



Cincinnati Skeptic

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The sign of a truly educated person is to be deeply moved by statistics.

— George Bernard Shaw

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**The Committee on the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal
Local Group Representatives Meeting:
20-22 April 2001, at the Center for Inquiry,
Amherst, NY.**

Representatives of four Canadian, 19 US and one overseas groups met for two days at the Center for Inquiry in Amherst, a suburb of Buffalo. Attendance represents more than half of the 38 groups listed in the back of the *Skeptical Inquirer*. Some of the local groups have difficulty remaining active, others consist of very few members.

Most of us arrived on Friday afternoon, stayed at the local, walking distance, Motel 6, and ate at the neighboring Ponderosa when the Center for Inquiry did not provide the meal. Most of us also stayed for the 25th anniversary celebration of CSICOP, which took place on Sunday afternoon.

The conference was rather informal with intensive meetings Saturday morning and afternoon, and Sunday morning. The first part of the morning session was devoted to remarks by the Center staff: Paul Kurtz, president of the Center; Barry Karr, manager of the *Skeptical Inquirer*; Joe Nickell, chief investigator; and Amanda Chesworth, youth involvement. Later sessions were devoted to (1) describing what each group sees as its accomplishments, i.e. what worked, then (2) broke into subgroups which each discussed a major topic, which (3) then reported to the whole group for further discussion.

In his introduction Paul Kurtz laid emphasis on the concept of inquiry, on scientific investigation as the basis for CSICOP. He also spoke of the changes the irrational has undergone in the past three decades, from Velikovsky and von Dänikin to recent "post-
(Cont. Pg 8)

May Meeting

Quack Accountability- Why Standardized Tests Can't Measure School Performance

A.R.T. founder, former president, and investigations officer emeritus Joe Gastright spoke at the May meeting, but not before President Roy Auerbach reviewed his remarkable contributions to local history and skepticism. Joe has a long standing interest in local history and helped found the Kenton County Historical Society. He taught high school chemistry and history. In addition he has given about a dozen talks to A.R.T., on subjects ranging from his investigations into Therapeutic Touch and families troubled by ghosts to a comprehensive history of nonsense in Cincinnati and its European roots.

Of all the subjects Joe has spoken to A.R.T. on, he has made the deepest study of this meeting's topic, beginning in graduate school when he wrote his dissertation on a problem related to standardized testing and completed his doctoral degree in educational evaluation. For many years he was director of both educational evaluation and testing for the Cincinnati Public Schools.

Joe started out by conceding that you can't teach without testing. Teachers always collect some sort of
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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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Comments Corner.....**1853 was a Very Good Year**

My promised look at feminism in 1842 turned out to be too long for one issue, so it will be delayed till later. In its place a review of "Spirituality in Cincinnati" as presented by our favorite Eclectic Physician, Jos. R. Buchanan, in the *Journal of Man* (What follows is a long quote from the issue for March 1853).
--Joe Gastright

Spiritual Circles are not confined to any particular class of society, but are found on every street and square of the city. The facts almost stagger belief. Many circles were held in secret and we only learned of them by accident, and many we have reason to suppose, are of this class. We found fifty-nine organized circles and these figures may be safely doubled to arrive at the true number. This however does not include hundreds of circles which are held occasionally, or which have only just commenced. The number of mediums whose names we could ascertain was three hundred and ten which does not include those partially developed. If that class were added, the number of mediums in Cincinnati would not be less than twelve hundred!

So great was the demand for the publications touching this subject, that one book concern, that of F. Bly, the blind phrenologist, has confined his business entirely to this class of books. The number which have been written, referring directly to this phenomena is thirty-five, and near a dozen newspapers and periodicals devoted to the investigation of this subject, are issued in different parts of the Union, all of which find many eager purchasers in our city. Another measure of the interest which is felt in this matter is exhibited in the fact that the "Spiritual Beacon" commences its publication this week with one thousand city subscribers.

In the progress of this movement the old system of communicating by raps has been superseded by yet stranger processes. It used to take half an hour to obtain anything like a complete sentence by raps. Now mediums are able to write and even talk under spiritual influence. Other physical manifestations have recently taken place. We will mention a few of the most boldly defined cases.

