



IFSR Newsletter

Official Newsletter of the International Federation for Systems Research

Editor-in-Chief: Gerhard Chroust

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**The Executive Board of the IFSR
(2016-2018)**

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| Dr. Mary C. Edson | Dr. Gary S. Metcalf | Dr. Jennifer Wilby | Prof. Ray Ison | Prof. Gerhard Chroust |
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Dear Readers!

Even-numbered years (2016!) provide milestones in IFSR's institutional life: The IFSR holds its biennial Board Meeting in order to take a look over the past two years, elect a new Executive Committee, and plan for the future.

In this Newsletter we present the members of the newly elected Executive Committee together with their messages, a summary of the Board Meeting held in May 2016,, the announcement of 3 new members, and a report from the IASCYS, the International Academy for Systems and Cybernetic Sciences.

With IFSR's best wishes for further successful cooperation

I remain yours truly

Gerhard Chroust



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Mary C. Edson: President's Message

Dear Fellow Systems Scientists, Cyberneticists, Practitioners, Colleagues, and Friends,

Issac Newton (1676) is often quoted in academia as stating, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." In organizations like the IFSR, the same principle applies. After serving three terms and six years as President of the IFSR, Dr. Gary Metcalf has passed the leadership baton as of May 1, 2016. As an umbrella society of societies in the Systems Sciences and Cybernetics, the IFSR has continued to thrive and emerge as an evolving service organization under Gary's leadership. Prior to 2010, Gary was also member of the Executive Committee, so it is with deep appreciation that I thank him for his steadfast service. Gary has agreed to stay on in a leadership role as Vice President of the Executive Committee (EC), so we will have the benefit of his insight into the organization and its members going forward into this 2016-2018 term.

In 2010, when Gary took office, he opened his President's Message acknowledging the important role of the Executive Committee members. Likewise, I thank Vice Presidents Mag. Stefan Blachfellner and Dr. Nam Nguyen, as well as Secretary General, Prof. Gerhard Chroust, for their dedication to the IFSR's

initiatives during the last term. While Stefan focused on improving the visibility of the IFSR, Nam focused on improving the quality of service to members. Taking up their responsibilities for future development of the IFSR are Dr. Ray Ison and Dr. Jennifer Wilby as Vice Presidents on the EC. Prof. Gerhard Chroust continues in his role, faithfully minding the ship, as Secretary General. He is also, again, taking care of IFSR's web-site, trying to make it more attractive and interactive. I am looking forward to working with each of them, along with Gary, as a team focused on continued development of the IFSR as a dynamic networking organization in service to its member societies and their members. The value of the IFSR is as the "go to" resource for everyone in the field of Cybernetics and the Systems Sciences. We look forward to serving you this term with the same level of commitment to building quality relationships that will keep the IFSR thriving.

As we look forward, we also need to attend to what has happened so far. In that spirit, this message will focus on updating you about current events and then discuss future developments.

Current Events and Future Developments

Welcome New Members of the IFSR

In April the membership of the IFSR expanded. We now have 45 members, of which 40 are FULL members. At the biennial General Assembly, we accepted the applications of new members. They are:

- INSTICC: The Institute for Systems and Technologies of Information, Control and Communication (<https://www.insticc.org/>), represented by Joaquim Filipe (No. 55)
- SCiO : Systems and Cybernetics in Organisation Ltd (www.scio.org.uk), represented by Patrick Hoverstadt (No. 56)

International Academy of Systems and Cybernetic Sciences (IASCYS, the “Academy”)

Last fall, Gary Metcalf and Gerhard Chroust attended a meeting in Chengdu, which included the election of Stuart Umpleby as President of IASCYS. We extend our congratulations to Stuart and the Executive Committee.

