MULTISENSORY PROCESSES

Editorial

In the two years since the first special issue of Multisensory Processes was published (*Cognitive Brain Research*, Vol. 14, No. 1) following the 2001 meeting of the International Multisensory Research Forum (IMRF) in Tarrytown, NY, research in the “new” field of multisensory convergence, integration, and processing has blossomed. Indeed, that initial special issue was in such demand that it required a second printing. After the 2002 IMRF in Geneva, the second special issue of Multisensory Processes was published in the *International Journal of Psychophysiology* (Vol. 50, Nos. 1 and 2). The present issue of *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience (CABN)* presents a similar collection of articles, representing most of the areas of research covered during the recent (2003) forum in Hamilton, Ontario. This tradition of publishing special issues following the IMRF meeting has proven a successful way to present current multisensory research in a succinct and timely fashion. At each of these three IMRF meetings and at the inaugural meeting in 1999 at Oxford University, the proposal for creating a journal specifically for publishing multisensory research has been raised and rejected on the grounds that this research needs to be accessible and visible to people outside the field as much as to those within the field. The present issue is an excellent example of this goal, bringing to the membership of the Psychonomic Society, and other readers of *CABN*, some of the key issues in multisensory research. We thank the Psychonomic Society and John Jonides (Editor of *CABN*) for granting us this opportunity.

The present articles stem from papers presented at the 4th International Multisensory Research Forum (IMRF; www.imrf.info) held at McMaster University in June of 2003 (www.multisense.info/2003). The conference, and this special issue, would not have been possible without the support of the Faculty of Science and Department of Psychology at McMaster University, Electro-Geodesics, Inc., and the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network. A very special thanks needs to be sent to the Cognitive Neuroscience group with Unilever research and development, for their on-going generous support of the forum. Without that support, this and the last two IMRF gatherings would not have been possible. We applaud this company, and specifically its research and development group, for their foresight and ideals in helping to found and fund this forum. A final thanks goes to the tireless and timely efforts of the many reviewers of the articles found within these pages. Without their help, the publication of this special issue would have been impossible.

Several factors conspired to make this meeting very successful. First, there was an invited symposium on “The Multisensory Quartet—Smell, Taste, Chemesthesis, and Flavor,” sponsored by Unilever and organized by Bruce Halpern. In the same theme, Dana Small gave a keynote address on the state of neuroimaging the processes of flavor perception. Both events were a smashing success and prompted the addition of several other posters and talks in the field. It is hoped that this tradition of including senses beyond the traditional spatiotemporal three (vision, touch, and audition) will continue in years to come. Unfortunately, the present issue does not present any of these data and further steps need to be taken to include this important group of researchers in the activities of the forum. Other notable scientific events included the keynote address by Mriganka Sur, an fMRI tutorial by Philip Servos, and a much needed discussion of the top-down and bottom-up contributions to multisensory integration by Charles Schroeder and colleagues.

A second factor that shaped the size and scientific content of the meeting was the 2003 battle against the SARS virus. Toronto was at the focus of world attention in this regard, and the proximity of Hamilton to Toronto prompted many people to cancel their registration or never make it in the first place. Despite early estimates of over 250 delegates, the final conference number was around 100. This made for a very intimate meeting with a wealth of scientific and social exchanges.

A third factor in making the meeting such a success was the team of graduate and undergraduate student volunteers from the Department of Psychology, who helped organize and im-

plement the myriad details necessary for such a gathering. In this regard, special thanks go to Kellie Gray for leading the team and also for acting as editorial secretary for this special issue.

The present issue of *CABN* comprises 16 articles. The majority are behavioral studies of interactions between pairs of modalities. One deals with measurement of neuronal interactions; two present the use of fMRI to tease apart the neural underpinnings of pain and imagery; two discuss developmental issues of matching across senses; one looks at sensory enhancement by another modality in adults; five are on visual–haptic interactions; four are on motion perception. And there is one article on short-term memory across modalities. There is a noticeable shortage of traditional articles from areas of multisensory research such as electrophysiology (both single-cell recordings in animals and EEG recording in humans). However, this may simply be due to the SARS-induced reduction in forum participation mentioned above. Future special issues should seek a more rounded representation of the different research approaches and techniques used to address multisensory problems.

We hope that readers will enjoy the range of articles presented here and will visit www.multisense.info, where they may subscribe to a virtual journal of multisensory research. At this site, authors will be able to submit the abstracts and references for published papers on multisensory topics for monthly distribution to the multisense membership (see the website for free membership information). This database will also be back-populated with historical articles related to multisensory topics to eventually form a valuable resource for the research and education community. Also planned for this site in development is a searchable links database, a members' database, and several flavors of discussion. This web portal will offer researchers a quick way to communicate and discuss new findings in the quickly growing field of multisensory processing.

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