

The Humorous Times

Newsletter of the International Society for Humor Studies

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Ralph Mueller, Editor

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Association News

2009 ISHS Presidential and Board Elections

In Fall 2009, the Society held its biennial Board elections. With 109 returned ballots, Elliott Oring (California State University, Los Angeles) received the majority of the votes cast for ISHS President. He will serve as ISHS President through December 31, 2011. Laura Chao-Chih Liao (National Chiayi University, Taiwan) and Andrea Samson (Stanford University, USA) were elected as ISHS Board Members-at-large and will serve through December 2013. We thank Christie Davies (University of Reading, United Kingdom) for his service as ISHS President for 2008 and 2009 and Lorene Birden (University of Dijon, France) and Wladislaw Chlopiki for their roles as ISHS Board Members from January 2006 through 2009. Our best wishes to the new ISHS President and Board members.

Message from the New President

From Elliott Oring, California State University Los Angeles



I am honored to have been elected as the new president of ISHS. I would like to thank the past-president Christie Davies for his stewardship of the Society over the past two years and for his support during my term of office. The most important officer in the Society is not president, however, but executive secretary. The executive secretary not only directs the operations of the organization on a day-to-day basis, but provides the continuity essential to its functioning. It is the executive secretary that keeps the president and other members of the board on task, alert to goals previously set, and continuing efforts previously initiated. It is fortunate for the ISHS that Martin Lampert holds this critical administrative position.

My goal as president, as of previous presidents, is to help shape policy that will support the excellence of ISHS publications and conferences and maintain the good reputation of humor studies in general. However, the landscape of the academy and of scholarship in which the ISHS must operate is changing. Support for the administration of scholarly organizations and their journals is not what it once was. Universities only support journal editorships reluctantly, if they support them at all. Organizational work on behalf of scholarly societies is rarely viewed by university committees as fulfilling the service requirements requisite for tenure, promotion, and merit awards. Libraries no longer routinely purchase hard copies of scholarly journals. More and more, the dissemination of scholarly research is moving to online, open source publication and listserv exchange. The ISHS board and the membership need to be alert to, and even anticipate, changes in the research, publishing, and academic environment. It is the job of the ISHS board to ensure that contributions to humor research come from scholars in a wide range of disciplines, that these scholars are able to exchange information and ideas easily, that enthusiasm and debate continue to be generated, and that humor research is respected by academic institutions and granting agencies everywhere. To accomplish this task, the ISHS will have to strengthen itself structurally, financially, and politically to meet the challenges of the future.

Message from the 2008-09 President

From Christie Davies, University of Reading, UK



After two worthwhile years as ISHS President, I am now passing the sceptre of office to my successor Elliott Oring, an outstanding scholar and one in whom we can place our confidence. It is a propitious time for our discipline but not for the world economy so I wish him luck as well as success.

We have had two excellent humour conferences, in the Universidad de Alcalá Spain, birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes in 2008 and in California State University, Long Beach in 2009 where I am sure someone humorous must have been born. I wish to thank all those involved in the work of organizing them for their efforts. To organize a conference at all is a mighty task but to organize a very successful one is a real achievement and we have had two good ones in a row. We can now look forward to the next ISHS conferences in Hong Kong, in Boston, USA, and in Kraków in Poland. This is also a good place to congratulate our colleagues, who have been organizing the annual International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter and in its tenth year very appropriately returning to Willibald Ruch's department in the University of Zurich.

My work as President was made both possible and congenial by our executive secretary Martin Lampert, an efficient and effective master of detail and a good judge of situations. Thanks to Leverhulme I was lucky enough to be working on my research in libraries and archives in the Bay Area in both Spring 2008 and again in Spring 2009 and this gave me the opportunity to work directly with Martin, a very pleasant supplement to the emails that he and all the committee have been exchanging. The work of the committee members and the editors of *Humor, International Journal of Humor Research* has also been invaluable and they too deserve our thanks and appreciation.



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

2010 ISHS Conference

22nd ISHS Conference

City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, June 24-27, 2010



The 2010 ISHS Conference will be held from June 24 to June 27, 2010, at the City University of Hong Kong (CityU), which is located under the Lion Rock in Hong Kong. Conference convener Xiaodong Yue (City University of Hong Kong) and his organizational team have established an internet site for the Conference at <http://ssteach4.ss.cityu.edu.hk/~ishs2010>. The website provides information on accommodations, touring and shopping opportunities, and the preliminary conference program. Registration information is available online at <http://ssteach4.ss.cityu.edu.hk/~ishs2010/Registration.htm>

Recent Events

16th Colloquium of the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN)

Women's College in the University of Sydney, February 13 and 14, 2010

From Jessica Milner Davis, University of Sydney

The Australasian Humour Studies Network <http://www.usyd.edu.au/humourstudies> held its 16th Colloquium on "Risk-Taking and Transgression in Humour" at the University of Sydney on 13-14 February 2010.

