

The Humorous Times

Newsletter of the International Society for Humor Studies

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Ralph Mueller, Editor

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Association news

2007 ISHS Presidential and Board Elections

During the current American Presidential primaries, an old joke has reappeared that starts with the question: "What do you think: Who will they elect for President?" In the case of ISHS, the answer to this question would be, "I don't know, probably again some humor scholar."

This past Fall, ISHS had its own Presidential election, and, yes, a humor scholar was elected again. With 105 returned ballots, Christie Davies (Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Reading) received the majority of the votes cast, and he will serve as ISHS President through December 31, 2009. Sven Svebak (Norwegian University of Science & Technology) and Martin Führ (Danish School of Education—Aarhus University) serve on the ISHS Board through December 2011. Our best wishes to the new President and the new Board members.

Message from the New President

Christie Davies, University of Reading, United Kingdom

It is an honor for me to be elected to serve as president of ISHS for the next two years. I am very conscious of how much is owed to the good work put in by my predecessors Rod Martin and John Morreall, and we all know how much the Society depends on the skills and personal qualities of our executive secretary Martin Lampert. I will be relying very much on their advice and support. We also have a strong committee and editorial board and I look forward to working with these valued colleagues, many of whom I have known for a long time. Some of them were once emerging scholars but are now well and truly emerged.

We have come a long way. In 1976 at the time of the first international conference on humor not only were humor scholars fewer in number but also we did not know one another. Yet today in large measure thanks to ISHS, to our journal and to our annual conferences we form a community drawn from many disciplines and many countries and yet regularly in contact by email. Just as noteworthy is the way young scholars, including students, who have found us through the ISHS website, do not hesitate to contact us to ask for advice.

There was a time when the mass media saw humor scholars mainly as a subject for humor and had as their favorite picture delegates at an ISHS conference falling asleep on a hot day while listening to a lecture on humor. Now documentary makers in particular recognize our contribution to the understanding of humor as being valuable and constructive and both consult us and incorporate interviews with us into their filming. We have indeed come a long way.

There is, though, still much to do. Some disciplines and countries are very well represented in our membership but others only thinly. There is a great deal of collaborative work going on but there can be more.

Our last two conferences at the Danish University of Education in Copenhagen and at Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island, were extremely rewarding and I am greatly looking forward to seeing you all at our next meeting in the University of Alcalá, in Alcalá de Henares, the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quijote de La Mancha*.



For more ISHS news, visit us on the web at www.humorstudies.org.

Outgoing President's Remarks

Rod Martin, University of Western Ontario, Canada

I greatly enjoyed my two years as President of ISHS. I must say that my job was made easy by our capable Executive Secretary, Martin Lampert, who always kept me on the ball with his excellent organizational skills, efficiency, and timely attention to details. All of us in ISHS can be very grateful for such a dedicated and accomplished leader who keeps the organization going. The highlights of these two years for me were two very enjoyable and highly successful conferences, one at the Danish University of Education in Copenhagen, and the other at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island. I want to thank Martin Führ and Hans Vejleskov and the many people who assisted them for all their hard work in organizing the wonderful conference in Copenhagen. I also want to express my heartfelt appreciation to Margaret Mathias and her hard-working assistants for the excellent conference in Newport. I have many fond memories of both those events, including the interesting plenary and paper sessions, stimulating conversations with many colleagues, and unforgettable sight-seeing excursions in two very beautiful cities.

Another particularly enjoyable aspect of my tenure as President throughout the two years was the numerous contacts I had with people from all over the world, including many of the members of ISHS; students and academics from various disciplines seeking guidance in getting into humor research; and numerous journalists wishing to report on recent humor research in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television around the world. These conversations have made me even more aware of how much interest there is in humor scholarship, both among the general public and in academia. With membership in ISHS higher than we have seen in years, and interest in the topic continuing to grow, we can look forward to even more interesting discoveries and insights in this fascinating and multifaceted field. I now pass the torch to my worthy successor, Christie Davies, and I wish him all the best during the coming two years.

20th ISHS Conference 2008



20th International Society for Humor Studies Conference

University of Alcalá, Alcalá de Henares, Spain, July 7 to July 11, 2008

As part of its 500th anniversary celebration, the University of Alcalá will host the 20th annual conference of the International Society for Humor Studies. The University, first opened in 1508, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is located just 30 kilometers outside of Madrid, Spain. This year's Conference promises a rich and interesting program, and will include plenary presentations from our new President, Christie Davies, and Alice M. Isen (Cornell University), who has completed research on laughter and positive emotions. In addition to the plenary addresses and paper sessions, the University of Alcalá, will offer a breath-taking cultural and social program, including an exhibition of *The Best World Press Cartoon, 2007*.

The Conference is open to ISHS members and to all others with an interest in humor research. Registration fees before March 20 are €175 for ISHS Members, €225 for Non-members, and €150 for students. After March 20, fees increase by €75. Registration, housing, and paper submission information are available online at www.20ishs.fgua.es.

Reduced registration fee deadline is March 20, 2008.

Paper proposal deadline is April 25, 2008.

