

# living cybernetics

# playing language



the 60th anniversary meeting  
washington, dc  
june 15–19, 2024

<https://asc-cybernetics.org/2024/>



american society  
for cybernetics

brochure v. 2024-03-17

# the 60th anniversary

# meeting




american society  
for cybernetics

# a (hi)story

In the 1943 short story, 'Mimsy Were the Borogoves,' a small box with children's toys originating from a future time and place is sent to Earth [1]. A young boy finds the box and carries it home. While he develops a sufficient understanding of the toys to play with them, to his parents, they remain entirely obscure. It is the boy's baby sister, still unconditioned by the language of adults, who shows the boy how the toys can form an exit; and thus, she assists both children to escape the world of prediction toward the future. Excluded from this dimension of play, the parents remain behind.

'Mimsy Were the Borogoves,' written by Catherine Lucille Moore and Henry Kuttner under the pseudonym Lewis Padgett, was included by the cybernetician Gotthard Günther in the first German-language collection of American science fiction in 1952 [2].

The story presents insights that have been critical for cybernetics since its beginning in the transdisciplinary conversations of the Macy Conferences. Language conditions how observers perceive the world in which they live and their possibilities for action. Likewise, perceptions and actions condition the languages that observers develop. When the American Society for Cybernetics (ASC) was founded in 1964, understanding the interdependence of language, thought, and action was considered foundational for cybernetics. Margaret Mead further highlighted the importance of the reconception of language at the

A stylized illustration in white and light brown tones. On the left, a snail is shown moving towards the right. To its right, three stylized human figures (two adults and one child) are walking along a dashed line that curves across the page. The background is a solid light brown color with faint, abstract white outlines of shapes at the bottom.

first ASC symposium in her now-famous address, later titled ‘Cybernetics of Cybernetics’ by Heinz von Foerster [3]. Advancing ‘cybernetics as a science, a discipline, a meta-discipline, and a practice’ [4], as the ASC’s By-Laws state, cannot be done without taking the tasks of building a language for cybernetics seriously. Equally important is the study of related languaging acts.

Drawing inspiration from the narrative of ‘Mimsy Were the Borogoves,’ the theme for the 60th Anniversary Meeting of the American Society for Cybernetics considers language at play in the connections of pasts, presents, and futures.



**living cybernetics | playing language** further suggests that cybernetic languaging, in all forms and media, shares a logic that is informed by understandings of processes of living as they exist and may exist. Playing is a means to reach out into possible futures, to initiate the not-yet-existent. In homage to past experiments in conversational framings of ASC meetings, the ASC's 60th Anniversary Meeting will engage in situational enactments of cybernetics at a variety of locations in Washington, DC, ranging from an arts center with a theater to the zoo.

**While we aim for a meeting that engages the values of conversations in the present and in-presence, we will have options for virtual contributions. Two special journal issues as well as a proceedings volume that captures the conversations and carries them into**

**the future are planned as well. Reflecting the conference theme and the anniversary occasion, we have given the proceedings volume the tentative title *An Experimental Glossary*. If the idea of a glossary links to reductionist ideas of language with fixed definitions, a cybernetician's task is to turn these constraints into possibilities. Consequently, the adjective experimental carries the glossary into a new realm where language becomes languaging.**

1. Padgett, Lewis. 1943. "Mimsy Were the Borogoves." *Astounding Science-Fiction*, February, 52–69. [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_astounding-science-fiction\\_1943-02\\_30\\_6/page/52/](https://archive.org/details/sim_astounding-science-fiction_1943-02_30_6/page/52/)
2. Padgett, Lewis. 1952. "Mimsy Were the Borogoves." In *Überwindung von Raum Und Zeit*, edited by Gotthard Günther, 3:186–219. Rauchs Weltraum Bücher. Düsseldorf: Karl Rauch Verlag.
3. Mead, Margaret. 1968. "Cybernetics of Cybernetics." In *Purposive Systems. Proceedings of the First Annual Symposium of the American Society for Cybernetics*, edited by Heinz von Foerster, J. D. White, L. J. Peterson, and J. K. Russell, 1–11. New York: Spartan Books.
4. American Society for Cybernetics. [1979] 2009. "ASC By-Laws." <https://asc-cybernetics.org/by-laws/>.



american society  
for cybernetics

# enacting conversations

The ASC's 60th anniversary meeting will take place in Washington, DC, between June 15 and 17, 2024. Depending on interest, there will be one or two additional workshop days on June 18 and 19.

