

Dr. Zvi Har'El (December 14, 1949 – February 2, 2008) and International Jules Verne Studies - A Tribute

Most contemporary scholars of Jules Verne would agree that the history of international Verne studies can be divided into two distinct periods: pre-Zvi and post-Zvi. In the pre-Zvi era, each of us worked in near-isolation from one another, and we rarely shared the fruits of our individual labors. There existed little communication among us and little sense of community. Outlets for publishing research on Verne remained limited to books and journals that were often hard to find and difficult to purchase. And those rare digital resources devoted to Verne, scattered here and there across the World Wide Web, seemed most often to be superficial, myth-based, and teeming with error.



Picture taken by Zvi's daughter, Michal, Dec. 7, 2007

Then, on November 13, 1995, Dr. Zvi Har'El—professor of mathematics at Technion, Israel Institute of Technology—launched his website called “Zvi Har'El’s Jules Verne Collection.” With its high level of quality and comprehensiveness, it immediately attracted the attention (and participation) of serious Verne aficionados from around the world. Offering invaluable tools such as

“The Complete Jules Verne Bibliography,” the “Jules Verne Virtual Library,” and “Academic Scholarship on Jules Verne” (in some ways the precursor of *Verniana*), Zvi’s website soon became the leading source of information on Jules Verne on the Web.

But what really revolutionized the field of Verne studies was his creation of the “Jules Verne Forum,” an international discussion board free for all to join. The Forum, which started with nine members in January 1996, became an online *lieu de réunion* for all Vernians, a meeting place where we came to share our research, to engage in wide-ranging (and multilingual) discussions, and to showcase up-to-date information about this important author and his legacy. Through his website and Jules Verne Forum, Zvi succeeded in transcending national and cultural boundaries, making Verne studies more international in scope. In many ways, he brought people together. Jean-Michel Margot said, during the opening session of the “Jules Verne Mondial” in 2005, that this truly international event was realized thanks to one man: Zvi Har’El.

Zvi wanted Vernian scholarship to become a more collective enterprise, less proprietary and/or exclusive in nature and more openly accessible to all. It was in this spirit that he created a new international online journal devoted to Verne, which he called *Verniana*. Following Zvi’s sudden and tragic death a year ago, we are proud to offer the first issue of his *Verniana*. We dedicate it to his pioneering vision and his magnanimous heart. We will remember Zvi as a good-humored, jovial man, dedicated and indefatigable, always ready to help others. He was a dear friend, and we will miss him. Zvi wanted the first issue of *Verniana* to appear on Jules Verne’s birthday, February 8. This date will henceforth also commemorate the birth of a new era in international Verne scholarship and our brother in spirit who brought Verne studies into the electronic age.

THE EDITORS