At a private circle in the western part of the city, the editor of a morning paper was carried, together with a table upon which he sat, several times across a room, without there being any visible moving cause..... An ex-judge on Fourth street, who had been ridiculing his wife for convening circles in his house, was prevailed upon to attend. He challenged any spirits present to show themselves by working on the table around which they sat. No sooner had these words left his mouth, when the top was twisted from its column and rolled cross the floor!

But to the communications. These are now generally made by the mediums arm being spiritually magnetized, and becoming obedient to spiritual direction in writing, or in pointing out the letters on a large alphabet; or, as is more frequently the case, after a half an hour of sitting hand in hand in a circle of eight or a dozen persons, the medium is taken possession of by the spirits who use her organs of speech in talking to the company..... These "revelations" through the medium vary somewhat, yet they are of a radical character. They teach the overthrow of existing church organizations, and say that vital changes must be made in the social and commercial world.



**A.R.T.
Business**



**May Meeting of the
Executive Council**

The Executive Council met May 5 to hear Wolf Roder report on his trip to Anherst, New York, to meet with other representatives of local skeptics' groups. The meeting was called by CSICOP to encourage stronger relationships among the local groups and between them and CSICOP. Wolf's report appears elsewhere in this issue.

Our treasury stands at \$1,953. A grant of \$200 from CSICOP paid part of the expenses of Wolf's trip. Membership is at 105. Planning began for our annual summer picnic, and nominations for next year's officers were discussed.

Everyone went home with an action list to be accomplished before the next meeting, June 2, Bethesda Blue Ash Medical Building, at the corner of Reid Hartman Highway and Cooper Road in Blue Ash. All A.R.T. members. are welcome.

-Reported by Virginia Jergens.

Membership Duration

The ART Executive Council approved a proposal to have all memberships start in late Summer, in order to coordinate membership with our fiscal year, from 1 August to 31 July of the next year. This will allow us to mail renewal requests only once a year in the Fall.

**Stuck by Sturkey's?
Compensation Here!**

Members who were treated rudely by a waitress at Sturkey's Restaurant after an A.R.T. meeting at the Wyoming Public Library may call Inez Klein at 513-521-8195, or e-mail her at inez@one.net. Inez has a **\$15 gift certificate** for a meal at Sturkey's for you, courtesy of the management.

A Puzzle for Thinkers

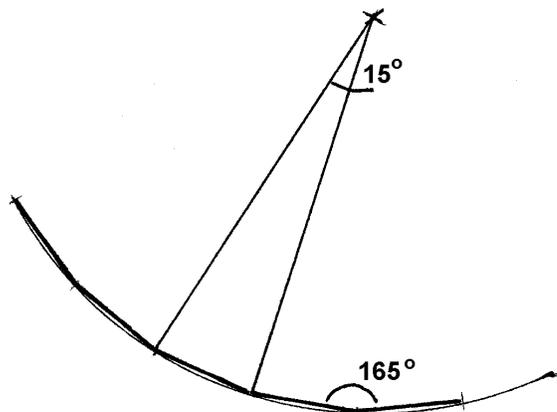


Yin and Yang.

Picture the image of the symbol sometimes called yin and yang. (This is the central symbol in the flag of South Korea.) It consists of a large circle, into which two smaller circular arcs are inscribed. Imagine we carry one of the circular arcs around to make the full circle. This leaves a complicated figure bounded by three circular arcs. If the large circle is 38 units in area, how large will the area of this figure be?

Solution to the puzzle in the last issue:

A regular polygon with 165° interior angles. Think of the triangles that form this polygon. Each base angle will be half of 165° and the two base angles will add to 165° ; which leaves 15° for the angle at the apex of the triangle, since all three angles of a triangle add to 180° . 360 divided by 15 equals 24, so there will be that many triangles to form the polygon which will have 24 sides.



