

EDITORIAL



by Pierre Corvol
Administrator of the
Collège de France
Professor, holder of the
Chair of Experimental
Medicine

The Collège de France is a unique Institution in many ways. Founded in 1530, its initial goal was – and still is – to promote learning at the cutting edge of research, to teach new areas of knowledge, to favor interdisciplinary exchanges. This is accomplished by academic courses, seminars and symposia held in the Collège de France. Every year, each Professor's courses differ from those given in previous years, thereby ensuring innovative teaching. There is no strict equivalent of the Collège de France in the Anglo-Saxon world. In fact, it is easier to define the Collège de France by saying what it is not rather than what it is! The Collège de France does not belong to the University system as it does not enrol students and it does not deliver diplomas. Everyone is free to attend any course, at any time in the year. Neither is it an Academy as there is very active research going on in the Collège de France itself. There are basic science research laboratories in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, etc... as well as strong research in humanities and social sciences. Because of its long expertise and tradition in humanities, the Collège de France has accumulated an exceptional collection of libraries, especially in

Egyptology, Byzantium, the Middle and Far Eastern worlds. The laboratory of Social Anthropology, one of the very first created in the world, possesses one of the most important libraries of general anthropology.

The Collège de France has many interactions with countries outside of France. The Professors of the Collège de France have the possibility of giving part of their courses abroad. Reciprocally, temporary professorship positions are offered to foreign colleagues to lecture and participate in the Collège's life. In addition, two one-year revolving chairs (an "International" and "European" Chair) are open to foreign Professors for teaching any discipline. Post-doctoral positions and full facilities are provided by the Collège de France for foreign Fellows who wish to work in its laboratories or libraries.

The courses, colloquiums and seminars of the Collège de France are broadcast by the means of several communication media: website (www.college-de-france.fr), podcast, radio and webradio, etc. Publications, bibliography, research activities of the different laboratories are available through the web site. An English web site has just been opened. A *Letter of the Collège de France* relating some of the research performed in the Collège was launched in 2001. The present *Letter* is the first one of a yearly series of English *Letters of the Collège de France*. It assembles some of the papers published in the French-language *Letters* and highlights various aspects of the Institution's life. Its goal is to make everyone more familiarized with the Collège de France and with the role it plays, in terms of learning, teaching and research, throughout the world. ■

Teaching "Science in the Making"

Since the 16th century, the Collège de France has pursued a dual vocation: to be both a research centre at the forefront of knowledge and a place for the teaching of this new knowledge. The 52 chairs cover a vast array of disciplines, including mathematics, the study of great civilizations, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, philosophy, literature, social sciences, economics, prehistory, archeology, history and linguistics.

Courses are mainly given in Paris. However, each professor is free to teach a part of his or her course in

another major French city or abroad. Foreign scholars receive a particularly enthusiastic welcome. More than fifty of these are invited to give lecture series each year.

The Collège de France also owns rare books and specialized library collections recognized as among the foremost in Europe. They are working tools for the Collège's professors and researchers and are also accessible to outside specialists.

Courses are free and open to all, without enrolment requirements, as long as space is available.