All proposals should be submitted through the Conference website. Requests for additional information can be sent to: Technical Secretariat, 20th ISHS Conference, Fundación General de la Universidad de Alcalá, Departamento de Formación y Congresos, C/ Imagen 1-3, 28801 Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain. Correspondence can also be sent online to 20ishs@fgua.es. In order to send abstracts or gain greater access to information you will need to pre-register by selecting the *Login* option on the menu, and then *Preregistration* (actual registration for the conference is a separate process).



**For Conference registration, accommodations, and paper submissions,
visit the Conference website at www.humor.fgua.es/20ISHS.**

Upcoming Events

8th International Summer School and Symposium on Humor and Laughter

University of Galati, Romania, June 23 to June 28, 2008

The 8th International Summer School and Symposium on Humor and Laughter will take place at the University of Galati in Galati, Romania. ISHS Members receive a discount on Summer School registration, and the fees for ISHS members are £300 GBP before March 20 and £350 GBP after March 20, 2008.

Reduced registration fee deadline is March 20, 2008.

As in past years, the 2008 Summer School is designed to provide students and established investigators an opportunity to develop a stronger understanding of the existing theoretical and methodological issues related to the scientific study of humor. The Summer School also includes a concluding symposium in which participants present their own work. You can obtain Summer School information, read this summer's program, and see a list of planned speakers on the Internet at

<http://www.humoursummerschool.org/08/index.html>

For additional information and help with registration, you can contact this year's organizers, Diana Popa (University of Galati) and Willibald Ruch (University of Zurich) at organiser08@humoursummerschool.org. If you do plan to register, do so early as the number of participants is limited.

Conference on Humor in Romance Literature

Hofstra University, Hemstead, New York, April 10-12, 2008

The Hofstra Cultural Center will hold a conference on Humor in Romance Languages Literature, entitled *At Whom Are We Laughing?* from Thursday, April 10 to Saturday, April 12, 2008. Conference contributions will look at literary humor within seven different language paradigms (Catalan, French, Galician, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, and Spanish). The program, available on the Internet at www.hofstra.edu/pdf/Community/culctr/culctr_regprog_humor.pdf, features several ISHS members.

Emotions behind Smiles and Laughter: From Facial Expression to Literary Descriptions

University of Bologna, May 19 and 20, 2008

Paolo Santangelo, Professor of History of East Asia at the University La Sapienza, Rome, will host a conference on the representations of emotions. This meeting will focus on humor-related manifestations of emotion, such as smiling, laughter, giggling, chuckling etc., both from their representation in East Asian cultures and in experimental psychological studies. The number of participants is limited.

Recent Events

13th Invitational Colloquium of the Australasian Humour Scholars Network (AHSN)

From Jessica Milner Davis, Univ. of New South Wales, Australia

The 2008 AHSN Colloquium, "Boundaries and Borders of Humour", was held at Women's College, University of Sydney, February 16 and 17, 2008. Dr Jessica Milner Davis (School of Letters, Art and Media, University of Sydney) convened this year's colloquium.

The program included four plenary sessions with special focus on cross-cultural issues: obscenity and humor from Aristophanes, Japanese stand-up comedy and in New Zealand penis-injury jokes; recent Australian research in the psychology of humor (including into religious fundamentalism and attitudes to humor); aspects of Australian comedy and history of art and cartooning; and Islam and humor. The Colloquium also included a post-graduate section on humour research which included presentations from six doctoral candidates and an MA research student on topics from linguistics, psychology, marketing, meta-fiction and art history.

Humor in the News

New Humor Research Center at Kansai University, Japan

From Till Weingärtner, Free University of Berlin, Germany

The Kansai University in Osaka, Japan, promises to develop more and more into a center of laughter and humor research. At the beginning of February, the university announced its plans for the opening of a new institute for cultural health research in 2010. The new institute will introduce three subjects to study and research, one of them being the “Humor Science Major.”

To help promote humor research, a symposium was held under the direction of Prof. Yoji Kimura on February 22nd. During the symposium Prof. Kimura presented his newly developed machine which can chart out laughter by attaching sensors to a subject and using the new unit of “aH” to measure funniness. To demonstrate the possibilities of this new machine, two comedians were invited to perform in front of test subjects, and the comedians received a shock when they were shown the machine’s results of their awful routine. Professor Kimura believes that by using this method, researchers will promote scientific research on laughter, for example, verifying its effects on health. He also believes that the machine will also be able to tell how funny somebody believes a joke really is, no matter how much, or how little, he pretends to laugh.

Member News

New Academic Positions

Villy Tsakona is now Adjunct Lecturer in the University of Athens and the University of Ioannina, Greece, where she is teaching pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and lexicography. Her new affiliations are: Faculty of English Studies, School of Philosophy, Univ. of Athens, Panepistimioupoli, Zographou 157 84; and: Dept. of Philology, School of Philosophy, University of Ioannina, Panepistimioupoli, Ioannina 451 10.

New Books

Chris Lamb, illustrated by Steve Stegelin: *I'll Be Sober in the Morning: Great Political Comebacks, Putdowns and Ripostes*. Charleston: Frontline Press, 2007.

Politicians have been slinging barbs at one another, at reporters, hecklers and critics for at least 2,500 years, as I'll Be Sober in the Morning documents. There are nearly 200 comebacks, putdowns and ripostes in this little book.

Contributions and Submissions

Next issue is due in late Spring 2008. Please send information, contributions and announcements to ralph.mueller@unifr.ch.