



Cincinnati Skeptic

Newsletter of The Association for Rational Thought

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Truth does not change because it is, or is not, believed by a majority of the people.
— Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) heretic burned at the stake

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June Meeting

What Are the Social Sciences?

Wolf Roder, editor of *Cincinnati Skeptic* and professor of geography at the University of Cincinnati, says that there is more to life than hard science, government and business. The Elian Gonzalez affair, for example, was a popular movement beyond the reach of these institutions, a unique social phenomenon, unplanned and unforeseen.

Social scientists are concerned with the systematic study of human activities and behavior. Conclusions are cast in terms of averages and norms, characteristics of groups. The unique individual is not their target.

Bill Jensen, on the Chemistry Department faculty at the University of Cincinnati, in his recent talk to A.R.T. members described a pecking order for the natural sciences: Physics looks down on chemistry, which looks down on biology. Wolf extended this ranking scheme to include the social sciences: the natural sciences in turn look down on all the social sciences. In fact, the social sciences rank so low that they are often excluded from science entirely.

The natural sciences also dominate numerically. Overall, about 80% of all scientists work in the natural or "hard" sciences. The remainder are social scientists. The disparity in status can also be seen in relative income levels. The average annual salary for chemists, physicists, and astronomers is about \$68,000. The average for all social (Cont. Pg 4)

Great Moments in Accreditation: The Case of IAC, ACT, and The Three Stooges

by John Bear

In 1982, there opened for business in Missouri the International Accrediting Commission (IAC). They aggressively marketed their accreditation services among hundreds of then-unaccredited institutions in the United States. Their standards were rather modest, but they were operating within the law, and they were able to bestow that magical word "accredited" upon their clients.

More than 130 institutions had achieved IAC accreditation by 1989, when one Eric Vieth established the Eastern Missouri Business College and immediately applied to the International Accrediting Commission. Vieth opened his headquarters in a one-room office in St. Louis, Missouri, and issued an eight-page typewritten catalog that listed faculty members such as Arnold Ziffel, Edward J. Haskell, M. Howard, Jerome Howard, and Lawrence Fine.

Trivia buffs may recall that Arnold Ziffel was the pig on the TV show *Green Acres*, Eddie Haskell was the obsequious friend on *Leave It to Beaver*, and the Messrs. Howard, Howard, and Fine were collectively known as the Three Stooges.

It gets better. The college seal was emblazoned with the phrase *Solum pro Avibus Est Educatio*, which means "Education is only for the birds," and the motto was *Latrocina et Raptus*, or, loosely translated, everything from petty theft to highway robbery. Doctorates were offered by mail in dozens of fields, from aerospace to marine biology. The marine biology textbook was identified as *The Little Golden Book of Fishes*.

Unlike what you may have been imagining, Eastern Missouri Business College founder Vieth was wearing a white hat. As assistant attorney general for the state of Missouri, he had set up this clever sting operation. And when the head of the International Accrediting Commission stopped by, had a quick look around, accepted a cashier's check, and pronounced the East Missouri Business College fully accredited, he was immediately slapped with an (Cont. Pg 6)

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The By-Laws require that officers for the following year be elected annually at the May meeting. They begin their duties on following July 1st.

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Too Many Books... Too Little Time...

The Beast Reawakens

by Martin A. Lee

(Boston: Little Brown and Co. 1997)

The Beast of the title is Nazism and other kinds of fascism allied to new and old extreme right creeds. In the first place this is a history of the survival of individual German and other European Nazis and their post war period of hiding under ODESSA or in the *Spirne* (spider) network. It traces the connection of the old guard to the regrowth of a new racist and nationalist right. The book begins literally with the defeat of Germany and the death of Hitler and ends with Patrick Buchanan and the bombing in Oklahoma City. The center of the new right is western Europe, but the study is world wide, wherever the old Nazi guard disappeared and hid to become the mentors of another generation of crazies.

Lee treats the Nazis as the most extreme variety of fascism. "According to this interpretation, all Nazis are fascists, but not all fascists are Nazis. Similarly, all fascists are right-wing extremists, but not all right-wing extremists are fascists." (P. 397) He also quotes a useful description of the political right: "To be right wing means to support the state in its capacity as *enforcer* of order and to oppose the state as *distributor* of wealth and power more equitably in society." (Quoting Sara Diamond, p. 397) Lee leaves no doubt he considers the entire gamut evil, or at least "ideological miscreants" (p. 11). He himself is very much on the left liberal side of the spectrum.

The author propounds a theory of considerable interest to explain the recent, — in the past decade, — recrudescence of fascism. At the end of Hitler's Germany relatively very few of the Nazi criminals were punished, or otherwise put out of action. The Allies fell into disagreement almost immediately, and each side began hiring leading Germans for their expertise regardless of individual guilt. The Russians, British, Americans and French recruited capable Germans to rebuild their occupation zone of Germany and as allies in the cold war. Other Germans were hired for their technical and engineering expertise and brought to Moscow, London, or Huntsville. The CIA and its sister secret services protected many of the worst criminals to make use of their knowledge of the other side. Some of the most notorious Nazis were able to hide in the remaining fascist dictatorships, — Spain, Portugal, and Argentina — until things cooled down. Yet others found refuge and employment among the Arab enemies of the new Jewish state. Lee describes this period in general and provides outstanding individual biographies.

