

## History of the Psychonomic Society III: The meetings of the Psychonomic Society

DONALD A. DEWSBURY  
*University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida*

A primary function of the Psychonomic Society, founded in 1959, has been the conduct of scientific meetings. Its first 37 meetings have been held in 18 different cities, St. Louis being the most popular with 11 meetings. The 5 Chicago meetings have been held at 5 different sites. Although there have been some changes in format and procedure, there has been a general adherence to guidelines laid down by the Society's founders whereby the format is kept simple, with a strong emphasis on the communication of results of scientific research.

From its founding in 1959, the primary function of the Psychonomic Society has been to conduct meetings at which scientific information could be exchanged (see Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995). From the beginning, the meetings were to be Spartan, with an emphasis on scientific communication and few frills. As summarized by the founding Governing Board:

No special events, eg symposia, invited addresses, etc. will be scheduled. No commercial exhibits of any sort will be permitted. No formal relationship with, or provisions for, the press will be established. The Chairman of the Arrangements Committee will take such steps as are necessary to work with the University of Chicago's Public Relations Office. Reporters will not be barred; they will be referred to those giving papers for any special information they may request. (GB Minutes, March 31 and April 1, 1960<sup>1</sup>)

Clearly, the founders were reacting to the meetings and structure of the American Psychological Association (APA) and trying to keep their meetings and structure free of what they regarded as fluff that was unrelated to hard science. These basic principles would be challenged repeatedly. In some respects, the meetings have changed over the years, but in others, the same core principles remain intact.

### TIME AND PLACE

The first annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society was held September 1-3, 1960 at the University of Chicago (see Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995). The meeting was timed to just precede the meeting of the APA also

held in Chicago that year. An initial poll of the membership, taken in 1960, indicated that 60% of the respondents preferred meetings on a campus near the annual APA meeting. The next three meetings were also on college campuses: Columbia University, Washington University in St. Louis, and Bryn Mawr College. Ever since, meetings have occurred in hotels, generally in large cities. This has probably been because of the meeting's size and, as the timing of the meetings changed, the difficulty that most universities have in providing space when classes are in session.

The first four meetings were held on Labor Day weekend, in association with the APA meetings. A 1961 poll indicated that a majority favored changing the date, but the members were badly divided as to what time of year they preferred (GB Minutes, March 1961). Yet another poll was taken during the planning of the 1964 meeting, which was to be held in Niagara Falls (GB Minutes, March 1963), and as a result, the meeting took place in October. The date gradually moved into November during the late 1960s and has remained in November ever since.

The Psychonomic Society has met in a total of 18 different cities. From the beginning, it has generally been the policy to move the meetings around the country (see Table 1). The only meeting to take place outside of the United States was that at Niagara Falls, Ontario in 1964. Only three cities have hosted more than 2 meetings: St. Louis, with 11; Chicago, with 5; and San Antonio, with 3. As can be seen in the table, the Chase Park-Plaza was an especially popular site, hosting nearly one quarter of all the meetings.

In 1971, the Governing Board adopted a policy of alternating the meeting according to a pattern of West, Central, East, Central, West, Central, East, Central, etc. (GB Minutes, 1971). Examination of Table 1, given a liberal interpretation of these three regions, reveals such a general pattern beginning with 1975. A breakdown by more conventional geographic regions yields a summary of 46% of the meetings in the Midwest, 22% in the Northeast, 15% in the South and Southwest, and 15% in the West. We can compare this distribution with the results

---

I thank J. P. Chalarca for his help in analyzing the content of meeting programs from 1960 to 1995 and Betty Capaldi, William Estes, Judith Goggin, Gregory A. Kimble, and Michael Rashotte for commenting on an earlier draft of this article. Correspondence should be addressed to D. A. Dewsbury, Department of Psychology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2065 (e-mail: dewsbury@psych.ufl.edu).

Note—This is the third part of a four-part history of the Psychonomic Society (see Dewsbury, 1996; Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995).

**Table 1**  
**Meetings of the Psychonomic Society**

Year	City	Hotel
1960	Chicago	University of Chicago
1961	New York	Columbia University
1962	St. Louis	Washington University
1963	Bryn Mawr	Bryn Mawr College
1964	Niagara Falls	Sheraton-Brock
1965	Chicago	Edgewater Beach
1966	St. Louis	Chase-Park Plaza
1967	Chicago	Sheraton-Chicago
1968	St. Louis	Chase-Park Plaza
1969	St. Louis	Chase-Park Plaza
1970	San Antonio	Hilton Palacio del Rio
1971	St. Louis	Chase-Park Plaza
1972	St. Louis	Chase-Park Plaza
1973	St. Louis	Chase-Park Plaza
1974	Boston	Statler-Hilton
1975	Denver	Denver Hilton
1976	St. Louis	Chase-Park Plaza
1977	Washington	Shoreham Americana
1978	San Antonio	Hilton Palacio del Rio
1979	Phoenix	Del Webb's Townehouse
1980	St. Louis	Chase-Park Plaza
1981	Philadelphia	Philadelphia Sheraton
1982	Minneapolis	Hyatt Regency
1983	San Diego	Sheraton Harbor Island East
1984	San Antonio	Hilton Palacio del Rio
1985	Boston	Boston Park Plaza
1986	New Orleans	Hyatt Regency
1987	Seattle	Seattle Sheraton
1988	Chicago	Palmer House
1989	Atlanta	Hyatt Regency
1990	New Orleans	Hyatt Regency
1991	San Francisco	Hyatt Regency
1992	St. Louis	Adams' Mark
1993	Washington	Omni Shoreham
1994	St. Louis	Adams' Mark
1995	Los Angeles	Westin Bonaventure
1996	Chicago	Hyatt Regency

