

# KINSEY TODAY

A publication of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction

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## Director's Column

by Dr. John Bancroft



The institute is buzzing as I write. In March, the builders completed major renovations to the second floor to provide stable temperature and humidity conditions for our art and

photography collections. Now they are back working on the fifth floor annex and part of the third floor. By the end of the year, we will have secure storage for our archival collections. This step, combined with the upcoming appointment of an archivist, opens a new era in the institute's history, with a special emphasis on archival collections.

The research program is buzzing, too. We are about to begin clinical studies on Viagra to assess the relationship between psychological factors (like our inhibition measure), relationship factors, and response to and continuation of the drug. We are also undertaking clinical studies on the new Eli Lilly and Company "designer estrogen" raloxifene in which we will be assessing the effects of the drug on the well-being and sexuality of postmenopausal women.

In recent months, we have reduced and restructured our staff. This was necessary to accommodate budget cuts Indiana University had to impose on most of the research institutes on the Bloomington campus. It was painful, as we lost old friends. Our progress through this difficult transition has been greatly helped by a two-year grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, which renews an historical link between us.

In addition, we will soon be appointing a development officer to help us with fundraising, thanks to an agreement between the IU Foundation and Research and the University

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## Institute Launches Information Service

This fall, the Kinsey Institute will launch the first phase of its new Sexuality Research Information Service on the World Wide Web. The two-year pilot project, funded by the Ford Foundation, will allow the institute to test the feasibility of operating a Web-based information service designed to bridge the gap between different disciplines that deal with sexuality.

"Using our expertise at the Kinsey Institute, we will bring together in one location key research information from diverse fields of inquiry and interpret the information to a wider audience," says Margaret Harter, director of information services for the institute. The project will include information from such fields as sociology, psychology, psychiatry, and bio-medicine, as well as from different cultures.

The project addresses an identified need in the field of sexuality research. The Social Service Research Council, in its 1995 report on sexuality research in the United States, called for greater interdisciplinary communication and for better mechanisms to disseminate research findings. Two international seminars on human sexuality sponsored by the Kinsey Institute reinforced the need for an integrated information service for researchers from various disciplines.

"It is difficult for researchers to keep up with the volume of research in their own fields, much less several related fields," Harter says. "Each discipline also has its own language and approaches to research. We hope to work across different disciplines, paradigms, and world views to compile and evaluate information and make it readily accessible to researchers, policy makers, health professionals, and others who need this information."

The initial project will focus on four areas related to sexual health that are current research emphases at the institute: adolescent sexual behavior, determinants of high-risk sexual behavior, psychobiology of male sexual response, and the link between reproductive hormones and women's sexual and emotional well-being. Kinsey Institute research staff and an IU graduate assistant

will review literature related to these areas and create annotated bibliographies, abstracts of key articles, review articles, and commentary. As the project develops, the Kinsey staff plans to involve a widening circle of researchers beyond the institute in writing commentaries and sharing perspectives on current research problems of interdisciplinary significance.

References listed on the Web site will include links to full texts when possible, and there will be annotated links to other sites and resources, including research centers, key journals, libraries and archives, and related electronic discussion groups. Ongoing evaluation will be built into the project with an online response form.

"The Web site will ultimately include an interactive feature where we will highlight a paper or topic area, such as Viagra or women's designer hormones, and invite discussion among researchers, policy makers, and others," Harter says. "We will work toward building an electronic community with regular interaction via the site. There are limitless possibilities here for dialogue that will promote research and collaboration across disciplines and serve the information needs related to human sexuality."

Kinsey Institute staff involved in the project, in addition to Harter, include Director John Bancroft, Associate Director Stephanie Sanders, and scientist Erick Janssen, as well as sociology graduate student Jennifer Loftus.

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The mission of the Kinsey Institute is to promote interdisciplinary research and scholarship in the fields of human sexuality, gender, and reproduction. The institute was founded in 1947 by renowned sex researcher Alfred C. Kinsey. A Harvard-trained biologist, Kinsey began collecting sexual histories after discovering that few scientific data existed on human sexual behavior. From 1941 to 1954, Kinsey's pioneering work was supported by the National Research Council, which was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Today, the institute has two components, an Indiana University research institute and a not-for-profit corporation, which owns and manages the institute's research data and archives, collections, and databases.

## Partnerships with Visiting Scholars Foster Dynamic Research Environment

A folklorist, two psychologists, an historian, and a gynecologist—what does this diverse collection of scholars have in common? They are all visiting Indiana University this year to further their research through the unique combination of resources available at the Kinsey Institute.