The cold war period was a frustrating time for the surviving fascists. Focus in each camp was concentrated on the main adversary, — communist or capitalist, — and little additional demand for extreme nationalism existed. When the Russian Bear withdrew his heavy paw from the ethnic melange of eastern Europe the fascist beast returned.

Since the end of the Soviet Union we have seen a world wide recrudescence of extreme ethnic nationalism, of racist ideology and theory, of anti-Jewish denial

of the German holocaust, of anti-foreigner sentiments, and of a willingness to use violence to gain chauvinistic ends. In the United States this growth is represented by untethered militias and other racists. The author documents neo-Nazi ties for McVeigh, Pat Robertson, and Pat Buchanan. Today, most of the generation that personally remembers the Hitler period is gone or dying, leaving the new patriots free to mythologize. Few on the extreme right continue to wave the swastika or extend the Hitler salute. The post cold war neo-fascist code speaks of self-determination, identity, ecology, and disdain for a multi-racial, multi-cultural society. They function as a vanguard of xenophobia with immigration as an issue to rally against. Throughout the world the new fascists thrive on social chaos, political instability, rabid nationalism, and violent outbursts of ethnic hatred.

Martin Lee traces a fascinating genealogy of intellectual venom and malice. There are direct lines of descent from the paladins of Hitler to the Jesse Helms and David Dukes of today. It sends shivers down my back.

— Wolf Roder

Celluloid Soldiers: The Warner Brothers

Campaign against Nazism

by Michael E. Birdwell

(New York University Press, 1999)

As sceptics and opponents of pseudo-science we must often wonder if our arguments have any impact. We are also confronted with the question, just how effective are the popular media in influencing their audience? Do pictures of violence, sex or morality lead viewers to accept attitudes and move them towards action? What happens when a commercial company deliberately promotes a campaign for or against certain ideas and people? During the thirties the movies certainly were the leading popular medium of entertainment not only for Americans, but for a global audience. Here is an interesting history of one movie company which opposed fascism in the thirties before the War.

Birdwell examines the history of Warner Brothers, which deliberately used some of its films to oppose the Nazis. One could argue as Jews it was easy for the Warners to oppose Hitler. Yet, the other seven major studios of the time were also led by Jewish men, but who preferred to play along with the Germans. Even within the company studied it was the business head, Harry Warner, who acted as a principled conscience to insist on opposing Hitler, and on warning America about the fascist menace. His brother Jack, the studio head, was more inclined not to care, particularly in regard to Mussolini and Franco who did not

share Hitler's rabid antisemitism.

Today we know Harry Warner was right to warn against the growing menace. In the thirties there were many reasons to avoid controversy, the economic depression only one of them. The industry depended on overseas earnings, and Germany was a major market for Hollywood products. The producers would knuckle under to the demands of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry rather than lose this lucrative market. Only the Warner Studio was denied German distribution as early as 1934.

Americans had been disappointed by the outcome of the First World War. Rather than a war to end all wars, the distribution of the spoils in Europe led almost immediately to rearmament and thoughts of revanche. Americans concluded "never again," and Congress passed neutrality acts. The State Department counseled no offense under any circumstances, and wanted no films hostile to any European country. What is more, the German embassy and their west coast consulate were quick to protest films opposing German interests.

We think of the Production Code Administration as concerned mostly with sex, so that even married couples could only be shown using twin beds. But the PCA concerned itself with many other aspects of the industry, and was anxious to avoid anything controversial. They raised many objections to showing even home grown fascists of the Bund or Pelley's Silver Shirts. Nor did they approve of running down the KKK. Besides any such film might lose market in the American South.

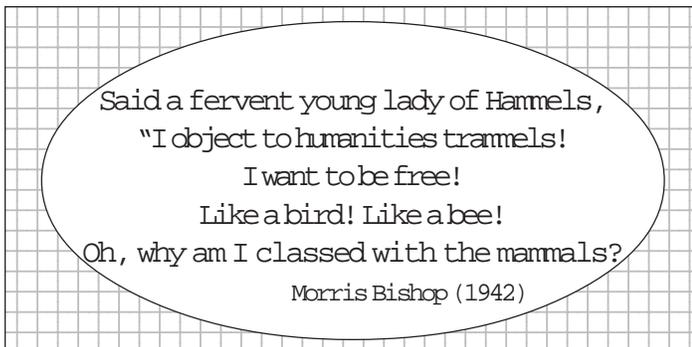
A large part of the media, the Hearst newspapers most prominently, saw Communism and Soviet Russia as the major threat to American values. This thinking allowed them to consider Hitler and Germany as a bulwark against Bolshevism. Any attack on fascism would evoke heavy criticism from the right. Many including Walt Disney, who admired Nazi Germany (p. 29), Hal Roach, Henry Ford, and Charles Lindbergh supported the anti-interventionist, peace at any price America First organization.