of a 1986 survey of the membership distribution (GB Minutes, 1986), which showed 24% of the membership in the Midwest, 33% in the Northeast, 15% in the Southeast, 15% in the West, and 12% foreign. It would seem that the distribution of meetings generally matches the distribution of the membership, except that there has been an excess of meetings in the Midwest and a deficit in the Northeast. This was by design, because of cheaper air travel and accommodations in the Midwest.

A successful meeting requires good facilities. Those for the 1964 meeting in Niagara Falls were regarded as inadequate. As a result, a policy was adopted that the Secretary-Treasurer, who is responsible for arranging the meeting, would travel to the prospective site and inspect the facilities before final arrangements were made (GB Minutes, October 1964). That policy is still in force. However, since 1994 the Secretary-Treasurer has enlisted the help of a commercial firm, Conferon, Inc., to help find available hotels, negotiate room rates, and help with the details of local arrangements. This provided some relief for the Secretary-Treasurer, whose responsibilities grew with the growth of the Society.

In the beginning, meetings were held on Thursday, on Friday, and on Saturday morning. In 1981, the Board ap-

proved a measure to change the meeting days to Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, in order to reduce room rates for members. In addition, air fares were more favorable when airlines lowered rates for trips with a Saturday night stay. The new format was used in 1985, 1987, and 1989, and thereafter.

Twice the selection of a meeting site became an issue of social and political significance. The Society was due to meet in Chicago in 1969, when the APA and other organizations began boycotting Chicago because of the city's response to protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in that city. Although Society founder Clifford T. Morgan wished to keep the meeting in Chicago (Morgan, 1968), it was moved.

The second case was related to the passage by the U. S. Congress of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s. In order for it to become law, the ERA had to be ratified by the individual states. As the process dragged on, pressure was applied to encourage passage in recalcitrant states. One part of the pressure was the refusal of organizations to meet in states that had not passed the ERA. Pressure was put on the Governing Board, which was torn between sympathy with the cause and the long-standing policy that the Psychonomic Society was apolitical. At its 1978 meeting, the Governing Board passed a motion that can only be described as wishy-washy, in that it merely stated that the Society was apolitical and that many felt that the Society should not meet in non-ERA states. The 1979 meeting was in Arizona and the 1980 meeting in Missouri, both non-ERA states. In October, 1979, a group of Society-member activists sent out letters to all Society members living in the United States seeking support for the movement to move the 1980 meeting from St. Louis (GB minutes, 1979).

At its 1979 meeting the Governing Board passed a resolution declaring its intention to no longer meet in non-ERA states. As its reason for meeting in Phoenix and St. Louis, the board stated that "the Society is honoring commitments made previously that it takes to be legally binding" (GB minutes, 1979). Surely, the potential for legal action would have been present had the Society broken its contract. Some members, however, felt that the principle was more important than the contract. The resolution was cleverly worded in an effort to maintain the Society's apolitical appearance. The reason given for not meeting in non-ERA states was that some members felt unable to attend meetings in such locations and "their absence would interfere with the scientific functions of the Society" (GB minutes, 1979). As the controversy died down, in 1982 the Board passed a motion declaring the previous action "moot and no longer binding" (GB minutes, 1982).

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEETINGS

### Attendance

The first meeting of the Society, held in 1960, was attended by some 294 individuals, of whom 195 were members, 79 were guests, and approximately 20 were unreg-

istered (Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995). Attendance grew over the years and is reported in some, but not all, minutes of the Governing Board. By 1970, there were 624 registrants, with 351 members, 199 nonmember PhDs, and 74 graduate students. In the early 1980s, attendance hovered around 800 and first passed 1,000 (1,039) in 1985. There were 954 registrants in 1987; of the 853 who checked their status on the registration forms, there were 486 members, 195 nonmembers, 153 graduate students, 16 associates, and 3 undergraduates. By 1989, the registration was up to 1,240, and by 1996, to 1,681. Part of the reason for this increase was the increased attendance of students and associates as the Society provided more opportunities for them to present their work.

Those attending the Psychonomic Society meetings appear to be more diligent in attending paper sessions than those at some other meetings. The large audiences aid in the spread of new scientific information but can retard free discussion following the presentation of papers.