The colloquium offered a wide selection of papers presented in the Post-Graduate section, and a special panel on "Humor and the Law" (Prof Laura E. Little, Beasley School of Law at Temple University, Philadelphia; Dr David Rolph, School of Law, Sydney University). The next Colloquium will be held at the University of Tasmania in Hobart 19-20 February 2011. For more information, please visit the web-site.

Upcoming Events

10th International Summer School on Humour and Laughter

University of Zurich, Switzerland, July 5-10, 2010

The next International Summer School and Symposium on Humor and Laughter will take place at the University of Zurich in Switzerland from July 5 to July 10, 2010. The International Summer Schools are intended to provide students and established investigators planning research projects on humor an opportunity to develop a strong foundation on the existing theoretical and methodological issues related to the scientific study of humor. For more information on the 2010 Summer School, contact Willibald Ruch at w.ruch@psychologie.uzh.ch. For information on future and previous International Summer Schools, visit the Summer School homepage at <http://www.humoursummerschool.org/>.

53rd Conference on the Positive Power of Humor and Creativity

Silver Bay, New York, August June 11-13, 2010

The Humor Project celebrates its 53rd International Program on the Positive Power of Humor and Creativity at the Silver Bay Conference in Silver Bay, New York. This year's keynote speakers will include best-selling author and Will Rogers Humanitarian Award recipient, Jeffrey Zaslow, who will talk on *Living Life with Love, Joy, Passion, Creativity, and Humor*, and Playfair founder, Matt Weinstein, who will present on the *Ultimate Icebreakers for Teachers, Trainers, Speakers, and Leaders*. For details, visit the Humor Project website at www.humorproject.com.

Interdisciplinary Humour Conference: "San Zen Che Ride"

San Zeno di Montagna, Verona, Italy, August 26-28 2010

This conference will focus on the social perception of humor in multilingual contexts with contributions from the areas of pragmatics, literature, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, cultural anthropology, and education. In particular, papers will focus on (1) the multilingual and multicultural contexts of humor, (2) humor as identity, and self-expression, and (3) the role of humor in the implicit and explicit socialization of attitudes and values.

Invited Plenary Speakers will include Giovannantonio Forabosco (Ravenna, Italy), Delia Carmela Chiaro (Bologna, Italy), Giampaolo Marchi (Verona, Italy), Anthony Mollica (Toronto, Canada), Piotr Cap (Lodz, Poland); Danica Škara (Split, Croatia); Marta Dynel (Lodz, Poland); László Imre Komlósi (Pécs, Hungary). A preliminary program is available on the Internet at <http://www.sanzencheride.it>. For more information, contact Giampaolo Poletto at g.poletto@yahoo.it.

Humour in the Media: Voicing Agendas, Communicating Laughter

*Seminar at the 2010 European Society for the Study of English Conference
Torino, Italy, August 24-28, 2010*

From cartoons and comic strips, through internet gags and humorous adverts, to sitcoms and funny remarks in editorials and opinion articles, the media thrive in linguistic manifestations of humour. Whether or not it serves as a playful distraction, a selling strategy, or an instrument to make a point, attack indirectly or voice the unspeakable, humour in the media deserves attention both as a discourse device and a sociolinguistic phenomenon. This seminar includes papers that look into the various roles humour plays in print and audiovisual media, as well as the forms it takes, the purposes it serves, the butts it targets, the implications it carries and the differences it may assume across cultures. For more information, contact the seminar convenors: Isabel Cristina Costa Alves Ermida (University of Minho, Portugal) at iermida@ilch.uminho.pt or Jan Chovanec (Masaryk University, Czech Republic) chovanec@phil.muni.cz.

Twelfth Luso-Hispanic Humor Studies Conference (Call for Papers)

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, October 21-23, 2010

The International Society for Luso-Hispanic Humor Studies announces the call for papers for its 12th Annual Conference and invites paper and panel proposals on any aspect of Luso-Hispanic humor. Proposal abstracts should not exceed one page, and may be submitted in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. Abstracts should be sent to islhs@umn.edu by the proposal deadline of May 30, 2010. For further information, please contact Dr. Paul Seaver at pseaver@axs2000.net, or Dr. Alita Kelley at kak7@psu.edu.

Humor in the News

Social Networks in Humor Research – Boon or Bane?

From Ralph Mueller, University of Fribourg, Switzerland



Have you recently been invited to join a social forum such as *facebook*, *LinkedIn* or any other substitute for direct social contact? Do you regularly count your “followers” on *academia.edu* or your “friends” on *facebook*? Then you may belong to a community of researchers who try to use social networks for their research contacts. The question remains whether social networks provide enough professional benefit in comparison to the time you may spend in the Internet.