For travelers going sidereal
The danger they say is bacterial.
I don't know the pattern
On Mars or on Saturn
But on Venus it must be venereal.
Robert Frost



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

*Encyclopedia of Pseudoscience:
From Alien Abductions to Zone Therapy*
William F. Williams, General Editor
(New York: Facts on File, Inc. 2000)

On the face of it this is a standard A to Z encyclopedia from a reputable publisher. From Alien Abductions to Zwaan Rays the 385 pages discuss the many and major topics related to pseudoscience. Most are short articles in alphabetical order. Clearly this is the sort of reference book every skeptic has and needs to have on his shelf.

The list of four advisers and consultants, however, gave me pause. What is a director of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies doing on this list. Another adviser is Professor Marcello Truzzi, the Director of a Center for Anomalies Research. Truzzi was one of the founders of CSICOP and the first editor of their magazine. They soon came to a parting of the ways, because, as Ken Frazier wrote "Truzzi wanted it to be more of an academic, especially sociological, journal:" and "Truzzi wanted CSICOP to invite paranormal proponents into the organization." Clearly, Truzzi comes from a viewpoint of cultural and scientific relativism. This view seeks debate with the believers in the paranormal, even on subjects considered settled and beyond dispute by scientists.

Another adviser is a Research Specialist in a department of religious studies. The last of the advisers is Professor of the Philosophy of Science. He is willing to advance the thought that "some ideas that may at first look like superstitions eventually become accepted into science." (p. xiii) An example of this "is acupuncture, which – one rejected as 'oriental fakery' – is now increasingly (if grudgingly) recognized as engaged with something quite real." (p. xiii) On the other hand he also comments on the social sciences that "to many hard scientists these softer sciences were much more like pseudoscience than true science." (p. xiv) This is, in other words, a book to be taken with care and some skepticism.

How does one describe or comment on a mass of short articles. Looking for something characteristic, I first turned to Ufology (p. 359). In my opinion the author of the article (none of the articles are signed) is willing to give too much credit to the phenomenon. Phrases include such as "the study of the evidence for, and explanation of, these observations ..." or "The continuing controversy over UFO's..." does not sound overly critical. The further reading at the end cites none of the really critical works about the UFO phenomenon. These, however, can be found listed under Philip J. Klass who along with James Randi and many others, not Paul Kurtz though, appears in these pages.

The entry on Alien Abduction mentions Harvard professor John Mack prominently, but balances this by giving four contrary explanations of the phenomenon. The entry under crashed Flying Saucers gives a lot of space and too much credence to the July 1947 incident at Roswell, New Mexico. Does any rational person still believe this, or did any ever?

A rather odd aspect of this *Encyclopedia of Pseudoscience* are the many articles on what I at least think, is true science. Why are there articles on the Big Bang, biofeedback, continental drift (plate tectonics), Easter Island or the germ theory. What are Havelock Ellis, Isaac Newton, Louis Pasteur and many other prominent scientists doing in this book. I am left with the distinct impression, the authors and advisers of this volume lack a clear distinction between what is pseudo and what is science. Nevertheless, it is an interesting volume, and should be on your shelf. Where else could you find out what is or was Kikapoo Oil.

– Wolf Roder



A Room Temperature IQ.

A chap left a roll of film to be developed at a supermarket in England. When store employees examined the prints, they recognized the men in the pictures as the robbers who raided the store two weeks earlier. Police arrested Roland Tough, 22, when he came back to pick up his prints. He had taken the photos of the gang and their loot in order to "show friends in prison how well they were doing." Tough was sentenced to six years in jail for the robbery. (Times of London)

*The Satanic Gases:**Clearing the Air about Global Warming*

by Patrick J. Michaels and Robert C. Balling, Jr.

(Washington: The Cato Institute, 2000)

The authors present themselves as leading spokesmen for a large number of atmospheric scientists who question the reality of global warming, or at least consider the process as of no great practical importance. The lead author, Michaels, knows what he is talking about and is an expert in the subject. He has a doctorate in agricultural climatology from a leading university.

We have heard a lot about global warming in the press and on TV, a special issue of *Newsweek*, vice-president Al Gore has commented often, and major political conferences and treaties deal with the issue. Michaels claims most of what we have heard is wrong or exaggerated. The slow process of global warming as a consequence of the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will result only in a minor increase in temperature, and most of that will be good for us.

