The history and principles of the IPA

Michael Ashby, UCL, London

This talk will explain the origin and purpose of the IPA, and the extent of its current adoption. We will illustrate the principle of providing a separate symbol for every sound used distinctively in any language, and the way in which new symbols and sounds are added.

We will examine critically the framework of phonetic classification incorporated in the IPA, and its underlying theoretical assumptions.

Finally we consider the other ‘IPA’—the International Phonetic Association, established in 1886—and consider its role in developing and maintaining the alphabet.