Many Jews in the interwar years tried to de-emphasize differences, to assimilate, to show they were just like their Christian neighbors. Some Reform Temples even held services on Sunday and celebrated Christmas! Don't rock the boat. Would it really benefit anyone, Jew or Gentile, American or European to complain about Hitler? Would any word, publication, or film decrease persecution in Germany, or would it rather arouse latent anti-Jewish forces at home. Many were the critics opposed to Harry Warner's attempt to wake the nation.

Harry Warner wanted to make movies that were unabashedly patriotic, uplifting, instructive, and entertaining (p. 176). Birdwell discusses three in particular, *Black Legion*, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, and *Sergeant York*. We

may label these as either didactic or else as propaganda. Some members of Congress clearly viewed what Warner was doing as propaganda. As late as August 1941 the Senate started hearings into propaganda by the Jewish-controlled monopoly in Hollywood (p. 154.) Only the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought an end to that particular foolishness.

— Wolf Roder



June Meeting from page 1...

scientists is \$55,000.

Wolf distinguished scientists from professional practitioners such as engineers and architects whose job is focused on applying knowledge rather than seeking new knowledge. This distinction isn't easy: some psychologists are research scientists, but many are clinical psychologists who treat patients rather than undertaking research. Sociologists, too, may be research scientists or work in applied fields.

Just as there are doctors like Deepak Chopra who become quacks, although the field of medicine as a whole maintains its integrity, there are bumsocial scientists, but social science as a whole adheres to scientific principles.

It is a good thing because without objective knowledge about human behavior, there is no rational basis for public policy. If there were no reliable, systematic knowledge of human driving behavior, for example, traffic engineers would be unable to design a usable highway system. The goal of the social sciences is to look at the systematic behavior of human beings.

Social constructionists argue that scientific knowledge is totally man made and that the ultimate purpose of theory and experiment is not to control and manage nature, but to control other people. Some claim that all science may be criticized from the point of view of literary criticism. This notion relies on an illusion of the omnipotence of language. But it is impossible to explain complex ideas without the use of math, art, music, maps and

other non-linguistic means of expression. Like the natural sciences, the social sciences rely on quantitative as well as qualitative analysis for their conclusions.

Wolf maintains that knowledge is a seamless web, and that our divisions of knowledge into separate disciplines is necessarily arbitrary. He prefers to divide all the sciences into physics, chemistry, biology, and the social sciences. Physics deals with mechanics, the behavior of electricity, thermodynamics, and the behavior of molecules and atoms. Chemistry is a special branch of physics devoted to the study of the bonds between atoms. Biology is the chemistry of living systems. Biologists study all forms of animals, plants, and other organisms. The social sciences are a subset of biology, in which human beings are the only animal studied.

Wolf also divides science according to research method: experimental laboratory research, which can be highly controlled is largely closed to the social science which have to rely on field studies, where the variables cannot be so neatly controlled. Other methods include historical studies such as the study of evolution and the history of human behavior, and computer simulation.

Public response also distinguishes the social sciences from the natural sciences. Most people recognize their ignorance of the natural sciences. Everybody knows they don't understand physics at all, but in the social sciences, everyone is convinced that they have all the answers.

In addition, in the natural sciences as in the social sciences predictions can be made only for groups of molecules, atoms, cells, rats, or people. But while no one especially cares which particular rat fails to navigate the maze, everyone wants to know exactly which individual marriage will fail. Knowing that about half will end in divorce, which is the only prediction social scientists can reliably make, is not good enough.

The methods that social scientists use include participant observation, sometimes known as "drinking with the locals." The researcher spends time with the group she or he is interested in studying, learning the local lingo, understanding what people are talking about, what concerns they have, how they do things, and why. This method is useful for exploring an environment the researcher knows little about so he or she can design useful research.

Participant observation is excruciatingly difficult, as you might guess from the oxymoron-like character of its name. The difficulty is how does the researcher observe and participate, without influencing his or her subjects? Minimizing and shaping this influence is a major problem in participant observation. Another problem is finding trustworthy and knowledgeable informants.

Once a researcher has the general lay of the land, formal questionnaires may be designed to collect quantitative data. The pitfalls in questionnaire design are many. "Closed"

questions, in which the respondent must choose from among a set of answers provided by the questionnaire, provide easily quantified answers, but the answers will be useless if the categories are off target. Open-ended questions, in which the respondent is invited to answer in her or his own words, may produce valuable insights into the research problem, but will be very hard to quantify. Word order, question order, and many other issues make writing reliable questionnaires a challenge.

Social scientist often don't have the money to do large surveys themselves, so they depend instead on "secondary analysis": taking data collected by others for other purposes and using it to answer social scientific questions. The most popular source of data for secondary analysis is the U.S. Census. When using secondary analysis, the researcher must know exactly what the census asked and of whom and under what circumstances.

Other problems with asking people questions include memory problems. People will give answers even when they don't know or have forgotten, merely to satisfy the interviewer. When asked about the past, people will tell you what they are certain they remember, but that will substantially disagree with the answers they gave to the same question years ago.

