NEW OFFICERS
by Stuart Umpleby

We have some changes and additions in our line-up of officers. Alex Bhanos will be working this year on setting up divisions or special interest groups. He also has some ideas for training programs for people in government and industry. Alex served as treasurer in late 1980. Steve Ruth will be working on setting up local chapters. Both Alex and Steve are on the faculty in the Department of Business Administration, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030, 703/323-2736 and 2738 respectively.

Our new treasurer is Jon Cunnyngham. Jon is a professor of economics at Ohio State University and for a few years was head of that department. He is a good friend of Dan Howland. His address is Department of Economics, Ohio State University, Columbus OH 43210, 614/422-7366.

Victor Rodriguez has taken over the responsibilities of membership chairman and is already making progress on organizing our membership records and our membership drive. Victor was a research assistant on my NSF grant for the computer conference. He received his MBA degree from George Washington University and is now a management analyst at the Department of Education, working on office automation. He has some innovative ideas on how we can use computer technology. Victor can be reached through the Society's address, 2131 G. Street NW, Washington DC 20052.

ASC BOOK SERIES
by Roger Conant

Some inquiries have arrived about the two books mentioned in the last newsletter, Mechanisms of Intelligence (a collection of writings by Ashby) and Observing Systems (a collection of Von Foerster's writings). These are to be published this spring by Intersystems Publications, P.O. Box 624, Seaside, California 93955. The price for each is a modest $12.00. They will be in paperback. Postage and handling charge is $1.50 per book if you order them directly from the publisher. If the original schedule is held to they will be out by the end of May. I will keep you posted as I learn more.

ASC POSTER
by Stuart Umpleby

Klaus Krippendorff has designed a very attractive recruiting poster. A copy is enclosed. Please put the poster up near your office. If you can use additional copies, send a note to ASC, 2131 G. St. N. W., Washington DC 20052.
ASC CONFERENCE - DESCRIPTION

by Larry Richards

A significant number of active ASC members recently attended the annual meetings of the Society for General Systems Research and the American Association for the Advancement of Science held in Toronto. ASC held a business meeting at that time; the upcoming ASC conference (October 31 - November 2, 1981, in Washington DC) was the primary topic of discussion. Those present at the meeting made up what might be called an informal program committee for the conference. A broad concept for the conference and for future ASC conferences emerged.

The overriding sentiment was that this should be a very different form of conference to reflect the new spirit and broadened scope of the Society. The atmosphere of the conference will be informal, and the design of sessions will reflect experimental methods in communication and learning. Deviation from tradition will include everything from innovative seating arrangements to the use of elaborate forms of structured group processes. Banquet formats, lunch breaks, field trips, and evening get-togethers are all subject to radical departure from past practice at professional meetings.

To expand participation at ASC conferences, the program committee indicated a desire to make every effort possible to hold future meetings at locations with relatively inexpensive accommodations; this year, however, it was felt appropriate to hold the first meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Society for Information Science (ASIS), with which ASC has had a close relationship in the difficult years of the recent past. While ASC hopes to attract interested participants from the ASIS conference, I believe that the interests of the ASC membership are broader and more penetrating than those of other professional societies. For example, some topics already selected for inclusion in the November program include political destabilization tactics, cybernetics and the arts, community cybernetic centers, cybernetics and ethics, epistemology, the politics of science, controlling large bureaucracies, and Third World development.

While a fairly clear conceptual direction for ASC conference programs emerged from the meeting, implementation is another matter. We need ideas and volunteers to implement those ideas. Without these, the conference will be as dull as other professional conferences. Some ideas for future conferences that were brainstormed in Toronto include:

* informal conferences similar to the Maine festival held last summer.
* conference picnics rather than formal banquets.
* session monitors to provide speakers or discussants with feedback on audience receptivity while they are still speaking.
* invitations to political leaders, community leaders, or other spokespersons to participate in discussions.
* organized (or unorganized) activities vs. paper presentations.
* informal stories, jokes, riddles, limericks, skits, etc. to replace banquet speakers.

