International Society for Intellectual History

President’s Report 2020

Dear ISIH Member,

This report is being circulated to members of the International Society for Intellectual History in lieu of the ISIH annual general meeting, in accordance with provisions in the ISIH constitution.

1. Presidency

The first item to report is that I have assumed the presidency of the society, after Michael Hunter stepped down earlier than originally planned. Michael has been a hard-working and dedicated chair, since assuming the role in 2014. ISIH is deeply grateful for his work, and we look forward to his continuing association with the Society as a member of the Advisory Board.

1. Annual Conference

This year’s ISIH conference, which was due to be held in Florence, had to be cancelled because of the global pandemic. I would like to set on record our thanks to the organiser, Ann Thomson, and her team at the European University Institute, for all their organisational work prior to cancellation. We had hoped that the conference might be postponed until next year, but sadly this has not proved possible.

I am, however, glad to report that we are making plans for the 2021 conference, which will be held in Venice in September 2-4 at Ca’Foscari University. The theme of the conference will be “Histories of Knowledge: Political, Historical and Cultural Epistemologies in Intellectual History”. It will be organised by Charles Wolfe and Pietro Omodeo. Further information about this will be posted on ISIH website.

ISIH is always glad to receive proposals for future annual conferences, especially from would-be organisers for venues across the world. Please contact me if you would like to propose a conference.

1. Finance

ISIH Treasurer, Adam Sutcliffe reports that society’s finances are in good fettle—the main source of income being royalties from the journal. He has various suggestions for future expenditure, which will be discussed by the Executive Committee with a view to making a recommendation at the next general meeting of the society.

1. *Intellectual History Review*

Thomas Ahnert has been appointed editor of the *Intellectual History Review*, taking over from Stephen Clucas who has held the role since the inception of the journal. Thomas will be assisted by James Lancaster who takes over from Stephen Gaukroger as Special Issues editor, at the end of the year. On behalf of ISIH I would like to thank both Stephen Clucas and Stephen Gaukroger for their sterling work, in helping to develop the journal from its first publication to become a leader in its field—a remarkable achievement. They will continue their association with ISIH as a member of the Advisory Board. Communications Director.

The journal continues to attract a healthy number of strong submissions and a very strong supply of material for special issues. There will be new appointments to the editorial board to cover unrepresented areas, such as non-Western intellectual history and post-1800 intellectual history.

1. Communications Director

Michelle Pfeffer has been appointed Communications Director, with responsibility for the ISIH website and Twitter account. She takes over from James Lancaster, whom we thank for his service in the role. One of Michelle’s first tasks will be to make changes to the website to update it and to make it more user-friendly.

1. Charles Schmitt Prize

The generosity of an anonymous donor makes it possible for ISIH to offer this prize on an annual basis. The prize is for an essay by a doctoral student or a recently-graduated post-doc on any area of intellectual history. The prize judges this year were Michael Hunter, Stephen Gaukroger and myself. The winner was Jon Cooper, whose essay, 'A Science of Concord: The Politics of Commercial Knowledge in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain' will appear in *IHR*. In view of the high quality of the submissions the judges decided to make special commendation of the runners-up, with the recommendation that their essays be published in *IHR*. They are Michelle Pfeffer, for her essay, 'Paganism, Natural Reason, and Immortality: Charles Blount and John Toland’s Histories of the Soul'; Hugo Bonin for his essay, 'Between Panacea and Poison: “Democracy” in British Socialist Thought, 1881–1891', and Paige Donaghy for her essay ‘False Conceptions and Wind Eggs’.

1. Constance Blackwell Prize

It is the intention of ISIH to institute a prize in honour ISIH founder, the late Constance Blackwell. It is proposed that this be a prize for the best book in intellectual history in any given year. Discussion of the details are ongoing, and I hope to be able to report the setting-up of the prize at the next general meeting.

Sarah Hutton

President International Society for Intellectual History

Honorary Visiting Professor, University of York