Each year, the Kinsey Institute hosts visiting researchers and postdoctoral students from around the world who wish to affiliate with the institute for varying lengths of time to carry out research projects important to the study of human sexuality. They are invited not only because of how the resources of the institute may help them with their research but also because of how they add to the interdisciplinary dialogue and foster diverse, creative approaches to significant questions in the field.

"The institute benefits from having outside researchers spend time with us," says Kinsey Institute Director John Bancroft. "They throw a different light on our research interests and often participate to provide additional expertise."

Scholars affiliated with the institute this year include: Jerome Cerny, a professor of psychology at Indiana State University who is interested in psychophysiological processes of sexual behavior; George Chauncey, professor of history at the University of Chicago, who is a visiting fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies and is using the Kinsey archives for a forthcoming book; Jacob Pastoetter, a folklorist from Rensburg University in Augsburg, Germany, who is using the Kinsey's video archives for his doctoral thesis; Daniel Rozenman, a gynecologist at the Kaplan Medical Center at Hebrew University in Rehovot, Israel, whose specialties are sexuality and menopause; and Joanne Rouleau, a professor of psychology at the University of Montreal and director of a clinic that provides assessment and treatment for sex offenders.

"In each case, a symbiotic relationship exists between the researcher and the institute," Bancroft says. "For example, Cerny is doing some interesting

experiments in ejaculation latency that we may want to build on, and while Pastoetter needs our video archives for his thesis, he is also carrying out invaluable work in sorting and indexing the collection. George Chauncey is someone we wanted to come here to give us his advice about our archival collections and to suggest ways in which we might form closer links with the history department here at IU. He is also making great use of the archives for his current book, so it is truly a two-way relationship."

For their part, the researchers are just as enthusiastic about collaborating with the Kinsey Institute as the institute is about hosting them. "I've worked at archives all over the country," Chauncey says. "Professionally, I have been writing about the history of sexuality for more than 15 years and have done extensive research elsewhere, and I regard the Kinsey Institute archives as the single most important repository of materials bearing on the history of sexuality in the United States."

"I would rank it as one of the 'Ivy League' institutes in the research of human sexuality," Rozenman states. "It has a combination of solid academics and outstanding clinical work that is rare in the field."

Beyond the intellectual and physical resources of the institute, many of the visiting scholars also cited the encouraging atmosphere of the organization as one of its most valuable assets. "Sex research in general is under attack from a number of sources, academic as well as political," Cerny notes. "The Kinsey Institute provides a supportive environment in which sex researchers can enjoy the freedom to do their research. There are relatively few sex researchers in the United States, and often it is difficult to find support or even a friendly environment in which to conduct sex research. The Kinsey Institute is one of the few places available."



## Themed Exhibition Designed to Support and Spur Academic Inquiry

Power kisses, tender kisses, chivalrous kisses, lusty kisses, and everything in between are represented in more than 50 photographs, prints, and paintings from the Kinsey Institute's collections on display October 23 through November 24. The images are part of an exhibition entitled *The Kiss: Selections from the Kinsey Institute* mounted at the School of Fine Arts Gallery on the IU Bloomington campus. The exhibition is curated by Kinsey Institute Curator Jennifer Pearson Yamashiro and School of Fine Arts Gallery Director Betsy Stirratt and Assistant Director Sigrid Danielson.

"Because of the depth of the institute's collections, we are able to present an astonishing range of works even in this relatively small exhibition," Yamashiro says. *The Kiss* includes images from China, France, Iran, Japan, Mexico, and the United States; represents different historical periods; and contains works by amateurs, professionals, and fine artists. "The strength of the Kinsey collections... allowed us to present a picture that's less cohesive but far richer than many traditional museum exhibitions," Yamashiro notes. Another way in which the show is diverse is that the images are not limited to traditional kisses but illustrate the pre-kiss and near kiss, as well as other forms of oral stimulation.

The curators expect the show to be of interest to academics from a variety of disciplines, as well as to the general public. "In a selective manner, this show presents culturally significant practices and representations of those practices," Yamashiro notes. "There are some really interesting cultural issues here. For example, kissing is not a public activity in the Far East, and for it to be represented at all makes these images intriguing, particularly when they are juxtaposed against the pointedly public American film still." The exhibition is enhanced by a selection of quotes from literary and scientific sources, pop culture, and scientific works by Kinsey Institute founder Alfred Kinsey.