Often an author will report a relationship based on personal observation. For example, Susan Faludi has claimed that pro-life adherents are mostly also anti-gun control. But such a personal observation is no more than an anecdote and tells us nothing about the groups involved. To find whether this relationship actually exists, one would need to survey the population, using a large random sample. Answers collected in a survey are unreliable unless the respondents were randomly selected. It is only from a random sample we can make valid inferences to the population.

The information drawn from surveys often elaborately documents the obvious. Much of what we know as social beings is quite accurate. An example is the finding that high levels of credit card debt are associated with poor health and stress, not a surprising finding. Note that survey data often can identify only correlation, not cause and effect. So we can't tell whether poor health causes high credit card debt, or high credit card debt causes poor health. Or a third cause could be behind both. Or the two may simply be unrelated.

When confronted with new discoveries in the natural sciences, the public is likely to assimilate the information without objection. No such luck in the social sciences. When the social sciences come up with a finding that people are convinced is correct, the conclusion of the public is that the findings are so obvious the study should never have been done. When the social sciences come up with something that is contrary to what everyone believes, no one believes the social scientists, usually because the finding contradicts

"common sense," An example is the finding by Moynihan, Coleman and others that more spending on schools, once basic needs have been fulfilled, will not improve students' achievement. Adding a swimming pool or paying teachers twice has little impact on learning. What really makes a difference in achievement are the resources a child brings to school. A stable home, good health, enough to eat, and lots of parental attention improve achievement scores more than a swimming pool or doubling teachers' salaries. Yet research has found that on the whole, parents' influence on their children is limited. Both genetic characteristics and peer influence have more explanatory power. But few believe this. Confronted with this finding, many people resort to anecdotal explanations: "Well, in my family."

Another major characteristic of science that must be taken into consideration is whether the work is an experimental or a field study. Work that can be done in a laboratory can be highly controlled. Field work is influenced by many uncontrollable variables. This distinction is important in the social sciences since many experiments can't be done on human beings for ethical as well as practical reasons.

No single survey is definitive. Social science, like other sciences, relies on a gradual accumulation of evidence. Science, whether natural or social, is objective, but individual scientists are not. A scientist can not have firm knowledge until there is a consensus among peer researchers..

-- Reported by Virginia Jergens.



ART BUSINESS

Officers elected on
10 June 2000



President:	Roy Auerbach
Vice-President:	Lance Moody
Secretary:	Virginia Jergens
Treasurer:	Rick Prairie
Membership Secretary:	Nurit Bowman
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Program Committee Chair:	Brad Bonham
Meeting Organizer:	Brad Bonham
Investigations Officer:	Terry Endres
Newsletter Editor:	Wolf Roder
Media Resources Coordinator:	Bob Streifthau
Publicity Coordinator:	Inez Klein
Webmaster:	David Wall

John Bear from page 1...

injunction and was ultimately fined heavily and ordered to shut down his agency.

End of story? Sadly, no. Immediately after the closing of International Accrediting Commission, there opened, the next state over, in Beebe, Arkansas, the Accrediting Commission International (ACI), which immediately invited all of the IAC schools (except, presumably, Eastern Missouri Business) to become automatically accredited by ACI.

ACI is in business today, bigger than ever, accrediting over 200 institutions (I don't know how many more, since, incredibly, they decline to make their membership list public).

This is absolutely legal. The accreditor operates legally under Arkansas law. The over 200 schools they accredit apparently all operate legally under the laws of their own states.

And those well-meaning consumers, who have been trained to ask, "Is it accredited," reach for their checkbooks, because they don't know that they must ask the essential second question: "And is the accrediting agency recognized by the Department of Education or the Council on Higher Education Accreditation?"

(John Baer is without doubt America's foremost expert on Diploma Mills.)

From Edward B. Davis, "**Recapitulations: Reply to Phillip Johnson**" in *Reports of the National Center for Science Education* vol. 19, (no. 4, July/August 1999) pp. 25-26. (Davis is Professor of the History of Science at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa.)

I find evidence of purpose in the astonishing fact, pregnant with meaning, that a deep and often subtle order exists and can be found by rational creatures—in the fact that methodological naturalism is so fruitful . . . to account for certain natural phenomena. This fact about the intelligibility of the world is hardly necessary for our evolutionary survival and raises profound questions about why this should be so. Such questions are metascientific in nature and have often been asked by great scientists who do not share a common religious orientation. I also see evidence for theism in various anthropic phenomena discovered by cosmology; in the persistent human belief in a meaning for existence that goes beyond our own time and place; in the equally persistent belief in "right" and "wrong" as moral categories compared to considering "good" and "bad" simply as attributes of things that happen; and even in aspects of the biological world, such as the progressive development on this planet of an extraordinarily diverse and interrelated system of organisms, which in some respects mirrors (in my view) the Trinity itself.

Neither Zeus nor Santa Claus represents a serious answer to questions of this type, but many would say that God does. I count myself among them.



