

## **A Concise History and Overview of the International Medieval Sermon Studies Society**

Revised January 2022, with reference to the 2010 Concise History by Leo Carruthers

### **Early Days and Constitution**

Gloria Cigman (1928-2018, University of Warwick) launched the Medieval Sermon Studies Newsletter in 1977 to facilitate the exchange of information among scholars with interests in this vital aspect of medieval culture. With the encouragement of Fr Louis Bataillon OP (1914-2009, Leonine Commission, Rome), she organized international gatherings of scholars devoted to this area of research at Linacre College, Oxford, in 1979, 1980, 1982, 1984 and 1986. At this point, the Newsletter was handed on to Valerie Edden (Birmingham) and Ronald Zawilla (St Louis).

At the same time, it was decided that subsequent Symposia would take place in various countries under the guidance of local planning committees, with a French team headed by Nicole Bériou (Lyon), Jacques Berlioz (Lyon), Jacques Foviaux, and Leo Carruthers (Sorbonne) planning for July, 1988.

It was further decided to organize into an international scholarly society; Phyllis Roberts (CUNY) and Larry Eldredge (Oxford) agreed to work on a draft charter. Phyllis' husband, Earl Roberts, offered his legal services. Their draft was discussed, revised, and adopted in Dijon in 1988. The International Medieval Sermon Studies Society came into existence and its first Council were elected. In 1992, Gloria Cigman was made an honorary life member of the Society in gratitude for her contributions to the founding of the Society. The same honor was extended to Fr Bataillon in 2004.

This constitution was revised slightly in 1998 to permit the holding of Council meetings in certain circumstances outside its normal meeting at the biannual Symposium. This opened the way for Council meetings to take place at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, held annually at Western Michigan University. The Constitution was further revised in 2018, allowing for internet-enabled business meetings and voting in an effort to facilitate the participation of all members of the Society in its decision-making processes. The current constitution also encourages the holding of Symposia in Europe and North America, and elsewhere as the opportunity may arise, in recognition of the international character of the Society.

### **Governance**

The IMSSS Council is composed of seven members, each elected for four years with the possibility of succeeding oneself once. The maximum period a person may serve continuously on the Council is therefore eight years, to be followed by a two-year hiatus before being eligible for election again. At a typical biennial Symposium a new Council comes into being, composed partly of newly elected members and partly of those who have completed two years and still have another two to go (see article VI of the Constitution). Each new Council then chooses its officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. In addition to officers and council members, the editors of *Medieval Sermon Studies*, the organizer of the upcoming Symposium, and the webmaster should be invited to attend Council meetings. Per the 2018 Constitution, the editors have one vote between them.

Presidents:

1988-1996 Leo Carruthers (Sorbonne); named Honorary President, 1996  
1996-2002 Beverly Kienzle (Harvard Divinity School)  
2002-2004 Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Freiburg)  
2004-2010 Nicole Bériou (Lyon)  
2010-2014 Franco Morenzoni (Geneva)  
2014-2020 Laura Gaffuri (Turin)  
2020- Anne Thayer (Lancaster Theological Seminary)

Vice-Presidents:

1988-1996 Nicole Bériou (Lyons)  
1996-1998 Stephan Borgehammar (Lund)  
1998-2002 Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Freiburg)  
2002-2004 Nicole Bériou (Lyon)  
2004-2006 Laura Gaffuri (Turin)  
2006-2008 George Ferzoco (Bristol)  
2008-2010 Franco Morenzoni (Geneva)  
2010-2016 Jussi Hanska (Tampere)  
2016- Linda Jones (Pompeu Fabra)  
2020- Patricia Stoop (Antwerp)

Secretaries:

1988-1996 Phyllis Roberts (CUNY, Staten Island); named life member, 2010  
1996-2004 Anne Thayer (Lancaster Theological Seminary)  
2004-2012 Ronald Stansbury (Roberts Wesleyan)  
2012-2020 Holly Johnson (Mississippi State)  
2020- Jessalynn Bird (St. Mary's)

Treasurers:

1998-1992 Larry Eldredge (Oxford)  
1996-2004 Mary Swan (Leeds)  
2004-2012 Martine De Reu (Ghent)  
2012-2020 Alexis Charonsonnet (Lyon)  
2020- Pietro Delcorno (Bologna)

Others who have served on the Council, not mentioned above:

