

NEWSLETTER



*International Society for the
History, Philosophy and
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

At a time of upheaval in the world, and where the life sciences play an increasingly crucial role in informing our understanding of environmental and societal concerns (and their implications for policy and research within and across borders), intellectual engagement within our beloved ISHPSSB has hardly been more salient. Our society provides a harbor for those seeking to better understand not only the nature and outputs of specific fields within the biological sciences, but also how such fields relate to each other, how we may understand their origins and development, and how they may contribute to an overarching understanding of life that may adequately address the urgent challenges confronted by our generation. I am so grateful to the society as a venue for exchanges among a disparate but growing field, where researchers (whether working in academia or in other institutions) can safely meet to interrogate developments in areas ranging from genomics to developmental biology, evolutionary theory, ocean science, precision medicine, agronomy and epidemiology (to name but a few), and discuss their scientific, societal, environmental and political implications. I am also immensely proud to belong to a community with such heightened sensitivity to the lives of non-humans, and to how such lives, in their interrelated complexity, ground the diverse cultures, identities and sense of belonging that each of us brings to our international exchanges. In a moment of geopolitical tensions and social fragmentations, where our species undergoes an existential challenge and there is far too little public debate on what may constitute evidence (and why, and for whom), ISHPSSB is a tangible reminder of what meaningful dialogue can and should be, what scholarship can offer to the world and how very different experiences can be weaved together in ways that are constructive and hopeful.

The wonderful reunion in the city of PORTO, where we held our 2025 CONFERENCE, was outstanding in all these respects. While we continue to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting attracted 623 participants, including a whole new generation of ISHPSSB researchers whose energy and insight infected all sessions, giving me great hope for the future. The report by the chair of the Local Arrangements Committee, the brilliant Maria Strecht Almeida, provides a snapshot of the meeting which cannot do justice to the memorable experiences of all who were lucky enough to be able to attend: we owe

her our thanks for the immense effort, care and dedication that she invested in ensuring the success of the conference both in scientific and in social terms. None of this would have been possible without the enthusiasm and hard work of our outgoing President, Betty Smocovitis, whose tireless work included curating every aspect of the meeting with a keen eye on inclusivity and interdisciplinarity; the outstanding Program chairs Kate MacCord and Charles Pence, who not only created an amazing program but ensured it could be delivered effectively by supporting the local team during the event; the indefatigable work of our secretary Lloyd Ackert and our treasurer Don Opitz, who were (and continue to be!) on call at all hours to resolve the endless practical issues relating to running our organization; and the ISH Council members and Program committee, all of whom played key roles in ensuring that every one of the countless planned activities were successfully designed and carried out.

Of course, and in true ISH spirit, such joyful exchanges are just a start. Our newly updated COMMITTEES in Education, Membership Development, Early Career, Operations, Nomination and (of course!) our various Prizes are already busy with their activities, and [here](#) you can find details on their activities and the names of all those who so generously volunteer their time and ideas to our Society. We need to continue to build up our MEMBERSHIP, extending it further into history, social science and biology itself, not least to ensure that the conceptual and empirical research carried out within our field finds wide resonance and multiple interlocutors. To help with this, [please make sure your membership status is up to date](#): we have so many members who have not yet paid their dues for the coming year, which is a crucial step to ensure that the Society thrives given membership fees are our greatest source of income. Also, please help to spread the word about ISHPSSB to colleagues far and wide: not only are our upcoming OFF-YEAR WORKSHOPS a great opportunity for involvement, but the newly revamped Communications Committee has created new SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS ON [LinkedIn](#) AND [Bluesky](#) (follow them and spread the word if you have not done so already), our NEWSLETTER continues to grow in content thanks to the careful editing by David Suárez, and our MAILING LIST, valiantly coordinated by Lucie Laplane, provides timely updates on novel activities at any point during the year. Information about all such tools is available on our WEBSITE, which Michel Durinx continues to maintain to a high standard—pay particular attention to the fact that registering as a

member of the Society does not give you automatic access to the mailing list: you need to register for that separately, and you can do this very easily by reading the instructions on [this link](#).

Last but not least, start planning and setting funds aside to take part in OUR NEXT CONFERENCE IN THE WONDROUS CITY OF BUENOS AIRES IN JULY 2027: it is a fantastic opportunity to reconnect with our lively South-American community and the energy and multicultural spirit of the city will no doubt provide a fantastic setting for our discussions. This newsletter provides an initial introduction to “BA”, as inhabitants call it, by the chair of the Local Arrangements Committee Pablo Lorenzano; I am delighted that Maria Elise de Brzezinski Prestes and Yafeng Shan have accepted to act as Program chairs; and more information will follow in the coming months of course. While in-person attendance is without a doubt the best way to enjoy and benefit from an ISHPSSB meeting, the Society is well-aware of the difficulties that too many of us are experiencing in crossing borders these days, whether due to lack of funding, visa problems, caring responsibilities or health concerns. The ISH council, working closely with the Local Arrangements Committee, will do its best to foster both in-person and virtual forms of attendance to the conference, and local organizers kindly pledged to provide immediate assistance with travel documentation where needed. All together, we continue to be strongly committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful and open-minded environment, welcoming all and with a strict policy of non-tolerance towards any form of discrimination or abusive behavior. I am very grateful to our RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR COMMITTEE for continuing to improve our guidelines and policies, our OMSBUDPERSONS Matt Huber and Sam Mukka for providing a firm and concrete point of reference, as well as to Marsha Richmond for her outstanding service (together with Matt) in enforcing the policy over the last few years. As for funding, keep an eye on the newly formed FINANCE COMMITTEE, which under the leadership of our indefatigable treasurer Don Opitz will endeavor to raise money to be able to support Society activities, and most importantly to subsidies attendance to our meetings to the best of our abilities. If you have any ideas on fundraising, or are aware of opportunities that we should pursue, do not hesitate to contact me or Don — we need all the help we can get to continue our work among increasing cuts to academic efforts in many

countries around the world, which particularly affect the humanities and social sciences.

I should close by noting that I am humbled by the trust and responsibility placed upon me as incoming ISH president, especially when following in the footsteps of such illustrious predecessors (who thankfully provide brilliant and much-needed advice!). It is great to know that Nick Hopwood will succeed me after an already busy period as our President-elect, I hope not to saddle him with many problems to fix... and as many of you who attended Porto already know, we are in the lucky position to have a site for our 2029 CONFERENCE lined up already, thanks to Pierre-Olivier Methot and Stephanie Lloyd who will host us in QUEBEC CITY. More information on this in the next newsletter!