A Puzzle for Thinkers

A famous problem: the Girl or the Goat?

In a TV quiz program the contestant is asked to choose among three closed doors. Behind one door is a beautiful woman (or young man if the contestant is of the other persuasion), behind the other two doors are goats.

After the contestant picks one door, but before it is opened the host opens another door showing there is a goat behind it. The odds are now even the contestant has the door with the girl or the other goat. He is asked if he wants to change his choice.

Question, should the contestant change to the other door, stand fast with the door he has chosen, or does it make no difference?

Solution to last issue's puzzle:

An equation with four sevens equaling to one hundred:

$$\begin{array}{r} 7 \quad 7 \\ --- * --- = 100 \\ .7 \quad .7 \end{array}$$



Not the sharpest knife in the drawer:

City Manager: [to a member of the audience] "Excuse me. No cigarette smoking allowed. Would you please put out that cigarette?"

Smoker: "That's no cigarette. It's a joint."

Incident at a meeting of the Harlingen, Texas, city council. It resulted in the arrest of the smoker for possession of marijuana.



In Kansas they don't teach the Big Bang, the age of the Earth, or Evolution in school. But I don't think they'll outlaw bio-astrology though.

—bio-astrologer Esmeralda von Löwenzahn-Dentdelion



The Association for Rational
Thought
Annual Report, 1999-2000



Below you will find the ninth annual report of the Association for Rational Thought. Five officers reported working a total of 713 volunteer hours during the 1999 - 2000 year. This represents only a portion of the hours contributed by A.R.T.'s hardworking officers.

--Virginia Jergens, Secretary.

President's Report

Each year that I have been president, I have written an annual report for the organization. I am happy to say that this year has produced the same excellent results as in past years. The differences noted here are all positive.

As in past years we have had an interesting speaker program including talks on the history of Tarot cards, local evidence (or lack of) for UFOs, Reichenbach Ord energy, intelligent design, and more. Even when we had speakers cancel, we were able to substitute another speaker (Thanks to Joe Gastright) or come up with a community discussion. The talk on Tarot cards was a special treat with a visit to the card museum of U.S. Playing Cards and a talk by a world wide expert. I look forward to another year of excellent talks and a year that will include a special Friday the 13th party before Halloween.

Our web site is now well established and generates a steady rate of hits. As a measure of public interest, we get a steady stream of e-mail addressed to the president either asking questions or wanting to discuss further topics from the blurbs. I would like to thank all the members who have helped answer those correspondences that merited a reply. Many times questions for which I didn't have an educated reply were answered by other members of greater learning. This is a great public service that goes towards one of our organizational goals of education.

To my great surprise, our number of members and the generous donations over our requested dues have put us in a position where our bank balance is not always hovering at the zero mark. That small balance of a few hundred dollars provides a little breathing room. I hope and expect that as our membership slowly grows, we will have enough funds to consider expanding our operations beyond supporting membership communication, the web site, and the newsletter.

As always, I want to thank the other officers for making this organization work as smoothly as it does. Executive and general meetings are always fun as well as productive. One of the best indicators for the future are some new faces who start working in A.R.T. for the coming year. New people will mean an influx of new ideas. Look for an even better organization in coming years. Hours worked on behalf of A.R.T. unavailable.

--Roy Auerbach, President.

Vice-President's Report

As vice-president, I filled in for our illustrious President at the last regular membership meeting. One of the real perks of being on the executive council is attending those bimonthly meetings, being involved in the workings and machinations of our venerable

organization and reaping the benefits of having computer experts to interrogate about various computer problems, which I took full advantage of. But probably the most important thing I did as vice president this year was to learn how A.R.T. works and what our needs as an organization are. I look forward to doing more of the same in the coming year. Hours worked on behalf of A.R.T. unavailable.

--Nurit Bowman, Vice-President.

Secretary's Report

As secretary, I took minutes at executive council and membership meetings and entered them in A. R. T.'s official records. I distributed copies of executive council minutes and action lists and membership meeting minutes to officers. I collected reports from officers on their activities for the past year and prepared the annual report required by our by-laws. I maintained and distributed an executive council member address and phone number list and sent meeting reminders to members of the council.

In addition, I wrote articles for the newsletter summarizing the talks of the speakers at A.R.T. meetings this year. I wrote several articles for the newsletter summarizing executive council and membership meeting business and one blurb for our web site. I helped set up before and clean up after regular membership meetings.

Next year I plan to prepare for our web site six issues of the newsletter issued when I was editor but not yet included on our web site. I contributed 162 hours of volunteer work during the past A.R.T. year, July 1, 1999 - June 30, 2000.

--Virginia Jergens, Secretary.

Treasurer's Report

As of June 30, 1999 the checkbook balance was \$1594.38, with no outstanding bills. This year's balance as of June 30, 2000, is \$1667.81, again with no unpaid bills.