I have been a satisfied member of *facebook* and *academia* for several months, but when a friend asked me about the professional benefit, there was very little I could remember: On the one hand, through *facebook* I get to know what my friends in humor research do besides doing serious research. I think this is very interesting, but not exactly a professional benefit. On the other hand, the academic social network *academia.edu* is much more centered on professional contacts, and it has recently added a general humor research category (<http://lists.academia.edu/See-members-of-Humour-Research>), but it is at the same time a rather dull place to spend one’s time.

Are social networks useful for humor research? It seems that establishing contacts via social networks has a growing importance—also in our professional lives. However, there are also more traditional ways of distributing knowledge and establishing contacts (home pages, email etc.). Moreover there is also the possibility of managed websites such as *Who is Who of Humor Research* by Igor Krichtafovitch which includes many members of the ISHS.

In the next issue of the *Humorous Times* we want to publish a list of digital services that may be used to establish professional contacts in humor research. As it is difficult to keep track of all developments in the Internet we would like to ask our readers to inform us about mailing-lists and social networks. In particular, we are interested in what you think is important about such services. Send your ideas and suggestions to ralph.mueller@unifr.ch.

Awards for Humorous Writing

From Lorene Birden, University of Bourgogne, France

Last year we drew your attention to the eighth *Annual Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest*. Lorene Birden has kindly informed us that Randy Cousteau of Massachusetts is the proud winner of this contest for his poem *The Felching of the Octopus* available online at www.winningwriters.com. Be advised, this poem is rated R.

Humor Research Books

John Benjamins is now offering a very special book discount (50% off the list price) for the newly released *Humor in Interaction*, edited by Delia Chiaro and Neal Norrick. John Benjamins also offers the paperback edition of Wally Chafe's book, *The Importance of Not being Earnest*. The paperback version does not come with a discount, but is just \$35 (less than the hardcover version with the 50% ISHS discount).

Please note that DeGruyter now offers a 20% discount on all its book titles for ISHS members. If this is not enough, Transaction Publishers continues to offer to ISHS members 25% discounts on all books in its Humor Studies series, which includes *Farce* (by Jessica Milner Davis) and *The Mirth of Nations* (by Christie Davies).

And finally, you are still eligible for substantial 35% discounts on all books in Wayne State's Humor in Life and Letters Series available at www.wsupress.wayne.edu. The promotion codes for these discounts are available from the ISHS Executive Secretary at ishs@hnu.edu.

Recent Humor Research Books

Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor by John Morreall. Chichester, United Kingdom, 2009, US\$ 41.95. ISBN: 978-1-4051-9612-3

From the publisher: *Comic Relief* develops an inclusive theory that integrates psychological, aesthetic, and ethical issues relating to humor. It offers an enlightening and accessible foray into the serious business of humor and reveals how standard theories of humor fail to explain its true nature and actually support traditional prejudices against humor as being antisocial, irrational, and foolish. A foreword is provided by Robert Mankoff, Cartoon Editor of *The New Yorker*.

A *Philosopher's Eye* interview with John Morreall on his new book *Comic Relief* can be found online at <http://philosophycompass.wordpress.com/2010/05/13/comic-relief>.

Recent Humor Research Books (continued)

Humor in Interaction. Edited by Neal R. Norrick and Delia Chiaro. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009; € 90.00, US\$ 135.00. ISBN: 978-90-272-5427-6.

This volume provides a rich collection of essays by an international array of scholars representing various theoretical perspectives, but all concerned with interactional aspects of humor. All the articles draw on empirical material from different countries and cultures, comprising conversations among friends and family, talk in workplace situations, humor in educational settings, and experimental approaches to humor in interaction.

Humour in Language Education: Transcription, Categorisation and Analysis by Carmen Popescu. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009; US\$ 112.00. ISBN: 978-3-639-17902-6.

This book looks at the role of humor in language education, focusing principally on the examination of humorous interaction, and draws on the traditions of classroom discourse analysis, conversation analysis and micro-ethnography. Foreign language classroom-specific humor is described, a form of humor characteristic of foreign language classrooms, which facilitates learning by transmitting knowledge in the form of humorous talk around a text. The conclusions should be especially useful to textbook writers, teachers and teacher educators who may be interested in using humor in their language classes.

The Primer of Humor Research (Paperback Edition). Edited by Victor Raskin. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009. (Humor Research [HR] 8); € 32.95 / US\$ 46.00. ISBN 978-3-11-018685-7.

The book is intended to provide a definitive view of the field of humor research for both beginning and established scholars in a variety of fields who are developing an interest in humor and need to familiarize themselves with the available body of knowledge. Each chapter of the book is devoted to an important aspect of humor research or to a disciplinary approach to the field, and each is written by the leading expert or emerging scholar in that area.

Contributions and Submissions

The next issue of the *Humorous Times* is due in Summer 2010. Please send information, contributions and announcements to ralph.mueller@unifr.ch.