As some of you may already know, IASCYS is in the process of becoming independent from IFSR. For the time being, IASCYS's governance is independent, yet will operate as a special project under the auspices of the IFSR. Even with full independence our alliance is important as we continue efforts for promoting the Systems and Cybernetic Sciences (especially Education and Research). This cooperation was explicitly expressed in the

theme for the joint meeting in Chengdu, "Systemic Solutions for Systemic Problems." IASCYS remains similarly networked with WOSC and EUS-UES

In addition, last year IASCYS appointed two new Academicians: Constantin Negoita and Philip Chen. More recently, two additional Academicians have been appointed resulting from nominations by IFSR member societies (ASC and ISSS): Karl Müller and Klaus Krippendorff. We congratulate Constantin, Philip, Karl, and Klaus on their appointments as Academicians by IASCYS and for their contributions to the Cyber-Systemic Sciences.

The IFSR Conversation (Linz, April 3-8, 2016)

Also in April, three teams gathered the 18th Biennial IFSR (formerly Fuschl, Pernegg, etc.) Conversation in Linz, Austria. The Conversation was held again at Bildungshaus Sankt Magdalena, which is a seminar hotel on the outskirts of Linz, along the River Danube. Johannes Kepler University is just a little over a mile or kilometer away. Systems Literacy, guided by Peter Tuddenham, was the

overarching theme for this Conversation. A total of approximately 25 participants dispersed among three teams focused on these topics:

- 1.) Unity in Diversity,
- 2.) Application of Boulding's Skeleton of Science to Transdisciplinarity, and
- 3.) Relation of Systems Research to Systems Literacy.

The next IFSR Newsletter will contain details of the Conversation, so comments will be limited to the feedback received from participants. Those unfamiliar with the Conversation may be daunted by the idea of spending five days in a small group focused on a single topic, especially if accustomed to traditional conferences in which the formal lecture, unidirectional, rather than interactive and participatory. Feedback from participants tells us that while that unsettling feeling exists on Sunday, it evaporates quickly by mid-week. By Friday, most participants wonder where the week went because there is a sense that there hasn't been enough time to accomplish all that emerged from the week's Conversation. Here are some of the participants' comments from this Conversation:

My overall impression is...

- *"...possibly the most important work in the world. Needs acceleration."*
- *"...unsure what to expect. I had a chance to explore questions of interest to me."*
- *"...it was a fruitful week with rich experience."*
- *"...I can't wait until the next one!!!"*

- *"...brainstorming process with creative/critical thinking."*

Most of the participants enjoyed the collegiality and diversity of the teams. They also expressed that there is neither time nor the conditions for deep development of these subjects discussed in day-to-day academic- professional-career-work environments. The quality of interactions at this level received high marks for generativity and innovation, especially for collaboration and "co-creating knowledge," as one participant remarked.

As most social interactions continue to evolve into the 21st century globally, so must the Conversation. Several participants remarked about leveraging technology and social media to enrich the discussions. We will research these options, along with several other suggestions for improvements, in the months preceding the 19th Biennial Conversation. In the meantime, we ask our member societies to encourage their members to start thinking about topic proposals and to develop ideas with colleagues who may be interested in joining the Conversation in 2018.

Future Developments: IFSR International Series on Systems Science and Engineering



In recent months, Gary and Gerhard have been in contact with editors at Springer regarding revival of the IFSR's IFSR International Series on Systems Science and Engineering, which has been edited by George Klir, first President of the IFSR (1980 – 84). Originally, George Klir and Bela Banathy edited

a Systems Inquiry Series published by Aldine in Chicago with reprints by Intersystems Publication, which was based in Seaside, California. Eventually, this series was acquired by Springer.

The vision statement for the original series stated that,

Systems inquiry is grounded in a philosophical base of a systems view of the world. It has formulated theoretical postulates, conceptual

images and paradigms, and developed strategies and tools of systems technology. Systems inquiry is both conclusion oriented (knowledge production) and decision oriented (knowledge utilization). It uses both analytic and synthetic modes of thinking and it enables us to understand and work with ever increasing complexities that surround us and which we are a part of.

*The series aims to encompass all three domains of systems inquiry: systems philosophy, systems theory and systems technology. Contributions introduced in the Series [sic] may focus on any one or combinations of these domains or develop and explain relationships among domains and thus portray the systemic nature of systems inquiry (Banathy & Klir, front matter from *On Purposeful Systems*, Ackoff & Emery, 1972).*

The statement further expounds about the five kinds of presentations considered in the series at that time. Of important note is that the series was to be priced for accessibility to “various publics who have an interest in or are involved in the systems movement.” It is important to retain this intent and expand upon it as we move forward with the Series.

