For our discipline, and for the IAHR, the construction of the future requires taking informed selective decisions about the nature of the past. It is not a question of constructing an artificial past which in its simplicity might stand in tension with a historian's critical account of the same events or period. Rather it is a construction of the past which, while historically serious and reliable, at the same time is consciously intended to feed the future. (Pye 2009, 284–285)

Memories of the IAHR are part of the history of our discipline, and so I conclude by expressing the hope that these memories, selected, contested, and always reflected, will turn out to be not only memories of the past but also constituents of the future. (Pye, 2009: 297)

Having the honor of editing, on behalf of the IAHR Executive Committee, the publication celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the IAHR flagship journal NVMEN, we find the quotes from the then IAHR President and former General Secretary, Prof. Michael Pye's Opening Address at the IAHR World Congress in Durban 2000—a congress celebrating the "100th Anniversary of the IAHR as a congress tradition and its 50th as a formal organisation with statutes" (Pye 2009: 284)—perfectly suited to indicate the editorial rationale behind this volume.

With its title “Memories of the Future. Looking Back and Looking Forward in the History of Religions”, Pye's Opening Address at the same time reminds the present editors of the closing lecture, “Looking backward and forward”, delivered by the first IAHR General Secretary, Prof. Claas Jouco Bleeker, 50 years earlier, on September 9, 1950, at the 7th Congress for the History of Religions held in Amsterdam, the congress during which the IAHR (until Rome 1955 the I.A.S.H.R.—International Association for the Study of the History of Religions) was established “as a formal organisation with statutes”. 
Bleeker, who served as General Secretary for twenty years (1950–1970), longer than any other IAHR General Secretary, when stepping down during the Stockholm 1970 World Congress delivered yet another speech called “Looking backward and forward”. (Both speeches are reprinted as, respectively, chapters 1 and 10 in this volume).

When it was Tim Jensen’s turn to step down during the IAHR XXIst World Congress in Erfurt, Germany 2015, having then served as IAHR General Secretary for ten years (2005–2015) there was no ‘stepping-down-looking-back-and-forward’ opening or closing lecture. When Armin W. Geertz stepped down in Tokyo 2005, having then served as IAHR General Secretary also for ten years (1995–2005), there was, likewise, no ‘looking backward and forward’.

Having been invited by Brill, in particular Maarten Frieswijk, to help produce a publication celebrating the 60th anniversary of NVMEN, we soon nourished an ambition of collecting a volume with ‘joint memories of NVMEN and the IAHR’, memories that “selected, contested, and always reflected, [hopefully can] turn out to be not only memories of the past but also constituents of the future”. Memories, furthermore, showing the intimate, past and present, and, hopefully, future relationship between the NVMEN and the IAHR.

Consequently, this publication, as a kind of ‘Festschrift’ in honor of the 60th anniversary of NVMEN, is a collection of writings manifesting, incarnating, analyzing, discussing and critically reflecting on NVMEN past and present, on the history, developments and gradual but steady expansion of the IAHR as well as on key methodological issues and debates. These methodological issues and debates linked to the IAHR and its history, were often, though not always, published in NVMEN, and raised, analysed, and discussed by key IAHR ‘mov- ers’, be they presidents, general secretaries, treasurers, publications officers, managing editors or other scholars and colleagues serving and dedicated to the IAHR and NVMEN in one way or another.

This publication, then, might hopefully serve present and future generations of IAHR members, be they individual scholars or member associations and affiliates, when looking for material on key discussions within the IAHR and the academic study of religion as envisioned, promoted, and pursued by the IAHR and its members.

In terms of themes, issues and discussions, of IAHR policy, methodology, and contributions to NVMEN, stubbornly persisting, reappearing, in the same shape or dressed up in new clothes and terms, this publication, thus, hopefully

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1 Today, the IAHR Constitution, § 4 states that “[n]o one member [of the IAHR Executive Committee] shall serve in the same office for more than two terms and no one member shall serve for more than four terms in total.”