### Numbers of Papers

The number of papers on the program has grown in association with increased attendance. The first program included 119 papers in 24 sessions. By 1969, there were 324 papers on the program. Given that the Society was dedicated to a 2½ day meeting with no more than 6 concurrent sessions, the number could not rise appreciably above that total. What allowed an increase in the number of presentations was the eventual inclusion of poster sessions. In 1995, for example, the 666 presentations included 336 spoken papers and 330 poster presentations.

### Registration Fees

Registration at Psychonomic Society meetings has been free of charge in most years. The historical record is not completely clear concerning the years in which a registration fee was charged. A registration fee of \$1.00 was charged for the first meeting in 1960. That year the Governing Board decided that an effort would be made to pay meeting costs from the \$2 annual dues and to charge a registration fee only if additional funds were needed. Apparently, no registration fees were charged through 1981. At its 1981 meeting, the Board voted to impose a \$10 registration fee for the meeting. In 1985, however, the Board reversed itself, deciding to waive the registration fee for 1986, with the understanding that it could be reimposed if needed. There is still no such fee. The Psychonomic Society is one of the few societies of this sort with no meeting registration fee. With the meeting kept trim and free of frills, the costs of arranging it have been minimized. The bulk of the work has been done by the Publications Office and Secretary-Treasurer with funds provided through member dues and other sources of general revenue.

It should be noted that, although there are no formal registration fees, on occasion there has been an indirect charge, as in 1995, when a \$2 fee was added to the hotel room rate to cover the costs incurred by the conference organizing firm.

### Joint Meetings

At the instigation of members belonging to both the Psychonomic Society and the Psychometric Society, the Governing Board voted to meet jointly with the Psychometric Society in 1964. The Board regarded this meeting as a success, but the historical record is somewhat confused as to subsequent actions (GB minutes, 1964). Apparently, the Board felt that no recommendation to continue the joint meetings was required. When the matter was raised at the Business Meeting, it appeared as though the Psychometric Society had been "disinvited" and there were, in fact, no more joint meetings. "There were also some very unhappy Psychometricians" (GB minutes, 1964, p. 3).

The group that has been closest to the Psychonomic Society has been the Society for Computers in Psychology (see Sidowski, 1990). The first meeting of what was then called the National Conference on the Use of On-line Computers in Psychology was held in St. Louis on November 10, 1971, just before the Psychonomic Society meeting. The Society for Computers in Psychology has evolved over the years, but it still meets in association with the Psychonomic Society.

Other groups sometimes scheduled meetings around those of the Psychonomic Society. The Tactile Research Group has been meeting in conjunction with the Psychonomic Society for more than 20 years. The Judgment/Decision Making Society also has frequently held meetings contiguous with those of the Psychonomic Society. In 1985, there was a workshop on Human and Machine Vision organized by the Center for Automation Research of the University of Maryland, and in 1995, there was a Roundtable Discussion on Relations between Conscious and Unconscious Processing sponsored by the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness. The International Society for Psychophysics held a Thursday night reception at the 1986 meeting.

### Exhibits

As noted above, the initial policy was to prohibit displays by such vendors as book companies and manufacturers of apparatus during the meetings. This is one of the issues that arose repeatedly. When the policy was re-examined in 1965, the Governing Board was split on the issue. In the end, Digital Equipment Corporation was permitted to exhibit a LINC computer as long as technical, but no sales, representatives were on hand. Two other companies expressed an interest in exhibiting as well (GB minutes, 1965).

The issue was revisited in 1982 when the National Conference on On-Line Use of Computers in Psychology, then meeting with the Society, proposed the inclusion of exhibits. The Governing Board agreed to reintroduce exhibits as long as the Conference took the responsibility for their organization (GB minutes, 1982). The next year there were 24 booths with 20 paid exhibitors, generating a net income of \$1,500 that was divided with two thirds going to the Psychonomic Society.

The Board was committed to exhibits as part of the meeting (GB minutes, 1983). In 1984, the Society for Computers in Psychology, as it was then called, decided that it no longer wished to organize the exhibits. The Governing Board decided unanimously to eliminate the exhibits, beginning in 1985 (GB minutes, 1984). It was noted, however, that nonmembers, including publishers, were free to attend the meetings of the Psychonomic Society.

The matter arose again in 1988, and the policy remained unchanged because of a "sense of the Psychonomic Society meeting as a place where members come to meet each other and to discuss research. It has not been a place where members come to buy books and equipment" (GB minutes, 1988, p. 5). The spirit of the first meeting was still with the Board. The policy was again changed, however, more recently, so that exhibitors are now welcomed—but only if they place advertisements in the meeting program in return.

### Programs and Abstracts

At the beginning of the meetings' history, Psychonomic Society programs were printed as separate documents. This has since been continued, but in some years programs and abstracts were printed as part of *Psychonomic Science* and later the *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, either in addition to or instead of the separate abstracts.

The format of the printed programs evolved as well, particularly in the late 1980s. The move was toward more lively two- or three-colored covers, with improved print, graphics, and meeting information.

