

Newsletter

europaen society for cognitive psychology

Groningen, 10th Nov. 1991

Dear Colleagues,

It is some time since the last Newsletter, so it seems appropriate to get in touch and keep you up to date with Society News. Since last I wrote, two of our best known members Donald Broadbent and Paul Bertelson have reached the 65 mark but happily, have not retired from the cognitive scene! We wish them both a happy, healthy and prosperous future and look forward to continuing to meet them at future society meetings. Paul being president of our society can of course not excuse himself! In spite of his being one of the organisers of the XXVth International Congress of Psychology in July next year, he will be chairing our 5th Conference in September in Paris. Further information about this meeting is given on the following page. The planning is something as follows: abstracts should be sent by February 15. You will hear whether or not your paper/poster or symposia has been accepted toward the end of March. At this time you will also be sent a provisional programme, more information about local arrangements and a registration form. The venue- Paris- is an exciting one - let's also make the conference exciting by as many of us as possible coming along and sharing our new ideas and data with each other.

We have also been active on the Summer School front. Our third school - indeed I should say our third successful summer school was organised earlier this summer by Herbert Heuer. You can read more news about this event elsewhere in the Newsletter (our thanks to the contributors!) but this is a good opportunity to formally convey our thanks to Herbert and his fellow organisers for all the hard work they put into making this such a worthwhile and successful occasion. While giving bright young researchers the opportunity to participate in such summer schools is one of the major goals of our society, we cannot achieve these goals without someone doing an awful lot of hard work. We are indebted to members such as Herbert and Paolo for putting in so much effort. Fortunately, new victims keep appearing and I am happy to say that preliminary plans appear to be already underway for the 4th school which will take place in 1993 - (rumour has it that the topic will be psycholinguistics!).

Portugal has laid its cards on the table! They have recently formed a cognitive psychology section and are staking claims to organise the next general conference in 1994. I admire their initiative and thank Amâncio da Costa Pinto for sending me the contribution. What else has been happening on the European front? I have heard on the psychology grapevine that Israel has now also started a cognitive psychology section - also that Alan Baddeley received an honorary doctorate from Umeå -but unfortunately noone has sent me any concrete evidence! Maybe Portugal's example will encourage more of our members to put pen to paper! If we have enough news, the next newsletter could be sent out along with the provisional programme. Think about it!

James Jaeger

Fifth Conference of the European Society for Cognitive Psychology

Paris, 12-16 September 1992

Call for Papers

The Fifth General Conference of the Society will be held in Paris, 12-16 September 1992. Dr. Michel Denis, from the University of Paris-Sud, Orsay, who is a member of the Advisory Board of the Society, has agreed to take on the role of local organiser. He has an able support team in Drs. Jean-Paul Caverni (Aix), Marguerite Cocude (Orsay), Jonathan Grainger (Paris), Anh Nguyen-Xuan (Saint-Denis) and Guy Tiberghien (Grenoble). Together I'm sure they will ensure that our Fifth Conference will not only be an enjoyable get together of our members, but will also be a smooth running, high quality scientific meeting. As with previous General Conferences, the final responsibility for the scientific programme will rest with the Executive Committee of the Society, in cooperation with the local organizer.

The venue of the Conference will be the 'Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris'. The 'Cité Universitaire' has the unique feature of being located close to the centre of Paris (the Latin Quarter being only three subway stations away), but with the additional bonus of being situated in a residential park in a pleasant campus environment. The Cité Universitaire hosts many international conferences and is therefore suitably equipped with complete catering services for lunches and dinners, and many other facilities (post office, bank, shops, theatre, concert halls, tennis courts, etc.). Accommodation is available on campus. The residencies offer facilities and comfort comparable to those of excellent hotels, but at very reasonable prices. Since our aim is to encourage as many members as possible to attend, this is an important consideration!

Members of the Society are invited to submit proposals for papers. These may be of two types: individual papers or symposia. All proposals, typed on the enclosed abstract form, should be forwarded in quadruplicate to the Secretary of the Society, Dr Janet Jackson, Institute of Experimental Psychology, University of Groningen, Grote Kruisstraat 2/1, 9712 TS Groningen, The Netherlands. The deadline for sending proposals is 15 February 1992.

Individual papers should be submitted together with an indication of the author's preference for giving an oral or poster presentation. The scientific committee, whose task it will be to arrange thematically coherent sessions, will be finally responsible for the allocation of each accepted paper to either an oral or a poster discussion session. Particularly if the number of submissions is large, this latter presentation format is often superior and it is not our wish to attach any differential value to these two forms of presentation. Our aim is to provide the best possible vehicle for as many people as possible to share their new findings with their colleagues in the society.

