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ADVANCING THE BUSINESS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY GLOBALLY

## The Renaissance Of LESI Through Innovation: Let's Innovate For Good

By Audrey Yap, President, LES International



The bustling metropolis that is Singapore, a city state that never sleeps, was on pause due to COVID-19 from April. It is now slowly reviving as the country brings the pandemic under control and the 'circuit breaker' restrictions are gradually lifted. Shopfronts are reopening, streets are beginning to fill, restaurants are back in business, almost hesitantly yet with great relief as the infection numbers lower due to the imposition of safe distancing and health safety measures. The strange quiet of a deserted business district is now awakening to movement and life. This may sound familiar or a scene you anticipate depending on which stage of the cycle the city you live in is at.

It is a peculiar feeling to have constant media bombardment of escalating numbers of COVID-19 infections and be touched by the personal stories of those who suffer and heart breaking realities of those who succumbed. We remember those in healthcare on the frontlines, battling to save those they can whilst still struggling with unimaginable limitations themselves—lack of personal protective equipment and supplies—and having the painful responsibility of making life and death choices for patients. We read of job losses and dissolution of businesses, countries in recession as never seen before in decades.

These are difficult things to write about in a President's message, but in my mind necessary: this is our world today.

It has been 11 weeks since I was appointed President of LES International on May 19, 2020. I am writing this in late July as our September LES Global News goes to press. At the rapid rate at which things are changing, what I am now writing may be dated by the time you read this, but the current number of people infected worldwide now stands at over 17.4 million. On May 19, 2020, the daily infection rate was 95,898 and we thought it was horrific. By July 29th, the daily case rate had become 289,053. We all recognise that COVID-19 is a medical emergency with far-reaching economic implications. And these contours I describe of the new world are still just continuing to emerge, as we all struggle to plan in advance against events and movements we cannot truly predict.

No one knows how long the pandemic will last, how many waves of the disease there will be, and how widely and equitably distributed worldwide any cures and vaccines will be if and when they are found.

But we must hope.

We must use this collective experience to unify, and to support each other.

As LESI President, I ask myself, how do I serve in times like these?

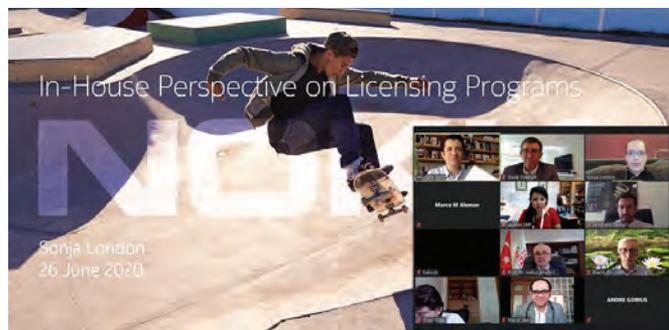
While I shared about the renaissance of LESI through innovation in my last message, I want to underscore in this edition of Global News that the Renaissance pushed forward the idea of humanism in business and this is all the more critical today, as ironically the pandemic is enforcing a reduction in direct human to human interaction, and promoting the acceleration of AI, digitalization, and e-commerce. While these are powerful tools, they can also be dehumanizing.

Remember that prior to the Renaissance, innovation was held back to the point of being prevented; but when innovation was freed, it generated progress and wealth. To quote the leading expert on the subject, Professor Piero Formica:

*"The spark of prosperity is characterized by discontinuity"*

Professor Formica wrote that the culture of the impossible is the hallmark of a renaissance. "Possible" is the equivalent of incremental change. Renaissance entrepreneurs by contrast are unreasonable people that "abandon the shore of today's opportunities" to sail into the "sea of absurdity" seeking business opportunities that will not become clear until long after the original perception.

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Webinar, "In-House Perspective On Licensing Programs" by Sonja London, Nokia Technologies, attended online by LES members in June.

