



Editorial

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Preface to the special issue “Championing global semiotics: in honor of Paul Cobley”

<https://doi.org/10.1515/css-2022-2087>

I vividly remember a conversation that I had with the late John Deely at the 12th World Congress of the IASS-AIS in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 2014. Immediately after the bureau election session in which Paul Cobley had just been elected president of the IASS-AIS, I asked John how he felt about the future of the association, John heartily patted me on my shoulder and said, “I’m very much looking forward to the Cobley era.” I agreed. In retrospect, I find John’s vision all the more admirable. The past eight years have witnessed remarkable development of global semiotics, as Thomas Sebeok envisioned. The person who has spearheaded the development is none other than Paul Cobley. As an homage to his contribution – and on the auspicious occasion of his sixtieth birthday – we dedicate the present Festschrift to this world-renowned semiotician and leading figure in the community of semiotics of our times.

Currently the Deputy Dean of Research & Knowledge Exchange and Professor of Language and Media in the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries at Middlesex University, Paul Cobley is in his second term as the incumbent president of the IASS-AIS. In addition, he has been serving for decades not only in crucial leadership roles in major institutions of semiotics in the world, but also in editorial or advisory positions for leading journals of semiotics in the world, for instance, *Social Semiotics*, *Semiotica*, *Chinese Semiotic Studies*, *Sign Systems Studies*, and *Cybernetics and Human Knowing*, to name just a few. His research outputs and interests include semiotics, in particular biosemiotics, zoosemiotics, and cybersemiotics, the work of Thomas A. Sebeok, communication theory, narrative, subjectivity, and popular genres (especially the thriller). On these topics he has published over a hundred scholarly papers and more than 25 volumes of monographs and edited works.

Since we first met at the International Symposium of IASS-AIS in Nanjing in 2008, I have known Paul as one of the most dedicated and visionary supporters

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for not only solidarity among semioticians around the world, in particular the ever-growing community of semiotics of Greater China, but also the future of early career researchers in global semiotics. Like countless other semioticians around the world, I have personally learned a lot and benefited hugely from the past 14 years of friendship with Paul. His vision, wit, grace, and sense of humor are as enjoyable as the incredible mentorship he has so selflessly provided to fellow semioticians and especially young semioticians in the whole world. In more than one way, he has been working tirelessly as a true champion and practitioner of global semiotics, a unifying force in bringing together the largest possible number of semiotically minded researchers.

At an online event organized by the International Center for Language and Cultural Semiotics at Dalian University of Foreign Languages on November 2, 2022, Paul gave a talk titled “Semiotics: Discipline, field, or utopian global vision” in which he reiterated the distinction between semiotics as a domain (i.e. the symbolic rules and procedures making up the scope of semiotic inquiry) and semiotics as a field (i.e. the gatekeepers of the domain). Bearing out the distinction, this special issue consists of contributions from our fellow semioticians, senior and young, representing both the domain *and* the field of global semiotics. All of the articles speak volumes in modeling, approaching, and tackling Paul about semiotic inquiry, and even beyond. Therefore, it would only undermine their particular appeal if I were to include a redundant section of introduction to their contents. I will let these articles speak for themselves.

Without further ado, I proudly present to you this unique collection that honors the one and only Paul Cobley, semiotician, professor, and president. At the same time, I would like to offer my thanks to *Chinese Semiotic Studies* for including this special issue in the journal and facilitating its publication.