The Conference will also host a limited number of symposia. Themes should not be too narrowly restricted, but should aim to offer 'state of the art' information on topics of general interest to contemporary cognitive psychologists. Symposia may be allocated between 90 and 180 minutes in the Conference programme, as requested by their convenors. It is expected that participants in such symposia will be representative of our European endeavours (in other words, they should come from many different countries!). Proposals should be made in the form of a set of \pm 200-word abstracts (one from each contributor printed on enclosed form), preceded by a short introduction by the convenor.

In the midst of all the festivities surrounding 1992, we hope that our Fifth Conference will once again be a significant meeting and will contribute to our aim of promoting the level and quality of interactions among European cognitive psychologists.

We hope to see you all in Paris!

Summer School on Cognitive Aspects of Motor Behaviour

Ohlstadt, 18 - 31 August, 1991

There is an emergent tradition of summer schools in ESCoP: this one was the third in a series which began with memory followed by perception. While these two topics belong to established fields in our society, motor behaviour is more of a minority theme within our group. When starting preparation for the event, we were therefore rather pleased to discover that there was a highly similar plan already afoot in Europe. This plan originated from a research consortium named MUCON (Multisensory Control of Movement) working within the ESPRIT II Program. The next obvious step was obviously to join forces. We did this and established a working committee composed of Alain Berthoz (Paris), Marc Jeannerod (Bron), Paolo Viviani (Geneva), Alan Wing (Cambridge) and myself. Our first task was to search for sufficient money to fund the school. Once again, as with the memory summer school, we were very fortunate in getting enormous support from the Volkswagenstiftung, Hannover, Germany. Without their help, this event may never have taken place.

Somewhat unexpectedly more than seventy applications arrived in response to our initial announcements and, since we had only accommodation and funding for a restricted number, we had to face the unpleasant task of selecting forty participants. This was no easy task. However, probably as a result of the involvement of two different organisations as well as the highly cross-disciplinary nature of the field of motor behaviour, the group of people who finally assembled in Ohlstadt came from quite varied backgrounds. These included psychology, physical education, biology, physiology, physics, physiotherapy and engineering. What they found in this small Bavarian village was not only an excellent conference centre, but also wonderful mountains and lakes nearby and of course, not so far away a big city called Munich. And of course, there was also the summer school that left very little time indeed to enjoy the more pleasant things of life! At the end of 10 days of lectures, tutorials and other events almost everyone was utterly exhausted, and at the end of the 11th day, the last one, there was a feeling of considerable relief!

The exhaustion resulted from several contributing factors:

- a series of 22 lectures by 11 lecturers from various European countries as well as the US;
- a series of four guest lectures, again by speakers from Europe and the US;
- a total of 12 presentations by students given at three evening sessions;
- two poster sessions and several informal poster discussions on 22 posters presented by the students;
- daily tutorials with five tutorial groups running in parallel (and different tutors for the first and second week);
- demonstrations of software and hardware by students, lecturers, tutors and a commercial company in the afternoon; computers had been made available by the Institut für Arbeitsphysiologie, Dortmund;
- several informal groups and discussions during the somewhat limited spare time;
- heavy use of the small library (at least as judged by the fact that many books were absent for the larger part of the two weeks).

All in all, the schedule of the summer school was pretty hectic. However we - and here I can certainly speak for all the organizers - do hope that it was a worthwhile effort, not only for the students, but also for the staff who participated. By "worthwhile" I do not only refer to an increase in individual knowledge, but also to an integration of the field across established subject areas and national borderlines.

Herbert Heuer.
Dortmund, Germany

Revisiting the Summer School on "Cognitive Aspects of Motor Behaviour"

From August 18th to August 31st, 1991, forty youngsters from eleven European countries participated in the joint Summer School "Cognitive Aspects of Motor Behaviour", which was held in Ohlstadt, Germany. The program included 22 lectures, 4 guest lectures, 11 tutorials, 12 student presentations and 2 poster sessions (how on earth was it possible to pack all this into 2 weeks?!). We started on Monday morning ready for anything.

Imagine a lecture room filled with forty young, bright and eager scientists, ready to conquer the scientific world with new discoveries and deep insights. All that separated us from eternal glory was one single summer school. Then Gruesser started his lecture by telling us about the history of the efference copy concept, and reminded us of a very basic scientific law; if you think you have discovered something new, you probably haven't done your homework properly. All aspirations for Nobel prizes and other scientific awards started to fade away. Fortunately, we did not have to deny our ambitions too long, because Jeannerod taught us all about reaching and grasping. What else could he mean but reaching out for our goals and grasping scientific awards? We even appear to have specialized brain structures for these functions! Soechting explained how to deal with the multitude of degrees of freedom necessary to attain our goals. We were warned by Viviani not to be overly optimistic, however: science is governed by laws of power and we will meet a lot of resistance along our way upwards. We were encouraged again by Deecke; it is all a matter of proper preparation, and Requin: even monkeys can do it. And, should anything go wrong, Kelso assured us, just throw in an Arnol'd tongue and order will emerge from chaos.