The location and dates will allow for synergies with the **ISSS conference**, taking place from June 9 to 13 in the same city. June 14 will be dedicated to inter-societal conversations in systems and cybernetics facilitated by the **International Federation for Systems Research (IFSR)**.

We invite you to get involved, initially by indicating your desire to attend the meeting and by proposing interactive presentations, plays, dances, exhibitions, and other forms of conversational framing. You may link your proposal to any of the following three thematic strands: languaging in/for action, archiving archiving, and reimagining technicity. You may consider the entanglement of the three strands in the overarching living cybernetics | playing language theme and their engagements with pasts, presents, and futures. You are further welcome to contextualize and situate your proposal, taking one of the conference locations into account.

# three entangled thematic strands

linguaging in/for action

archiving archiving

reimagining technicity



american society  
for cybernetics



## **linguaging in/for action**

The question of how to conceive linguaging in/for action is at the heart of the 60th-anniversary meeting. How to describe what goes beyond description? How to explain cybernetics? What words do we need to speak cybernetics, and how do they need to be spoken? Proposals focusing on 'linguaging in/for action' may take a word for a walk and, in the process, create a Cybernetics 101 or a grammar of cybernetics.

## **archiving archiving**

The 60th anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on the history of cybernetics and the ASC's past. However, 'archiving archiving' alludes to a second-order reflexive turn. Rather than simply storing the voices of the past, we would want to revive them so that their wisdom becomes a productive contribution to creating desirable futures.

Proposals within the 'archiving archiving' strand may suggest new structures and methods that link pasts, presents, and futures; they may also reflect on the risks related to attempts of revival.

## **reimagining technicity**

The term technicity suggests that creating things and techniques to assist with the processes of living is an essential and inherent part of being human. How design, agency, and action are conceptualized in relation to technology in the widest sense holds significance for how we understand both time and space and, with it, community, environment, and interaction. Proposals within the 'reimagining technicity' strand may reflect on processes and tools that support human agency, diversity, and the creation of sustainable, more-than-human worlds.

# call for proposals

While we aim for a conversational meeting and thus do not intend to schedule paper presentations in the classic sense, we are aware that some of you might need a peer-review process and a formal acceptance for your travel funding applications.

We have set up an academic and an alternative submission pathway. Submissions in the academic pathway will go through a double-blind peer-review process. We recommend the academic pathway to everyone who aims to publish an article in one of the special journal issues related to this conference. Submissions in the alternative submissions pathway are subject to a curatorial selection



american society  
for cybernetics

process and will be considered by the organizing committee.

In the academic pathway, you are asked to submit an abstract, written in common academic language and following a common academic format, followed by an explanation of how the described topic could be (part of) a conversational session at the conference. 300 words of academic abstract plus a few sentences of contextualization for the conference would be a good structure. In the alternative pathway, your proposal can be shorter, but you should nevertheless attempt to describe clearly how you would like to contribute to the 60th anniversary meeting, taking the general theme and

the related strands into account.

If you have ideas that would work well as part of a film or performance evening at the DC Arts Center's theater, you should submit them in the alternative pathway. Likewise, ideas for a workshop on June 18 and/or 19 should be submitted in the alternative pathway. We are particularly interested in workshop proposals that suit the DC Arts Center context. Please see the author guidelines on the next pages for further details.

ASC members who submit a proposal will be invited to participate in the curation of the ASC 60th anniversary meeting.

# submissions timeline

Submissions should be made, at the latest, by Monday, 1 April 2024.

## alternative submission pathway

If you submitted a proposal for a contribution to the conference using the alternative pathway, you can expect to hear back from us by 31 March 2024 (April 15 for submissions after March 17).

## academic submission pathway

If you submitted an abstract in the academic pathway outlining your proposal for a contribution to the conference, you can expect to receive a formal email with comments from the peer reviewers by 10 April 2024 (April 25 for submissions after March 17).



american society  
for cybernetics

We do not intend to go through a full paper review process before the conference. If you need a full paper acceptance before the conference for travel funding-related reasons, please contact the organizing committee.

### **planned publications**

Two special journal issues and *An Experimental Glossary* related to the ASC 60th anniversary theme 'living cybernetics | playing language' are planned. The latter will be flexible in terms of contribution formats. The ASC 60 special journal issues will be published by *Cybernetics & Human Knowing* and *Constructivist Foundations* in the spring of 2025.