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## Quick Links:

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## Call For Content

We request contributions from all societies and individuals about important events, changes in the law in your country or region, conferences, annual meetings, board changes, and the like from your society. You can submit articles or announcements to the editor or use the form on the website at the following address: [www.lesi.org/les-societies/les-global-news/submission-form](http://www.lesi.org/les-societies/les-global-news/submission-form).

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I love the idea of the pursuit of the impossible in this time, as I believe duress brings out human ingenuity.

*“Creativity is an input to innovation and change is the output from innovation”*—Brandon Kelley

With these ideas in mind, I sought to up our game at LESI and launched the **President’s “Let’s Innovate” challenge** on May 21, 2020, at the Committee leadership meeting. The challenge was to organize an online or virtual activity to further LESI’s objectives as reflected in each Committee’s mandate, and collaborate with another committee or national society to promote cohesiveness and cooperation. Innovation could be reflected in the theme or how it’s organized or an introduction of a new way to interact. I held two National Presidents Council Meetings on May 27, 2020, and July 1, 2020, with incredible participation and support displayed by the collective leadership of LES, including an average 26 national presidents out of our 33 chapters at each sitting joining and contributing to the LESI effort and plan globally.

I am delighted to report that in these past few weeks we have had more than 20 webinars organized, not including those held at the national level that we have not updated on our common calendars. Over 50 committee zoom meetings have been held and many LESI committees have submitted exciting action plans for the term, the results of which will be seen in the months ahead.

Due to constraints of time and space, I cannot write about all 20 webinars, but have set out below a few key highlights.

### Innovative Webinars

The webinar organized by the LESI CEEM (Chemical, Energy, Environment & Materials) Committee was remarkable as it not only brought together speakers from Australia, France, Thailand, USA and China, it covered industry sectors such as oil and gas, chemicals, mining, manufacturing and data analytics & IP expertise in a punchy lively session.



**LET'S INNOVATE!**

Another instructive seminar on July 2nd was very ably co-organized by LES South Africa, the Patent and Technology Licensing Committee and LESI on Cannabis—Regulatory and IP views, bringing together a national society and an LESI committee as well as the engagement of experts from Europe, Canada, South Africa and the USA. Special mention must be made of Madelein Kleyn who was instrumental in bringing this to us.

LES Asia Pacific Committee together with four ASEAN LES societies: LES Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand pushed forward the “WE are family” theme and organized a well-attended and well-received webinar on Mediation with WIPO that had participants across Asia and Europe logging on to participate.

I had the great pleasure of joining as a speaker and being part of the 10th Anniversary celebrations of LES Turkey. The theme of the online event was The Renaissance of Innovation (how wonderful!). After being welcomed by Murat Idal, President LES Turkey, we had a surprise performance by a leading Turkish opera singer. An innovative mix of arts and science! After that interlude of music, Professor Dr. Habib Asan, President of Turk Patent, led the presentations. We learned from Dr. Habib that Turkey is introducing a novel IP financing model and has a vibrant start up scene. This was followed by my talk, and those of Dr. Marco Aleman (Director Patent Law Division, WIPO) and Sonja London (President LES Scandinavia, and Director of Licensing of Nokia Technologies).

I also had the pleasure and privilege of providing welcome speeches to two amazing virtual events. The first was the regional online conference co-organized by LES Brazil and LESI Americas Committee held over six sessions in July and

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August. The theme “Licensing Success in the Changing Global Market” was well thought-out and covered a good range of IP topics from IP valuation to enhance corporate value to data protection, smart contracts, AI, as well as the circular economy. It even incorporated a Mock Panel for licensing! Karina Muller, President of LES Brazil also shared how LES Brazil is looking to organize activities supportive of practitioners and businesses in these challenging times beyond the intellectual but including also the emotional needs as well. Brava!

The other virtual event was the LES Japan Annual Meeting with the theme “Innovation for IP Activities after COVID-19.” It brought together experts from academia (Kyoto University and Tokyo University) as well as industry (Fujifilm, Suntory Holding, Canon and Honda Motor), and was attended by 150 participants. The keynote addressed the important need to overcome COVID-19 through international collaborative research.