The path which we should follow in pursuing our careers was explained in more detail during the second week of the summer school. Sugden proposed that we should avoid talking too long but instead should play tennis with important people.

The opposite strategy was recommended by Keele: do talk with a lot of people, especially about the meaning of life, late at night while drinking Bavarian beer. And, first and foremost, be sure to do it using a modular approach. However, even if talking and playing tennis are prerequisites for a fast scientific career, the awards (and that is what we are ultimately interested in) have to be related to some form of experimental work. Now we come up against a problem, since experiments virtually always yield unexpected results. But Lacquaniti demonstrated very nicely how to face obstacles like this using a very simple blink reflex experiment: just ignore the actual outcome of the experiment and insist that you found what you expected to find. Aha, that is the secret! Just put the expected results into Jordan's neural network, stir, and ready we are! Or, perform the experiment in space, as Berthoz suggested. All that remains to be done then is to write the experiment down, trying to avoid too many typographical errors (unless Schaffer is to be one of the reviewers).

A last tip came from Bridgeman and was intended for those of us who will be writing for psychological journals: write whatever you want, but DON'T USE MATHEMATICS!

If all this was not enough to guarantee award-winning research, there was always Jacques Paillard. He was present during the whole two weeks and, in a fatherly manner, took ample time to help all of us fill in any details. Last but not least, there was the main organizer of the Summer School, Herbert Heuer. Poor Herbert! The Summer School has divided his soul ('zwei Seelen leben, ach, in meiner Brust') and on top of that, he had to listen to speeches of acknowledgment in eleven different languages. We hope he recovers soon. From the party on the last evening it became clear that Europe is becoming smaller; we all plan to do research together, and were able to celebrate our acquaintance with multi-folk dancing.

Well, be sure to note the forty names of the participants of the Summer School. You will certainly be hearing from us in the future. We are ready to face the challenge: science, here we come!

Geert van Bortel KUB/Tilburg and
Harold Bekkering RL/Maastricht,
The Netherlands

P.S. 1. Those of you who have not yet contacted Joerg Sangais for reimbursement matters, should do so between 4 and 5 p.m. at the reception.

P.S. 2. Don't have Alan Wing organize any more lotteries. He cheats!

Portuguese Psychology Society - Cognitive Section

The Cognitive Section of the Portuguese Psychological Society, which was established early in 1990, had its first scientific meeting this year on 17-18 May in the new building of the Faculty of Psychology of the University in Lisbon. Ten papers, most of them dealing with psycholinguistics, human memory, and visual cognition, were presented to an audience of about 30 participants. The next meeting will be held in May 1992 in Porto and we hope to invite a few well-known psychologists to give one or more tutorial lectures on key cognitive issues. The Cognitive Section also decided that at the next General Meeting of the Society in Paris in September, we would propose that our Portuguese section would be a suitable candidate to organise the 6th Conference of the ESCoP. If our proposal were successful, we believe that it would do a great deal to foster cognitive psychology in Portugal.

The Cognitive Section address is: Dr. Brito Mendes, Seccao Cognitiva da SSP, Faculdade de Psicologia, Alameda da Universidade, 1600 Lisboa, Portugal.

British Psychology Society: Cognitive Psychology Section 2nd International Conference on Thinking

Polytechnic South West, Plymouth, UK
27th - 31st July, 1992

Call for Submissions

Submissions of papers and symposia for this conference are invited on the topic of empirical and theoretical research on human thinking. This conference is a successor to the highly successful International Conference on Thinking held in Aberdeen in 1988.

Whilst the principal focus is on psychological studies of human thinking, relevant contributions from other branches of cognitive science are also encouraged. Suitable psychological topics include problem solving, decision making, representational issues, reasoning, induction, creativity, undirected thought, neuropsychology of thinking and pathological studies of thinking. Related cognitive science topics include computational approaches to reasoning and problem solving, and issues in the philosophy of mind.

Individual Papers

Proposals should consist of an abstract of 100-150 words and an extended summary of 1000 words, together with the titles of each contribution and the name(s) of each participant. Individual papers will normally be allocated 25 minutes. Two copies of the abstract and summaries should be included.

Symposia

Abstracts and summaries of individual papers should be submitted as above. In addition, a general summary of the symposia should be submitted.

To avoid problems of overlap, those planning to propose symposia are advised to contact Jonathan Evans as soon as possible (Telephone 0752-233157).

Proposals should be submitted by March 1st 1992 to

Professor Jonathan Evans
Department of Psychology
Polytechnic South West
PLYMOUTH
PL4 8AA

Venue

Plymouth is situated on the Cornwall-Devon border. It can be reached by train (three hours from London) and has an airport with regular flights to and from London Heathrow.