

CALL FOR PAPERS

The **50th** Conference of the **Semiotic Society of America**
Pittsburgh, 14–18 October 2026
Semiotic Communities and Collective Inquiry

This Year's Theme: Semiotic Communities and Collective Inquiry

Relationally conceived, the *Collective* is a form of continuity of semiotic relations that makes reasoning and reasonableness open to experimentation, critique, and correction. Collective reasoning emerges when interpretations are rendered accountable to others, where claims can be challenged, redescribed, and tested, while keeping the process open through a readiness for translation across boundaries, for correction, and for the expansion of shared semioses. As an ever-expanding field of knowledge and research that ranges across virtually all phenomena, semiotics is deeply interwoven with the idea of community itself. Semiotics and sign-theories of all stripes presuppose perceivers, interpreters, interactors, sign producers, meaning makers, and inquirers.

It is in this very sense of semiotics and communities of inquiry that the 50th Conference of the Semiotic Society of America invites scholars and researchers to examine semiotic processes in their communal and collective aspects. As signs are increasingly produced, circulated, and interpreted throughout nature, humanity, and technology, semiotics is challenged to reframe agency, mediation, interpretation, and meaning-making in relational terms, the manner in which communities are formed, strained, and transformed through semiosis. Any consideration of semiosis as the action of a sign in being interpreted into another more developed sign already bears a collaborative component: shared, traded, and challenged codes, traditions of interpretations and innovative disruptions, differentiations of significations, and, simultaneously, integrations of produced signs and meanings into larger, more global contexts.

Abstracts Welcome

Each year, the Conference assembles a unique group of international transdisciplinary experts from a wide range of disciplines, such as anthropology, biology, cognitive science, communication, cybernetics, design, fine arts, law, literary criticism, linguistics, logic, marketing, media studies, mathematics, pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, religion, sociology, and technology. As always, we welcome theoretical, empirical, historical, and practice-based contributions from across these disciplines, with topics including:

- Artificial intelligence and generative media
- Visual and audiovisual culture
- Linguistic and discursive change
- Interfaces and infrastructures
- Ethical and political dimensions of contemporary semiosis
- Biosemiotic and ecosemiotic perspectives
- Interpretive communities (human and non-human)
- Historical and contemporary theories of semiotics
- Logic and reasoning as relational phenomena

The Conference aims to foster international dialogue on how semiotic theory can illuminate communicative life as it is currently lived and contested. We welcome proposals that engage with the Conference Theme as well as contributions that address fundamental questions in semiotics from diverse theoretical perspectives and research traditions.

Celebrating the Life and Work of John Deely

On Friday, 16 October, the traditional local excursion will take participants (transportation provided) to Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where John Deely was Professor and Philosopher-in-Residence when he died. Developing the thought of Peirce and Poinsett, Deely demonstrated that relations constitute reality itself, not merely our representations of it. His relational realism reveals that semiotic community extends far beyond human society, encompassing all living beings and their environments, for “community and personhood

transcend subjectivity and intersubjectivity precisely by consisting in a network of semiotic relations” (2008, “From Semiosis to Semioethics”). In this way, the doctrine of signs opens new pathways for understanding logic and meaning as fundamentally relational phenomena that permeate the entire world — from biosemiotic processes in nature to collaborative reasoning in human communities to distributed cognition in socio-technical systems.

Venue and General Description

The 50th Semiotic Society of America (SSA) Conference, *Semiotic Communities and Collective Inquiry*, will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 14–18 October 2026.

This year's Conference will be in-person, with only limited online support for certain meetings.

Except on Friday, Conference events will take place in the Oakland (Pitt-CMU) area of Pittsburgh, at the Hilton Garden Inn. A Friday excursion will take participants to special events at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe.

The nearest major airport is PIT (Pittsburgh International Airport, <https://flypittsburgh.com>).

