

CONFERENCE REPORT

## MBAA International Annual Conference 2017

CARA CADENA

Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan, United States

### About MBAA International

MBAA International is an academic organization that is comprised of twelve formal organizations. A small group of professors formed the group in 1964 as the Midwest Business Administration Association. The group has since shortened the name to MBAA International, since “Midwest” inaccurately describes its membership. Attendees represent all 50 states and dozens of countries. In fact, this year’s international business track (one of 13 tracks) alone had registrants from Turkey, China, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and the Netherlands, making it a truly international and multidisciplinary conference experience. The MBAA Annual Conference takes place each spring in downtown Chicago at the Palmer House hotel—where it has been for the last 53 years.

One of MBAA’s member organizations is the Academy of International Business - U.S. Midwest Chapter, which is also a member chapter of the Academy of International Business (AIB), an organization that fosters research in international business. Research is produced primarily by business educators, practitioners, and scholars, and is disseminated via the *Journal of International Business Research and Practice (JIBRP)*, as well as professional conferences like MBAA International. AIB hosts an annual conference each year, rotating among international locations. The 2017 annual conference was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, July 2-5.

### MBAA International Annual Conference 2017

Chicago, Illinois

March 22-24

<https://mbainternational.org/annual-conference>

### Nature of the conference

The three-day event begins with business meetings and receptions, followed by two days of program sessions led primarily by business faculty in 13 business-related tracks, from accounting to case research and operations management. Entertainment is provided both nights, giving attendees ample time to network and mingle. The themes this year were “Choosing the right tools for the job: Educators providing good options,” and “Publishing: Practical help for publishing success.” As has been the case in recent years, attendance has been increasing steadily. Attendance for the 2017 meeting in Chicago was nearly 900, growing by almost 100 over the previous year.

### Participating in the conference

MBAA International has designed a unique submission process that sets up its participants for success. Prospective program presenters must submit full-length research papers for review. If accepted, the authors are asked to present their research at the conference and solicit feedback from attendees. After the conference, authors are given the opportunity to incorporate the feedback from

the conference into a revised draft and submit to the *Journal of International Business Research and Practice*, a scholarly refereed journal, for publication. The amount of learning that takes place from start to finish is unparalleled, not to mention the friendships that result from spending three days with such a supportive group of devoted educators.

## **Innovation**

Innovation was a popular theme throughout the international business presentations. Paul Lane, a marketing professor from Grand Valley State University, presented on his experiences in Nicaragua. Lane helped educators use design thinking concepts to foster innovation at their schools. In his presentation, he emphasized the importance of recognizing the key influencers within communities and understanding the power structures in order to make innovation possible. He explained the Quintuple Helix innovation model, , in helping cultures to innovate appropriately (Carayannis, Barth, and Campbell, 2012). The Quintuple Helix innovation model considers the natural environments of society as driving forces for production and innovation. Lane works with the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast.

Lane practices these concepts with his marketing students by collaborating across disciplines to help students spark their creativity while showcasing their disciplinary expertise. Recently he teamed up with engineering and design faculty to develop a case study (Lane & Farris, 2016). Business students worked with engineering and design students to solve a problem for a real-world corporate client. This opportunity gave both students and faculty a chance to combine their very different approaches and perspectives and learn from each other, all while cultivating the global mindset necessary for the 21st century businessperson.

## **International business and information literacy**

Grand Valley State University management professor Mike Ricco and faculty librarian Cara Cadena presented a paper on their team-teaching approach in two international business courses: International Management and Multinational Corporations (MGT 466), and Global Competitiveness (BUS 671). Cadena visited both classes throughout two semesters to discuss information literacy concepts, with added emphasis on the authority of information and evaluating online information. Cadena was also added as a teaching assistant to the course's learning management system (Blackboard) site, where she could add timely suggestions and research tips for upcoming assignments. She added a "library resources" content area with helpful videos and links to recommended resources, along with an "ask the librarian" discussion thread for questions.

Ricco and Cadena tested students on international business and information literacy concepts at the beginning and end of the semesters and noticed significant improvement in their ability to judge the quality of information and to decipher different types of sources. Cadena also analyzed the bibliographies of each group's final projects and compared them to the bibliographies from a control group. There was a drastic increase in both the number of sources used and the number of peer-reviewed sources. In addition, test students used many of the websites recommended by Ricco and Cadena for their final project research.

Cadena was the only librarian in attendance at MBAA International and was warmly welcomed by attendees and organizers. The idea to collaborate or team-teach with a librarian was new to many in the audience. Many viewed this as a real innovative idea and sought to replicate it at their institution. The presentation is available at: <https://works.bepress.com/cara-cadena/2/>.

### **Practical help for publishing success and feedback**

This year's conference piloted a paper development workshop, led by AIB fellow Masaaki Kotabe from Temple University. Participants were invited to workshop their draft manuscripts of research in progress and receive feedback from Kotabe and conference attendees. Kotabe explained his four criteria for good research in international business: (1) emerging issues, (2) theoretically sound, (3) managerially relevant, and (4) darn interesting. He lectured about the concern that fewer interesting research questions exist and encouraged the audience to apply their research to public policy for new relevance. It is highly likely this workshop will continue each year, as it was very well received and worthwhile.

As has been the intent of the organizers more than 50 years ago, the MBAA International meeting was about giving and receiving feedback for the papers presented at the conference. The collaborative culture worked well for everyone involved. It was refreshing to attend a conference where the audience was actively involved in each presentation. At least one member of a submitting party must be a member of AIB to propose a program. Next year's conference will be held April 18-20 at the Palmer House in Chicago. While the focus of my participation has been information literacy, it is clear to me that a business librarian can benefit a great deal by presenting and attending the same conferences where the business faculty are working. This is a tremendous opportunity to connect with faculty both in the classroom and in scholarship.

### **References**

- Carayannis, E.G., Barth, T.D., & Campbell, D. (2012). The quintuple helix innovation model: Global warming as a challenge and driver for innovation. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (1)2. Retrieved from <https://innovation-entrepreneurship.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/2192-5372-1-2>
- Lane, P. & Farris, J. (2016). Experimenting with course design and discipline integration in an applied environment. *Business Education Innovation Journal* (8)2.