Depending on the response to the "Call for Papers" (see December newsletter), we plan to publish a proceedings that incorporates all contributed papers. If possible, however, only a select few papers will be chosen for presentation at the conference. A possible alternative to paper presentations is to schedule and post times when papers can be discussed informally with the authors. If this practice is followed, most of the organized sessions would be of the tutorial, workshop, or discussion type. If you have any suggestions or would like to participate as a session leader, please contact me as soon as possible at: Dept. of Administrative
Science, Colby College, Waterville, Maine 04901 (phone 207/873-1131×587).

Editorial Comment (also by Larry Richards): There is a significant group of ASC members who believe strongly that simply having "Cybernetics" in the Society's name is not sufficient motivation for individuals to join and actively participate in the Society. There are other societies, that already have strong financial and administrative bases, that welcome the kinds of contributions that cyberneticians do and can make. These societies would love to have ASC members form special interest groups within their organizations. What we believe sets ASC apart is the spirit in which it pursues its intellectual heritage. For the Society to offer an alternative to other societies, this spirit must be reflected in its conferences, journal, newsletter, and involvement in community and world affairs. We believe that exemplification of this spirit provides the key to the future of the Society, rather than the number of library subscriptions to the journal or the size of the membership. The latter are peripheral. It is this belief that motivates the change in conference format.

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SGSR CONFERENCE
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The annual conference of the southeastern region of the Society for General Systems Research will be held in Louisville, Ky. April 21-23. The conference will include a joint session with the International Society for Ecological Modeling, vendor exhibits of microcomputer and video technologies, and a special post session on strategies for systems and computer literacy via information and instructional technologies. Sponsored by the Systems Science Institute, U. of Ky., Louisville 40292.

"Cybernetic Notes in Hand," the newsletter of the Cybernetics Society (in London), has arrived. It is edited by Annetta Pedretti. I believe that we can learn from their experience. The intent of their newsletter is to provide a forum for notes on cybernetic topics, and also to provide news and whatnot. Their very first issue contains an interesting article by Igor Aleksander entitled "Whatever Happened to Cybernetics?" which I will try to get permission to reprint here.

I would like some guidance from the readership of this newsletter as to what is appropriate material and what is not. I think it is clear that short articles of the type by Bruce Abele and Barry Clemson, printed recently in the Newsletter, are highly appropriate. What I am not so sure of is things like notices for conference proceedings, notes about books which have just come out, job openings, new journals, and such. On the one hand a newsletter does seem to be an appropriate vehicle for such things, but on the other there is a danger that they could swamp out the more interesting stuff and turn the Newsletter into little more than a piece of glorified junk mail. My short-term compromise has been to make personal decisions as to the number of readers that would be likely to be interested in such things, scrap the less-likely candidates, and print the more likely ones, or at least a skeleton of information with a suggestion that readers could get more information either from an address given or from me.

At the outset I said that the editorial policy of the newsletter would evolve as experience showed what was necessary. To evolve I need the advice of the readers, so please send in your comments! Feedback please.

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RDNDNCY
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by Roger Conant

Dd y knw tht mst rdrs f nglsh cn rd t vn f 11 th wvl f hv bn rmvd? sn't tht mzing?
Three conferences on cybernetics were held in the past six months, one in Europe, one in Mexico, and one in Canada. They provide a number of insights into the issues being discussed and the way the discipline is organized.

Namur, Belgium

The Ninth International Congress on Cybernetics was held in Namur, Belgium, 8-13 September 1980. About 150 people attended. Usually there were three parallel sessions. Papers were presented in English, French and Esperanto. There was no simultaneous translation between English and French. However, the sessions in Esperanto were translated into either or both English and French when translation was requested. Since my knowledge of French does not extend beyond the phrases required in a train station and restaurant, the French presentations were not accessible to me. On average the papers in Esperanto seemed better to me than the papers in English.

The congress was arranged by the International Association for Cybernetics (IAC) which was founded by Georges Boulanger in 1957. Boulanger is the current president and with Josse Lemaire has headed the organization for 25 years. Individuals, not societies, are members of IAC. The membership has declined from a peak of over 400 to now less than 100. All of its meetings have been held in Namur. It is primarily a European organization, although people from a variety of countries are represented on its board.