In 1996, the program was altered to appear as a new publication, *Abstracts of the Psychonomic Society* (labeled "November 1996, Volume 1"). This decision was made by the Publications Committee in order to make it possible for the abstracts to be more easily cited in archival literature. Libraries can now subscribe to the abstracts, and copies of current and back issues can be ordered through the Publications Office.

### Atmosphere

Clearly, the emphasis at the meetings has been on the transmission of new scientific information. In comparison with the meetings of some societies, those of the Psychonomic Society include much less politicking and far fewer frills and distractions. This does not mean, however, that Psychonomists do not have fun. Many long-term friendships have been formed and nurtured at the meetings. The alcohol consumption can be appreciable. Many Psychonomists remember the Zodiac Bar, on the top floor of the Chase-Park Plaza in St. Louis, the site of eight meetings, which offered an opportunity for young psychologists to meet informally with leaders in the field on essentially an equal footing.

The earlier meetings were more notable for extensive socializing than recent ones have been. Whereas many Psychonomists used to return from dinner and party well into the night, such activities are now generally more subdued. The alcohol consumption appears to have declined

in recent years in comparison with that of the earlier years of this and many comparable organizations. Such trends may be a function of the increased size of the meeting, heightened health concerns, or the aging of some of the leading party-goers.

### FORMAT

The first scientific meeting of the Psychonomic Society featured 2½ days of spoken papers with three concurrent sessions plus one business meeting. There have been many modifications, but the basic structure has remained intact.

At the first meeting, the program could be accommodated with three concurrent sessions. A fourth concurrent session was introduced in 1963, and the 1964 meeting included up to six concurrent sessions. The pattern of six concurrent sessions became the norm in the late 1960s. The matter has arisen several times as the pressures of growth have worked toward an expansion of the program. However, the policy of six concurrent sessions was affirmed by the Governing Board in 1972 and again in 1978, and it remains in force. In 1996, a poster session was added for Thursday night, the night before the traditional starting date.

### Who May Present Papers?

A thorny issue throughout has concerned the privilege of presenting papers at meetings. It must be remembered that the cornerstones of the new organization lay in the policies wherein there was selectivity with respect to membership but membership included the privilege of presenting a paper at the annual scientific meeting (see Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995). A cardinal principle was that submissions would never be refereed; that principle has held. This policy would be tested in various ways.

Initially, members not presenting a paper in a given year could sponsor one paper by a nonmember. The original by-laws stated that "any member may present a scientific paper at the Annual Meeting" and also allowed for such sponsored papers (Dewsbury & Bolles, 1995, p. 230). Thus, for example, 18.5% of the papers at the 1965 meeting were sponsored; 14% in 1970. The policy regarding sponsored papers was revisited on several occasions. A resolution passed by the Board in 1970 eliminated sponsored papers. At the same time, priority was given to papers presented by members over those presented by nonmembers and coauthored by members. Exceptions would be made for guests from foreign countries. Further fine-tuning occurred in 1974. First priority would go to papers authored or coauthored and presented by members, with priority going to those who had not presented papers in the previous year. Papers presented by nonmembers would be added only when all members' papers were on the program. The policy adopted in 1977 allowed sponsored papers only if there was room on the program and assigned priority to (1) distinguished foreign guests, (2) Psychonomic Associates, (3) nonassociates with the PhD or its equivalent, and (4) graduate students.

