



TASA The Australian Sociological Association

January Contact Letter

This month I want to report on two finds. I have been an independent scholar, that is not attached to any academic institution, for 46 years and it was only a couple of weeks ago that I discovered there, not one but two organisations that provided services for scholars outside academia. The first, was the U.S. group calling itself The National Coalition of Independent Scholars. (NCIS) What they offer is: The National Coalition of Independent Scholars is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation organized in 1989 to support independent scholars. Basic to many of the goals of NCIS is providing a sense of community in which independent scholars can interact and address issues we have traditionally encountered. NCIS has also responded to the increasing numbers and changing demographic of independent scholars.

We have identified some of our largest constituent groups. First and foremost are those who have not or never wished to enter academia, or those who have left it, preferring instead the life of the independent scholar.

Another group of NCIS members is that of academics who are peripheral and marginal to their institutions. They continue to grow in numbers as academia no longer provides a stable position or income for much of its faculty, relying instead upon part-timers and adjuncts who are offered little or nothing in the way of benefits or jobs security.

Newly emerging is the second or new career scholar who has decided, for various reasons, to forgo previous pursuits and enter a field of scholarship (s)he has long dreamed of pursuing.

And, of course, there are numerous others who have chosen this route for their own individual reasons. Regardless who or when the decision to pursue scholarship has been undertaken and what degree, if any, has been sought, NCIS welcomes those independents who qualify for membership. We also welcome other groups of organized scholars to join us as *Affiliate* members.

Today, NCIS is an international organization whose members hail from many continents and pursue diverse fields of study in a variety of disciplines. This is the population NCIS proudly serves.

For more information see their web site, <http://www.ncis.org/>

Having signed up, I was looking at their web site and discovered there was a similar Australian organisation, The Independent Scholars Association of Australia, so I signed up with them as well. What they offer is:

The purpose of ISAA is to encourage and support individuals who undertake independent scholarly work outside the nation's formal institutes of education and research; to promote such scholarship; and to stimulate public debate in Australia. It does so by:

- bringing such individuals together to share interests and expertise
- sponsoring conferences and lectures for both members and the public
- offering informed opinion on matters of public interest and concern
- creating a collective voice on issues affecting the practice of scholarship
- representing the interests of independent scholars in the public arena
- supporting knowledgeable dissent and independent opinion

As an organisation ISAA takes no position on matters of party politics. ISAA supports the right of its members to take an individual stand on matters of public concern but their statements should not be presented as reflecting the view of the Association or other members.

See their web site: www.isaa.org.au.

Soon after I joined, the American crowd sent me an offer to submit an abstract for consideration to publish an article in their journal. I am working on an abstract, so we will see what happens.

If you do sociology, you do scholarly work. I think the connections will be useful both for issues that concern us and new contacts we might make with people doing similar work, Have a look at the web sites and see what you think.

Alan Scott, Continuing Education Officer