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Inaugural Meeting of the Cultural Evolution Society

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The field of cultural evolution has grown considerably since the turn of the 21st century. Researchers who apply evolutionary principles to the study of human culture and social learning in other animals are spread out among a great diversity of fields. They can be found in human sciences like archeology, anthropology, geography, economics, politics, sociology, and history, or the ecological and biological sciences like ethology, environmental science, evolutionary studies, population genetics, and sociobiology. Many are also found in psychology, public health, business management, marketing, and technology studies.

This diversity brings great promise for the integration of knowledge across biology and the social sciences, yet is accompanied by numerous challenges – one being that researchers struggle to find a community of like-minded people who together can discuss the fundamentals of cultural evolutionary studies. It was for this reason that a Cultural Evolution Society¹ has been created to serve this multidisciplinary community with conferences and meetings, educational initiatives, and research efforts. Since our first call for founding members in the summer of 2015 we have recruited more than 1800 researchers from 54 nations, each of whom has expressed an interest in participating.

We are pleased to announce that the Cultural Evolution Society will host its first international conference this year at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Jena, Germany. It will be held on September 13–15, 2017 with abstract submissions welcomed until the closing date of June 1. Visit our conference website² to learn more, submit abstracts, and register to attend.

The Cultural Evolution Society supports evolutionary approaches to culture in humans and other animals. The society welcomes all who share this fundamental interest, including in the pursuit of basic research, teaching, or applied work. We are committed to fostering an integrative interdisciplinary community spanning traditional academic boundaries from across the social,

¹ URL: <https://evolution-institute.org/project/society-for-the-study-of-cultural-evolution/>.

² URL: <https://www.shh.mpg.de/cescjena2017>.

psychological, and biological sciences. Scholars from the humanities including especially linguists, philosophers, literary critics and historians are making contributions to our field as well. We also welcome practitioners from applied fields such as medicine and public health, psychiatry, community development, international relations, the agricultural sciences, and the sciences of past and present environmental change. The Society aspires to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations and our Bylaws make provision for the establishment of Working Groups to pursue focal topics collectively. We expect that several Working Groups will self-organize before and during the meeting in Jena.

We have embraced the challenge of bringing members of these fields together under a shared interest in cultural evolution, based in rigorous science with strong theoretical foundations. Our inaugural meeting encourages contributions across a diversity of themes that may include:

- Analysis of quantitative data to study cultural and historical dynamics;
- Archaeology and paleoanthropology;
- Cognitive anthropology;
- Evolutionary psychology;
- Comparative studies of social learning/cultural transmission in humans and other animals;
- Education and outreach from cultural evolution into civil society;
- Evolution of cooperation, institutions, and social structure;
- Experimental studies of social learning/cultural evolution;
- ‘Grand Challenges’ revealed in the recent survey of founding members³;
- Modelling of cultural evolutionary dynamics and gene-culture coevolution;
- Neuroscience and other biological approaches;
- Phylogenetic analysis of language and other cultural traditions;
- Evolution of religious beliefs and practices;
- Evolution of language, languages, and other forms of expressive culture;
- Evolution of technology;
- Real-world applications of cultural evolutionary knowledge.

In this and future meetings, we are committed to an inclusive, pluralistic and tolerant perspective. We hope you will join us in Jena, Germany at the inaugural meeting of the Cultural Evolution Society in September 2017.

³ URL: <http://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-017-0070>.