The IAC is significant in that it was the first cybernetics organization to be established. The proceeding of its conferences and its quarterly journal Cybernetica contain important papers by people such as Ross Ashby, Heinz Von Foerster, Stafford Beer and Gordon Pask. Articles appear in both English and French in about equal number.

The next few years will be important for IAC because Boulanger and Lemaire will retire in 1983. The organization has received office space and financial support from the Province of Namur. A new set of officers with institutional support will need to be found if the organization is to continue.

A central figure at the recent conference was Helmar Frank from the University of Paderborn in West Germany. Several months prior to the conference he negotiated an agreement with Boulanger. He promised a block of participants in the conference if Esperanto were accepted as a language of the conference. It appeared that without more participants the conference could not be held, so Boulanger agreed. During the business meeting a key subject of debate was whether articles in Esperanto should be accepted in the journal Cybernetica. Boulanger and Lemaire were concerned that university libraries (an important source of income) might not continue to take the journal if articles appeared in Esperanto. Several people said that usually libraries follow the recommendations of their faculty. If the faculty want the journal, the library will subscribe to it.

Esperanto is gaining increasing attention in Europe. Each time a new country joins the European parliament or other international organization, it wants its language to be an official language. The translating and publishing costs are becoming quite large. In 1976 the United Nations spent over 100 million dollars on language services. Since Esperanto is an artificial language, it has none of the genders or irregular verbs of natural languages. As a result it can be learned in one quarter to one fifth of the time that is required to learn English, German, Russian, Japanese, or a similar language. Although English is currently the dominant international language of science, it is difficult to learn to speak and understand since the way words are pronounced often
has little to do with how they are spelled. In Esperanto each letter has only one sound. Cyberneticians might be interested to know that Esperanto was invented in Poland in the 1880's by L. L. Zamenhof, a linguist who was a friend of Norbert Wiener's father.

Prior to attending this conference I had never given any serious thought to language as a constraint on the growth of science. However, I now find this to be an interesting issue. If an artificial international language could be adopted as the second language of all peoples, there would be large benefits in terms of an increased ability for people to communicate and reduced costs of administration, publication and education. Of course the transition to widespread use would take many years. Nevertheless I believe that ASC should consider adopting at some time in the future an international language as a second official language of the Society.

Acapulco, Mexico

The International Congress on Applied Systems Research and Cybernetics, 12-15 December 1980, was nominally sponsored by eleven scientific associations but in fact was the result of the work of George Lasker and his staff at the University of Windsor, Canada. ASC sponsored a panel on "Trends in Cybernetics" (see Newsletter #6 for abstracts) which was well attended and favorably received.

The conference consisted of as many as ten sessions held in parallel. One disappointment was that quite a few people listed in the program did not show up. Nevertheless over 500 people attended. The fuzzy set theorists claimed by far the largest presence. Ron Yager had arranged a total of 15 sessions on fuzzy set theory running in series. It was very nearly possible to attend the entire conference without leaving the world of fuzziness.

Keynote addresses were given by George Klir, Emilio Rosenblueth (nephew of Arthuro Rosenblueth and currently undersecretary of the Mexican Ministry of Education), Gordon Pask, Bela Banathy, Alfred Kuhn, Georges Boulanger, Stein Braten, and Lofti Zadeh. I personally enjoyed conversations with Ranulf Glanville and Annetta Pedretti, who are expanding the activities of the British Cybernetics Society.

A small ASC business meeting was held and attended by Roger Conant, Richard Jung, Howard Hilton, Jon Cunyngham, Akira Ichiikawa, Stuart Umpleby, and Virginia Holt. A number of suggestions for Society programs were made. Among them were: (1) Membership might be increased by sending out sample copies of the Newsletter. (2) Key articles from the past could be made available by reprinting them either in books or in Cybernetics Forum. (3) The relevance of cybernetics could be shown by writing accounts of successful applications. (4) Dictionaries and encyclopedias often give peculiar definitions of cybernetics. (For example the Encyclopedia Britannica classifies cybernetics as a branch of the mathematical theory of optimization.) The members of ASC could compose a more appropriate definition and history of the field and send it to the publishers of dictionaries and encyclopedias. (5) Interdisciplinary communication should be the chief selling point of the Society.