Income

Membership Dues	\$1,200.00
Cash Donations	835.00
In-Kind Donations	410.96
Web Donations	300.00
Blurb Sales	10.00

Total Income	2,755.96

Expenses

Membership	
Postage	348.90
Printing of Notices	142.30
P.O. Box Rental	64.00
Newsletter	
Bulk Mail	450.00
Postage	17.38
Printing	867.17

Programs	
Coffee	48.99
Guest Meals	63.07
Other	
Web Expenses	652.74
Miscellaneous	27.98

Total Expenses	2,682.53

Net Income	73.43

Compared with last year's income and expenses, dues were unchanged, cash donations excluding the web decreased about \$400, web donations decreased \$300 and in-kind donations decreased by about \$150. Total expenses remained about the same. So whereas last year saw a net increase of \$950, this year's increase was much more modest. I again spent about twenty hours keeping the books, plus about 18 hours at executive meetings.

--Rick Prairie, Treasurer.

Meeting Organizer and Program Chair's Report

OK, it's four years and counting now that we've been offering monthly programs from September to June. Whew! That continuity (vs. eight meetings per year), plus the increased contact with membership provided by six newsletters per year has resulted in a solid increase in attendance. For the 1999 / 2000 season, we averaged 22 members, two visitors and 12 "lunchees" per program. And this in spite of another year with some early schedule difficulties, and without benefit of distribution of an Annual Program flyer (which seriously impairs advance publicity efforts).

We had some great new speakers this year (all of whom we hope to hear from again) and ventured out for our first-ever field trip, to the U.S. Playing Card Museum in Norwood, a real treasure and one of Cincinnati's best-kept secrets. And yes (in response to many requests), we'll try to do at least one field trip each season. This past year also included two "free-for-alls," the first because the world didn't come to an end on January 1, 2000, the second due to a last minute speaker cancellation. For those of you who missed 'em, these sessions have been great fun and a terrific way to get to know some very quirky things about your fellow members!

Membership Committee Chair Report

Once again, early-season scheduling problems pre-empted production of an Annual Program flyer. And, in a domino effect, we didn't manage to mount a membership recruitment campaign aimed at area Skeptical Inquirer and Skeptical Magazine subscribers. Maybe the 2000 / 2001 season will prove more productive. I contributed an estimated 285 hours of volunteer work during the past A.R.T. year, July 1, 1999 - June 30, 2000.

--Brad Bonham, Meeting Organizer, Program Chair, and Membership Chair.

Membership Secretary's Report

The membership of A.R.T. has increased to approximately 100 members. Unfortunately, I haven't made a

great effort to remind members and collect renewal dues for most of 2000 so that approximately 40% of the membership is late in paying dues. The main bulk of memberships come up in the fall season, and a large campaign will need to be undertaken at that time.

I would like to thank the membership for donating their money to the organization. We have purposefully kept the membership fee a low \$15 to encourage membership by all. I want to specially thank those that have provided donations above the membership fee. We rely in part on the generous donations of some members, important to our survival. Gifts have helped greatly in supporting our web site and have left us a small working balance at the end of the year. Hours worked on behalf of A.R.T. unavailable.

--Roy Auerbach, Membership Secretary.

Publicity Coordinator's Report

I continued to place adds for membership meetings when information on the speaker and topic were available at least a week advance. Notices were sent to the Cincinnati Enquirer, Cincinnati Post, and City Beat on a regular basis.

Due to professional responsibilities, I have stepped down from my post and turned the position over to Inez Klein. Hours worked on behalf of A.R.T. unavailable.

--Gary Himes, Publicity Coordinator.

Investigation Officer's Report

During the past year, three investigations were made. These were two cases of supposed house hauntings and one case of supposed stigmata.

Both house hauntings turned out to be of the "poltergeist" type. They ceased when the happenings were examined and explanations given to the families.

The stigmata case seemed to result from a teen-age girl's having seen the movie "Stigmata," and believing she had stigmata herself. We viewed the film together and its lack of knowledge of real stigmata was explained. With some counseling, the girl was cured of her belief.

No other cases for investigation were reported to me during the past year. I likewise received no reports of any individual investigations by A.R.T. members. Hours worked on behalf of A.R.T. unavailable.

--Richard McGrath, Investigations Officer.

Newsletter Editor's Report

Six bimonthly issues of the Newsletter appeared during the year. Each contained 12 pages, except December/January, which had 16 pages.

Each issue generally consisted of these parts:

- (1) Certain short pieces in all or most issues: the motto, comments by bio-astrologer Esmeralda, a limerick, a puzzle.
- (2) Longer regular pieces: a full report on each meeting presentation (all written by Dinny Jergens), a thoughtful comments column, an editorial, book reviews.
- (3) Various, mostly short, but some longer pieces: news drawn mostly from the Internet.
- (4) Reports on executive committee meetings, election

results, etc.

(5) Announcements of the next two upcoming meeting programs or topics.

(6) A membership application and contribution form.

Missing are comment on idiocies written, spoken or shown by the local news media. Your editor simply is not hooked sufficiently into the local scene. Any help would be appreciated. Call me, write notes, present comments on material of interest in the local media.