The deadline for the submission of the full articles will be 1 July 2024. If you plan to submit an article to one of the special journal issues, please read the author guidelines on the journal's website. You should plan to have a first draft of your paper for the conference dates in June.

The deadline for submissions to the *Experimental Glossary* will be in August 2024. However, if you are interested in contributing to it, we would want to hear from you at the conference what you think *An Experimental Glossary* could be and how you would want to contribute to it.

# guidelines for abstract submissions

Before you can submit a proposal, you need to create an account on our submission platform. To create an account, [please click here](#) (there is an underlying link).

Once you filled in your information, you will need to activate your account via the link sent to you in an email. Check your spam or junk folder. Once you have activated the account, [you can access your dashboard](#). To create a new submission, click the plus sign at the top of the form. Fill in the form by following these instructions. Click the form submit button at the end. If you have successfully submitted the form, you will receive a confirmation email.



american society  
for cybernetics

## **submission form**

### **authors and presenters**

All contributors to the abstract should be included as authors on the right side of the submission form. Simply click the plus sign to add authors and presenters. Individuals have the option to submit multiple proposals, with a maximum limit of four submissions per author. Depending on the overall number of submissions, the organizing committee might select one or two from multiple submissions.

### **thematic strands**

All submissions should address the conference topic and the entangled thematic strands.

## **pathways**

All submissions need to be submitted in the academic or alternative submission pathways. Submissions in the academic pathway will go through a double-blind peer-review process. We recommend the academic pathway to all those who need a peer-reviewed, accepted submission for a travel funding application. We also recommend it to everyone who aims to publish an article in one of the special journal issues related to this conference. Submissions in the alternative submissions pathway are subject to a curatorial selection process and will be considered by the organizing committee. The pathway and theme selection can be made in the submission form in the top right box.

## academic pathway

In the academic pathway, we recommend that you structure your abstract in two parts. Part one could be written like an abstract for a conference paper. Keep the peer-review in mind. We expect around 300 words for this part. In part two, of up to 200 words, you should describe how your topic could become (part of) a conversational conference session, such as a panel, dance, play, walk and talk, workshop or performance. You may also indicate your preferred session location — the Friends Meeting, the DC Arts Center theater or gallery, the National Zoo, or Rock Creek Park. The maximum word length for all submissions is 500 words.

## alternative pathway

In the alternative pathway, your proposal can be shorter than 300 words. Taking the general theme and the related thematic strands into account, you should describe how you intend to contribute to the conversations of the 60th anniversary meeting. As mentioned above, a conversational session could take a variety of formats, including panels, dances, plays, walks and talks, performances or workshops. You may also indicate your preferred session location — the Friends Meeting, the DC Arts Center theater or gallery, the National Zoo, or Rock Creek Park. Your submission can have a maximum of 500 words.







If you have ideas for contributions that fit well into the DC Arts Center as part of a film or performance evening, you should submit them in the alternative pathway. Likewise, ideas for a workshop on June 18 and/or 19 should be submitted in the alternative pathway. We are particularly interested in proposals that suit the DC Arts Center context. Please select the relevant session format in the Coordinator/Mediator/Presenter Information box on the right. If your work requires support in terms of technology, infrastructure, or consumables, or requires a room that meets a particular set of conditions, please indicate this in your submission. You can also add attachments if needed. Keep in mind that the

ASC 60th anniversary meeting is run without external sponsorship. We have only a small budget to support activities.

### **session formats**

Please select the relevant session format in the lower right box labelled Coordinator/Mediator/Presenter Information. The regular conference session format is a 'conversational session.' Proposals for workshops should be indicated as 'workshop format'. Proposals for the film/performance evening should be indicated as 'performance or film evening session.'



rock creek park

national zoo

dc arts center

friends meeting of washington



american society  
for cybernetics

# locations

rock creek park  
just north of the zoo  
<https://www.nps.gov/rocr/>

smithsonian national zoological park  
just north of the dc arts center  
<https://nationalzoo.si.edu>

dc arts center  
2438 18th Street NW, Washington DC  
<https://www.dcartscenter.org/>

friends meeting of washington  
2111 Decatur Place NW, Washington, DC 20008  
<https://events.quakersdc.org>

The listing order of the locations is from North (top) to South (bottom). The locations are within walking distance from each other. It takes 17 minutes to walk from the Friends Meeting to the DC Arts Center and another 17 minutes to the zoo. Rock Creek Park is the furthest in the North and can be reached from the DC Arts Center within 30 minutes by foot. These [Google Maps Directions](#) display the entire route.