1988-1994 Gloria Cigman (Warwick)  
1988-1994 Jacqueline Hamesse (Louvain)  
1988-1990 Roberto Rusconi (L'Aquila)  
1990-1994 Carolo Delcorno (Bologna)  
1994-1998 Simon Forde (Leeds)  
1996-2004 Carolyn Muessig (Bristol)  
2002-2006 Katherine Jansen (Catholic University of America)  
2006- 2014 Kimberly Rivers (Wisconsin, Oshkosh)  
2008-2012 Suzanne Paul (Leeds)  
2010-2014 Roger Andersson (Stockholm)  
2014-2022 Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby (Ben Gurion)  
2014-2022 Beata Spieralska-Kasprzyk (Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski)

## Activities

The Society's major activities are its biennial symposia and the publication of the journal, *Medieval Sermon Studies*.

The earliest Symposia (1979, 1980, 1982) were devoted to methodological issues as applied to sermon studies. In 1984, many papers examined the content of sermons. Beginning in 1986, the Symposia were organized around the following themes:

1986	Oxford	Easter Preaching
1988	Dijon	Latin and Vernacular Sermons: Sources and Representations
1990	Assisi	Sacred and Secular Eloquence
1992	Louvain-la-Neuve	History of Medieval Preaching
1994	Dublin	Preaching on the Apostles
1996	Oxford	Vernacular Preaching
1998	Erfurt	Preaching Tools and their Uses
2000	Padua	Sermons and Society
2002	Vadstena	Preaching and Community
2004	Lyon	Sermons and Liturgy
2006	Budapest/Piliscsaba	Texts to Read and Texts to Preach
2008	Saint-Maurice	Preaching and Political Society
2010	Salamanca	Sermons in Other Discourses
2012	Brescia	Preaching and Legal Frameworks
2014	Krakow	Preaching and Reform in the Middle Ages
2016	St. Augustine	Preaching and New Worlds: Sermons as Mirrors of Realms Near and Far
2018	Bristol	Medieval Monks, Nuns, and Monastic Life
2021	online	Conversions and Life Passages through the Mirror of Medieval Preachers
2022	St. Paul	Preaching and Gender

Many presenters at the Symposia are recruited on the recommendation of the members; others answer a Call for Papers. Each Symposium is planned by a committee, chaired by someone with local connections to the chosen venue. Planning chairs should have attended at least on prior Symposium to get a sense of the spirit of academic collegiality we seek to foster. Symposia often include an excursion to historical sites of interest and a workshop on a practical aspect of our field. Modest bursaries are made available to help graduate students and others without institutional sources of funding to participate.

A poster session was first held in 1988 at the Dijon Symposium and became a regular feature of the Symposia. This provides opportunities for conversation and feedback for scholars new to the field and those in the early stages of new projects. The first fully virtual Symposium was held in 2021 when the Covid-19 pandemic forced the postponement, and then cancellation, of plans to be in Léon, Spain. Linda Gale Jones and Oriol Catalán led the way into this new mode of connection with great success.

In addition to its biennial Symposia, the Society regularly sponsors sessions at the International Medieval Congress held annually at Western Michigan University in

Kalamazoo, MI. This tradition began in 1982 when Gloria Cigman gave a paper entitled “Matter and Method in Popular Preaching.” The first full session devoted to medieval sermon studies came in 1984. From 1984 to 1998, such sessions were organized by Beverly Kienzle. Since then, organizing Kalamazoo sessions and arranging for a business meeting with lunch has been done by the Secretaries of the Society. In 1995 the Society was especially honoured to be represented by its Secretary, Phyllis Roberts, who had been chosen as one of the plenary speakers at Kalamazoo. This was an opportunity for us to draw attention to the Society and to make it better known. While it is in the nature of the event – or of its geography – that the Kalamazoo sessions attract a larger number of North American scholars, many IMSSS members from Europe and other parts of the world have taken part too, some on a regular basis.

On occasion, the members of the Society have organized sessions at other conferences where scholars may share our interests. These include the International Medieval Congress held at the University of Leeds, England, and the meetings of the Renaissance Society of America.

As noted above, the Medieval Sermon Studies Newsletter, launched in 1977, was instrumental in the gathering of our Society. Its aim was to create links between people working in the field of medieval sermon studies, in both Latin and vernacular texts, and in related academic fields. It quickly grew in volume and circulation. Its interdisciplinary nature was rapidly established as a major feature, for it soon became apparent that sermon studies were of interest to a great many scholars working in different areas of the Middle Ages. Once the Society itself was established, the Newsletter made the transition into the journal, *Medieval Sermon Studies*, publishing articles and book reviews on a regular basis. The subscription fee was incorporated into the membership fee for the society. The journal is now highly regarded in scholarly circles, having become truly multinational and multilingual, bringing together a broad range of expertise and representing many different strands in the field of sermon studies.