Submission Requirements

Only current members of the SSA may submit abstracts for papers or panels. Please ensure that your membership is current before submission. New members are welcome to join the SSA via:

<https://www.pdcnet.org/ssa>

Paper abstracts and panel proposals should be submitted no later than **20 April 2026**, via EasyChair at:

<https://easychair.org/conferences?conf=ssa2026>

Please include the following information in your submission:

1. Author's name
2. Institutional affiliation
3. E-mail address
4. Title of submission with a maximum 150-word abstract in English
5. A minimum of three and a maximum of six keywords

Abstracts for individual paper presentations must include all of the above information. Proposals for panels and organized sessions (with either 3 or 4 papers in one panel/session) may also be submitted, with a title and 150-word (maximum) description of the panel/session, as well as a title and abstract for each individual paper of the panel/session.

Notification of acceptance of abstracts will be sent on or before **15 June 2026**.

Conference Registration

To register for the SSA's 50th Annual Conference, please visit

<https://www.pdcnet.org/wp/registrations/2026-ssa/>

or call the Philosophy Documentation Center, Toll-Free: 1-800-444-2419 (US & Canada).

We encourage early registration. Nonmembers are welcome to attend the Conference, but only SSA Members may present papers at the Conference. The same link may be used by both Members and nonmembers for Conference registration.

If you will require a visa to travel to the USA for the Conference, the SSA can provide a letter confirming your attendance. If you need such a letter, please inform the Executive Director as early as possible both at:

<director@semioticsocietyofamerica.org> and also at

<director+visa@semioticsocietyofamerica.org>

Important Deadlines and URLs

- Abstract Submission: by **20 April 2026**, via <https://easychair.org/conferences?conf=ssa2026>
- Notification of acceptance: rolling until **15 June 2026**
- Registration deadline for presenters: **30 June 2026**, <https://www.pdcnet.org/wp/registrations/2026-ssa>
- Full Paper submission for the Kelson Award: by **31 July 2026**

Each presentation is allotted 20-25 minutes, with additional time for Q&A during the session.

Student submissions are eligible for the Roberta Kevelson Award, which will honor the best student paper presented at the 2026 Conference. Students who wish to be considered for the Kevelson Award should indicate their interest at the time of abstract submission; if accepted, the full paper must be uploaded to EasyChair by 31 July 2026. Questions regarding the Roberta Kevelson Award should be directed to the Kevelson Committee Chair at:

<director+kevelson@semioticsocietyofamerica.org>

Additional Conference Information

Papers presented at the SSA Conference will be considered for publication in *Semiotics 2026*, the Yearbook of the Semiotic Society of America. The SSA Yearbook is an annual peer-reviewed publication series sponsored by the Semiotic Society of America, providing both a timely overview of current developments in semiotic research and a regular outlet for members of the Society to publish papers on their current work. In accord with Article 4 §4 of the SSA Constitution, only Individual, Student, and Honorary members in good standing can make presentations at the SSA Conference and publish papers in the SSA Yearbook.

Further details and deadlines will be specified in the Conference Program.

Invited Speakers and Special Events

In addition to paper presentations, the 2026 Conference will include keynote and plenary speakers, as well as the traditional Welcoming event, Dinner Banquet, and local excursion. Details will be e-mailed later to Members and posted on the SSA website.

Accommodations

Discount lodging and transportation options will be sent to all SSA members via e-mail. Such details will later appear on the SSA website.

SSA Conference Registration Fee (and SSA Membership Fee)

Conference Registration:

- Conference Registration (Regular) – US\$ **120**
(late registration after 31 July 2026, US\$ 150)
- Conference Registration (Student) – US\$ **60**
(late registration after 31 July 2026, US\$ 75)

SSA Membership (required for Presenters):

- SSA Membership Dues (Regular) – US\$ 75
- SSA Membership Dues (Student) – US\$ 50

Conference registration provides access to all presentations, the welcome reception, the coffee/tea breaks, and the dinner banquet.

Special single-day rates for the general public and journalists will also be available, with details published later on the SSA website. Please check the SSA website for updates:

semioticsocietyofamerica.org

We look forward to welcoming you to Pittsburgh!

SSA 2026 Conference Program Committee

Priscila Borges (Chair) – Brazil

Farouk Y. Seif – USA

Tiago da Costa e Silva – Germany/Brazil

Dora I. Alvarez Tamayo – Mexico

Peter Lang – USA

Garnet Butchart – Canada

Donna West – USA

Joseph DeChicchis – USA/Japan