Some of you may recall that George Klir taught at the State University of New York at

What lies ahead for the IFSR?

As we have witnessed in these early years of the 21st century, change at many levels (society, economics, politics, and climate to name just a few) is accelerating largely due to technological advances. Our institutions need to adapt to these new conditions by serving our constituencies with sound governance that is timely, yet not capricious. That presents the IFSR, like most service organizations, with challenges and opportunities. Our strength rests in our community of systems scientists and

Binghamton since 1969. He expressed interest in passing the editorial torch last fall. Sadly, George passed away on May 27, 2016. Meanwhile, a new editor has been selected : Radim Belohlavek, Department of Computer Science, Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic, who has worked with George Klir for many years. Gary will continue to work in concert with Springer Publishers to organize the disparate systems titles, such as Complexity and Translational Systems Sciences (edited by Kyoichi Kijima and Hiroshi Deguchi), across Springer's business units to bring coherence existing titles in the series and attract new titles in its revival.

In the meantime, be sure to check out the newest titles in the Translational Systems Sciences series, *A Guide to Systems Research* edited by Mary Edson, Pamela Buckle Henning and Shankar Sankaran, which is a direct outcome of the 2014 Conversation, and will be released this July at the 60th Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS) in Boulder, Colorado, USA. *General Systemology* is forthcoming in 2017, by ISSS collaborators David Rousseau, Jennifer Wilby, Julie Billingham and Stefan Blachfellner.

cyberneticians who approach problem solving holistically. Our challenge is to adapt and implement well-timed programs and processes that meet current needs of our membership. The Executive Committee recognizes the urgency of the problems in need of Cyber-systemic approaches and it is prepared to support initiatives that further research, education, program development, and implementation of these approaches through its platforms for communication, collaboration, and

community action – especially using the biennial Conversation as an incubator for

innovation of Cyber-systemic endeavors.

Communicating with the IFSR Member Societies

Since high performing systems rely on feedback, both reinforcing and balancing, we encourage our member societies and their members to engage with us to keep the IFSR relevant to you and your work in the Cybernetic and Systems Sciences. We are continually updating and improving the website, so check in

regularly. Soon you will be able to exchange information and conveniently contact the Executive Committee with your ideas. We look forward to serving you in the term ahead.

Truly,

Mary C. Edson, Ph.D.

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Metcalf, G. S. (2010). IFSR President's Message 2010. *IFSR Newsletter*, 27(2), 1. Retrieved from: <http://www.ifsr.org/index.php/ifsr-presidents-message-2010/>

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I joined the Executive Committee of the IFSR in 2002, introduced by my doctoral mentor, Bela H. Banathy. I had just completed my Ph.D. in 2000, and this was only one year before Bela passed away in 2003. It was a time of many transitions for me, personally, and it has been a time of transition for the IFSR, and for our member organizations, as well.

When I accepted the role of IFSR President in 2010 I had hopes and aspirations for what might be accomplished. Some of those have been fulfilled, and many remain. The membership of the Federation has grown and

strengthened but our abilities to work as a unified body remain challenging.

The Conversations have moved from Fuschl am See, to Pernegg in 2010, and to St. Magdalena in Linz starting in 2012. These changes came with tradeoffs. The quaint fishing village in Fuschl, which holds nostalgic memories for many past participants, has been replaced by a space which is much more conducive to group work, including communication technologies. In Fuschl, teams huddled on stairwell landings or

shared space in the bar with local fishermen, then lined up at the one phone booth to share time on the dial-up connection to check email (when that finally came around). In Linz, the primary obstacle at present is having enough wall space to display a week's worth of flip chart pages all at once. Walks around the lake have been replaced by walks through the forest and past local farms. All of this, too, will change with time.