In my speech, I shared that, in order to innovate so as to address the COVID-19 problems that are presented to enterprises and governments today, we can think in these important steps:

- 解決する (Kaiketsu-suru): Resolve, to address the challenges
- 弾力性 (Danryoku-sei): Build resilience
- 機敏 (Kibin): Agility, be agile
- 予定 (Yotei): Plan

Resilience and agility would involve reducing costs and stabilizing supply chains, focus on transformation to engage opportunities; plan to embrace the virtual world, reimagining the new normal or reinventing ourselves, including digitalization or telecommuting and other innovative solutions.

In this, I highlighted that Suntory, an active supporter of LES Japan, has been producing neutral alcohol to distribute to hospitals as a disinfectant and Beam Suntory has been producing hand sanitizers and donating these to first responders and medical professionals in Kentucky and Chicago in the USA. This example underscores that a crisis can bring us together to innovate for good and across boundaries. Even though we are physically apart, we are joining hands across the world. And this is so encouraging and in keeping with my presidential theme of Let’s Innovate.

### **les Nouvelles Live!**

My report would not be complete if I did not mention our very innovative interactive new LES pilot event called “*les Nouvelles LIVE!*” organized in collaboration with the EPO and the LESI High Growth Enterprise (HGE) Task Force.

In celebration of our special joint LESI-EPO edition published in June 2020, we hosted a launch event where our wonderful Editor David Drews and the authors/contributors of articles in this edition came online to share about their writing journey, their motivations and experiences leading to their very practical perspectives and recommendations allowing readers for the first time to see and hear from authors first hand. Our very able moderator for the session was Dana, our Executive Director. It was a convincing case of establishing that this was a “must read” publication and a real keeper, given the invaluable insights on High Growth Technology businesses and the conference that inspired it (HTBC). In my mind this was an outstanding effort.

### **Tripartite Memorandum Of Understanding**

It is my great pleasure to announce and share with you that LESI on July 24, 2020, signed an MOU with the University of Padua’s Tech Transfer Office-UNISMART, LES Italy, and Commax Venturus Ltd, a Korean start-up accelerator, to collaborate to exchange best practices, organize delegations and workshops to promote cultural exchanges and innovation with LESI as a key knowledge partner. The fields of focus will include ICT, AI, the Internet of Things, Industry 4.0 technologies, Fintech and Life Sciences.

It warms my heart to know in these times the spirit of enterprise and endeavour pushes through and the desire to continue to collaborate amidst a pandemic emphasizes the human resolve to prevail.

### **Closing**

As they say, struggles can have beautiful results, like the butterfly that emerges from a cocoon in which it has been through significant agitation physically in order to transform.

The pandemic reminds us of the continual indomitable quest for survival in nature that for a long time now mankind has taken for granted. Whilst we have seen some countries retreating into their nationalistic core, interestingly and as never before this shared pain has also resulted in a surge of empathy worldwide.

I believe as seen in the activities across the globe in LESI that empathy will bind our efforts to stay relevant in the world. Together we have built for a shared future before and together we will build again.

I will call on this international family of national societies that is LESI to stand in solidarity to share resources, open your doors and in this way provide for our collective well-being together. This is why I am so encouraged by the enhanced interaction and inclusivity I see, the heightened interest to engage with each other in as many ways possible and the camaraderie we have shown in spite of the times.

Let us innovate to be a catalyst for positive change and cultivate a greater compassion for each other. I want to look back and be able to say, “The pandemic brought out the best in LESI, not just by what we said, but what we did.”

Carry on LESI! Let’s Innovate!

**Audrey Yap**



Participants in the new LES pilot event called “*les Nouvelles LIVE!*” organized in collaboration with the EPO and the LESI High Growth Enterprise (HGE) Task Force.