We then turned our attention to plans for the ASC conference in October 1981. There is considerable interest in different formats for holding conferences. For example, we could issue a call for papers. The papers would be available at the conference, but they would not be formally presented. A time would be scheduled when people could meet with the author of the paper. But most of the conference would be devoted to discussions of scheduled topics, perhaps half a day per topic. Also, not all of the time should be scheduled. This would permit the conference to adapt as it goes along. Suggestions for topics to be discussed included: (1) biological cybernetics, (2) how cybernetics can be helpful in arranging or optimizing communication, for
example at a conference, (3) cybernetics and peace, world stability, interaction of nations, prevention of global power monopolies or reduction of those that already exist.

Toronto, Canada

At the Society for General Systems Research (SGSR) conference in San Francisco in January 1980 one evening meeting was devoted to the ASC - what the programs of the reawakened Society should be. This year at the SGSR meeting in Toronto, 6-9 January 1981, ASC had a larger presence but still not a separate conference with our own registration.

Bill Reckmeyer and Roger Conant [mostly Bill - R.C.] arranged a joint panel for SGSR and ASC together with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The topic of the panel was "Frontiers of General Systems and Cybernetics Research." The speakers were George Klir, Heinz Von Foerster, Bill Gray, Stuart Umpleby and Michelle Small. Bill Reckmeyer served as moderator. The panel attracted and held an audience of about 80 or 90 people. A wide range of views were presented. Although interests may be similar, it is clear that people begin from different theoretical backgrounds.

The SGSR conference was held in the Four Seasons Hotel several blocks from the hotels where AAAS was meeting. Highlights of the meeting were sessions of more than an hour led by a single individual or devoted to a single topic. Under the guise of a tutorial on autopoiesis Heinz Von Foerster gave a dazzling portrayal of the history of cybernetics with an emphasis on its neurophysiological roots. Stafford Beer delivered the Ludwig Von Bertalanffy Memorial Lecture, "Death is Equifinal" and the next night followed with a reading of his Teilhard de Chardin lecture, "I said, you are Gods." Stafford's explorations continue to lead him in the direction of spiritual awareness. His presentation was laced with quotations from the Bible. By speaking softly and slowly, he constructed the atmosphere of a seance. The convergence of science, philosophy and religion has been a continuing theme in cybernetics and was best illustrated at this conference by Stafford's sessions.

Two meeting were held in Toronto to discuss ASC business. The following people attended one or both: Larry Richards, Barry Clemson, Allenna Leonard, Yves Bertrand, Roberto Caneta, Kjell Samuelson, Paul Henshaw, Stuart Umpleby, Doreen Stag, Bruce Abele, Roger Conant, Bill Reckmeyer, Stafford Beer and Gordon Pask. Most of the discussion, once again, focused on the October conference - its scheduling, style and content. Some reservations were expressed about having it following the American Society for Information Science (ASIS) meeting rather than with SGSR. I noted that some ASC members attend ASIS meetings but do not attend SGSR meetings. Holding our meeting with a different society each year has advantages in terms of building members but can be more difficult to schedule. This is a topic which merits more discussion. We should decide as soon as possible where and when we shall meet in 1982.

Yves Bertrand from Montreal asked how ASC was different from SGSR. By way of answering this question the members of the group listed ten possible topics for discussion at the October meeting: (1) epistemology and the nature of an observer, (2) community cybernetic centers, (3) standardization to aid communication and cut costs, in particular a common information retrieval language and an international language, (4) covert operations techniques and ethics, (5) culling institutional dinosaurs, (6) management cybernetics, (7) cryptocracy - coding and secret government, (8) art and cybernetics, (9) mass media, for example the current discussion of a "new international information order", (10) social learning processes. Questions intended to discern what these topics meant led to quite a bit of discussion. People presented theoretical analysis, technical facts, historical background and scenarios of possible social implications. There was a frank consideration of ethics. The October conference promises to be a lively and stimulating one.

A number of the other topics related to business affairs and programs were also discussed. These will be covered in a future issue of the Newsletter.
American Society for Cybernetics

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