**Table 2**  
**Symposia Presented at Meetings of the Psychonomic Society**

Year	Topic	Participants
1981	Federal Support of Research: Current Status Reports and Analysis	F. Stollnitz, G. Haddad, R. M. Sasmor, M. J. Farr, S. E. F. Chipman, J. L. Young, M. F. Kelty, N. Bernick, and S. F. Schneider
1982	Applications of Cognitive Psychology: The Growth of Skill	J. R. Erickson, D. LaBerge, J. Greeno, S. Card, P. Johnson, R. Shaw, M. Turvey, and J. Jenkins
1984	Psychonomic Society 25th Anniversary Session	W. K. Estes, F. A. Geldard, L. G. Humphreys, W. S. Verplanck, I. Gormezano, H. H. Kendler, G. A. Kimble, and J. T. Spence
1985	Where is Memory Research 100 Years After Ebbinghaus?	E. Tulving, H. L. Roediger III, G. H. Bower, R. M. Shiffrin, L. L. Jacoby, F. I. M. Craik, and W. K. Estes
1985	Recent Advances in Cognitive Neuropsychology	L. S. Cermak, S. E. Blumstein, D. Swinney, M. Coltheart, S. Byng, A. Caramazza, D. L. Schacter, M. L. Smith, R. M. Bauer, and P. Tallal
1985	The Neural Substrates of Learning	I. Gormezano, R. F. Thompson, S. Steinmetz, D. Lavond, T. W. Berger, J. L. Bassett, C. Weikart, J. E. Desmond, J. W. Moore, M. M. Patterson, R. L. Port, D. L. Alkon, J. F. Disterhoft, P. M. McCabe, N. Schneiderman, B. S. Kapp, J. P. Pascoe, C. G. Markgraf, M. Gallagher, S. D. Berry, M. Gabriel, and E. J. Kehoe
1986	Connectionist Models and Psychological Evidence	J. L. McClelland, G. S. Dell, J. Elman, D. E. Rumelhart, M. A. Bluck, G. H. Bower, and W. K. Estes
1986	Constraints on the Learning & Development of Knowledge	R. Gelman, E. S. Spelke, E. M. Markman, E. Newport, A. L. Brown, and F. C. Keil
1987	Behavior-Genetic Analysis With Phenotypes Involving Learning and/or Instinct	J. Hirsch, S. Zawistowski, M. Holliday, J. Ricker, D. Wahlsten, F. R. Brush, R. E. Wimer, and G. M. Harrington
1987	Retention & Remembering: Perspectives on Memory From Animal Research	A. A. Wright, E. Tulving, R. P. Balda, A. C. Kamil, R. M. Church, W. A. Roberts, L. R. Squire, and R. G. Crowder
1988	Event-related Potentials as Tools for Studying Cognition	M. J. Farah, M. G. H. Coles, S. A. Hillyard, M. Kutas, H. J. Neville, E. Donchin, and J. E. Hoffman
1988	Biological Perspectives on Adaptive Networking Models of Learning	M. A. Gluck, L. Nadel, B. L. McNaughton, R. Granger, G. Lynch, S. J. Hanson, R. F. Thompson, M. Pavel, D. Rumelhart, and T. Sujnowski
1989	Implicit Memory: Multiple Perspectives	D. L. Schacter, K. I. Forster, J. Booker, M. Moscovitch, S. Bentin, P. Graf, N. Butters, L. A. Cooper, S. M. Delaney, and H. L. Roediger III
1989	Complexities of Social Knowledge Structure	S. J. Sherman, R. Hastie, P. G. Devine, E. T. Higgins, A. G. Greenwald, S. J. Read, L. C. Miller, D. K. Jones, and L. W. Barsalou
1990	Varieties of Automaticity	G. D. Logan, A. Treisman, A. Vierra, T. H. Carr, J. A. Bargh, and R. M. Shiffrin
1990	Experimental Approaches to Eating and Its Disorders	E. D. Capaldi, N. E. Rowland, L. Bartoshuk, A. Scalfani, A. Drewnowski, L. L. Birch, and S. C. Woods
1991	Short-Term Memory: Where Do We Stand?	R. G. Crowder, N. Cowan, R. C. Martin, W. Schneider, M. Detweiler, M. C. Potter, and R. M. Shiffrin
1991	Comparative Cognition: Taking Stock	S. H. Hulse, E. A. Wasserman, S. Shettleworth, H. S. Terrace, R. Cook, R. M. Church, and D. A. Riley
1992	Connectionist Models and Cognitive Theory	M. S. Seidenberg, J. L. McClelland, M. J. Farah, M. McClosky, K. J. Holyoak, and W. Kintsch
1992	Reasoning and Decision Making	E. Shafir, M. Bar-Hillel, D. V. Budescu, P. N. Johnson-Laird, D. Kahneman, A. Tversky, E. E. Smith, D. Osherson
1993	Brain Imaging and Its Impact on Cognitive Psychology	W. Schneider, R. Desimone, G. McCarthy, M. I. Posner, K. E. Patterson, D. Howard, C. Price, R. Wise, and J. L. McClelland
1993	Visual Object Conceptualization	I. Biederman, E. A. Wasserman, B. Landau, M. J. Farah, J. Fiser, E. E. Cooper, P. C. Gerhardstein, and L. W. Barsalou
1994	Origins of Cognitive Competence	N. Newcombe, J. Huttenlocher, A. M. Leslie, F. Keil, and R. S. Siegler
1994	Emotion and the Brain	T. J. Shors, T. Minor, M. Davis, B. S. Kapp, and N. Kalin
1995	Relations between Conscious and Unconscious Cognition	W. P. Banks, J. F. Kihlstrom, A. G. Greenwald, S. C. Draine, P. M. Merikle, M. Daneman, B. J. Baars, S. Slotnick, C. Koch, V. S. Ramachandran, and J. E. Bogen
1995	Working Memory and Language	R. T. Zacks, R. C. Martin, G. S. Waters, M. A. Just, P. A. Carpenter, T. A. Keller, K. R. Thulborn, W. F. Eddy, A. Mockus, M. A. Gernsbacher, and N. Cowan
1996	Perception and Attention: A Tribute to Irwin Rock	A. L. Gilchrist, A. Mack, S. E. Palmer, W. Prinzmetal, I. Nwachuku, L. Bodanske, F. Bonato, X. Li, V. S. Ramachandran, E. Altschuler, D. Rogers-Ramachandran, and K. McClain
1996	Neuropsychological Constraints	M. Gluck, W. T. Maddox, F. G. Ashby, U. Turken, A. M. Isen, J. Cohen, S. Hanson, J. D. E. Gabrieli, and W. K. Estes

A restructuring of the meeting in 1977 included a provision that a formally scheduled 5-min discussion period was to follow each paper. In order to ensure adequate discussion, only senior members of the Society would chair sessions, and they were to be prepared to initiate and lead discussions. Furthermore, in cases of multiple authorship, a member must personally present the paper, even if not the senior author. Because of some violations of these policies, in 1986 the Governing Board passed a resolution according to which if a nonmember coauthor presented a paper scheduled to be presented by a member, that member would be penalized in priority the following year.