As in all science there is a certain amount of basic agreement between Michaels and the researchers he criticizes. All agree that CO₂ in the global atmosphere has increased since 1958 from about 315 ppm to 365 ppm, and that the source of this increase represents human inputs. There is no doubt this and other greenhouse gases, e.g. methane, act like a blanket on the earth, that is keep the heat in the troposphere longer, so the earth warms. Michaels' bottom estimate of global warming over the next hundred years is at least 1.2°C (2.2°F) in summers and at most 1.7°C (3.1°F) in winters, (Table 61, p. 108). This is much less than many other scientists expect, and thereby hangs the controversy.

Most long term estimates of global warming depend on GCMs (General Circulation Models of the atmosphere), major programs running on the largest computers simulating the atmosphere of the entire earth. The earliest of these programs were built in the seventies, and were rather simple. Despite their growing sophistication, they remain primitive measured on the size and complexity of the climates and the seasons. Michaels makes much of the fact, that as estimates improved global warming was reduced from the earlier crude estimates. Twenty to thirty years have passed since the earliest work on global warming. Michaels uses the empirical data of these last decades to confront his colleagues. He shows that the GCMs have been inadequate to simulate the climate we have experienced in this century, or to confirm the climate of the last decades. He shows this not only for temperature, but also for precipitation, flooding, wind, drought, and various other weather phenomena. It is very hard to argue against empirical data. Here is the summary of an assessment of midwestern USA climate change:

The analysis of historical drought patterns in central North America bring us once again to the dilemma that is always at the heart of the greenhouse debate. The numerical model simulations would have us expect increasing temperature, decreasing summer rainfall, and a decrease in the soil moisture levels. But we can check these expectations against reality because the region has excellent temperature, precipitation, and drought records. In fact, none of the expected seasonal patterns are found in the observations. Temperatures in the area are not rising, rainfall rates are up in summer instead of winter, and the leading drought indicators show a trend to increasing moisture levels. (Pp. 131-132)

The authors consider further that most of the temperature increase will come in mid- and high latitude winters, with only a very small increase in summers. This pattern will benefit rather than harm the human population of earth. Further benefits will come from more intensive plant growth, including of crops, from an increase in CO₂ and shorter winters.

Michaels and Balling have a thoughtful and skeptical book packed with facts which deserves a hearing. It is marred by their attitude of making the climate dispute a battle between good and evil (p. 8). It doesn't go well to accuse scientists on the other side of the debate of supporting a UN internationalist agenda (p. 14), of generating some sort of scientific cover to a foregone conclusion (p. 15), or merely defending a sentiment for transferring money from rich to poor (p. 14). These attitudes merely make me suspect their own bias. After all, the Cato Institute, sponsors and publishers of the book is known as an extremely conservative think tank.

- Wolf Roder



My psychic advice is every bit as useful as the finest bottled French mineral water.

- bio-astrologer Esmeralda von Löwenzahn-Dentdelion

Quack Accountability..... from page 1

information on what students are learning. Good teachers track what students have accomplished with the goal of making sure they learn what the teacher thinks they need to know about a subject. Poor teachers are more likely to set standards claimed to be high and then suggest that that it's the students' s job to meet them.

As long as there has been education there seem to have been methods to evaluate what has been learned. In a



famous series of talks Plato illustrated his method of teaching and evaluating his students as they wandered around down town Athens around 400 BCE. The strolling resulted the method's being called the Peripatetic School. The oldest existing tests we have are Chinese, dating from about 225 BCE, when they were used to

test and thereby standardize workers in the imperial bureaucracy.

Another method of testing is pitting one student against another to determine who knows more. This method, called scholastic disputation, originated in European universities during the Middle Ages. Scholasticism was the philosophy and theology of Western Christendom which held sway in Europe from the ninth to fifteenth centuries.

Students were seated by class rank, the highest ranking student in the left corner of the back row, and the lowest in the right corner of the front row. Any student was allowed to challenge any student above him to a disputation. When the challenge was issued, the teacher fired questions at both students. Whoever answers the most questions correctly took the seat of the higher ranked of the two students, while the defeated student slunk into the lower ranked seat. This method was still in use when Joe attended Covington Latin School, a Roman Catholic school for boys.

