

In Memory of David Hull: Reflections delivered at the 2011 Biennial meeting of ISHPSSB by his friends and colleagues Jane Maienschein, Robert J. Richards, and Christopher D. Horvath

Jane Maienschein

I offer a quick look at David Hull and the beginning of ISH, since he was right there from the start and played an important role in establishing the special nature and values of the Society.

When we began, we had almost as many presidents as we had words in our name. I was the first "regular" president, serving from after the meeting in London, Ontario in 1989 through the meeting at Northwestern in 1991, for which David was the local arrangements organizer. But there were many more presidents. We elected Dick Burian as the "Honorary Past President" because he had done so much to make the society possible. He and his assistant Peggy Stewart put in countless hours and invested tremendous patience to bring together different ideas into one coherent whole and then to navigate the Virginia laws to incorporate our formal existence. In addition, and also inspired by Dick, we elected Marjorie Grene and Ernst Mayr as Honorary Presidents. David Hull was elected as the first Vice President, and he became President in 1991 and through the 1993 meeting held at Brandeis.

It is amusing that a society that includes History in its title hasn't done such a great job of recording and writing its own history. Fortunately, Pam Henson is our terrific archivist and has kept the records from the beginning, so the actual record can be found. But perhaps some smart young person will set up a blog site or other way that those with memories and reflections can share those. So many people had comments after the David Hull session that it would be lovely to record the collective memory, along with the actual official record of ISH. This article, and this special newsletter collection, provide just a start.

Back to David. Let's start with that first official meeting at Northwestern. As president, it was my job to run the business meeting, and I started by twisting arms for people to attend. Most did, which is important for building a new society and getting it right. According to my records (and in retrospect, I have no idea why I recorded such things!), the meeting lasted just under twenty minutes total. We began with the rules and reports mandated by the state of Virginia. We thanked people. Then I called for new business. We had agreed that I would call on David first, though he was the only one to raise a hand immediately anyway.

David made a motion that ISHPSSB agree never to meet in any place that had sodomy (or what were often called anti-sodomy) laws. He had a list of the existing laws, which remained in place until struck down in the United States by the Supreme Court finally in 2003. He made a short but impassioned statement about why he did not wish to be part of a society that would meet in states where he would not be comfortable. David had proposed this resolution in other societies, but lamented that he had never been successful before.

The motion received an immediate second. The only discussion was along the lines of "huh, really? Do we really have such laws?" Or from one European visit: "how odd." The resolution quickly passed with no dissent, no questions, and no hesitations of the sort that the other

academic organizations to which David had posed it before had raised about whether it is our role as ISH to make such "political" resolutions. David had made it clear that this was about people, about principles, and about establishing our society to support all our members. That was clear, and it really shows the values for ISH. This was the first official resolution of the Society, and its first official non-routine vote.

David said that he was amazed and proud. It gave him a special feeling about this society of which he was about to become president. David told his close friend Michael Ruse that he would not have gone to Salt Lake City for the meeting, for political reasons. Michael himself decided not to attend out of respect for David. But we should note that the organizers did a great job of making sure that ISH held true to its values. They organized a special open forum at the downtown library on "Evolution, Gender & Sexuality". I think David would have been pleased with the commitment to doing this and the successful event.

Back to the Northwestern meeting: as a large group celebrated the new society at post-meeting party at David's house, he talked about the values of the new organization. ISH is a place where everybody can come and feel included. It is a place for all of us from all those alphabet soup of disciplines or those working between and across disciplines. A place for established scholars migrating from other fields, well-known leaders in their fields, and new graduate students. A place for people to try out new ideas as well as to present more polished works. It was important to David that we not just be organizing into yet another traditional academic group that would do the same-old thing. ISH should be open, welcoming, intellectually challenging, and dynamic. It's exciting that it is!

After that first meeting, David asked what he was supposed to be doing as president. I explained that he was supposed to find the next meeting site and raise money for graduate travel, and to make sure that the program chair and committee worked to make the meeting include history and philosophy and social studies and biology, as well as being international. Somewhere along the line, David complained that the society has an idiotically long name, and there is much difference of memory about whether it was actually David you named ISH after the comedian/musician Ish Kabibble (Merwyn Bogue). David was certainly enthusiastic to have something pronounceable and more sensible (??) than ISHPSSB.

As president, David made sure that the society was inclusive and felt good. He really cared about the organization and its being the right sort of place. David Hull, our first president to have died, more than anybody else embodied the values of the society. His own scholarship and his own behavior, as the other reflections here show, exemplified what we were trying to do in establishing ISH.

Then David died. His papers are at the University of Pittsburgh archives, along with collections from other important philosophers of science including Rudolf Carnap, Hans Reichenbach, and Carl Hempel. Some of his books, papers, and reprints he sent to us at Arizona State, including letters and comments on the work of colleagues and students. Some of these relate to his journal editing or refereeing. He said he trusted us with them, and we will make them available to scholars, but carefully trying to do so appropriately.

As I experience each ISH meeting or off year meetings, and as I watch the officers at work, I see the values and hopes of those early years having matured. All that work that David and Dick and others invested has led us somewhere worth being. We see David's values about people and ideas, about connecting disciplines, and somehow combining to make the world better. That's David Hull's legacy, and it's powerful and important as it plays out through ISH.