

The Olivia Schieffelin Nordberg Award

*for excellence in writing and editing
in the population sciences*

June 8, 2009

Samuel H. Preston Wins Olivia Schieffelin Nordberg Award For Excellence in Writing and Editing in the Population Sciences

NEW YORK—Samuel H. Preston has been named winner of the 2009 Olivia Schieffelin Nordberg Award for excellence in writing and editing in the population sciences. The award will be presented at a reception at the Population Council in New York this fall.

Created by her colleagues, friends, and family, the Award commemorates Dr. Nordberg, who played a leading role in information dissemination on international population issues over three decades as an editor, writer, and director of publications.

Given every two years, the Award recognizes one of the following achievements: writing on population that combines exceptional scholarship with appeal to a broad readership; or a record of editing technical material on population to make it accessible to varied audiences.

Samuel H. Preston is the Frederick J. Warren Professor of Demography at the University of Pennsylvania and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. He served as Dean of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Arts and Sciences from 1998 to 2004.

Preston is one of the foremost scholars of demography. His 1968 doctoral thesis at Princeton University, a study of smoking and mortality in the United States, began a lifelong series of contributions on the devastating international impact of smoking, and on mortality more generally. Although he currently sees himself as a researcher on mortality, there is not an area of population—fertility, migration, urbanization, aging, health—where he has not made fundamental contributions.

Without sacrificing an ounce of scientific rigor, Preston's prose is a delight to read. His canonical textbook (with Heuveline and Guillot) *Demography: Measuring and Modeling Population Processes* (2001) and his many expository articles set the standard of clear, engaging writing for demographers. He is also not afraid to let his sense of humor show in his work—no doubt a factor in his wide readership outside the demographic field. In addition, Preston's research on formal demography, including his work on age-specific growth rates, has given the demographic community new methods of understanding and analyzing demographic data.

Preston has co-written or edited a number of volumes for the National Academy of Sciences, including *Population Growth and Economic Development: Policy Questions*, *Demography of Aging*, and *The Epidemiologic Transition: Policy and Planning Implications for Developing Countries*.

A recent interview with Preston on tobacco-related mortality, now on the website of the Population Reference Bureau, exemplifies his lifelong effort to bring scientific research to a wider audience, where it can influence policy. Perhaps the best way to describe Preston's contributions to the field is to put it as simply as possible—his writing has advanced science and the public good.

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