In the nineteenth century, oral examination was considered a better way to evaluate students than disputation. The difficulty with oral examination was that it was carried out in the presence of an entire class of students. Teachers rapidly ran out of good questions to ask, since everyone heard all the answers to the questions.

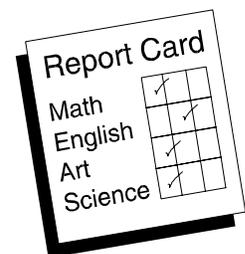
Late in the nineteenth century paper and pencil tests of the sort we are now accustomed to were developed. In Germany an early test developer, Ebbinghaus, developed the completion, or fill in the blanks, test. Along with the development of test items, statistical methods to analyze them began to be developed., including Pearson's product moment

correlation and Spearman's partial correlation. The center of the scientific world at this time was Paris, where schools were quite standardized. Every student at a given level was on the same page of a textbook on the same day as every other student of that level. Unfortunately, standardizing the children proved impossible: the slower ones lagged behind.

Alfred Binet a lawyer who had studied medicine, was asked to develop a method of identifying the slower children, so that they would not slow down the other students. Binet tried all sorts of ideas then current in his search for a sorting method: phrenology (analysis of intelligence by relating it to bumps on the head); palmistry, which looked for intelligence in the lines on the palm, graphology, which assumed that better writing meant better thinking; and physiognomy, based on the notion that the better looking you are, the brighter you are. Finally he observed that people who know lots of wise sayings and have a big vocabulary are more intelligent than those who don't. The amount of cultural knowledge a person has is a good indication of intelligence. Tests of vocabulary are still used in all standardized tests. In 1905, Binet brought out the first version of his test of cultural knowledge. The test did not measure what children knew. Instead it ranked children from smartest to dumbest, from who knew the most to who knew the least. The test measured knowledge, not intelligence.

In 1908, Binet thought he knew what children should know at each grade level. That level of knowledge he called mental age, so each child's score could be translated into mental age. Mental age divided by chronological age was supposed to tell how a child ranked in intelligence. Scores over one indicated above average intelligence; scores below one indicated below average. The mental age notion persisted until about 1930, when it was discarded.

The version of the Binet test used in the United States today, the Stanford Binet, was developed by Terman in the 1930's. By that time, standardized, "objective" tests of student accomplishment were widely accepted, as the result of studies showing that teacher's grading was anything but objective. In 1913 a study used 100 college level geometry papers to test teacher objectivity. One paper was selected as representative and sent to 100 geometry teachers for grading. At the time most grades were scored as percentages. In this case the 100 teachers returned grades ranging from 28% - 92% Another study found that a sample of teachers gave the same English composition grades ranging from 60% - 98%. A multitude



of other studies since have come to the same conclusion: teachers do not agree on what constitutes a particular grade. Students, of course, knew this long before research confirmed their practical knowledge of who the "easy" and "hard" teachers are. Standardized tests banished variation in teacher's grading to some extent, but did not banish variability in the students taking the tests.



The current version of the Stanford Binet sets the mean at a score of 100. The standard deviation at about 15. Other tests, including intelligence tests for military use in World War I, were developed. The multiple choice question format was invented. As the use of the tests grew, so did abuse of the resulting scores. In the United States, many southern states used standardized tests to determine who should be determined a "mental defective" and sterilized to prevent contamination of the gene pool, although the tests measure only knowledge, not innate intelligence. Other abuses resulted in unwarranted firing of teachers and principals. As evidence of abuse surfaced, test use collapsed during the 1930's.

But the need to measure educational accomplishment persisted, and testing recovered. By the 1950's test scores began to be effectively used for guidance. One thing standardized tests can predict well is future success in school, so test results are useful in advising students thinking of going to college or graduate school. Test scores collected as early as the fifth grade are useful in this regard, since students rarely change strongly in educational achievement after that age. Rare exceptions include students whose dyslexia or poor vision or hearing or other correctable problem is treated successfully.