### Invited Papers

In 1959, at the first meeting of the Governing Board, it was decided that invited papers would be part of the program. This feature has rarely been utilized. Indeed, the very next year the Board adopted a policy not to include invited papers (see above). The issue arose again in 1980 when Herschel Leibowitz proposed the inclusion of invited papers; no action was taken.

### Memorial Lectures

An exception to the general rule against invited papers appears in regard to Memorial Lectures. The 11 founding members of the Psychonomic Society were the original Governing Board members, W. J. Brogden, William K. Estes, Frank A. Geldard, Clarence H. Graham, Lloyd G. Humphreys, Clifford T. Morgan, William D. Neff, Kenneth W. Spence, S. S. Stevens, and Benton J. Underwood, along with Secretary-Treasurer William S. Verplanck. The Society adopted a policy of presenting Memorial Lectures in the year following the deaths of its founders. These have included the following:

Neal E. Miller (Spence; 1968): "Extending the Domain of Learning"

Frank A. Geldard (Graham; 1971): "Vision—From a Wide Mantel"

Clifford T. Morgan (Stevens; 1973): "S. S. Stevens, the Psychophysicist"

David A. Grant (Brogden; 1974): "W. J. Brogden: The Experimentalist"

Wendell R. Garner (Morgan; 1976): "Clifford T. Morgan: Psychonomic Society's First Chairman"

Apparently, there was no Memorial for Geldard or Underwood after their deaths.

In addition, Delos D. Wickens presented an Arthur W. Melton Memorial Lecture in 1979, and a Session on Animal Learning/Conditioning was presented in honor of Robert C. Bolles at the 1994 meeting.

### Poster Sessions

The first suggestion that poster sessions might be added to the program appears to have occurred in a letter from Harold Hake (1974) to Chairman Frank Logan. The possibility of poster sessions was seriously considered first in 1985; the decision was, as usual, to poll the

membership. Ninety percent of the members and 85% of the nonmembers submitting abstracts preferred spoken papers, although over half stated that they would prefer a poster should their spoken paper be rejected for the program. Posters were not added to the program at that time (GB minutes, 1986). This decision was altered the next year, when the Governing Board decided to institute poster sessions in 1988 as a means to enable Associates with low priorities for spoken papers to make presentations at the meetings. Many associates had bemoaned their inability to participate fully in the meeting and there was a feeling that the same people were presenting what sometimes appeared to be the same results year after year. The poster sessions were regarded as a success, and in 1989 the Board voted to make posters a permanent part of the program. By 1994, there were 331 spoken papers and 289 posters. Nearly all of the spoken papers were by members, whereas just 37% of the posters were by members. The influx of work from younger researchers altered the ambience of the meeting as well.

### Symposia

As noted above, the original conception was that the program would be lean, consisting only of contributed papers by members. As a result, no symposia were held for the first 21 years. In 1981, there was a symposium on "Federal Report of Research." The next year, there was one on "Applications of Cognitive Psychology: The Growth of Skill." After no symposia were scheduled for the next 2 years, a symposium on "Cognitive Neuropsychology" was held in 1985. The Board liked the concept and voted to continue symposia "for a couple of years" (GB minutes, 1985, p. 4). The policy was extended in 1987 and 1989, and symposia have been a permanent part of the meetings ever since. Beginning in 1986, there have been two symposia per year. In 1989, the Board voted to publish the symposia in the *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*. Several were thus published (e.g., Capaldi, 1991; Schacter, 1990; Sherman, 1990). A complete list of symposium titles and participants is presented in Table 2. These have generally been organized by a member of the Governing Board; in recent tradition, this has been the Chair. Chairs have differed in the extent to which they consult with members of the Governing Board.

### Papers by Title Only

The procedure of including papers read "by title only" appears to have begun in 1969. Typically, the title would be listed in the appropriate session and 5 min would be allotted at the end of the session for discussion of the paper. In 1974, the Board voted that members who had their papers rejected for platform presentation because of an excess of submitted papers would have the option of reading their papers by title only. The next year, when there was a problem regarding the attendance of authors presenting such papers, the Board adopted a policy according to which members whose papers were accepted for presentation by title only were to be present at the

meeting and session at which the paper was listed. This was always regarded as a marginal category. In 1977, the Board ruled that papers could be listed as "By Title Only" only when authored by members of the Society, and in 1979, that this could be done only when there was not enough room to accommodate the papers on the regular program. The category was dropped from the program beginning with the 1982 meeting. In 1987, a proposal to reinstitute papers by title only was defeated.