For the coming months, I look forward to any feedback or ideas from you, and thank you for your sterling work in making our society such a unique venue for collaboration and friendship. Have a wonderful start of 2026!

*Sabina Leonelli
President*

ISHPSSB 2027: BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

We look forward to welcoming you all in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where the 2027 ISHPSSB conference will be held in the third week of July.

The city of Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires, officially the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, is the capital and largest city of Argentina. It is located on the southwest of the [Río de la Plata](#). It stands as one of South America's cultural capitals and a vital, dynamic business hub in the region. Every month, it hosts an impressive array of cultural activities—many of them free—including art exhibitions, classic film screenings, and stage performances.

Buenos Aires serves as a venue for international exhibitions and world congresses covering diverse industries and topics. It is currently one of the most popular cities for business meetings in Latin America,

hosting approximately 50 major conferences annually, with large events accommodating up to 5,000 participants. (For more information on this, please see <https://turismo.buenosaires.gob.ar/en/agrupador-noticias/meetings-events-mice-tourism>)

Due to its infrastructure, its rich tourist, cultural, and historic attractions, a favorable business atmosphere, and a convenient exchange rate for both visitors and organizers, Buenos Aires is positioned as one of the most suitable venues for events in the hemisphere.

The Ministro Pistarini International Airport is located 22 km (13.6 miles) south-southwest of Buenos Aires, about 30 minutes away from downtown. To get downtown you can book either an airport transfer or take a taxi or a bus.

Organizers

The conference organization is an initiative of the Center of Studies in Philosophy and History of Science of the National University of Quilmes (CEFHIC-UNQ) and of the Graduate Program in Philosophy and History of Science of the National University of Tres de Febrero (UNTREF) as logistic host.

The organization is a transversal effort of a team gathering people from diverse institutions across the country. The Local Arrangements Committee includes scholars from another seven National Universities, one private University, the Argentinian Scientific Society (SCA) and the National Scientific

and Technical Research Council (CONICET), this way broadening the covered areas and, in a sense, following the ISHPSSB tradition of fostering cooperation across disciplines.

We will work in close relation with the Program Committee, co-chaired by Maria Elice de Brzezinski Prestes and Yafeng Shan, to hold a great, sustainable and inclusive conference.

Venues

Regular sessions will be held at the new Graduate School building of the National University of Tres de Febrero (UNTREF) at 71 Maipú Street, in the center of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. It is located a couple of hundred meters away from Plaza de Mayo and Casa Rosada (Argentina's political hub and Government House, respectively). It is easily reached by walking or public transportation.

21 classrooms for graduate courses are distributed in an area of 2,800 square meters, and the library, research centers and institutes, UNTREF Media, the UN3 channel, the bookstore and offices for administrative tasks are all located here as well.

All rooms are equipped with standard A/V equipment and are designed for universal access. Two of the meeting rooms, one for 60 and the other for 20 people, are equipped with facilities for hybrid sessions. All spaces will be pre-booked by the local organizers.



Front of UNTREF's Graduate School building located at the center of the City.



Buenos Aires at Night ©Luis Argerich (through Wikimedia Commons)

Free WiFi is available on the whole building. Participants will be able to check their email on their own devices.

Considering auditorium size requirements, the plenary and special sessions are planned to take place in two magnificent facilities with the required capacity, located just a few minutes' walk in downtown Buenos Aires: Paco Urondo Cultural Center of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and the Libertad Palace, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento Cultural Center.

The welcome reception will be held at the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales "Bernardino Rivadavia", located at the geographical center of the city. The conference dinner is planned to be held at the Centro Cultural "Torcuato Tasso", a legendary music club in Buenos Aires, known for its rich history and dedication to tango and other Argentine popular music, located in San Telmo.

Regarding the virtual space, we will build on the Toronto 2023 and the Porto 2025 experience and the post-meeting survey results.

*Pablo Lorenzano
Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee*

ISHPSSB 2025: LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

REPORT

When we submitted the proposal to host the ISHPSSB meeting in 2025, we were aware of the enormous task ahead of us. Needless to say, the task became even greater as the plans unfolded. Organizing ISHPSSB 2025 has been a great challenge and a great responsibility. The whole task was indeed a truly rewarding experience for us as organizers. We believe that even though not everything was perfect, at the end we managed to put together a successful meeting.

The meeting was locally organized by the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (ICBAS) in partnership with the Natural History and Science Museum (MHNC-UP). The event was possible by a huge amount of teamwork preparing for these few days, both at ICBAS and, for the opening day, at the MHNC-UP.

We hosted the ISHPSSB meeting at the University of Porto in the year that ICBAS celebrates its 50th anniversary. In 2025, we celebrate a school that was built on the intersection of knowledge from different areas, a school attentive to its societal context. Providing the venue for a whole week of debates around the life sciences and views from history, philosophy, and social studies was also a way for us to acknowledge that origin.

The conference gathered 623 participants. This number includes 4 invitees, 555 registered in-person participants (number of those who checked-in at the registration desk, confirmed by nametag given) and 64 registered virtual presenters.

Participants came from 43 countries. The charts in the image present different breakdowns of the registered participants.

Registered for the dinner circa 300 participants.

The total expenses for the conference managed at the University of Porto were 101 415,04 €. There were also expenses handled by ISHPSSB, amounting to approximately 3 400,00 € — abstract management software account (Oxford Abstracts), Zoom account and expenses to secure American Sign Language interpreter services. The revenue from registration fees was higher than the sum of these two amounts. In addition, the conference received funding (upon application) from Turismo de Portugal and Turismo do Porto e Norte de Portugal.