The background is a solid red color. A dashed white line starts from the top center and spirals outwards towards the bottom right. Several solid white geometric shapes are overlaid: a large circle in the upper left, a smaller circle inside it, a teardrop shape to the left of the large circle, and a series of overlapping circles forming a spiral pattern in the center and right.

website

<https://asc-cybernetics.org/2024/>



american society  
for cybernetics

# schedule overview

## **saturday, june 15**

The ASC's 60th Anniversary Meeting will begin at the Friends Meeting of Washington at Decatur Place. The Assembly Room and the adjacent terrace and garden offer opportunities for a variety of session formats, including a conference dinner session in the evening.

## **sunday, june 16**

The day will begin with various sessions in the zoo, weather permitting. The DC Arts Center's theater will serve as a second venue and as backup in case of rain in the morning. Sessions in the afternoon will take place at the Friends Meeting. The walking distance between the two locations is 17 minutes.

## **monday, june 17**

On Monday, sessions will take place at the Friends Meeting and the DC Arts Center's theater. Weather permitting, some sessions might be held outdoors in the Zoo and Rock Creek Park.

## **tuesday and wednesday, june 18–19**

Tuesday and Wednesday are our workshop days. Workshops will take place at the DC Arts Center, and weather permitting, they could also be held outdoors.

# registration for the conference

The fees in the following table include the conference dinner session on Saturday evening with soft drinks but no alcoholic beverages. We might explore adding an alcoholic beverage option for individuals at an additional cost. You can indicate your interest in such an option on the registration page.

We will be delighted to welcome you as a member of the American Society for Cybernetics. If you would like to join the society before the conference, please visit: <https://asc-cybernetics.org/join/>



american society  
for cybernetics

During the conference, registrants who are not ASC members will be able to join the society for an additional fee of \$50 (\$20 for students). This special offer will not entitle you to attend the conference for the reduced members rate.

People in special circumstances may apply for reduced fees with a statement justifying their request.

\*Those claiming student status must be full-time students at a university or a similar institution and are required to bring proof of their status, such as a valid student card. We do not include as students those with lecturing and other jobs who are also studying, except under very particular circumstances (ask us).

<https://events.asc-cybernetics.org/2024/>

Conference registration for	Early: until April 30, 2024	Regular: until May 15, 2024	Late
ASC members	\$210	\$235	\$285
individuals who are not ASC members	\$285	\$310	\$360
individuals who are not ASC members including ASC membership	\$310	\$335	\$385
students*	\$50	\$60	\$75

The background is a solid red color. A dashed white line starts from the top center and spirals outwards towards the bottom right. Several solid white geometric shapes are overlaid: a large circle in the upper left, a smaller circle inside it, a teardrop shape to the left of the large circle, and several overlapping circles of varying sizes in the center and right. In the bottom left corner, there is a white logo consisting of two interlocking loops, resembling a stylized infinity symbol or a knot.

website

<https://asc-cybernetics.org/2024/>



american society  
for cybernetics





# see you in dc

If you need an invitation letter for visa-related purposes, please contact [claudia.westermann\\*at\\*asc-cybernetics.org](mailto:claudia.westermann*at*asc-cybernetics.org).

Information about accommodation options will be provided at a later point on the website.

## **organizing committee**

Claudia Westermann, Kate Doyle, Paul Pangaro, Adler Looks Jorge, Mateus van Stralen, Laura Ehmann, Roo Shamim, Ioannis Bardakos, Jude Lombardi, Art Collings, Howard Silverman, Fred Steier.

## **scientific committee**

Allenna Leonard, Anja Pratschke, Ben Sweeting, Candy M. Herr, Claudia Jacques, Claudia Westermann, Fred Steier, Howard Silverman, Ioannis Bardakos, José Cabral, Kate Doyle, Larry Richards, Mark Sullivan, Mateus van Stralen, Paul Pangaro, Thomas Fischer, Tom Scholte, and others tba.

graphics and text: Claudia Westermann | website: Ioannis Bardakos |  
webserver infrastructure: Adler Looks Jorge