When I joined the EC in 2002, the U.S. was still recovering from the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. In 2003 the U.S. led an invasion into Iraq, the financial crisis of 2007-09 created instability in markets around the world, and in 2010 the Arab Spring began toppling governments throughout the Middle East. There were calls from individuals throughout this time that "we should do something." We – systems professionals – who prided ourselves on having better perspective and understanding than traditional, linear thinkers, should be able to offer solutions. The reality was, and still is, that we live professionally outside the walls of power where decisions get made. The term "system" is slowly finding its way into the common lexicon, but still in a very generic way, meaning something like "a level of organization which is too complex to address." If we want to affect true change, we have to get to the places where change happens.

There is tremendous potential in the work that we value. There is also irony in the fact that the wholeness that we see contrasts sharply with the fragmentation that is taking hold in so many spheres of our societies now. As has been so painfully evident, the collapse of unwanted systems does not by itself create better systems. We do have important perspectives to offer but we cannot expect other people to automatically understand or know how to use them. We have more work to do.

My intention for my own focus moving forward is to work on projects and efforts that can effect change. That still involves ideas, and it can still involve learning (even in education). It will also require, though, that we access the resources that we need (financial and otherwise), in order to move further into the world where most people live. It's good to be able to identify "messes," but sometimes it is necessary to get into them as well. My hope is that, together, we can start to gain access to the places that will matter.

Gary S. Metcalf



Jennifer Wilby: Vice President's Message

I am honored to be joining the Executive Board this year as a Vice President. I believe IFSR has an important role to play in facilitating conversations between all groups of systems researchers and practitioners, and in acting as a repository for systems materials. I hope to be able to contribute in these areas on behalf of IFSR in collaboration with the other members of the Executive. I have spent many years in the role of Vice President Administration for the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS), working on membership and administrative duties, but also administration for annual meetings in different locations each year. I am looking forward to the 2017 conference which will be held in Austria, and close links between the two organizations in

that year. In 2008/9 I was President of ISSS and am now a Trustee of the Society, and currently SIG Chair for Critical Systems Thinking and Practice.

My academic position is as emeritus senior researcher in management systems and sciences in The Business School, University of Hull, from where I have recently retired and my research interests include: developing systems resilience and flexibility in the management of complex systems, hierarchies and general system theory, service systems science and the development of critical systematic evaluations of research methods.

Jennifer Wilby



Ray Ison: Vice President's Message

I am delighted to be joining the IFSR executive at this exciting time for what I have been calling 'cybersystemics'. My rationale for using this term was explained in presentations at ISSS2016 in Berlin last year in my Presidential Address, and in a special 'systemic inquiry' at Herrenhausen Palace, Hanover last year. For those interested all of the talks at the Hanover

event and much of the background can be found at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/govan/>. Amongst other matters raised at these events was the significant institutional complexity in the cybersystemic field and the lack of intellectual and political influence for our interests and achievements – particularly in key policy and

research funding fora associated with the UN, Brussels, Washington and the like.

Some will know that I have been Professor of Systems at The Open University (OU), UK since 1994. Following many (ongoing) mergers we OU systems academics who number about 10 are now located in the School of Engineering and Innovation in a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Faculty. Within this broader structure we are organized as the Applied Systems Thinking in Practice (STiP) group (see <http://www9.open.ac.uk/mct-ei/research/applied-systems-thinking-practice/about>) and we are responsible for a successful MSc in Systems Thinking in Practice (see