Recent newsletter costs have totaled about \$215 per issue, including: printing 250 copies at \$150, tax \$8.20, postage about \$36.75, and each issue's share of the bulk mail fee, \$16.67. Mailing two dozen copies of each issue to the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) in Amherst, NY, for their newsletter exchange program is \$3.15 (They send us newsletters from other skeptics groups in return.)

I spent about 120 hours editing the newsletter during the year, plus executive council meetings. About 30 hours were spent writing reviews, untold additional hours to read the books. Donna Loughry worked about 60 hours. By far our most important and regular contributor was Virginia Jergens. Other contributors, Joe Gastright, Bill Jensen, Roy Auerbach.

--Wolf Roder, Newsletter Editor.

Webmaster's Report

At the time of writing, because of various mumblety-mumble excuses, I am missing the web logs for February and March of 2000. I had thought that they would be saved indefinitely, so I planned on downloading them when I needed them, but it seems that One Net automatically deletes old web logs from our account after a period of time. I'm talking to One Net about getting the missing logs, but this report is based on only the logs I have, namely those from July 1999 to July 2000, excluding the months previously mentioned as missing.

The number of "hits" (visits) at our site has increased dramatically; we get more hits in a month now than we did in about our entire first year.

In any case, here are some summary statistics:

Unique sites served	22,093
Unique documents served	310
Total visits	48,655
Overall Hits	89,556
Home Page Accesses	6,177
Blurbs	45,620
Remote links	5,648
Meetings	1,090
1996-7 Meetings	268
1997-8 Meetings	570
1998-9 Meetings	376
1999-0 Meetings	642

"Unique" sites refers to the individual network addresses that accessed our site. This is a pretty vague measure, since a network address is not necessarily static, that is, it can be one person one day and someone else the next. But that's the nature of

the beast.

"Total visits" is based on the number of unique sites served. At face value, it says that our site was visited over 48,000 times. So either every visitor looked at our web site a little more than two times, or (much more likely) many people visited once, and a smaller number visited repeatedly.

"Overall hits" is more obvious. That is the total number of times a particular net address, maybe someone at the same address, accessed a document on our site (I've excluded the counts of accesses to image files (pictures), since they are not really relevant.)

The most popular pages were:

Home page	6,177
Main blurbs page	3,292
Loch Ness Monster	2,969
Spontaneous Human combustion	2,478
Main Links page	2,225
Vindication of Stanton	1,940
Satanic Ritual Abuse	1,685
Philadelphia Experiment	1,609
Snake Handling	1,329
Repressed Memories	1,299
Faith Healing	1,214
Lunar Influence	1,202
Kirlian Photography	1,052
Mu and Lemuria	1,050
Darwin's Deathbed	988
Mind-Reading	978
Velikovsky	972
Lincoln's "Cannots"	959
Psychic Fairs	941
Bermuda Triangle	938

The blurbs remain the most popular section of our site, which has remained fairly constant since we first got it on the net.

At one time I had a page on which I kept links to other sites, and edited it manually. Now I use a free program that maintains a small database of links and link descriptions which I can update remotely. It also allows the grouping of links into categories. When I make changes, I press a button and all the links pages are updated automatically, which is much easier than editing all the pages by hand. At present there are 121 links to other sites in the database, broken up into categories such as Skeptical Organizations, UFOs, Creationism, Alternative Medicine, and so on.

I still plan to get other issues of the newsletter online eventually, but it's quite a bit of work and somehow I can never seem to find enough time to work on them. (After working on web stuff all day at work, often I just don't feel like tackling it at home, too.) If anyone would like to help, please contact me at darkon@one.net. No web experience is necessary; basically all I need is for someone to go through a Wordperfect file for a newsletter and concatenate each article into a contiguous piece, and then send me all the pieces as plain text files, or even some word-processing format I can read. The biggest hassle to me is simply getting all the pieces together. Once I have the pieces it's fairly

easy for me to add the necessary HTML and a few images, make an index page for the issue, and add it to the web site.

The SANE list had 32 members at the time of the 1999 annual report. It now has 47 members. However, except for a few of the e-mail addresses, it's not possible to tell who is local to Cincinnati and who is subscribed from a distance.

I moved the SANE list to onelist.com last year, because they offered free e-mail lists and a web interface to setting individual subscription options. Onelist has since been acquired by or renamed to Egroups.com, but the transition was practically unnoticeable, and the list works the same as it did. Traffic is still kept at a low level, with the number of messages per day rarely going over five I am pleased to see that others are making contributions, so that it's not just me forwarding material from CSICOP, Skeptic Magazine (it seems more like Michael Shermer info sometimes), and James Randi.

--David Wall, Webmaster.



WANTED!!!.....

**Your Favorite
Superstitions!!!!**

**Collecting Superstitions for a
Superstition Bash Party**

Send your favorites to; ART-Superstitions, P.O. Box 12896, Cincinnati, OH 45212 or e-mail me at dloughry@fuse.net.



October 



Superstition Bash!

WHO: All members their personal friends (Adults Only) who want to have some fun with Superstitions. If someone has a friend in the media, you are encouraged to invite them on a personal basis.