For many years, it was published twice a year. The following edited the publication, often with the benefit of administrators and assistants:

1977-1986, Numbers 01 to 18: Gloria Cigman, with Pat Odber (nos. 12-14)  
1987-1988, Numbers 19 to 22: Valerie Edden  
1989-1990, Numbers 23 to 26: Ronald Zawilla  
1991, name changed to *Medieval Sermon Studies*  
1991-1995, Numbers 27 to 35: Simon Forde, Veronica O’Mara  
1995-1988, Numbers 36 to 39: Veronica O’Mara  
1997-1998, Numbers 40 to 42: Carolyn Muessig, Veronica O’Mara

Since 1999, *Medieval Sermon Studies* has been published annually. Beginning in 2003, it has been published under the auspices of Maney Publishing which was purchased by Taylor and Francis in 2015. The co-editors work with an editorial board and assistant editors.

1999-2011, Numbers 43 to 55: Carolyn Muessig, Veronica O’Mara  
2012-2013, Volumes 56 to 57: Jonathan Adams, Ralf Lützelshwab, Riccardo Quinto  
2014-2020, Volumes 58-64: Jonathan Adams, Ralf Lützelshwab  
2016-2020, Volumes 60-64: Jonathan Adams, Ralf Lützelshwab, Patricia Stoop  
2021, Volume 65: Holly Johnson, Marjorie Burghart, Patricia Stoop  
2022 – , Volumes 66 -Marjorie Burghart, Patricia Stoop, Edward Sutcliffe

The Medieval Sermon Studies Archive grew spontaneously out of the Newsletter as interested readers sent Gloria Cigman reports of their research and publications as well as copies of books and articles. When housing the collection in Gloria's home became unworkable due to its size and the desire of scholars to consult it, the archive was transferred in 1982 to Blackfriars, the Dominican house of studies in Oxford, through the good offices of Fr Osmund Lewry OP and Fr Simon Tugwell OP. Subsequently, in 1997 David d'Avray (University College, London) negotiated an agreement with the Warburg Institute in London, whereby the entire archive was donated to the Institute and was made accessible there on open shelves.

Since being published by Maney, digital copies of *Medieval Sermon Studies* have been produced and are accessible to members of the Society through the Society's website. Digitisation of earlier volumes (1-49) is currently being investigated by the Council.

Websites now serve as an essential mode of communication for scholarly societies such as ours. The Society's first website was launched by Councillor George Ferzoco in 1996 ([www.ex.ac.uk/imsss](http://www.ex.ac.uk/imsss) (no longer in use)). In 2000 the website was moved to Harvard under the direction of the second President, Beverly Kienzle ([www.hds.harvard.edu/special/imsss](http://www.hds.harvard.edu/special/imsss) (no longer in use)). The next iteration was launched in 2003-2004 under the guidance of the third President, Hajo Schiewer ([www.sermon-studies.de](http://www.sermon-studies.de) (no longer in use)). The question of electronic communications was given close attention by members of the Council who met in July 2006. Emphasis was placed on the importance of creating a new website not specifically linked to a particular country or university, housed by a non-geographic server. Kimberly Rivers, a member of the Council, agreed to set up and maintain the new site with the help of her husband Kim Nguyen, a skilled website designer. They still maintain our website, [www.imsss.net](http://www.imsss.net).

Since 2016, the Society has also maintained a Google group for members who wish to share and receive electronic communications. This continues the communication function of the original Newsletter and replaced an earlier electronic newsletter. We also have a Facebook page for announcements, research queries, and other timely matters (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/33642481390/>).

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The first edition of "A Concise History of IMSSS" was written in 2004 by Leo Carruthers, Honorary President, after the Lyon Symposium. The Council members in office at that time read it in draft and made corrections where necessary, as did the other two past presidents, Beverly Kienzle and Hajo Schiewer, together with the editors of MSS, Carolyn Muessig and Veronica O'Mara.

The text was revised and updated by Leo Carruthers following the Symposia in Budapest (2006), in Saint-Maurice (2008) and in Salamanca (2010) and was posted on the website with the approval of the current Council members and editors.

Anne Thayer drafted this update in 2022; it was further edited by the Council.