### **Length of Presentations**

At the meetings of many societies, a fixed period of time is allotted for each paper. The Psychonomic Society is somewhat unusual in allowing some flexibility in this regard, as members can request from 10 to 20 min of program time. This policy, adopted at the first meeting, remains in force.

The flexibility of presentation time has been popular with presenters, who can match their time to the demands of their paper without undue condensation or stretching. It does cause problems for the Secretary-Treasurer, however, who must try to schedule simultaneous session breaks and facilitate movement between concurrent sessions.

There have been occasional, memorable exceptions. At the 1972 meeting in St. Louis, Richard L. Solomon made the first public presentation of his opponent process theory. The paper was presented just before lunch and the room was scheduled for another session to follow immediately. Session chair Stewart Hulse recalls being sent to scout for an empty room, as Solomon got wound up, running past his time limit. They moved the meeting to another room, where discussion continued for quite some time. Such a procedure for a presenter going over a time limit is highly unusual!

### **Fine Tuning**

As the meetings grew, it became necessary to change various aspects of the meeting structure in many small ways. Indeed, as early as 1965, David A. Grant, retiring Board Chairman, sent a memorandum to the Governing Board outlining the double-edged sword of the success and growth of the Society. He raised such possibilities as limiting attendance to members and eliminating sponsored papers, and he expressed concern with the lack of discussion after papers were presented. He felt that the meeting "was degenerating to an APA-like paper reading format" (Grant, 1965, p. 1).

There were various perennial problems. Concern that meetings be kept on time was expressed by Benton Underwood at the very first meeting and remained a problem. So precise was the timing to be, that eventually "Psychonomic time" was instituted, apparently in 1989, by keeping a standard clock at the registration desk, against which all chairs and other participants were encouraged to synchronize their watches! This is still done.

Because rental of audiovisual equipment in downtown hotels can be expensive, the Governing Board voted in

1981 that only  $2 \times 2$  slides could be provided at the meetings. The equipment was extended to include overhead projectors the next year. Video equipment, motion picture projectors, and tape recorders could be used at the presenter's expense. A proposal to tape-record sessions was rejected in 1983.

For many years, it was the direct responsibility of the Secretary-Treasurer to assemble the program. Typically, the Secretary-Treasurer would sort all of the information and fill his/her floor with program submissions, which were repeatedly shuffled until they fit the program. This changed during Michael Rashotte's term of office (1987-1989). With the new procedure, abstracts were sent to the Austin Publications Office, rather than directly to the Secretary-Treasurer, where the program was assembled. With the advent of new technologies, the process has become streamlined and more efficient.

Edward Bradford Titchener gave as one of his reasons for excluding women from his "Experimentalists" meetings that he wanted the freedom to smoke cigars. Since then, times have changed, and the Psychonomic Society has taken a different approach. In 1987, there first appeared in the program a statement that "We would appreciate no smoking in the rooms where papers are being given, in accordance with Society policy. The statement was strengthened in 1989 to read, "In accordance with Society policy, smoking is not permitted in rooms where papers are being given." A request from a member that the no-smoking policy be reconsidered died at the 1994 Governing Board meeting for lack of interest.

### **Business Meetings**

Every Psychonomic Society meeting has featured a business meeting, generally held late in the day on the last full day of the meeting. Some of these meetings have been well attended, with lively and entertaining discussions. In recent years, they have become somewhat more perfunctory and sparsely attended. Members of the Governing Board, committee chairs, and other Society leaders review their actions and open the floor for input. Others, such as representatives of funding agencies and the Federation for Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences, sometimes provide information and reports.

### **Special Events**

From time to time, the program has been dotted with special events. The first few meetings had no formal social hours. In 1964, a joint dinner for members of the Psychonomic and Psychometric Societies was scheduled. Receptions with cash bars or "hospitality" would become a nightly feature of the meetings beginning the next year.

A 25th Anniversary Session, featuring the founding group and subsequent members of the Governing Board discussing the history of the Society, was held in 1984. The idea for such a session originated in June of that year, with a memorandum from Governing Board chair Walter Kintsch to the surviving members of the founding

**Table 3**  
**The Most Frequent Session Titles at**  
**Meetings of the Psychonomic Society**

Title	Frequency
Information Processing	52
Vision	44
Attention	42
Psycholinguistics	38
Perception	38
Animal Learning	35
Letter-Word Processing	34
Human Learning & Memory	33
Human Learning/Memory	33
Memory & Recall	27
Psychophysics	26
Animal Behavior	26
Problem Solving	24
Animal Cognition	22
Judgment/Decision Making	21
Human Learning	21
3-D Movement Perception	20

Governing Board (W. K. Estes, personal communication, February 11, 1997). Following an enthusiastic response, Kintsch asked William K. Estes to organize the session; it would include discussions of the founding of the Society, the viability of the original conception, and any needed changes for the next 25 years. The session was among the best attended of any year. Estes began the session by reading parts of William S. Verplanck's draft summary of the founding, augmented by his own recollections. He then read excerpts from letters from Frank Geldard and Lloyd Humphreys, who were unable to attend. The remainder of the session included comments from the other participants (see Table 2), as well as interaction with the audience. "The overwhelming consensus seemed to be that most of the ideas of the Society founders had been right on target and nothing much needed to be changed with regard to what the Society was doing or whither it was heading" (Estes, personal communication, February 11, 1997).