WHERE: St. John's Unitarian Church in Clifton.
320 Resor Ave. Cincinnati, OH

WHEN: **Date & Time:** Friday October 13, 2000 at 7:30 PM

Food: Pop, Snacks, finger food and desserts will be served.
Drinks will be Bring your own bottle — BYOB.

WHAT: Costume contest, Fun & Games, Short Reader's theater and more.

Please **RSVP** (so we know how many people to prepare for),
with Donna Loughry at (513) 961-7331.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend!



The Association for Rational Thought is an independent, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization. We share the ideas and philosophies of CSICOP, the Skeptics Society, and JREF.

CSICOP : the *Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal* publishes the *Skeptical Inquirer*, a journal of investigations of paranormal claims. PO. Box 703, Amherst, NY 14226-0703, phone: 800-634-1610, fax: 716-636-1733, www.scicop.org

The Skeptics Society, publishes *The Skeptic Magazine*. PO Box 338, Altadena, CA 91001; phone: 626-794-3119; fax 626-794-1300; skepticmag@aol.com and www.skeptic.com.

JREF: the James Randi Educational Foundation publishes the *Swift Newsletter*. 201 SE Davie Blvd. Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316-1815. phone: (954) 467-1112, fax: (954)467-1660, www.randi.org

A.R.T. meets on the second Saturday of each month September through June, 10:00 AM at James Tavern in Blue Ash and publishes *Cincinnati Skeptic* each month. A.R.T. meetings are open to the public. A.R.T. also maintains a database of information on paranormal claims for local new media to consult and investigates local paranormal claims. A.R.T. was founded by Cincinnati area skeptics in 1991. Annual dues are \$15.00 and include a subscription to the *Cincinnati Skeptic*.

For more information call: President Roy Auerbach (513)731-2774 or Nurit Bowman, (513) 731-0642 or visit our website. **Address Changes and Corrections, Membership Questions:** Roy Auerbach (513) 731-2774 E-mail: raa@cinci.rr.com

Mailing Label Information: "00/00/00 Member": You are a member in good standing; your membership will expire on the date on the label. "Lapsed": (*highlighted*) - your membership has expired. Please send your dues as soon as possible.

Yes! — I want to support the important work of **The Association for Rational Thought** and receive *Cincinnati Skeptic* and meeting notices. I have enclosed funds for:

New Member

Renewing Member

Contribution

Gift membership for/by:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Work: _____ Home: _____ E-mail: _____

We have kept dues low and will continue to do so in spite of rising costs. However, if you are able to, your additional contributions are very much appreciated. Please give generously, if possible. Thank you very much!

I would like to make a contribution in addition to my dues to further the important work of the Association:

Contribution Amount: \$ _____ Dues: \$ _____ Total Enclosed: _____

Make your check payable to the **Association for Rational Thought** and mail to A.R.T., P.O. Box 12896, Cincinnati OH 45212. *Contributions are not at present tax deductible, but we are working on it.*

Request subjects for future meetings _____

Please do *not* include my name and address in mailing lists exchanged with other groups.

Skepticism and ART on the Electronic Media



For the latest in skeptical news via e-mail, join SANE, the Skeptical Area Network Effort. You will find cheerful, rational messages from CSICOP, James "The Amazing" Randi, your fellow local skeptics and ART in your e-mail box every week. This is our means of staying in touch between issues of the *Cincinnati Skeptic*.

Be sure to check out our skeptical website at <http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.org> --- It contains: our BLURBS on various subjects; lots of nifty links to skeptical thinking around the world; the information for joining SANE; the basic definition of who we are, what we do, and our bylaws. In addition, you'll find such things as how to get to our meetings held at James Tavern; other ways to reach us; and how to send sample copies of the newsletter to potential members.

—David Wall, Web Site Manager

Web: <http://www.cincinnati-skeptics.org>

E-mail: darkon@one.net



Association for Rational Thought
P.O. Box 12896
Cincinnati, OH 45212

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The Association for Rational Thought is an organization committed to encouraging rational, well-informed evaluation of fringe-science, pseudoscience, and paranormal claims. A.R.T. encourages the investigation of paranormal and pseudoscientific claims from a responsible, scientific viewpoint and the distribution of the results of such investigations to the public. You are cordially invited to become a member of A.R.T. Membership information is included elsewhere in this issue.

Preview Of Coming Attractions....

Place: James Tavern at Cooper Road and Reed Hartman Highway. It is a great place to gather and then have the lunch/social portion of each meeting. This location is very accessible for folks wielding walkers, wheel-chairs and the like. Coffee is available with a small donation during the meeting.

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program -->12:00PM - 2:00 PM -- lunch

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend!..See you there!

First Meeting of the 2000-2001 Season! Date and Day: 10 September 2000

Something fascinating and interesting is being planned

Watch Your Mail For a postcard with details....

Second Meeting of the 2000-2001 Season! Date and Day: 13 October 2000

Friday the 13th -- a great evening for a Superstition Bash!!

Mark your calendar and plan to attend!

NOTE: There will not be any Meeting on Saturday, 14 October at James Tavern.

Join us....to find out what's real and what's not!