*Maria Strecht Almeida
Chair of the Local
Arrangements Committee
(2023–2025)*

2025 DAVID L.

HULL PRIZE

In 2011 the International Society for the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Biology established the David L. Hull Prize to commemorate the life and legacy of David Hull, who exemplified both a high standard of interdisciplinary scholarship and exemplary service that helped to build bridges among our



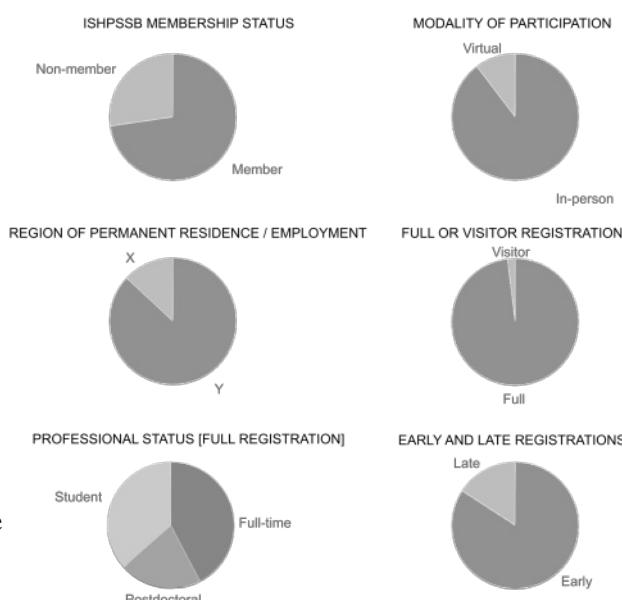
Porto 2025 dinner in the Palácio da Bolsa

disciplines. This biennial prize honors extraordinary scholarship and service promoting connections among the communities represented by our Society.

For this purpose, the 2025 David L. Hull Prize Committee, comprised of Rachel

Ankeny, Maria Elice de Brzezinski Prestes, Pierre-Olivier Méthot, Marsha Richmond, and Gregory Radick (Chair), launched a call for the prize in November 2024. The Committee emphasized that nominees may be at any career stage, and strongly suggested that members took into account diversity when considering nominations. The deadline for nominations was February 15, 2025. On behalf of the Society, we awarded this year's prize to Professor Mary Pickard or—as she is better known—Polly Winsor, emeritus professor at the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology at the University of Toronto.

No one has done more than Polly Winsor to make the history of taxonomy a central, conceptually lively topic



Breakdowns of registrations. The labels in the professional status chart are simplified: Full-time should read as full-time, ongoing positions, Postdoctoral as postdoctoral fellows, other contingent/temporary positions and Student as students, part-time employed/between jobs/retired.



present, as a number of current and recent PhD students can attest. Although she has been retired from Toronto for over twenty years, this period has seen a remarkable burst of creativity in her scholarship, when she has not only put paid to the idea that “essentialism” dominated monolithically from Plato to Darwin but published, among other things, a three-part dialogue on the notion of “affinity” and a re-interpretation of the place of extinction in Darwin’s evolutionary theorizing.

A longtime Canadian citizen—and so the first Canadian winner of the Hull Prize, as well as its second female recipient—she was born in New York City, graduating with a BA in the history of science from Harvard in 1965, then going on to complete her PhD in History of Science and Medicine at Yale in 1971. She was fortunate in her own mentors, working first with Everett Mendelsohn at Harvard, and then with Derek de Solla Price, Leonard Wilson and Frederic Holmes at Yale. She was also fortunate, as she tells it, in being at the right place at the right time when the Toronto Institute went looking for a new lecturer. To quote from a recent email to me: “Back then the procedure was just the IHPST’s Director picking up the phone and asking the heads of the few PhD programs who’s available. I had only written one chapter of my dissertation so was hired as Lecturer; when classes ended I finished writing it in the summer of 1970 at the good Museum of Comparative Zoology library, where I met Stephen Jay Gould, who needed a house-sitter while he went off researching snails.”

That finished dissertation, on how early-nineteenth-century naturalists had dealt with taxonomic complexities in the group that Cuvier had designated the *Radiata*, in turn became the basis for her first book,

Starfish, Jellyfish, and the Order of Life: Issues in Nineteenth Century Science, published by Yale University Press in 1976, and hailed by Frederick Churchill in his review in the *Journal of the History of Biology* for its success in “distill[ing] the philosophical spirits out of what has appeared to others as a bland and unnourishing mash.” A second book, on the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, followed in 1991: *Reading the Shape of Nature: Comparative Zoology at the Agassiz Museum*, published by the University of Chicago Press, and offering both a meticulous reconstruction of the life of a major museum and a meditation on the relation between taxonomic science and the institutions that make it possible. Since then, as noted, has come a series of papers of remarkable range and quality.

Over the arc of her long career, Polly Winsor has not only gone from strength to strength but has consistently enlarged the scope and ambition of her work, in ways that make her not only one of the most consistently exciting and illuminating historians of biology writing today but a model for the rest of us. The 2025 David L. Hull Prize is fitting recognition for her inspiring, and ongoing, achievement.

*Gregory Radick
Chair of the David L. Hull Prize Committee*

2025 MARJORIE GRENE PRIZE

This year's committee was chaired by Sophia Efsthathiou at the NTNU, Norway and ACG, Greece and Yafeng Shan, at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Our awards committee members were Rachel Mason Detinger at the University of Utah, USA, Jamie Elwick at York University, Canada, Siobhan Fenella Guerrero Mc Manus, at UNAM, Mexico, Stavros Ioannidis at University of Athens, Greece, and Thomas Reydon at University of Hannover, Germany.

THE MARJORIE GRENE PRIZE is named in Grene's honor not only because of her contribution to the history and philosophy of biology, but because she helped create the spirit of interdisciplinarity so fundamental to ISHPSSB. Grene was a valued mentor to many members of the Society and a long-standing inspiration to all, for the excellence of her work and her actions in bringing together diverse scholars of biology, even before the formation of the Society. The prize

thus honors Grene's legacy by supporting early career scholars in the history, philosophy and/or social studies of biology. The award consists of a certificate, US\$500 and a permanent record of the award on a plaque which circulates every two years to the current winner(s).

This year's winner is "*A backwards book? Eugenics and the evolution of R.A. Fisher's The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*" by Alex Aylward.

In this paper Aylward offers a novel interpretation on the authorship of R.A. Fisher's classic text, using archival material that has been so far unstudied and, in effect, suppressed. This neglected earlier draft of Fisher's book supports the claim that Fisher's interest in human eugenics took precedence over his work in natural selection and heredity. Aylward's paper captivated our awards committee with its vivid writing and impressed us with the originality of its argument and research. Finally, it exemplified the broad impact that the history of biology can have—in this case, informing discussions on how ideology and science can shape each other.