The latest form of test abuse, the notion that test results can be used to hold teachers and principals "accountable" began in the 1970's and has now grown into a mania for test scores. Unfortunately, the tests can't tell you anything about teacher or school achievement. All they can do is rank children from highest to lowest on what they know.

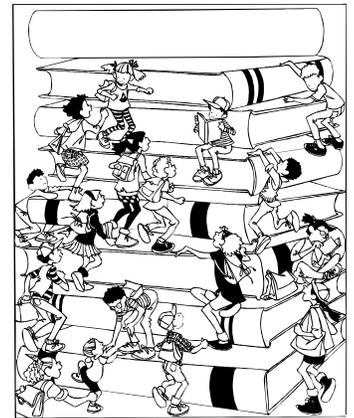
Test items are written and designed to produce scores that spread students out accurately from top to bottom. The goal is to get scores that are as different as possible. A question that most students either miss or answer correctly is a real loser. A question that only a few top scoring students get right is ideal. A question that discriminates negatively is also good. So a question that most high scorers miss, but most low scorers get right would be a good test item.

Tests do not find out how much students know. Most

standardized tests take about two hours, because longer tests are difficult to sell to teachers and administrators. They are limited to about 120 questions, only 20 more than the 100 minimum needed to discriminate between every percentile, so each question must discriminate. No questions can ask about information that can be taught as easily to bright as to dull kids can be included, because they do not discriminate. In addition tests are written so that individual children's scores remain pretty much the same from year to year. The belief that intelligence is a stable quality promotes the effort to prevent a child's score from bouncing around wildly.

These methods of writing items result in tests which are useful in discriminating among students so that they can be placed with other children who learn at about the same pace that they do. Scores appear as a normal distribution also called bell shaped curve. The middle 60% of students can all learn together. The top 20% will be bored if held to the pace of the middle 60%. The top 2% understand abstract things so much better than other students that they can very nearly be classified as another species, and require special attention. The lower 20% will not be able to keep up with the middle 60%, and the bottom 2% will need constant supervision to learn.

But the scores do not tell you which children within a given group are more or less likely to do well in school. They also do not tell you how much children as a whole are learning or how well they are being taught, although standardized test scores are often used for this. The only way to influence test scores is to teach to the test, predicting what will be on the test and teaching that. Unfortunately, because test items must discriminate between the dull and the bright, this method of teaching must focus on information and skills that only bright children are likely to have. Important skills, basics like telling time, that test writers believe all children have get left out.



Because of errors in the tests themselves and variability in the children who take them, for example taking a test when sick or tired, no major decisions at all should be made on the basis of a single score. The future of teachers, principals, and schools should not be tied to any test results. The tests were not designed to measure school performance, and in fact do not measure school performance.

-- Reported by Virginia Jergens

Amherst/CSICOP Report...from page 1

modern" attacks on science from within the academy. Barry Karr discussed the local groups as a forum to gather like minded people. Joe Nickell spoke of the local groups as resources, from within which investigations could originate and be publicized. Amanda Chesworth discussed her work of outreach to youth and schools, by means of a website, suggested classroom activities, and reading lists.

Under the heading of accomplishment, each delegate made a brief presentation on what worked or did not work for his or her group. I learned that most groups are very much like ART, most had reached a plateau in membership, many at about the one hundred mark. Most have periodic meetings for activities, that is presentations by a speaker. These meetings are important, many members join to be entertained. Most issue a newsletter. Goals, and what these might be, is an emotional issue. For some of us it is our own education and understanding about which issues and "truths" are questionable, others find pseudoscience entertaining in the sense "what fools these mortals be." Yet other members appear to have a major interest in making an impact on the

public, through the media, or among young people in the schools. It is to be expected that each group has problems finding and retaining members. It is my observation that many skeptics have a background as former believers, or at least have or had an interest in some one or several pseudosciences. The former expert on UFO's or bigfoot is a familiar figure in skeptical circles.



Many groups have websites, some have electronic discussion groups. All groups are interested in electronic communication and want to expand this.

