

Donald A. Dewsbury, PhD Awarded 2017 APA Presidential Citation

Donald A. Dewsbury, PhD, was awarded a Presidential Citation for being a beacon and benchmark for psychology.

Dewsbury is professor emeritus of the University of Florida at the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology conference in Savannah, Ga. Dewsbury is a student of Frank Beach and a mentor to many, including 2017 APA President Antonio E. Puente.

A review of Dewsbury's vita provides an illustration of what was important to him. These includes more than 250 publications in animal behavior, more than 100 publications in the history of science as well as of psychology, 18 books edited or written ranging from textbooks to reference books, president of three divisions of APA and the Animal Behavior Society, Animal Behavior Society Exemplar Award winner, historian or archivist for several scientific organizations, and 25 years of continuous support to the National Science Foundation.

What does not appear on his vita are his special qualities, such as his phenomenal dedication to collecting data, the care he took mentoring students and the amazing breadth of his knowledge in animal behavior. He felt incomplete if a day passed without collecting at least a few new data points. He was in the laboratory every day, always with more experiments in progress than his group of three or four graduate students combined. He provided his students with the resources and encouragement to carve out research niches of their own — a rarity in a world where the next grant depends on timely execution of an established research agenda. His textbook, "Comparative Animal Behavior", has become one of the benchmarks for the field. His thinking was so progressive that one could call him a founder of evolutionary psychology.

After accomplishing all of this, Dewsbury turned his attention to the history of psychology. Over the last several decades his scholarly writings, books and leadership have consolidated the importance of the history of psychology as the discipline navigates through turbulent times. Whether it is his private and extensive collection of photographs of contemporary figures in psychology, his in-depth and careful study of eminent psychologists such as Robert Yerkes, or his extensive writings about ideas, movements or people, Dewsbury has done more than any modern day historian of psychology.

His contribution to the history of psychology is even more unusual considering that his contributions to animal and comparative behavior were exemplary and make him arguably the premier comparative psychologist of his generation. Not being satisfied with such an accomplishment, Dewsbury went on to excel in the history of psychology. Dewsbury is completing his career with a legacy of being one of the foremost animal behaviorists and comparative psychologists as well as historians of psychology not only of his generation but in the history of psychology.