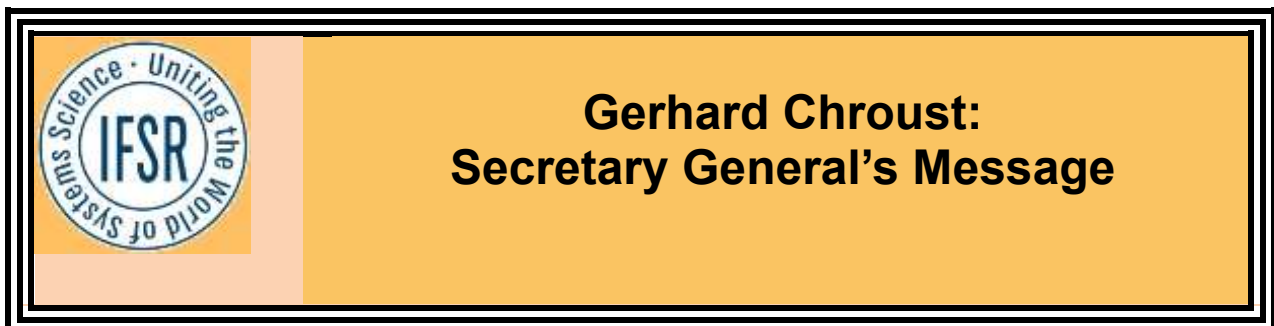
<http://www.open.ac.uk/choose/ou/systemsthinking>). We currently have just under 1500 alumni actively engaged in a LinkedIn community.

From 2008-15 I was also Professor at the Monash Sustainability Institute, Monash University, Australia where I developed and led the Systemic Governance Research Program, an interdisciplinary, systems-based research program focusing on water governance, climate change adaptation and social learning. At the

Open University I have through various commissioned projects and initiatives, usually entailing collaborative research, demonstrated how social learning, including systemic inquiry, can be employed as an alternative governance mechanism for managing in complex situations such as water governance, program and project governance, climate change adaptation, food security research, social learning and the purposeful creation of communities of practice. I am the author of the book (2010): Systems Practice: How to Act in a Climate-change World (Springer & OU). Most of my major research publications can be seen or accessed here: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/view/person/rli2.html>

For me, the IFSR has a basic structure fit for greater exploitation in the service of fostering and institutionalizing systems literacy at a global scale. Working with others I would like to leverage the possibilities inherent in its structure, history and people to further this aim. In particular I would like to explore how IFSR might support more meaningful relationships between Systems (read cybersystemic) educators and educational providers and support means to develop professional standards/competency frameworks

Ray Ison



I am proud to have been re-elected Secretary General of the IFSR, an office which I have held

since 1993. During these years the IFSR and consequently my work has changed

considerably: The number of members has risen from originally a handful societies to 45 and the Information Age demands new and faster ways of communication and co-operation for our members. In 1993 the link between the IFSR and its member societies our link was the Newsletter, published 4 times a year in 3000 to 4000 copies and mailed to our members for re-distribution.

Today a quick and intensive information interchange is a must and the IFSR has to provide this to stay viable. Our strategy will be based on four pillars:

- the IFSR website,
- Electronic Voting
- the IFSR NEWS service,
- and the IFSR Newsletter.

The *IFSR website* will offer up-to-date information for everybody and at the same time function as the archive of the IFSR, containing past Newsletters, IFSR Proceedings, general information about our members, projects, etc.

Since February of this year the IFSR Website has been fully operational after a long period of difficulties.



Electronic Voting: Important decisions are a prerogative of the Board, but a two year interval between the Board Meetings hampered our flexibility. Therefor we introduced in 2014 an

electronic voting system which allows the EC to ask for decisions of the member societies whenever necessary.

The *IFSR NEWS service*, powered by Mail Chimp, offers direct mail information of selected news to registered subscribers at irregular intervals, typically conference announcements. The subscription is open to everybody free of charge.

The *IFSR Newsletter* will continue essentially in its present form such as: containing after-the-fact reports especially from events with IFSR cooperation and relevant information from/to our members.



Most of the information is still provided by the IFSR Executive committee to the members based on information sent to me. I am now working to partially automatize this information transfer and I hope that this will increase the influx of information from our members. The biggest challenge is being able to improve the information interchange BETWEEN our members.

My challenges for the coming two years are:

- Improving and partly automating the information transfer between our members via the Web-Site and the IFSR NEWS-service
- Helping to improve the visibility of our *Journal of 'System Research and*



Behavior Science' and of our IFSR Books Series. Again the IFSR Website and the IFSR News will be the strategic tools for visibility and dissemination.

