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Members of the ISCHE Executive and of the Annual General Assembly of ISCHE, it is my very great pleasure to present this account of the achievements of Professor Ruth Watts, Emeritus Professor of History of Education at the University of Birmingham UK.

Over the last twenty-five years, Professor Watts has been one of the UK's most accomplished scholar, teacher, and international colleague. Professor Watts is being honoured with honorary life membership of ISCHE as the first woman in ISCHE's long and distinguished history on whom honorary life membership is bestowed.

PROFESSOR WATTS: THE SCHOLAR

Professor Watts is pre-eminent as a scholar in her ability to advance scholarship in a number of interlinking fields: history of education, history of religion, women's history, history of science, eighteenth century history, and history of colonialism and empire are but a few of the areas in which she has published with eminence.

Professor Watts' book, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860* (Longman, 1998), brought to the attention of scholars the radical views of the Unitarians on religious, political and social issues, including the part played by the Unitarians in opening the door to female education and emancipation. As Professor Watts argued, the Unitarians were successful in challenging the educational and religious norms of the day and through them, the ideas and social conventions affecting women. The book demonstrates a distinguishing feature of much of Professor Watts' scholarship - her ability to unravel the complex relationship between religion, gender, class and education.

In *Women in Science: A Social and Cultural History* (Routledge, 2007), Professor Watts investigated the historical and cultural contexts surrounding women in education and the scientific community from antiquity to the twenty-first century. This was a groundbreaking study of gender and technology, masculinity and science that addressed many searching questions of the day related to the production and dissemination of knowledge and the extent to which women fitted into or challenged the contemporary scientific framework. In a tribute to Professor Watts published in 2007 Professor Kay Morris Matthews wrote of Professor Watts' contribution:

increasingly her name has become synonymous with gender, science and history and has international relevance because of the focus on a body of research in these areas that makes original contributions to the advancement of knowledge in education.¹

Many of the themes in these two books were the subject of numerous articles and reviews as well as entries to the British *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press)

¹ Kay Morris Matthews, "Professor Ruth Watts", *History of Education Researcher*, no.8.November 2007, 64.

Professor Watts has also co-authored books on history teaching, including *Crossing the Key Stages of History* (with Ian Grosvenor)(David Fulton, 1995) and *Mapping the Challenge, Preparing Tomorrow's History Teachers* (with Peter Lucas)(University of Sheffield, 1992).

PROFESSOR WATTS: THE TEACHER

Professor Watts joined the University of Birmingham in 1989 as a Lecturer in Education after having taught History at a number of secondary schools and lectured at the Universities of Leicester and Warwick. At Birmingham University Professor Watts became Head of Creative and Cultural Studies and was a founder members of the Domus research centre.

At Birmingham, as well as research and teaching history of education, Professor Watts was responsible for the training of History teachers and her innovative approaches to the History curriculum live on in the lessons given by the History teachers who are her former students. Professor Watts was assiduous in her care for individual students, whether future teachers or her doctoral students. There are very many PhD students whose success is the result of her rigorous analysis of their work, coupled with her personal support.

Professor Watts has also been a mentor to very many historians of education and scholars of women's history. I was privileged that she was my co-supervisor and my mentor when I began as a PhD supervisor.

PROFESSOR WATTS: THE INTERNATIONAL COLLEAGUE

Professor Watts was President of the UK History of Education Society between 2002 and 2005 and was the first woman elected to the presidency. For six years between 1997 and 2003 she served on the ISCHE Executive Committee. She has also led the ISCHE Gender Group for many years and continues to do so with Professor Mineke van Essen.

Professor Watts has represented ISCHE at the Congress of Historical Sciences in Oslo and Sydney. Here at the CISH Conference in Amsterdam, she co-convoked with Professor van Essen a joint panel on Gender and Education. Professor Watts also co-convoked the ISCHE Conference in Birmingham on the topic of Urbanisation and Education.

From her first foray into ISCHE at the conference in Amsterdam in 1994, Professor Watts has been a constant presence at ISCHE conferences. Many of her papers have seen subsequent publication in *Paedagogica Historica*. We look forward to her Plenary Address at the ISCHE conference in Mexico.

Many international scholars will recognise the support that Professor Watts has provided in their careers, whether as new doctoral students or established researchers. I will end with a quotation from Professor Morris Matthews's tribute to Professor Watts:

Ruth demonstrated that she is one of those rare academics who can name and greet colleagues, knowing exactly their research expertise. In this way, to many emerging researchers and to her colleagues Ruth Watts models scholar-a-large, always interested in the ideas of others, always encouraging and inclusive. Many of us from the other side of the world on our first forays to conferences in foreign

places can remember the difference she made to our feeling welcomed and acknowledged. Her thoughtfulness in forging meetings of researchers working on similar topics, especially from within ISCHE conference sessions, highlights the kind of academic Ruth is.²

Colleagues, I invite you to join me in congratulating Professor Ruth Watts on the honorary life membership bestowed today by ISCHE.

Joyce Goodman
University of Winchester, UK

² *ibid.*