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### **7th Independent Learning Association Conference in Wuhan, China, 4-7 November 2016: Foreword**

Moira Hobbs, Unitec Institute of Technology, New Zealand

Kerstin Dofs, Ara Institute of Canterbury, New Zealand

Corresponding authors: [mhobbs@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:mhobbs@unitec.ac.nz) /  
[Kerstin.Dofs@ara.ac.nz](mailto:Kerstin.Dofs@ara.ac.nz)

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Conference Delegates, 7th Independent Learning Association (ILA) conference, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China

Huazhong University of Science and Technology were delighted to be selected to host this 7th Independent Learning Association (ILA) conference, as it was the first time they had held a full independent learning conference in China. They were awarded the rights to host this conference following the Independent Learning Association Conference held in Bangkok two years previously. It was also very exciting for many of the other European, Middle Eastern, Asian and Australasian delegates to be warmly welcomed to China and to share some experiences of Chinese culture, including academic, social, historical, artistic and culinary aspects.

Both the editors of this special edition of *SISAL* (Kerstin Dofs and Moira Hobbs) helped the conference organisers by inviting an excellent selection of international keynote speakers to the conference. These were Andy Gao, Phil Benson, Sara Cotterall, Lawrence Zhang and Garold Murray.

Throughout the conference, they also contributed with several major tasks:

1. **Before:** Giving the welcoming speech at the opening ceremony on behalf of ILA, which we did bilingually in Mandarin (Moira, with assistance from her Mandarin teacher) and in English (Kerstin)
2. **During:** Organising and running a separate symposium included within the whole conference. The presenters were Self-Access Learning Centre managers and professionals from around the world who we invited to participate: Maria Giovanna Tassinari (Berlin), Phil Benson (Sydney), Garold Murray (Okayama), Jo Mynard & Rob Stevenson (Chiba), David Gardner (Hong Kong), Katherine Thornton (Osaka), plus Moira and Kerstin (Auckland & Christchurch)
3. **After:** Recap of the conference and a closing address to all participants and attendees. During the closing ceremony, it was announced that the next ILA conference is to be hosted in Kobe, Japan in 2018.

The series of articles included in this special issue have been contributed by some of the presenters who shared their findings at the SAC Manager's symposium, and the overall conference plenary sessions.



Kerstin Dofs and Moira Hobbs Giving the Closing Speech