The show is the first in a series of annual themed exhibitions. The theme for *The Kiss* was selected to complement the "Bodily Aesthetics and the Kiss" panel

presentation held on the Bloomington campus November 4-7. Whenever possible, the institute will continue selecting themes that support academic interests and activities on the campus. Possible themes for upcoming exhibitions include beauty and the grotesque, images of women smoking, and undergarments. "There's a great deal of interest in some of these topics from a variety of academic areas—gender studies, English, philosophy, Victorian studies, history, American studies, fine arts," Yamashiro explains.

Conversely, the institute sees the exhibitions from its collections as instrumental in provoking further inquiry and research in areas related to human sexuality and culture. Kinsey Director John Bancroft notes that "in a world where sexual behavior is widely discussed and often studied, remarkably little attention has been paid to the kiss. We hope this modest exhibit will pave the way for more scholarly attention to this special form of intimacy."

A catalog of the exhibition featuring 14 different black and white images from the show is available from the Friends of the School of Fine Arts bookshop.



## Friends Lecture: Sexologist Leonore Tiefer Debunks Kissing Myths

As part of the Friends of the Kinsey Institute's first public event and as an accompaniment to the opening of the institute's new art exhibition, clinical and research sexologist Leonore Tiefer, Ph.D., lectured on the kiss with humorous slides and New York wit. Tiefer touched on the idealization of kissing in our culture and conducted a brief tour through the history, geography, psychoanalysis, and commercialization of kissing. Below is a short excerpt from her lecture.

"Kissing—simple, universal, delicious, right? Ha! Ha! and double-Ha! It turns out, that kissing is none of those—it is complicated, far from universal, and only sometimes delicious."

"I'm sorry to challenge the mythology of naturalism because I, personally, am both practitioner and admirer of multitudinous forms of kissing. More important, in a world where sexuality has become so complicated and intimacy so difficult, it would seem a great relief to be able to hold up the kiss and say, 'see, something in all this is simple!'"

"But actually, I don't mind being the bearer of a complex message, because, much as I love kissing, a complicated truth is a great pleasure too. We need not indulge in illusion to preserve delight."

"Our society's absence of comprehensive sex education and social science research on sexuality leaves us vulnerable to nostalgia and romanticism—never more evident than with the kiss. I wish to dispute the claim that birds do it, bees do it, et cetera, et cetera, in favor of a more Kinseyesque respect for diversity and the power of situation."

"In view of global economics and the new world of the twenty-first century, we must look not only at the kiss from poetic, physiological, and social science perspectives, but we also must ask, what kind of product is the kiss? what does it symbolize? and, perhaps most important, how can we protect our cherished intimate experience from mass marketing?"

(Director's Column, continued from page 1)

Graduate School, and some funding from the Ford Foundation. With this new position, we are on track to build an endowment fund that will keep us financially secure for the future.

Beyond the walls of the institute, the Friends of the Kinsey Institute hosted their first public event—"Kinsey and the Kiss"—October 24. This event commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Alfred Kinsey's groundbreaking volume on sexual behavior in the human male and complemented the institute's latest public exhibition, *The Kiss* (see page 3).

The Friends event included a session on Alfred Kinsey's interviewing technique, in which Paul Gebhard and Clyde Martin—who worked closely with Kinsey during his lifetime—described what it was like to be interviewers, and a panel of interviewees described the experience from

their point of view. The institute presented an overview of its current work, and the program ended with an entertaining lecture from Leonore Tiefer on the kiss, preparing the audience to view the exhibition (see page 3 for an excerpt of the lecture). The Friends contributed generously to help cover the costs of the exhibition. Thank you, Friends.

It is also heartening, after the fuss generated last year by James Jones's biography of Kinsey, to introduce to you a new biography—*Sex the Measure of All Things: A Life of Alfred C. Kinsey* by Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998)—that paints a more balanced picture of Kinsey and his research.

Interestingly, Gathorne-Hardy's effort benefitted from Jones's book in several respects. Jones's informants, including anonymous sources, were dismayed by his interpretations and wanted to set the record straight in this

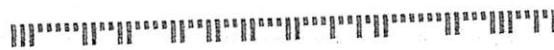
newer work. Gathorne-Hardy also delivers a scathing attack on Jones's interpretations, which he views as distorted. It is noteworthy that these two biographers arrived at such contrasting pictures while, to a large extent, using the same basic information.

There is another important difference between the two works: Jones impugned Kinsey's science while making no serious attempt to support his claim with critical evaluation; by contrast, Gathorne-Hardy makes a considerable effort to appraise Kinsey's research from a layperson's perspective and reaches positive conclusions.

The book closes with this comment: "A much maligned, courageous, difficult and great man; his first three adjectives are self-evident—I do not see why he should be denied the fourth." I agree with Gathorne-Hardy. This very readable book should be available in the United States in the near future.

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