*Sophia Efstathiou
Co-Chair of the Marjorie Grene and Werner Callebaut Prizes Committee*

on a plaque which circulates every two years to the current winners.

This year this Committee decided to split the award between two papers, listed alphabetically by their authors' surnames.

- “*Exploring the socio-ecology of science: The case of coral reefs*” by Elis Jones,
- “*Analogical Anatomy: Neurons, Networks and the Electric Telegraph*”, by Richard Vagnino.

Elis Jones's work “EXPLORING THE SOCIO-ECOLOGY OF SCIENCE: THE CASE OF CORAL REEFS” wonderfully exemplifies the spirit of interdisciplinary work, which the Callebaut prize speaks to. In this paper, Jones works with empirical material collected from interviews with coral reef scientists, integrated with a theoretical, philosophical understanding of niche construction to advance a socio-ecological account of coral-reef science as niche construction, with scientists understood as niche constructors, who shape their social and material world. The paper, though received in draft state, needing work to be finished, still impressed us with its novel analysis and the wider interdisciplinary interest and relevance it has for the field including STS, and for social analyses of science.

Richard Vagnino's work is an exemplar of integrated HPS. The paper “ANALOGICAL ANATOMY: NEURONS, NETWORKS AND THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH” explores the philosophical question of how analogy helped build scientific theory by tracing the historical debate between Camillo Golgi's reticularist understandings of brain function and Santiago Ramon y Cajal's notion of the neuron. Vagnino explains this stubborn debate as relating to the two scientists' divergent conceptions of 'networks' in terms of, respectively, their functional role in uniting parts of the brain or the physical aspects of their organising different parts of the brain. Emerging telegraph technology influenced these analogical readings. The paper is well researched, carefully argued, and highlights the value of combining philosophical and historical research for a clearer understanding of ways that the sciences develop.

In conclusion, we would also like to mention a paper shortlisted for the Grene prize, which also impressed us: “*INVASION ON SO GRAND A SCALE: DARWIN, LYELL AND INVASIVE SPECIES*” by Eric Burns Andersen.

This paper argues that Charles Darwin's early observations and work regarding processes of 'naturalization'—or of the introduction of European or invasive species in foreign places—was crucial in shaping his ideas on natural selection, especially when set against Charles Lyell's creationist assumptions.

This paper is original, well written and argued, shedding light on a fascinating and important topic. The primary research in Aylward's work was exceptional in quality and originality so he was awarded the Grene prize this year, but we wanted to mention Eric's wonderful work too.

Finally, we want to encourage all our early career colleagues to send us papers you are in the process of publishing, and which are based on your presentation in the last two meetings, for the next round of awards.

*Sophia Efstathiou
Co-Chair of the Marjorie Grene and Werner Callebaut Prizes Committee*

2025 INTERDISCIPLINARY ORGANIZED SESSION PRIZE

The Interdisciplinary Organized Session Prize Committee reviewed the self-nominated interdisciplinary session proposals and visited five shortlisted sessions during the ISHPSSB 2025 meeting.

We are pleased to announce that the recipient of the 2025 Interdisciplinary Organized Session Prize was the session *Ecologies of Life in Space*, for its combination of multiple disciplines and methodologies, with special incorporation of the history of social studies of biology. The participants of the winning session were Paola Castaño, Kärin Nickelsen, Ilenia Picardi, Marco Serino, and Monica Truninger.

We thank our adjudication committee, consisting of Yin Chung Au, Ingo Brigandt, Siobhan Guerrero Mc Manus, Abigail Nieves Delgado, and Sophie Veigl.
*Ingo Brigandt and Abigail Nieves Delgado
Co-Chairs of the Interdisciplinary Organized Session Prize Committee*

2025 ISHPSSB INAUGURAL COMMUNITY AWARD

Every successful organization has a small—indeed often tiny—group of volunteers who keep the society going, often in quiet and unassuming ways. We depend on them for all kinds of things, yet are often unaware or take for granted the important roles they play.

For this reason, we have decided to create an ISHPSSB Community Award that recognizes and honors a member of ISHPSSB who has played an outstanding role in supporting, managing, or building our organization, or in fostering a spirit of community.

With the unanimous support of council, the first inaugural award of the ISHPSSB Community Award recognizes the outstanding work by Carlos David Suárez Pascal, at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City, Mexico.

Since 2011 Dr. Suárez Pascal has continuously served as editor of our Newsletter, "ensuring that our diverse and international membership is both informed and connected," to quote from his nomination letter. He has shown us his skill and artistry in layout and design, producing the newsletter in a timely manner, despite the fact that many of us are often late, or forgetful. But his work doesn't consist of merely compiling news items. This is serious work. I invite you to read the last Newsletter's interview (only part one of two parts) with



Jörg Matthias Determann, one of our few scholars whose areas of expertise takes him to the Islamic world.

Dr. Suárez Pascal's involvement in ISHPSSB doesn't stop there. He has served on the editorial committee, is an active member of the Education Committee and the Off-Year Workshop Committee and indeed, in 2022, organized an Off-Year Workshop himself on the life and work of Richard C. Lewontin, in collaboration with the Asociación Iberoamericana de Filosofía de la Biología and the Society for the Study of Evolution. To quote from his nomination letter again, "this initiative exemplifies the values of interdisciplinarity and internationalization, fostering dialogue across disciplinary and geographic boundaries —goals that are at the heart of ISHPSSB."

We, the members of the council of ISHPSSB wholeheartedly agree, and for this reason, are very pleased to recognize the outstanding contributions made by Dr. Carlos David Suárez Pascal to our organization and our community.

Betty Smocovitis
Past President

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REPORT

The ISHPSSB Education Committee was established to foster sharing of knowledge at the intersection of ISHPSSB and biology education, and to make educational resources available to ISHPSSB members. The Committee's membership size has been increased to 17.

As many ISHPSSB members are interested in the question of how work in the history, philosophy and social studies of biology can be used in educational practice, the Education Committee has begun to develop closer connections with the International History, Philosophy, and Science Teaching group (IHPST). IHPST is an international, interdisciplinary group of historians and philosophers of science, science educators, and practicing teachers that was established in 1989 "to promote the betterment of school and university science and mathematics education by making them informed by the history, philosophy, and sociology of science and mathematics." IHPST

organizes the biennial International History, Philosophy and Science Teaching Conference and hosts the journal *Science & Education*.