Here are some things that worked for some:

- ☞ Do an intensive workshop on some topic, e.g. on ghosts, on dowsing, on whatever. How do we know it is or isn't so. How do we recognize, investigate the phenomenon.
- ☞ Research the police, have they used psychics, what has been the result. Might they be interested in what we have to contribute.
- ☞ Set up a skeptical speakers panel at meetings of other organizations, e.g. science fiction convention, mensa meeting, at a psychic fair (if you dare).
- ☞ Have a small group, about eight members, do a brainstorming session, develop critical thinking skills, what action to take against "alternative" medicine, or some other topic.

- ☞ Recruit quality, rather than quantity members. Quality: those who have skills and are willing to contribute work. This presumably means finding people with special skills and interests.

- ☞ Organize a meeting of "Skeptics in the Pub" periodically, just for talk and fun. Possibly consider other "social" rather than educational meetings.

- ☞ Set up or allow to organize a small sub-group of active or expert members to pursue their own project.

- ☞ For a meeting, prepare a vague announcement which makes you seem pro some weird topic, e.g. UFO's, dowsing, exorcism, etc. Then debunk the issue to the gullible

- ☞ Prepare a pamphlet, "Who we Are and What we Do" for friends, prospects, and the media. Have it ready to hand out at all times.

- ☞ Give an award for excellence (in science, in truth) to a news person for good work. People do welcome such award, especially when nobody else seems to read or listen.

- ☞ A T-shirt, e.g. "Tampa Bay Skeptics." This was prominently worn at the meeting. Possibly some other sign of identification, bumper sticker, perhaps.



- ☞ Get on the local talk show, get to know the host(s), suggest topics.

Reports from Small Discussion Groups

Publicity, Outreach, Media.

Court the local media. Compliment them when they do things right. Get on the local morning show, they are always searching for material. Make friends with local media persons, invite them to speak to the group on topics they are familiar with, e.g. quackery in the news, urban legends, etc. Ask the local economics reporter to talk about "scamming or bilking old people" for instance.

Maximize expertise within the group. Write for local media and publish if possible to get credentials, even if

only letters to the editor. Mail press releases to the local media including radio and TV stations. When writing a press release write for the editor, so that he or she can publish it as it stands. This really means do the work for the editor, do not expect the local media to research or edit your story. It must be publishable, entertaining, colorful, and ideally ready to cut



and paste right into the newspaper or radio script. Send press releases also to the radio stations. For television, this needs visuals, so find visuals. If possible make use of local, public

cable access. Put your people on speakers lists at the local library (if they have one). Prepare skeptical panel discussions. Be prepared to explain what CSICOP is, and is not. Provide speakers at local conventions, to Rotary, Lions, Knights of Columbus, etc. Become interested in the local school science clubs or science fair, volunteer to serve as a judge.

Recruitment and member activities.

SI will provide mailing labels once a year. To get more active members, don't just mail these, call the persons, discuss what they can do, their expertise, or what they want in a group.

Put together a "best of newsletter" for recruitment, with list of speakers and topics.

The National Council for Science Education is an anti-creationist body, which supports schools and teachers who resist pseudoscience in the class room. Get the director, Eugenie Scott or other members of the staff of NCSE to talk to your group, then try to tap into their mailing list. Try the same for Mike Shermer of the Skeptics Society and his *Skeptic magazine*. Try to exchange speakers and mailing lists with other local organizations who have related interests, e.g. astronomy club, International Brotherhood of Magicians, Natural History Museum. Invite some of their movers and shakers as speakers.

Attend science fairs, lay out literature and flyers; attend State Science Teachers Meetings. At the local psychic fair, do cold readings, channel a spirit, etc. then explain how its done and have literature and flyers out. The same for company health fairs, or magicians shows.

Speak to people about their specific interests, e.g. about Holocaust Denial to people concerned.

People want to be entertained. Hence, social gatherings or a party. Organize a firewalk or a seance, particularly to get the local news people out. Have programs

for children, e.g. dunk the witch (local science teacher?), bake "misfortune" cookies. Check the website for good ideas along this line.

Consider a breakfast meeting, especially of a small group of activists.

National Organization

There was general agreement that a speakers bureau or list is needed, and a mechanism for knowing when and where speakers are likely to travel.