### CONTENT

In order to assess the meetings' content and its changing patterns, we analyzed the paper session titles from the first 36 meetings of the Psychonomic Society. It is notable that the current policy is for a list of sessions to be sent out with the Call for Papers, thus allowing participants to choose, as far as is possible, the sessions in which their papers will be placed. By our count, there were 1,453 sessions in the first 36 meetings, or an average of 40 sessions per year. We considered how many different titles were used in naming these sessions, taking each title literally except for numbers (e.g., Vision II). We found 402 different titles used for sessions. The 17 titles that have been used at least 20 times are listed in Table 3. The emphases of the Psychonomic Society on human learning, cognition, and sensory function, with a

secondary interest in animal learning and cognition, are readily apparent.

A few landmarks and trends may be of interest. The Psychonomic Society program evolved in the context of broader changes in experimental psychology during this period. There is a general trend toward fractionation of sessions into more specialized titles. Thus, the first meeting program included just 14 titles, including a session entitled "Potpourri." Many of the titles were quite general (e.g., "Human Learning"). By contrast, the 1995 program had 44 titles, including such more restricted ones as "Stroop Effect," "Animal Cognition: Spatial Memory," and "Processing & Remembering Pictures."

The first use of the word "cognitive" or "cognition" in a title occurred in a 1964 session on "Decisions and Cognitions." The terms then dropped out for 17 years, reappearing in 1982 sessions on "Cognitive Processes" and "Cognitive Processes in Animals." The terms later became mainstays. Sessions on "Human Memory" and "Psychophysics" appeared for the first time in 1964. "Problem Solving" was added in 1966, and "Psycholinguistics," the year after that. The topic of "3D Perception," and variations thereof, first appeared in 1985 and became frequent. "Aging and Memory" also appeared in 1985. "Neural Network Models" appeared in 1990.

In 1964, the Psychometric Society joined with the Psychonomic Society for 1 year and organized sessions on such topics as "Factor Analysis" and "Psychological Test Theory."

There has been a general feeling that psychologists from some areas of experimental psychology, such as social psychology, physiological psychology, and comparative psychology, have pulled away from the Psychonomic Society meetings. This was certainly not the result of any policy decision as much as it was because of a feedback pattern, wherein as fewer psychologists from a field would attend, fewer would be inclined to attend because of the paucity of close colleagues. Many of these psychologists attend other meetings, such as those of the Society for Neuroscience and the Animal Behavior Society. In response to concern over the paucity of papers in applied psychology, the Board voted to include in the Call for Papers a statement that papers in applied psychology were welcome.

### CONCLUSION

The meetings of the Psychonomic Society have been an overwhelming success in what they were originally designed to do—to facilitate the communication of new scientific results among experimental psychologists. The meetings are lean and trimmed of some of the accoutrements of the meetings of other scientific societies. This was the will of the founders, however, and it remains that of most of the Society's members. The meetings have grown since their inception, and they continue to foster scientific communication.



## REFERENCES

- CAPALDI, E. D. (Ed.) (1991). Symposium: Experimental approaches to eating and its disorders. *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, **29**, 243-278.
- DEWSBURY, D. A. (1996). History of the Psychonomic Society II: The journal publishing program. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, **3**, 322-338.
- DEWSBURY, D. A., & BOLLES, R. C. (1995). The founding of the Psychonomic Society. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, **2**, 216-233.
- GRANT, D. A. (1965, January 2). [Memorandum to the Governing Board] (Psychonomic Society Archives, Box 490). Akron, OH: Archives of the History of American Psychology.
- HAKÉ, H. W. (1974, June 27). [Letter to Frank A. Logan] (Psychonomic Society Archives, Box 488.1). Akron, OH: Archives of the History of American Psychology.
- MORGAN, C. T. (1968, October 11). [Memorandum to the Governing Board, Psychonomic Society] (Psychonomic Society Archives, Box 642). Akron, OH: University of Akron, Archives of the History of American Psychology.
- SCHACTER, D. L. (Ed.) (1990). Symposium: Implicit memory. Multiple perspectives. *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, **28**, 337-380.
- SHERMAN, S. J. (Ed.) (1990). Symposium: Complexities of social knowledge structure. *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, **28**, 241-271.
- SIDOWSKI, J. B. (1990). Past, present, and future of the Society for Computers in Psychology. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, **22**, 94-97.

## NOTE

1. References to the "GB Minutes" refer to the minutes of the meetings of the Governing Board. These are available at either the Archives of the History of American Psychology in Akron, OH or the Psychonomic Society offices in Austin, TX.

(Manuscript received January 23, 1997;  
revision accepted for publication May 13, 1997.)