As part of our effort to forge closer connections, at the ISHPSSB meeting in Porto in July the Education Committee organized two cognate sessions on education in conjunction with IHPST: "*The Construction of School Knowledge on History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Biology*" (organized by Charbel El-Hani) and "*Making Educational Sense of «New Biology's» Philosophical Significance*" (organized by Ramsey Affifi, Kostas Kampourakis and Thomas Reydon). We also hosted the keynote speaker, Philip Ball, to discuss education and the "New Biology" in the context of his new book, *How Life Works: A User's Guide to the New Biology*. The two cognate sessions brought together nearly twenty presenters from across both societies to explore a range of topics relating to the intersection between contemporary biology theory and educational concerns. An output of one of these sessions will be a paper co-authored by its participants that will be submitted to the journal *American Biology Teacher*.

The Education Committee is currently planning to organize one or two cognate sessions at the 18th International History, Philosophy and Science Teaching Conference (IHPST 2026), which will be held in July in Lisbon. ISH members who are interested in contributing are invited to contact the co-chairs of the Committee.

*Ramsey Affifi and Thomas Reydon
Co-Chairs of the Education Committee*

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE REPORT

We are very happy to welcome Tatjana Buklijas as the new co-chair of the MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE. As a committee, we aim to explore ways to reach out to new members —for example, by promoting bilingual conference settings or by identifying ways to support early-career scholar participation. If you would like to join us, please contact Abigail Nieves Delgado or Tatjana Buklijas.

*Abigail Nieves Delgado
Co-Chair of the Membership Development Committee*

COMMUNICATIONS

COMMITTEE REPORT

After the demise of X (previously Twitter) as a welcoming place to promote our Society's work, Guglielmo Militello (University of Bordeaux/IHPST) volunteered himself to serve as ISHPSSB's new social media person in charge.

He has already created a [BlueSky](#) account (321 followers) and a [LinkedIn](#) account (168 followers) for ISHPSSB. Both accounts are being regularly updated every two weeks and their aim is to advertise ISHPSSB, to update followers on ISHPSSB activities and news, exchanging with followers on interdisciplinary issues.

You can already visit both social profiles and check some information, as well as seeing some posts related to our recently celebrated Porto meeting.

M. J. S. (JONATHAN) HODGE: IN MEMORIAM

Jon Hodge passed away peacefully on Friday August 29, 2025, of complications following pneumonia. While in the hospital in Harrogate, in the north of England, Jon shared many stories and jokes with the



medical staff, often mentioning his work at the nearby University of Leeds and his specialized focus on Darwin. His characteristic sense of humor and his philosophical perspective were undaunted, and a copy of his latest co-authored book, *Darwin's Argument by Analogy* (2021), made a few cameo appearances in the ward.

Jon was born in 1940 in Crewkerne, Somerset. His education included the Downs School, Leighton Park and Cambridge University. In 1962 he began graduate studies in history of science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he met his wife Anne. As an international graduate student, Jon had been instructed to "bring his national costume." He and Anne often joked about the bowler hat and umbrella he'd hastily acquired.

Jon completed his doctoral work at Harvard University in 1970 under the supervision of Ernst Mayr and Everett Mendelsohn. After working in the U.S and Canada for several years, including at the University of California, Berkeley (near Anne's home) and the University of Pittsburgh, Jon took a faculty position at Leeds in 1974, based in the Division of History and Philosophy of Science (HPS). Jon and Anne settled in Harrogate, where they raised three daughters, hosted many colleagues and graduate students, and contributed to the HPS community both at Leeds and across the world.

Over these decades Jon became esteemed for innovative scholarship both on Darwin and on the long run of associated theorizing, from antiquity to the present. His main medium was the article or book chapter, including such classic papers as "The Structure and Strategy of Darwin's 'Long Argument'" (1977), "Darwin as a Lifelong Generation Theorist" (1985), "Biology and Philosophy (including Ideology): A Study of Fisher and Wright" (1992) and "Against 'Revolution' and 'Evolution'" (2005). In common with all of Jon's teaching and writing, these show his concern to set aside existing—often anachronistic—traditions of interpretation and instead understand the projects of past scientific thinkers as they understood them, paying particular attention to the agreements and disagreements they saw themselves as making with their own predecessors, on broader philosophical issues as much as on narrower scientific ones.

Jon's best-known papers have been collected in two volumes, *Before and After Darwin: Origins, Species, Cosmogonies, and Ontologies* (2008) and *Darwin Studies: A Theorist and his Theories in their Contexts* (2009). His Harvard PhD thesis, *Origins and Species*, was published in 1991 (2nd edition 2018); and with Leeds colleagues he co-edited and contributed to three further volumes: *Conceptions of Ether*, with Geoffrey Cantor (1981); the monumental *Companion to the History of Modern Science* (1990, with Cantor, Robert Olby and John Christie); and *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin*, with Gregory Radick (2003, 2nd edition 2009). In recognition of the exemplary calibre and interdisciplinary reach of his work, as well as his unstinting generosity in mentoring and encouraging generations of junior scholars, our Society awarded Jon its highest honor, the David L. Hull Prize, at its 2019 conference in Oslo.

After his official retirement in 2006 Jon remained active, not just in publishing —producing another volume's-worth of papers along with the co-authored book mentioned above (with Radick and another Leeds colleague, Roger White)— but in the HPS conversations that were his forte, both at Leeds, where he became an Honorary Research Fellow, and more widely, with the biennial meetings of ISH a regular highlight for him. He continued to correspond and collaborate with local and international colleagues and students right up until his recent illness. His family greatly appreciate the exceptional camaraderie and support that this community provided throughout his career, both in-person and via the Internet that (after some initial battles) he enthusiastically embraced. As a historian and philosopher of science, he often marveled at the fact that his academic career spanned so many decades of digital and technological advancements, enabling him to meet, forge connections, and communicate with colleagues from around the globe in his 86th year.

Jon was an avid learner and educator in many areas beyond academia. He explored the history and evolution of everything from Dixieland jazz to opera to Subarus. He taught himself and his family to play tennis, which led to numerous lifelong friendships. He enjoyed birdwatching, fly fishing, and hiking in the Yorkshire Dales, the West Country, and California. Many of these adventures included opportunities for him to share his boundless enthusiasm for science,



history, and philosophy with children, grandchildren, and friends.

