

Member News

2009 George Sarton Memorial Lecture in the History and Philosophy of Science at the AAAS
This year's Sarton Lecturer at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science was **Ken Alder**, Professor of History and Milton H. Wilson Professor in the Humanities at Northwestern University, where he also directs the Science in Human Culture Program. At the Chicago meeting in February, attended by approximately 5,000 people from around the world, Ken's title was "A History of the International Scientific Conference."

The audience of around 75 persons appreciated how Ken brought the topic to life with his usual historical insight spiced with dashes of humor. Ranging from Isaac Newton's international correspondence to the politics of today's global-warming congresses, Ken focused on the topic explored in one of his recent books, [*The Measure of All Things: The Seven-Year Odyssey and Hidden Error that Transformed the World*](#) (New York: Free Press, 2002), which won HSS's Watson Davis and Helen Miles Davis Prize in 2003. The book and the lecture are the story of how the meter was established as an international standard of measure. Supposedly based on nature (one ten-millionth of the distance from North Pole to equator), the meter turns out to be the product of political and economic twists and turns, compromises, and shocking discoveries—in short a product of intense negotiation, sometimes continued by military means. Only historians could suspect that a supposedly straightforward measure of nature could be so full of intrigue! That Napoleon himself was an active participant in the Paris Congress of 1798 is one tip off. Even today, as Ken remarked in his lecture, critics question the national loyalties of scientists participating in international gatherings that examine such issues as climate change and nuclear disarmament.

So is "the messy work of science—like the making of laws and sausages— . . . best kept out of public view"? Most of us in the science studies professions would surely agree with Ken Alder that, quite to the contrary, the public needs to be better educated about how science is done, and that we need to combat chauvinistic nationalism in science and technology policy by trying to convince members of the general public that they, too, should have multiple loyalties, like those good cosmopolitans of old. By the way, the AAAS is really an international organization engaged in just such activities, so HSS members are encouraged to join!

By Tom Nickles, Retiring Chair, AAAS, Section L (History and Philosophy of Science)

Jeffrey Barrett, Professor of Logic and Philosophy of Science at the University of California, Irvine, has been selected as the next Editor in Chief of the Association's journal, *Philosophy of Science*. He succeeds Michael Dickson, current editor, on 30 June 2009.

Richard Healey, University of Arizona, has been awarded this year's Lakatos Award for his book

[*Gauging What's Real: The Conceptual Foundations of Contemporary Gauge Theories*](#) (Oxford University Press, 2007). The prize of £10,000 is awarded by the London School of Economics and Political Science for an outstanding contribution to the philosophy of science. Healey will visit LSE to receive the award and give the Award Public Lecture during summer term, 2009. Gauge theories have provided our most successful representations of the fundamental forces of Nature. How, though, do such representations work to tell us what kind of world our gauge theories reveal to us? Professor Healey's book describes the representations provided by gauge theories in both classical and quantum physics. The Lakatos Award is given for an outstanding contribution to the philosophy of science, widely interpreted, in the form of a book published in English during the previous five years. It was made possible by a generous endowment from the Latsis Foundation. The Award is in memory of the former LSE professor, Imre Lakatos, and is administered by an international Management Committee organized from the LSE.

David A. Hollinger, University of California, Berkeley, has been elected President-Elect of the Organization of American Historians, and will become President of that 9,000-member professional association in March of 2010.

Trevor H. Levere, University Professor Emeritus at the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (IHPST) at the University of Toronto, has been awarded the 2009 [Sidney M. Edelstein Award](#) for Outstanding Achievement in the History of Chemistry. Starting as an undergraduate chemistry major at Oxford in 1962, Levere changed his focus to the history of chemistry. Levere received his D.Phil. in 1969 with a thesis that appeared in 1971 as *Affinity and Matter: Elements of Chemical Philosophy 1800-1865*. His *Transforming Matter: A History of Chemistry from Alchemy to the Buckyball*, appeared in 2001, and is often considered one of the best histories of chemistry in several decades, presenting the subject in a readable style to a large audience beyond the specialist. The Edelstein Award is supported by HIST and the Chemical Heritage Foundation of Philadelphia and will be presented to Levere at the fall national meeting of the American Chemical Society in Washington, D.C. in August 2009.

Svante Lindqvist has been appointed President of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences for a three-year period, beginning in July 2009. Svante Lindqvist is Director of the Nobel Museum and a former Professor of History of Technology at the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awards the Nobel Prizes in Physics and Chemistry and the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel. The Academy was founded in 1739 and its first President was Linnaeus.



Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, winner of the 2008 [Koyré Medal](#) (the highest award given by the International Academy for the history of science) is pictured here with [Ron Numbers](#), winner of the 2008 Sarton Medal (the highest honor given by the HSS) visiting during a meeting of the Division of the History, Science, and Technology in Amsterdam, December 2008.

Michael J. Neufeld has been awarded the [Richard W. Leopold Prize of the Organization of American Historians](#), the [Eugene M. Emme Astronautical Literature Award](#) from the American Astronautical Society, and a Secretary's Research Prize from the Smithsonian Institution, all for [Von Braun: Dreamer of Space, Engineer of War](#) (New York: Knopf, 2007). He was also a finalist for the Los Angeles Book Prizes in the category of biography. Von Braun has now appeared in a Vintage paperback edition and in spring 2009 will appear in Danish and German translations.

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