There was further general agreement we need a national organization of skeptical groups. CSICOP will serve as national organization and is prepared to turn the newsletter *Skeptical Briefs* into a national newsletter for groups, for members within groups, and for people outside of groups.

There was a good deal of discussion about the structure of a national group, and the role and relationship of the local groups to the national. No agreement could be forged in the time available.

Issues and questions concerning these and other matters:

- ☞ Group representation on CSICOP, nature of membership, voting rights.
- ☞ Legal and liability issues. (The legal website "nolo.com" was mentioned as a resource)
- ☞ Some kind of electronic network is needed.
- ☞ Can we provide for local group tax exempt status through a national organization?
- ☞ Nature and structure of national data base of speakers, communication about speakers.
- ☞ How to influence the media.

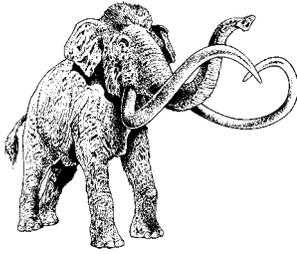
There is clearly a desire for closer organization and more unity. There may even be cause to have a national meeting annually. For the time being however, the plan is to discuss organization further by electronic mail. The details are to be hashed out among group leaders and CSICOP over the next weeks. To be part of this discussion subscribe to

skeploc@topica.com
which is hosted on
<http://www.topica.com/partner/tag01>.



-- Wolf Roder

Details of Upcoming Events...



The Last Meeting of the year!

09 June 2001 – Saturday 10 AM – 12 PM

Field Trip & Picnic – Big Bone Lick State Park (Union, KY)

Jonathan Barker, Park Naturalist

Big Bone Lick State Park (~22 mi SW of Covington, KY)

<http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/parks/bigbone.htm>

Though recognized by the scientific world as the "Birthplace of American Vertebrate Paleontology", BBLSP is not well-known, even to longtime residents of the tri-state region. Join us as Jonathan leads a 90 minute walking-tour (only 1/2 mi; paved & accessible) past the new bog diorama, the last remaining spring and the bison pen. We'll be discussing the history of the park, glaciation, the geologic importance of this site, its use by Native Americans & early settlers, and its value as an educational resource for local schools.

Brown-bag your lunch for this program, we'll picnic in the park afterwards. Members of KASES & CORI have been invited to join us for this program and we've even reserved a shelter in case of rain!

A nominal fee of a couple of bucks per person will be collected to defray park expenses. ART is also asking participants to make a contribution to further the park's educational efforts.

Maps were included in the May reminder mailing – if you wish to be on that list, send \$15.00 to:
ART Membership Secretary; PO Box 12896; Cincinnati, OH 45212-0896

July & August Summer activities...

...are usually limited to the members' picnic in August (if you want an invitation, join today!). However, this year we're going to steal an idea from skeptics in London, England...



– Skeptics in the Pub –

OK, we've heard ya!

Some folks just can't make it to daytime meetings, even on the weekends.

Other folks wish we'd gather simply for social reasons.

Still others feel that every Friday the 13th should be feted.

Well, a harmonic convergence has presented itself:

July 13, 2001.....

isaFriday!!!

Let's celebrate at a local *watering hole*!

Grab your dowsing rods and send us your divinations...



Remember, this is simply a social event – no presentation (unless you want to get into "I'll show you my rod, if you'll show me yours...").

Watch your e-mail, SANE or snail mail for news of this event.

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. P.O. 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; skepticismag@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 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 Lance Moody (513) 336-9834 or visit our website. **Address Changes and Corrections, Membership Questions:** Nurit Bowman (513) 731-0642 E-mail: nuritb@netscape.net

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; 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
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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...

Tenth Meeting of the 2000-2001 Season! *Date and Day: Sat. June 9, 2001*

Approximate Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM -- program --> 12:15 PM - 2:00 PM Lunch

Field trip to Big Bone Lick State Park.

Bring your lunch with you.

Mark your Calendars, Details inside!

Friday the 13th of July - ~~S~~keptics in the Pub!!!

WATCH YOUR MAIL FOR DETAILS

For this Summer's Picnic!!

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend!

See you there!