**Parapsychology Foundation**

The Parapsychology Foundation (PF) is a US-based forum that provides funding and other resources for the international development of parapsychology.\(^1\) It was founded in 1951 by Eileen J Garrett (1893-1970), a well-known medium, author, and businesswoman, and the Honorable Frances P Bolton (1885-1977), a philanthropist who served in the US Congress. Garrett served as the Foundation’s president from 1951 to her death.\(^2\) The two women worked in a partnership, Garrett handling the administrative and organizational work and Bolton providing the funding.

**History**

Eileen Garrett had been thinking about starting an organization at least since 1936, as revealed in recollections authored by JB Rhine.\(^3\) Garrett herself recalled in her autobiography *Many Voices* that in 1951 she ‘heard a voice’ about creating a foundation devoted to parapsychology.\(^4\) The Foundation received its charter on December 14, 1951, in the State of Delaware. Its offices were established in New York City. It retains a private office there, but the Parapsychology Foundation has officially moved to Greenport, Long Island, where the Eileen J Garrett Library is located.

After Garrett’s death in 1970, her daughter Eileen Coly took over the direction, and accomplished much during her 33-year tenure.\(^5\) Coly was succeeded by her daughter, Lisette Coly, who became president in 2013, and manages the PF to this day.

Over the years many other individuals have contributed to the development of the PF, among them Alan Angoff, Martin Ebon, J Fraser Nicol, Michel Pobers, George Zorab, Laura Oteri, Betty Shapin, and Robert Coly, Eileen Coly’s husband, who served as treasurer. Others who have contributed more recently include Carlos S Alvarado, Nancy L Zingrone, Susan MacWilliam, Gonçalo Veiga, Natasha Chisdes, and a fourth generation, Anastasia Damalas, Lisette Coly’s daughter.

**Scope of Support**

From the beginnings to the present, the remit of the PF has been to support all relevant topics related to parapsychology, which it has fulfilled through case studies, laboratory work, historical studies, theoretical work, and educational developments. A report of its first ten years\(^6\) shows a great variety of approaches, involving fields as diverse as anthropology, biology, literature, medicine, philosophy, physics, psychology, religion, and sociology. Garrett herself stated that the PF had a ‘constant interest in statistics, psychological testing techniques, religio-cultural aspects of psychology, theological concerns with “miracles”, apparent unorthodox healing and psychosomatic medicine, certain areas of pharmacology and ... neuro-physiology’.\(^7\)

**Funding**

The PF is probably best known for funding parapsychology since the 1950s. JB Rhine said of Garrett and the PF: ‘There has been nothing else to compare with the generosity of this Lady Bountiful of Parapsychology as she willingly poured out the financial aid needed by isolated workers in many countries struggling to do something in or near the field of psi research’.\(^8\) This evaluation continues to apply, even with the reduction of PF grants in recent years and the appearance of other sources of funding for parapsychology, none of which has been as generous in its support of the field, in terms of topics supported, as the PF.

Many prominent individuals in the field benefited from PF funding in the second half of the twentieth century, among them Margaret Anderson, Betty Humphrey, Winifred Nielsn, Karlis Osis, John Palmer, J Gaither Pratt, Dean Radin, Gertrude Schmeidler, Rex G Stanford, Robert Van de Castle, Christine and Paul Vasse, and Rhea White.

Important experimental work funded by the PF includes Bernard Grad's studies of effects on plant growth; work on dream ESP by Montague Ullman and Stanley Krippner; studies of out-of-body experiences in the laboratory by Robert L Morris and others; and Patric Giesler's experiments with members of Brazilian cults.

Case studies included Louisa E Rhine's studies of ESP cases; Hornell Hart’s comparisons of published cases of OBEs and apparitions of the living and of the dead; Ian Stevenson's reincarnation work; Donald J West’s examination of healing cases at Lourdes; and John Palmer's survey of psychic experiences. Several hundred more examples could be cited from more recent times.

The PF has funded many other projects besides research. A grant was given to Rhine’s Parapsychology Laboratory in 1955.
for its expenses, a sum that Rhine considered a ‘very substantial and even essential part of the fiscal year budget of the Laboratory’. For students, the PF established the Eileen J Garrett Scholarship and other awards. PF grants also supported the teaching of parapsychology courses at John F Kennedy University and the University of California at Santa Barbara, taught by John Palmer and Robert L Morris, respectively. For many years the PF offered the Frances P Bolton Fellowship, for post-doctoral writing of research, and the D Scott Rogo Award for Parapsychological Literature, for author assistance.

Much theoretical and methodological work was funded by the PF, along with examinations of historical cases, such as Eric J Dingwall’s four volume work Abnormal Hypnotic Phenomena (1967-1968), a classic study of psychic phenomena in nineteenth-century mesmeric literature.

