

From: Sylle Arvidieu

1. What is your take on there being several memory associations presenting themselves as being global? Where does the IAM fit in?

Obviously it would be best to have everybody united in one association, and so that's something we need to work on. The IAM has taken a step in the right direction with these elections, and I'm sure the new board will make a point of listening to everybody's point of view, bringing more people in, and peacefully unifying any divisions.

But the main point that we need to remember is that memory competitions are fun! It doesn't really matter who's organising the things, as long as there are opportunities for everyone to test their memories against the best in the world! So the best contribution the IAM can make is to ensure there are plenty of memory competitions, and an online community that makes the whole thing fun for all of us.

2. What would be your top two ideas to help broaden the memory competitor base?

Some of my other answers cover this subject as well, so please also see my replies below about online videos, children's competitions and friendly championships, but point 1 – a really great website that people can come to even if they know nothing about memory competitions, and learn everything they need to know. All the basics, laid out in a way that makes sense and gives newcomers the chance to practice and come together online and offline for training and competitions. And point 2 – we first need to broaden the arbiter base! Even if the capacity for electronic recall expands, reducing the need to manually mark people's papers, there will always be a need for non-competitors to help out at championships. We need a strategy for recruiting volunteers and getting them excited about the events as part of the wider focus on expanding the community.

From: Lynne Kelly

3. Some motivation letters referred to the value of memory sports for education and implied a role for IAM extending beyond sports to promoting the broad benefits of memory training. Do you see this as a role for IAM? If so, to what extent?

I'm well known for my attitude to this kind of thing – I see memory sports as a separate entity from any educational benefit of memory training, and the competitions shouldn't be seen as a sideshow to an unrelated project in education. But that doesn't mean the IAM can't do both! As long as they're not seen as being intrinsically the same thing (because it simply isn't true that the same techniques we use to memorise a pack of cards can be used to pass exams), IAM people who can help with education and learning should have their own department of the wider association that focuses on that side of things. It is, after all, called the International Association of Memory, not just of Memory Sports.

4. Some motivation letters talked about the high entry level into the sport. Can you point to some successful efforts in that field and / or ideas you have for making it more accessible?

I think there need to be more small, local, friendly championships and events. Everybody should be encouraged to find a room and host a little competition. Even if it only brings in two or three people, every little helps! Personally, I've always found that newcomers do love to meet the top-level competitors, but they also like to meet other beginners and develop rivalries with someone on the same kind of level. The more competitions there are, the more chance people have to compete against people at all levels.

From: Kelly Knight

5. What is your approach to bringing new members, especially young ones, into the sport?

Germany has a longstanding tradition of children's competitions, with different rules and standards to make it easier for young people to get into memory sports. Because it's historically been a little bit 'unofficial', it's never really spread outside Germany, but there's no reason the IAM shouldn't push this format internationally and encourage people to take it up. For example, the kids Braden brought into the championship in Canada would probably love a German-style kids' competition, the USA has a history of school teams coming to the unique-format US Championship, plenty of other countries would be sure to get on board too. Let's make it a priority to look at the rules, see if there are a few tweaks and changes people want us to make, and get the next generation of world memory champions into the sport!

Secondly, let's get on YouTube! We've had a few very nice videos made at memory competitions in the past, but I think it needs to be something that's done at every competition – all it takes is someone going around with a camera, interviewing the people there and throwing in a few graphics about scores and standings. If we have a regular channel of memory-themed updates, that's something that would bring in a flood of new fans and competitors.

From: Florian Minges

6. What is your opinion on the ongoing digitalisation of memory sports? Yay or Nay? Why?

That gets a definite Yay from me. Let's face it, memory competitions were originally done with pen and paper just because there was no other way to do it. In the modern world, there's absolutely no reason not to use electronic enhancements if possible. There will always be a place for 'traditional' memory and recall, in small friendly competitions – and the tradition of physical speed cards is always going to be a cool spectator sport – but if it's possible to do things on computers, then we should be doing them on computers now.

7. The IAM is currently looking for a host for the IAM World Memory Championship 2019. The DL for applications is the 7th of December (so before your answers to these questions will be published). What do you think about the feasibility of organising an IAM World Memory Championship in your country, either next year or sometime in the future? What are the the biggest obstacles? Is there anything that could be done or changed to make it easier / more convenient in order for someone to host it in your country?

Some people have unreasonable expectations about money that have scared off potential sponsors and organisers in the past – let's set up a standard list of requirements for a world championship, and treat anything else on top of that as a nice bonus. The ideal world championship would make it possible for everyone around the world to attend as cheaply and easily as possible, so things like visa requirements and ease of access by public transportation should be considered. I think Britain would be a good venue, if we can find the right people and the right place – it's certainly something I'll look into.

8. The memory sports community has many dedicated volunteers who are contributing to it in many different ways, both internationally and nationally. If you could highlight one such person today (who is not also running for the IAM International Board right now), who would it be, and why?

There are so many people (including the one who asked this question!) who I could highlight, that it doesn't really seem right to focus on one. So with that in mind, let me highlight Simon Orton here – as a pioneer of online memory competitions and creator of the Memory League system, not to mention the original creator of the statistics website and a partner in the Art of Memory website, he's repeatedly helped develop 'memory sport' into new areas that had never been done before. To keep things moving onwards and upwards, it's vital to have people with ideas and ability to come up with new things! Simon's a shining example of the many volunteers you mention, who have given countless hours of their time just for the fun of it!

From: Anonymous

9. How do you consider your own potential contribution to the board to be unique, compared to the other candidates?

I do have the widest range of experience of memory sports, in competing and organising, but above all I think I have the advantage that memory people all around the world tend to know who I am and think I'm great. As long as the other board members are capable of doing great things with the IAM, and thus preventing these people from realising that I'm not all that great after all, the 'name recognition' factor that I bring to the board could be a big help in uniting the memory people of the world in working together for our common interests! Also, I don't take things too seriously...

