarship in different parts of the world, and so on. The function of *RIAS*, as indeed of IASA in general, is to enhance channels of communication among scholars concerned with American Studies in different parts of the world, so as to enable the subject to grow and develop in ways that may not be visible to any of us at the present time. While *RIAS* has no preconceived academic agenda, it will of course depend crucially for its usefulness on the participation of scholars in many different parts of the world. We hope that this e-journal will become a network of global intellectual exchange in American Studies, and, to this end, we warmly welcome contributions from all quarters.

*Paul Giles*  
President, IASA