Jon's wife Anne and daughters Jenny, Cynthia, and Diana can be reached at 34 Rutland Drive, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 2NX or via mjshodge@hotmail.com Any donations in Jon's honor to [Crisis](#) would be welcomed, but are not expected. Anyone with queries relating to Jon's academic work can send them to Greg Radick at G.M.Radick@leeds.ac.uk

A “TRIBUTE TO JON HODGE” page has been set up to collect thoughts, memories, reflections and photos about Jon's life and your connections with him: <https://jonhodge.muchloved.com> Two of the postings there, from Betty Smocovitis and Dan Nicholson, beautifully express what many of our members, across several scholarly generations, will feel when they think about what we have lost in losing Jon. From Betty:

He was a keen listener, always interested in other people's work and especially in younger people. Everyone who knew him recognized the kindness of the man, the spirit of generosity, that was combined with a soaring intellect and curiosity—It never ended, I'm happy to say; 'Hodge' was the perpetual learner, excited about ideas, and keen to engage them, and very directly—no guile, no artifice, none of that academic pretense or posturing that is depressingly common. I am so grateful to Zoom, which allowed me to join a seminar in Leeds last year or so, that allowed me to see him in action again, one

last time. With others in the community, I mourn the loss, but believe his legacy continues, especially in the many people who were lucky to know Jon, and benefit from his tireless interest in all matters pertaining to Darwin and evolutionary biology.

And from Dan:

He was a towering figure. Gentle, patient, and kind, but also very opinionated and firm in his views. When I spoke of him to others who didn't know him, I would describe him as a 'walking encyclopedia'. The depth and breadth of his knowledge was boundless; he could speak in a commanding way about just about anything, from Neopythagorean influences on French comparative anatomy to Boltzmann's statistical reinterpretation of the second law of thermodynamics. Hearing Jon talk shop was always an education. But he never flaunted his wisdom; whatever he said was invariably in the service of the conversation he was having. He was also extremely funny and witty. One of the reasons I looked forward to ISH every other summer was because I knew I would be able to catch up with Jon and pick his brains about whatever new topic I was working on. I regret not having told him how much I owe to him. He really was one of a kind.

Michael Jonathan Sessions Hodge, 18 February 1940–
29 August 2025

ISH members might enjoy the following recordings of Jon in full flow —the first an audio recording of a seminar he gave in Leeds on Darwin and Wallace in 2014, the second a video interview from 2016 with Leeds graduate students on integrated HPS:

- <https://digital.library.leeds.ac.uk/6028/>
- <https://ihpsleeds.wordpress.com/keynotes/>

INTERVIEW WITH JÖRG MATTHIAS DETERMANN (SECOND PART OF TWO)*

Matthias Determann is Associate Professor at the Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar; he studied history and Arabic in Vienna University and earned a Ph.D. from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Recently, he edited a book titled Islamic Theology and Extraterrestrial Life (Bloomsbury, 2024), which highlights attitudes and interests from an Islamic perspective towards recent developments in astronomy and astrobiology, that touch upon issues that might be interesting for other members of ISHPSSB. Also, among his previous works, other one that might well be an obligated lecture is Researching Biology and Evolution in the Gulf States (Bloomsbury, 2015). Given our Society's aim to expand its reach and to diversify our membership and interests, we deemed showcasing the work of Matthias was a good opportunity to contribute to that goal.

(To read the first part of this interview you can go to the past issue of the newsletter.)

David Suárez Pascal [DS]: Matthias, based on what you mention about the Crusades, I see that you have some interest in school teaching. Have you also made this kind of work related to science education?

Jörg Matthias Determann [MD]: Yeah, my current project is about a history of teaching science with science fiction. So that is the current book that I am writing at the moment. It looks at efforts to teach the natural sciences with science fiction. So it is also a history of interdisciplinary science, interdisciplinary education; a kind of history that tries to bridge different fields: the two cultures of the sciences and the humanities. And I have looked at authors such as Isaac Asimov, a very famous science fiction author who as early as 1968, recommended that science fiction could be used as a teaching tool for subjects like physics. Since then many, many educators have tried to use the appeal of science fiction to attract a larger range of students, and to have students be inspired to learn

* This interview was conducted online on November 21, 2024 by David Suárez Pascal.

science and to be motivated to learn science. And they have used various sources, for instance, from the 1970s and the 1980s onwards. A lot of educators in different countries have used science fiction movies to teach subjects like astronomy or biology. For instance, they have used very popular movies, such as *Star Wars* to teach about astrophysics,

The Andromeda Strain to teach about microbiology. For instance, they use *Close Encounters of the 3rd Kind* to teach various sciences. And indeed they have sometimes used these films as illustrations of scientific principles, but also at times as violations of scientific principle. Other educators have used exhibitions, for instance, there have been exhibitions at Science Museums, especially about *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*, so, using the popularity of these franchises to bring people into the museum and then teach them something about the natural world.

DS: This is very interesting and exciting to me, since science fiction seems to make this mixture between science topics, but it also contains the hopes and the fears of authors regarding what science means to society and to humankind. How can you take this aspect in efforts to employ science fiction in education, embracing, so to say, the controversial part of it?

MD: A lot of science fiction stories and science fiction movies are about something in science going terribly wrong, and then a lot of drama ensuing from that. So, for instance, to take an example from biology, the novel and later film *Jurassic Park* essentially shows what can go wrong with research on dinosaurs, with the idea that one could bring extinct life back to Earth, that one could edit the genes, that one could control reproduction and control the path of a species. In the first *Jurassic Park* movie there was a scientist that made a statement that nature will find the way. So, even though the dinosaur breeders in *Jurassic Park* wanted these dinosaurs to be infertile, essentially, this the movie is about that that plan going wrong, and the dinosaurs finding a way to reproduce after all, and then sort of becoming monsters that would hunt humans. And a lot of science fiction, especially related to life and life forms, is often about the figure of the monster. One can also think, for instance, of the *Godzilla* movies



Matthias Determann © Kateryna Reshetova

that came out of Japan in the 1950s, that work through some of the fears in the Japanese population about radiation after the explosion of the nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War 2. And this idea that nuclear radiation could basically lead to enormous mutations and could bring about monsters

that would haunt humanity. This is something that was explored in the *Godzilla* movies, but those were not the first monster types of science fiction. One of the first Modern science fiction stories in general, as well as one of the first science fiction stories about monsters, is, of course, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, which is also about the idea that a scientist was trying to control life, but there, as well as in *Jurassic Park*, and so on, the lesson is that humans cannot control life and should not control life, and if they try to manipulate it, it will turn against them.

