

American Society for ybernetics

July 9, 2009

Dear Members and Fellows,

A member recently emailed me commenting that she had not heard much from the ASC recently. I was surprised, because the board has been very busy indeed: but being that busy has obviously blinded me to our failure to adequately pass on some news, and I apologise for this.

2009 Conference

Arun Chandra and his colleagues and students organised our conference this year, at Evergreen College just outside Olympia, Washington. The theme of the conference was “Cybernetics, Talk, Dance, Anticommunication” and was, in part, a celebration of the life, thought and teachings of our Wiener medallist and member, the late Herbert Brün. The conference also featured an extensive set of concerts of contemporary music that was in every way as challenging as the rest of the thinking at the conference. I think everyone who was there enjoyed the conference and really valued the work Arun and colleagues had put in to make it so good. Thanks to all.

The Executive Committee, through its connections with the journal “Cybernetics and Human Knowing” (which publishes an ASC column in each issue, along with alternating columns by our present and immediate past presidents) chose a number of the papers for publication as a proceedings—the first proceedings published by the society for a long time. This should appear as issue one of next year. All conference participants are invited to send drafts, papers or other material to Randy Whitaker (email address below) for publication on our web site.

The Executive Committee held two meetings at the conference and the president’s report was presented and accepted. We are aiming to make more use of our web resources for publishing, so we do not send endless email attachments, and so that the original is stored somewhere openly visible. I will keep you informed of this, so you can access such documents.

An important function of our conferences is to encourage new members, because of both what we are and what we offer, and because of what they can offer, specially in an environment such as the ASC. One very important way in which we do this is through the award of the Heinz von Foerster Prize to the best presentation by a younger person. This year the prize was awarded to Kate Heron Slaymaker and Melanie Meltzer for a wonderful presentation deriving from the work of Theodor Adorno, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Humberto Maturana and Ernst von Glasersfeld. Their

prize is a grant towards attendance at next year's conference (fuller details of this and all ASC awards can be found on our web site). Their paper will be in the C and HK collection.

Future Conferences

The ASC is associated with several international conferences. The Heinz von Foerster Society are holding their biannual conference in Vienna, November 12 to 14, on the theme of "Learning". You should have received notification. If you didn't and are interested, please contact: hvf09.zeitgeschichte@univie.ac.at. Proposal abstracts were due in at the end of June, but I'm sure that if you write in in the near future you will be considered. The conference is organised by our trustees Albert and Karl Mueller, and the ASC is recognised as a co-sponsor.

Again in Vienna, the Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies will hold its 20th biannual conference in the week after Easter 2010, that is 6 to 9 April 2010. ASC members have traditionally found this a good venue, and our Wiener medalist and member, the late Gordon Pask, chaired a symposium there for many years. Current symposium chairs include ASC members Stuart Umpleby and myself. Again, you should have received notification. If you have not, please visit <http://www.osgk.ac.at/emcsr/>

By far the biggest news for the ASC is our own conference in 2010. This will be held between 29 July and 5 August at the new EMPAC facility at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York (<http://empac.rpi.edu/>). There are 4 components to this conference, on the theme of "Art, Cybernetics, Design, Mathematics". All but the last are open to all members of the ASC (the follow-up workshop will be by invitation only). Accommodation is available on campus in RPI dorms at an estimated \$60 per night). Here is the schedule:

29 July	ASC private conference day
30 July	Tutorial day: second order cybernetics for participants at the main conference.
31 July	Main Conference (3 days)
3 August	Workshop Conference (3 days) (by invitation only)

I anticipate this conference will raise considerable international interest, and will bring the ASC to the attention of a large group of people who do not yet know us. It is being organised by Lou Kauffman, Albert Mueller, Ted Krueger (ASC member and RPI faculty) and myself. We already have an International Advisory Board of the highest quality. I will post more information on the conference on our web site during the summer. Meanwhile, please book the dates in your diary!

Projects

The ASC Executive Committee has agreed to support a number of projects. Those responsible for them are making progress. The Observing Cybernetics project in collaboration with Peter Tuddenham of the College of Exploration will enter a second round in the summer. From this we

will be able to begin the development of a web based resource that will provide material for those who wish to study or develop courses in cybernetics.

