

Ruth Schwartz Cowan
Janice and Julian Bers Professor Emerita
History and Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania
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Ruth Schwartz Cowan is an historian of science, technology and medicine, with degrees from Barnard College (BA), the University of California at Berkeley (MA) and The Johns Hopkins University (PhD).

She was a member of the History Department of the State University of New York at Stony Brook from 1967 to 2002, attaining the rank of Professor in 1984. Between 1997 and 2002 she was the Chair of the Honors College at SUNY-Stony Brook; she also served as Director of Women's Studies from 1985-1990. She became Professor Emerita at Stony Brook in 2002.

In July, 2002 she became Janice and Julian Bers Professor of the History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania. Between 2003 and 2008 and again in 2011-2012 she was Chair of the Department. She became Professor Emerita in July 2012.

Professor Cowan is the author of five books and numerous articles. Her books are: Heredity and Hope: The Case for Genetic Screening (Harvard University Press, 2008); The Social History of American Technology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); (with Neil M. Cowan) Our Parents' Lives: The Americanization of Eastern European Jews (New York: Basic Books, 1989) [revised second edition published as Our Parent's Lives: Everyday Life and Jewish Assimilation (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996)]; Sir Francis Galton and the Study of Heredity in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Garland Press, 1985); and More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

With Daniel J Kevles and Peter Westwick she has recently begun a commissioned sesquicentennial history of the National Academy of Sciences. Currently, she is also working on a revision (for 2016) of her textbook, A Social History of American Technology.

Professor Cowan has been a Fulbright Scholar, a Guggenheim Fellow, a Phi Beta Kappa Lecturer and a Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Scholar at the California Institute of Technology. She has had grants in support of her research from the Sloan Foundation, NSF, NEH, NIH (through ELSI) and the ACLS.

Professor Cowan has been awarded the Leonardo da Vinci Medal and the Dexter Prize of the Society for the History of Technology as well as the J.D. Bernal Prize of the Society for the Social Study of Science. She was elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society in 2014.

Professor Cowan is active in the Society for the History of Technology (President, 1992-1994). She serves on the editorial boards of Social Studies of Science and Science and Culture. She has been a member of the Smithsonian Council, and of the IEEE History Committee. For several years she was the Chair of the US National Committee, International Union for the History and Philosophy of Science, a member of the Visiting Committee for the Humanities, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Trustee of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. She is a founding board member of the Philadelphia Area Center for the History of Science (PACHS) and is currently the Chair of the Research Community Advisory Board, North Shore/LIJ Hospital System on Long Island and the Chair of the Advisory Committee for the Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation at the Smithsonian Institution.