So this is something that expresses a lot of fears about science in society, but, at the same time, as some of the educators I am studying have looked at that, some of these stories and movies can also be used to teach science. Thus you can use some of the *Godzilla* movies in order to educate students: what radiation actually does to DNA, and how much it can damage it, how much it can change it, for instance; similarly, educators could use *Jurassic Park* theoretically to teach about how evolution actually works.

DS: Okay. This takes me to my next question. How is this with science fiction in the Middle East, are there some works that you like from science fiction?

MD: I find science fiction in the Middle East fascinating in part because of itself, but also because of its global connections. When it comes to global connections, science fiction has long been a globalized genre. I mentioned, for instance, *Godzilla*, that came out of Japan, but was then also adapted and developed in America. Similarly, a lot of science fiction stories and movies about space have connections to different parts of the world. So, for instance, two of the most prominent franchises in modern science fiction *Dune* and *Star Wars*, feature, desert planets. *Dune* has the planet Arrakis and *Star Wars* has the planet Tatooine,

and both of those names come from Arabic names and Arab countries. So Arrakis actually means «the dancer» in Arabic, and is an Arabic style name.

Tatooine comes from the name of a Tunisian town, and a lot of elements of Arabic culture, Middle Eastern culture made their way into *Dune*, even though *Dune* was written by an American author. When it comes to *Star Wars* as well as *Dune*, different scenes were also shot in Arab countries; in the United Arab Emirates or Tunisia or Jordan, for instance. So the Middle Eastern countries sort of contributed to global Science fiction as well. And if one considers global science fiction part of a larger genre of speculative fiction, then obviously the Middle East have contributed to fantasy literature for a long time, most notably through the *One Thousand and One Nights*, the *Arabian Nights*. That is about the global connections. Among the other aspects that I find quite interesting about Middle Eastern literature is how Middle Eastern literature works through themes such as colonialism or imperialism. A lot of science fiction is about power. It is about power over nature, the idea that knowledge is power, that knowledge, science, can give scientists power, and this power can be abused. A lot of science fiction is specifically also about colonial and imperial power, and that includes a lot of science fiction about other worlds and extraterrestrial life. In a lot of sci-fi stories, it is either us going to the other planets and colonizing them, and colonizing space and colonizing Mars. Or it is the aliens coming to us. It is the Martians invading Earth. It is the Martians colonizing Earth. So these themes are obviously quite interesting in literature from the Global South or from non-western countries that have dealt with colonialism relatively recently. So, for instance, in the case of a lot of indigenous people in the Americas, the alien invasion already happened. The alien invasion already happened, when, for instance, the Spanish *conquistadores* came with their ships and landed almost out of nowhere with strange weapons. And when these European invaders destroyed entire cultures and civilizations and colonized them. If indigenous authors think about alien invasions, they have a lot of that already in their cultural memory. In the case of the Middle Eastern countries, it might be a little bit more complicated since Middle Eastern countries, yes, for the most part, were colonized, experienced colonization. And, for instance, in the case of Palestine there is still, a very, very violent process of settlement expansion. The Israelis don't call their new towns and villages and cities, they don't call them colonies, but they do call them settlements, which can be seen as synonymous in many ways, right?

One can think about a colony on Mars. One can think about a settlement on Mars, a colony on the moon, a settlement on the moon, and so on. Middle Eastern countries have experienced these kinds of histories of colonialism of settlement building. On the other hand, Middle Eastern countries also have had long empires of their own. So the Muslim world also has had empires, like the Ottoman Empire or the Mughal Empire in India. Some of the richest and most powerful empires in human history. Then Muslim authors can, when they are dealing with science fiction, they can grapple with multiple layers of empire, of colonialism. They have the memory of their own empires, which are sometimes glorified, but they also have the experience of being suppressed and being invaded by European empires. So Middle Eastern writers can tell us a lot about how power works, how Empire can work.

DS: Thank you, Matthias. Regarding that, in some places you have mentioned some things about the plurality of worlds and how is it connected to the religious tradition in Islam. And I see that this kind of topic is very recurrent in science fiction. For instance, in *Star Trek*, which you mentioned, everything is about that kind of different worlds evolving in parallel and in similar ways. And you also talk about there being some kind of futurism in Islamic or Arabic societies. How is all this connected to current attitudes regarding astrobiology or spatial technologies, for instance?

MD: Thank you so much. I mentioned how Darwinism and evolution is at times quite controversial, especially when it comes to human origin in Muslim publics. What is not controversial is the idea of the plurality of worlds, the idea that there is more than one world. Indeed, in the Quran, the sacred book of Islam, God is described many times as Lord of the Worlds, and always as Lord of the Worlds in the plural, never as just Lord of one World, but always as Lord of the Worlds. There is also the idea that there might be seven heavens and seven earths, and there is the idea, in the Quran itself, that there might be creatures spread out through the heavens. The Quran also features other intelligent beings that were created by God, but intelligent beings that have a different nature from us, the *jinn*, which has similarities to the idea of demons in European culture, but in the Quran, the *jinn* have an entire chapter named after them. So if you believe in the Quran literally, you have to believe in the existence of *jinn*, which is more than what you would have for Christians. You can have Christians who believe in the Bible that would not necessarily