The Members' wiki pages are under development. We hope they will be online by autumn (fall). Associated with these pages, we will turn a spotlight on individual members on a regular basis.

The Competition based on Margaret Mead's arguments for a "Cybernetics of Cybernetics" will be held in the winter. It will be open to anyone. I hope the results may be interesting enough to publish in another special issue of one of the journals the society is well connected to.

By now, all members should have copies of Pask Present, the catalogue for the exhibition of that name held in Vienna in the spring of 2008; and Stuart Umpleby's cybernetics tutorials, generously made available by Nagib Callaos, director of the WMSCI, in collaboration with Stuart. If you have not received them please contact Phillip Guddemi (membership@asc-cybernetics.org) re Pask and Stuart Umpleby (umpleby@gmail.com) re his tutorials.

If you have an idea for something you believe the ASC should do, which you are able to commit to help bring to realisation, you should contact me to make a proposal for an ASC project.

Difficulties

You will be aware from earlier discussions that we discovered the ASC has significant problems with its Bylaws. I will not even try to summarise here. Randy Whitaker has spent a vast amount of time both drafting new Bylaws, and researching the legal basis of the old ones. Drafts of the Bylaws have gone backwards and forwards between Randy and selected individuals as well and the Bylaws Working Group. I anticipate they will shortly be in an appropriate form that we can place them before the membership (you) for ratification. I urge you to vote on these Bylaws when the time comes: it is not possible for us to conduct our business properly while we remain in the current, anomalous position.

So, for instance, a number of other things depend on the ratification of the Bylaws, including finding two officers: Treasurer and Ombudsman. Once the new Bylaws are ratified the nominating committee will get to work to find candidates.

There is also a possible complication concerning the funds the ASC was given, which fund the Heinz von Foerster Prize. Members of the Executive Committee have been working very hard to resolve these matters, which appear to result from actions (and inactions) originating years ago.

Committees

The Executive Committee has set up the committees it is obliged to: nominating, finance and membership. Nominating is chaired by Pille Bunnell (pille@interchange.ubc.ca), and membership by Phillip Guddemi. Finance is for the moment, in abeyance. We have also set up 3 Working Groups. The Bylaws WG (chaired by Randy Whitaker) is temporary and will be

dissolved when the revised Bylaws are accepted. The ASC archive WG is chaired by Paul Schroeder, pauls@commoncoordinates.com (vice president for archives, by appointment) and the ASC web WG is chaired by Randy Whitaker. Each committee has prepared a specification of its mode of working and the limits to its autonomy. The point of these groups is to encourage working from the bottom up rather than the top down, with ownership and checks built in to each area of operation. We will see how well this works! When you want to contact the society, please approach the officer whose role seems most closely to reflect what you would like to discuss, in the first instance.

Contacting the ASC

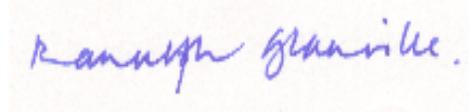
All officers of the ASC now have officer-based email addresses. These can be found on our web site at <http://www.asc-cybernetics.org/organization/officers.htm>, but I list them here.

<i>office</i>	<i>email</i>	<i>current holder</i>
president	asc-president@asc-cybernetics.org	Ranulph Glanville
vice president	asc-vice-president@asc-cybernetics.org	Elizabeth Simpson
past president	past-president@asc-cybernetics.org	Louis Kauffman
secretary	secretary@asc-cybernetics.org	Thomas Fischer
treasurer	treasurer@asc-cybernetics.org	<i>vacant</i>
vice president membership	membership@asc-cybernetics.org	Phillip Guddemi
vice president electronic publishing	webmaster@asc-cybernetics.org	Randall Whitaker
ombudsman	ombudsman-1@asc-cybernetics.org	<i>vacant</i>

The chair of our trustees is Paul Pangaro, who can be contacted at pan@pangaro.com

As mentioned above, the posts of treasurer and ombudsman are currently vacant. For the moment, messages to their email addresses will be redirected.

Best Wishes,



Ranulph Glanville, ASCF
President