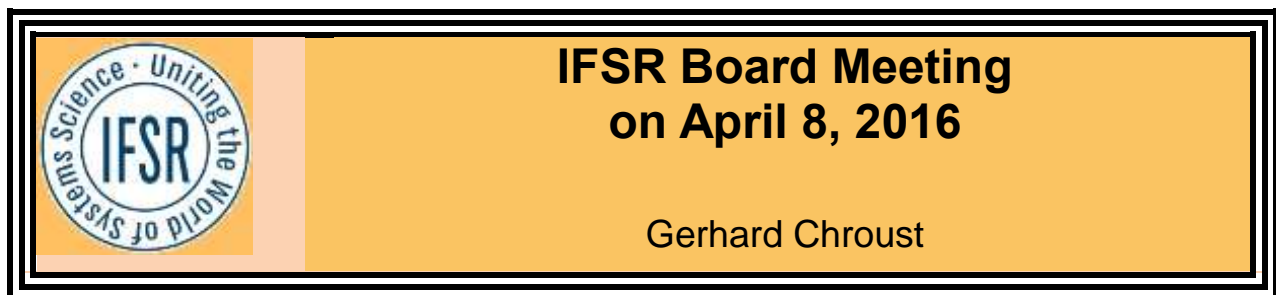
- Cooperating with the IASCYS (International Academy of Systems and Cybernetic Sciences), WOSC (World Organisation of Systems and Cybernetics) and UES/EUS (Union Européenne de Systémique / European Union for Systemics).

I invite you to look into our dissemination offerings, utilize these services to promote your ideas and plans. I also invite me to discuss any further cooperation initiatives and services the IFSR can provide.

To a successful future of the IFSR !

Yours truly

Gerhard Chroust



Short Summary of the Board Meeting of the IFSR

Friday, April 8, 2016, 13:00 – 16:30 Sankt Magdalena, Linz, Austria

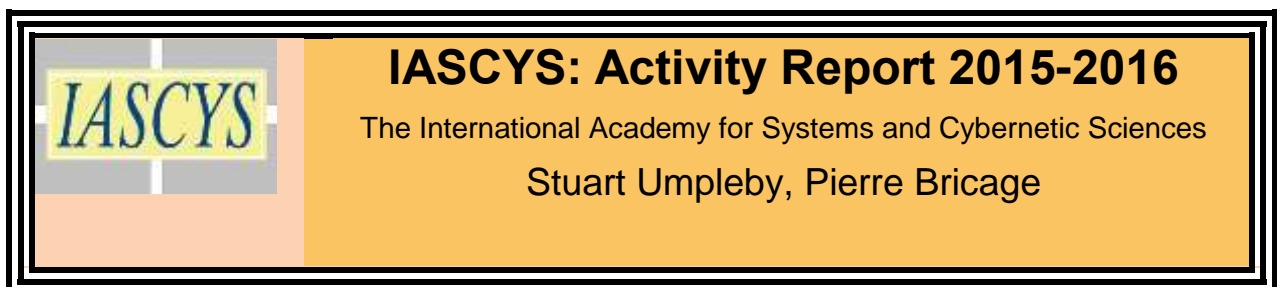
This is just a short summary of the essential items of the Board Meeting. More information can be found in the Messages of the members of the Executive Committee in this Newsletter. The full minutes will be sent to the members in due time.

- **Ranulph Glanville:** The Board commemorated Ranulph Glanville (13 June 1946 - 20 December 2014) who passed away in December 2014. Ranulph was one of the most active and outspoken representatives in the IFSR and instrumental in the creation of the IASCYS. We thank him for all his constructive comments and suggestions. Thank you, Ranulph!
- **New Members:** Since the last Board Meeting (April 2014) the following societies have been accepted as members



- (51) ISCE Institute for the Study of Coherence and Emergence (<http://isce.edu>), contact: Michael Lissack
- (52) S&O Systemes & Organisations ASBL (<http://www.so.be>), contact: Lambert Claude
- (53) HPSSS Hai Phong Systems Science Society (<http://iss2013.gov.vn/en-us/home.aspx>), contact: Hoang Thi Lien
- (54) SDN Systemic Design Network (<http://systemicdesign>), contact: Peter Jones
- (55) INSTICC The Institute for Systems and Technologies of (<https://www.insticc.org/>), contact: Joaquim Filipe
- (56) SCIO : SYSTEMS AND CYBERNETICS IN ORGANISATION Ltd (<http://www.scio.org.uk>), contact Patrick Hoverstadt