believe in the existence of demons. Demons just don't play that particular role. The *jinn* are described as creatures of a different nature made out of fire, and there are many interpretations about what that could mean, but the basic conclusion that many Muslims can draw is that we are not alone in the universe, we are not the only intelligence out there. There are also discussions about to what extent angels, for instance, might be intelligent. There is the idea of *iblis* or the devil, being a fallen angel, an angel who went against God, which also suggests that angels, too, might have their own will, might have their own intelligence, might have their own ability to choose between good and evil, between going with God or against God. So Muslims have, in general, no problem with the idea of there being multiple worlds, there being life spread out through the different worlds, and there being other intelligent creatures, too, that were made by the same God. There are, however, differences when it comes to human specialness. To what extent are humans still, the most favored creatures. To what extent humans are more favored than angels. To what extent humans are more favored than *jinn*, and of course more favored than animals and plants and minerals, and so on. That could become a challenge for many Muslims. If we, for instance, find evidence for advanced civilizations, if we find technological signatures as well as biological signatures that show us that there seem to be other civilizations out there that are much more advanced than we are. This could potentially challenge some Islamic ideas that humans are sort of special to God. I don't think that the discovery of an advanced extraterrestrial civilization would bring about the end of Islam. Islam is a very flexible religion. It has been able to adapt to all kinds of different regions and cultures and climates and societies around the world. We find Muslims on every continent, we find Muslims in places very far from Mecca, very distant from Mecca, very different from Mecca in terms of nature and climate, and so on. But Muslims have been able to adapt to all of that. In addition, obviously, Islam has adapted to all the changes of the modern world. In that sense, I would believe that, yes, it might create a challenge if we find out that there are creatures more advanced than we are in the universe. It might lead us to revisit questions about how special we are, but I don't think it would do away with Islam.

DS: And my last set of questions, I think, is related to how do you see the role of history and history of science also in the Arabic world. You mentioned somewhere that history can a function as a place for dissident voices, to express themselves. Do you see this as an important part of work on the history of the Arabic world and the Middle East cultures? Do you see this also as a way to connect Western and the Middle East?

MD: Thank you. That is another great question. Well, historians of science and historians in general would acknowledge and know how much the modern world has been made by science, how much the modern world has been made by technology, and that, of course, includes the Middle East, too. So, for instance, desert countries, arid countries like Saudi Arabia, or like Qatar, they have not only relied on a lot of technology for oil production that has created the basis for a lot of financial wealth of these countries, but they have also relied a lot on desalination technologies, and hence provide the cities that we have here in the Gulf, cities like Dubai, with the enormous amounts of energy, but also the enormous amounts of water that they need. We can't really understand a lot of Middle Eastern cities without understanding all the technology that they are using and all the science behind oil extraction, all the science behind desalination, for example. However, I think we need to appreciate modern history of science more in the Middle East. There is a lot of appreciation for the Golden Age of Arabic and Islamic science. There is a lot of interest in medieval Arab and Islamic science. For instance, there are many streets named after people like Ibn Sina or Ibn Rushd, and so on. There are schools often named after them. Many countries have stamps also about these figures. There is less appreciation of the modern scientists, from the 19th, the 20th, the 21st century scientists. In the most extreme cases, we can see, for instance, in Gaza, in Palestine, the destruction of universities, the destruction of libraries. I think every single university in Gaza has been attacked, has been bombed by Israeli forces, and a lot of libraries there have been damaged or destroyed. There is a lot of modern heritage being lost there. That would be the most extreme case, however, there are other cases as well where we have modern observatories, modern research stations not being treated as heritage sites. We could

take an astronomical observatory from the 19th or 20th century, we could take a laboratory or some university buildings from the modern period and see them as important historical sites and try to protect them more. We should protect those libraries, protect those instruments. There should be more museums for

modern scientific instruments in the Arab world, in the Middle East. Institutions that would teach us how to appreciate, not just the legacy of the medieval past, but also that teach us how to appreciate the scientific and technological artifacts of the last 100 years, the last 200 years, for instance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Newly digitized books on the histories of genetics, eugenics and Social Darwinism

Anyone with teaching or research interests in the histories of genetics, eugenics and social Darwinism can now find three outstanding scholarly collections on those topics available in free digital versions at the website of the [Adelphi Genetics Forum](#) (successor to the Galton Institute, which published them):

- *Essays in the History of Eugenics* (1998), Editor: Robert A. Peel
- *A Century of Mendelism* (2001), Editors: Robert A. Peel and John Timson
- *Herbert Spencer: The Intellectual Legacy* (2004), Editors: Greta Jones and Robert A. Peel

The website includes a number of other resources, including videos of all the lectures at the recent annual conferences. For ISHPSSB members, Steve Sturdy's Adelphi Lecture last year, "The Fortunes of Medical Genomics: A Quarter Century of Promise," may be of particular interest.

Gregory Radick

Yohay Carmel, Ayelet Shavit, Ehud Lamm & Eörs Szathmáry: Human socio-cultural evolution in light of evolutionary transitions

A widely read special issue from Royal Society Publishing Philosophical Transactions B is free to access: Human socio-cultural evolution in light of evolutionary transitions compiled and edited by Yohay Carmel, Ayelet Shavit, Ehud Lamm and Eörs Szathmáry. The articles can be freely accessed directly at <https://www.bit.ly/PTB1872>

A print version is also available at the special price of £40.00 per issue from sales@royalsociety.org
Felicity Davie

The Backpage

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Are you subscribed to the ISHPSSB Listserv <ISHPSB-L>?

If not, you may have missed information posted for members which is not included in the newsletter, such as positions announced, grant and funding opportunities, calls for papers, etc. Subscribe online by following these instructions:

Send an email message to:

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This listserv is maintained by Lucie Laplane. If you want to submit something, write to her under:
moderator@ishpssb.org

Have you renewed your membership?

ISHPSSB members receive lower registration rates to attend the biennial meeting. Members who renew by April 1st in odd-numbered years can also participate in the Society election held in May prior to the biennial meeting. To renew your membership, go to: <https://ishpssb.org/membership> and click on “Renew my membership.”

If your membership has expired, click on “Join or renew ISHPSSB membership.”

If you experience any difficulties, contact the Secretary at secretary@ishpssb.org

As a benefit, members are able to subscribe to a variety of journals at reduced rates; see the information under “Membership Benefits.”

Credits

This newsletter was edited by David Suárez Pascal employing [GNU Emacs](#) and [Scribus](#) (both open source and freely available). I thank Sabina Leonelli for proofreading it and to all the ISH members who kindly contributed to this issue with their texts (and their patience).

The logo of the society was generously contributed by Andrew Yang.

Submissions for the newsletter should be addressed at: newsletter@ishpssb.org

Cover photo: Opening Session of ISHPSSB 2025 at the Botanical Garden of Porto (MHNC-UP), 20 July.