

Preserving the History of Systems Science

Gerhard Chroust
Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria

The Growth of Systems Sciences is mirrored in the complete set of IFSR Newsletters from 1981 to 2018.



Fig. 1: Gerhard Chroust

From 1981 to 2018 the IFSR (the International Federation for Systems Research) published the IFSR Newsletters and has thus accompanied the IFSR and the world of Systems Sciences from its beginning.

Systems Science (Bertalanffy (1968); Bosch and Nguyen (2015); Metcalf et al. (2021)) builds on interdependence based on communication between humans. In 1980 the time was ripe for the creation of an international umbrella society in order to connecting different Systems Research activities: This resulted in founding the IFSR in March 1980 by the (then only) three systems-oriented societies, the Society for General Systems Research (SGSR, since 1988 'International Society for the Systems Sciences' (ISSS)), the Austrian Society for Cybernetics Studies (OSGK), and the System Groep Nederlande (SGN). These societies were headed by three far-sighted officers: George Klir, Robert Trappl, and Gerard de Zeeuw (Fig. 2)¹.

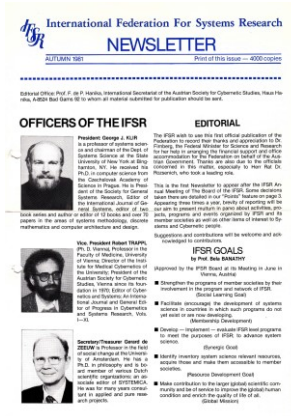


Fig. 2: First Newsletter 1981

At that time the primary medium for international communication between members of the societies were newsletters. Soon, in autumn 1981, the "IFSR Newsletter" was created and printed in

¹IFSR Newsletter no. 1, Autumn 1981

4000 copies to be distributed to the members of IFSR's member societies and other interested individuals. Newsletters were published twice to four times a year and throughout the years reflected the activities of the IFSR, its member societies, and the systems community at large².

In time, with the growth of the Systems field and the IFSR, the Newsletters also changed. Some of the milestones of the 28 years of the IFSR Newsletter's existence respond to the growth of the Systems community and also to changes in technology.

By 1986 the IFSR already counted 12 members which increased to 45 members in 2018. Copies of the Newsletters were sent as bulk mail to the individual members societies for distribution to their members. Initially the Calendar of Relevant Conferences/Meetings on the last page of the Newsletters was one of the key contributions to the systems community. It gave way to internet announcements in 1999.

Initially the Newsletters were type-set and printed at high cost, from 1993 onward the Newsletters were produced by Desk Top Publishing. From 2000 onward the digital printing and e-mailing was done at the University of Linz and our member societies in order to distribute the electronic Newsletter.



Fig. 3: 25th Anniversary Newsletter 2006

With the availability of IFSR's web-site (1997) the Newsletter lost its short-term communication function and morphed into a repository for historical events and reports. In 2018 the Newsletter was discontinued - replaced by monthly News-Flashes reporting on up-to-date events in the Systems World.

I believe that this collection of Newsletters is a means of preserving in our memory many of the events in the history of the Systems Movement including the acting persons. Paging through the newsletters provides a fascinating perspective of the status and the development of Systems Sciences, with contributions from or about prominent systems scientists, mentioning, remembering and praising many individuals. Past events come back to life.

²Chroust, G.: "Good Bye IFSR!", IFSR Newsletter, vol.35 (2018) no. 1, pp. 3-7



Fig. 4: Last Newsletter 2018

I sincerely thank all Editors-in-Chief and all contributors of the IFSR Newsletters for their support and supplied material in making the Newsletters a remarkable repository for the Systems Science world and for the IFSR in particular. On behalf of the IFSR, I have had all Newsletters scanned and collected. In 2021 the complete set of 74 Newsletters, a total of approx. 830 pages with a size of 88 MByte was donated to the ISSS (the International Society for the Systems Sciences).

They are now generally accessible in the Digital Library of the ISSS (<https://www.iss.org/ifsr-newsletters/>).

Literatur

- L. Bertalanffy, "General system theory - foundations, developments, applications," *George Braziller New York*, 1968.
- O. Bosch and N. C. Nguyen, *Systems Thinking for EVERYONE - the Journey from Theory to Making an Impact*. Think2Impact, 2015, 2015, 94. [Online]. Available: <https://books.google.at/books?id=yh-TrgEACAAJ>
- G. S. Metcalf, K. Kijima, and H. Deguchi, Eds., *Handbook of Systems Sciences*. Springer Singapore 2021, 2021.