- **New IFSR Fellow:** Charles Francois: Following the motion by Gerhard Chroust, Secretary General of the IFSR, the IFSR-EC, bestowed on Charles Francois, Argentina, Honorary President of GESI, the title of "FELLOW OF THE IFSR" (Oct. 7, 2014)
- **New Logo:** In the wake of modernizing the IFSRF Website, we also created a new logo and banner for the IFSR (see at right).
- **Changes to the Constitution.** Experience with past procedures made it necessary to modify/improve minor details of the constitution of the IFSR:
 - Art. 8 (3), (6): According to an old tradition of the IFSR each member society had the right to send two voting delegates to the Board Meeting. To make voting consistent with the e-voting procedures, from now on each member society has only one vote but may send a second delegate without voting rights.
 - Art. 9 (2), (4), (6): In order to avoid confusions due to cultural differences with respect to workday versus holidays we translated all statements about durations from workdays to weeks. We adjusted the number of weeks such that only minimal changes to the original durations were introduced.
 - Art 11 (3) : Nominations for candidates for functions of the EC must be submitted 1 month in advance, in order to allow evaluation and consulting before the Board Meeting.
 - Art 11 (5) to (8) : We also clarified that in case of incapacity the President must be replaced by co-option within 1 month. Vice-presidents need not necessarily be replaced.



The International Academy for Systems and Cybernetic Sciences (IASCYS) has had an active year so far in 2015 and 2016. Among the officers of the Academy, Vice President Ranulph Glanville (UK) died very unfortunately of cancer. Stuart Umpleby replaced him as Vice President. Soon thereafter Robert Trappl stepped down as President due to the pressure of other work. Stuart Umpleby (USA) was made President to replace Trappl (Austria), who was elected Honorary President and a member of the Executive Committee. Ockie Bosch (Australia) was nominated and elected Vice President. Other members of the Executive Committee are Vice Presidents Matjaz Mulej (Slovenia) and Jifa Gu (PR China) and Pierre Bricage (France) as Secretary General.

There were important **administrative changes** in the Academy. IASCYS was originally founded as a part of the International Federation for Systems Research (IFSR). However, after several years of discussion a consensus emerged that the Academy could move forward more quickly if it became independent of IFSR and accepted nominations of academicians not only from IFSR but also The World Organization of Systems and Cybernetics (WOSC) and the European Union for Systemics (EUS). These proposed changes were submitted to the IASCYS academicians and approved. Consequently IASCYS is now accepting nominations of academicians from societies that are members of the three associations (IFSR, WOSC, EUS).

In late July 2015 about fifty people active in the systems and cybernetics field, including several academicians, attended a meeting with executives of the Volkswagen Foundation at Herrenhausen in Hannover, Germany, to discuss the present and future of the field. Ray Ison and Louis Klein were

instrumental in arranging this meeting. Later in August several of those who were at the Volkswagen Foundation meeting, attended the annual conference of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS) in Berlin. Ison and Klein had key roles in arranging this meeting as well. In October 2015 there was an IASCYS workshop in Chengdu, China, on the topic **Systemic Solutions for Systemic Problems**. This meeting was arranged by academicians Jifa Gu and Jiuping

Xu. Several academicians attended this conference and an IASCYS business meeting was held.

In November 2015 IASCYS cosponsored a World Conference on Complex Systems in Marrakesh, Morocco. A key topic was fuzzy systems.

The Executive Committee endorsed Ockie Bosch's course and book, **"What do Systems Scientists say?"** Our hope is that this course is just the first of many educational programs on systems science and cybernetics that members of the Academy will conduct.

In March 2016 two new Academicians were elected. Constantin Negoita, from Romania, has spent his career working in the US, primarily on fuzzy systems. Philip Chen, who was educated and worked in the US, is now dean of engineering at the University of Macau in China. Both Negoita and Chen have been very active in the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).



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