Conferences

From its beginnings the PF put much energy into organizing conferences, in the belief that meetings of scientists, scholars and others bring about meaningful exchanges of ideas. The first of a long series of international conferences was held at Utrecht in 1953, the First International Conference of Parapsychological Studies. This landmark event in the history of parapsychology was organized around four themes: (1) quantitative studies; (2) psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic approaches; (3) spontaneous phenomena and qualitative research; and (4) the personality of the sensitive. Among the participants were Hans Bender, Orlando Canavesio, Jan Ehrenwald, Hornell Hart, William Mackenzie, Gardner Murphy, William G Roll, Emilio Servadio, SG Soal, René Sudre, Robert H. Thouless, WHC Tenhaeff, and Gerda Walther.

Following the Utrecht meeting, the PF organized many other conferences, events in which the expenses of the presenters were covered by the Foundation. Some examples include:

International Philosophic Symposium, held at St. Paul de Vence in France in 1954
Psychological Aspects of Parapsychological Phenomena, St. Paul de Vence, 1964
Psi and Altered States of Consciousness, St. Paul de Vence, 1967
Psi Factors in Creativity, St. Paul de Vence, 1969
Parapsychology and the Sciences, Amsterdam, 1972
Parapsychology and Anthropology, London, 1973
Quantum Physics and Parapsychology, Geneva, Switzerland, 1974
Education in Parapsychology, San Francisco, 1975
Psi and States of Awareness, Paris, 1977
Concepts and Theories of Parapsychology, New York City, 1980
The Repeatability Problem in Parapsychology, San Antonio, Texas, 1983
Parapsychology, Philosophy and Religious Concepts, Rome, 1985
Spontaneous Psi, Depth Psychology, and Parapsychology, Berkeley, California, 1987
Psi Research Methodology: A Re-Examination, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1988
Psi and Clinical Practice, London, 1989
The Study of Mediumship: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Charlottesville, Virginia, 2005
Utrecht II: Charting the Future of Parapsychology, Utrecht, 2008

A more complete listing can be found here.

More recently, the PF has hosted events online, such as the Parapsychology Foundation International Affiliates Conference in January 2016. Some of the Foundation’s 25 affiliates presented overviews of work conducted in their
respective countries: Argentina, Brazil, England, France, and Japan. In addition the PF has been sponsoring forums, such as one on ‘Physical Mediumship’ in September 2016. This and other online events can be viewed for free at the PF’s YouTube Channel.

Publications


The PF has published conference proceedings such as *Psi and Altered States of Consciousness*,[12] and *Quantum Physics and Parapsychology*.[13] Among books published by its Helix imprint are *Eleven Lourdes Miracles*,[14] *Can We Explain the Poltergeist?*,[15] and *Investigating the Paranormal*.[16]

The Foundation also published the *Parapsychological Monographs*, consisting of studies too long to be articles and too short to be books. Some examples are *Deathbed Observations by Physicians and Nurses*,[17] *Toward a General Theory of the Paranormal*,[18] *Dream Studies and Telepathy*,[19] and *The Common Thread Between ESP and PK*.[20]

Also worth mentioning is a series of pamphlets that include essays about education in parapsychology[21] and bibliographies.[22]

Other Work

The Eileen J Garrett Library, now at the Foundation’s headquarters in Greenport, New York, contains over 12,000 books covering both the classic as well as the more recent literature, periodicals and an audio-visual archive.

From 1957-1962 it maintained a research department directed by Karlis Osis, responsible for analyses of cases of deathbed visions[23] and the first experimental dream ESP studies,[24] among others.

In more recent times the PF has developed online projects, many of which can be seen in its YouTube channel. Videos, originally real-time online presentations, now number more than 60. Examples are three Book Expos, in which authors and editors summarize the content of their books; interviews and conversations with figures in the field such as Rex Stanford and Robert Van de Castle; and forums, such as Recent Advances in UK Parapsychology, filmed in May 2015.

Social Media and Future Plans

The Foundation maintains two Facebook pages, a Twitter feed, an Instagram account, a Tumblr blog, and a Pinterest page, aiming to spread the word about its programs and events, and to reach a wider audience interested in parapsychology but lacking contact with the scientific side. The websites are being modified for mobile access; new content is being developed to extend legacy film on the YouTube channel; and more online and onsite activities are being developed.

Information About the PF

There are few detailed discussions about the PF. In addition to the Foundation’s website, see the article by Alvarado, Coly, Coly, and Zingrone,[25] Coly’s obituary[26] and Ten Years of Activities.[27] There is also relevant information in Angoff’s biography of Garrett,[28] and in a discussion of the First International Conference of Parapsychological Studies.[29]

Carlos S Alvarado

Note

I am grateful to both Lisette Coly and Nancy L Zingrone for information about the PF and for useful editorial suggestions.

Literature


### References

### Footnotes


© Psi Encyclopedia