Radiology has a precise date of birth in 1895: but apparently radiology and medical imaging are not dead, and on the contrary, they show an obvious dynamism. The very notion of scientific progress has supported the history of radiology since its origins: this notion of progress is intrinsically constitutive of the 20th century. This notion remains present in medical imaging today, whereas in many fields the very term progress, as the philosopher of science and physicist Étienne Klein points out, has been replaced by the term "innovation", which is unfortunately not equivalent, and whose semantic connotation is more limited, as if progress were frightening now. The future of humanity depends on an approach of useful progress, resulting from a personal inner growth shared collectively. This growth, that is, this apprehension of a revitalized "meaning" and responsibility, calls everyone together. It is to this question that Étienne Klein invites us in his book "Sauvons le Progrès"... This progress must remain an objective in radiology: qualitative progress and access to as many people as possible in a generalized and global way. Artificial intelligence (A.I.) will probably enable us to write new pages and make new progresses in radiology, and to overcome the fears, tears and restructuring that are inevitable within the profession itself by reshuffling the cards for both the radiologists and the « technologist-manipulator-paramedic » (you name it) in the broad sense that gravitate to Radiology. This is not the first time that Radiology has been confronted with such changes in its history.

The BSR Historical Section: a key for the future

The past informs us about the future: as Victor Hugo said: “The future is the door, the past is the key”. As we saw today, imaging has been at the heart of all medical revolutions over the past 125 years, and will remain so for a long time to come. This day was also intended to be the solemn occasion for the inauguration of the new historical section of the Belgian Radiological Society. The last one, the eleventh one.... The previous section to date the tenth is the 4-year-old LMQ section, which is very dynamic and will co-organize the next annual national congress of the Belgian Society of Radiology with the « Young Radiologists » of the BSR. In total there are 11 sections now and also a scientific section which coordinates the activities of all these sections. The historical section had necessarily become indispensable, as is the case with our Dutch neighbours, where as we saw, their very old historical commission is also very active, dynamic and productive. In the particular case of Belgium, this historical section also benefits from the logistical support and back-ground of the Belgian Museum of Radiology, and from the incredible dynamism of its founder and enthusiastic Curator Dr René Vantiggelen, to whom the entire radiological corps wishes to pay a vibrant tribute today. The collection he has assembled is the work of one man and one life and the testimony of an exceptional passion.

The idea of a scientific anchoring of the Museum through an integrated section of the National Radiological Society was therefore a logical one. The glorious past of Belgian radiology is a treasure to be valued indeed.
As a reminder, the Belgian Society of Radiology was founded in 1906 and the Belgian Journal of Radiology was quickly the flagship. In 1956, as it should be, after 50 years of existence, the Belgian Society of Radiology was able to claim the title of “Royal” and this is how it became the Royal Belgian Society of Radiology. The title is conferred by the « Cabinet-Chief » of the Royal House, located at 16 Bréderodestreet in a wing of the Royal Palace. Why then, you may ask, has this society lost its honorary title? Since 2006-2007, the Belgian Radiological Community had felt the imperative need to defend itself more and better in relation to the obvious attempts of various circles to put a brake on the development of medical imaging in Belgium. For this to happen, all the driving forces in radiology had to be able to come together and speak with a single voice. Previously it was the reign of the “Divide ut imperes”... After many negotiations, the merger of all the components of Belgian radiology could finally take place on 16 November 2013 and a new “Belgian Society of Radiology” was created by the incorporation of the three existing entities: the National Union of Radiologists (UNR-NUR) the Consilium Radiologicum Belgium (first attempt for a concertation body) and the Royal Belgian Radiological Society. All legal and organisational obstacles had been overcome, including the dissolution of the various NPOs, and the new single entity took the previous glorious historical name of “Belgian Society of Radiology”.

The aims of the BSR

This company is now a professional union under the Act of 31 March 1898 on professional unions in Belgium, a law published on 8 April 1898, which confers a very special status and legal protection on professional unions. De facto and de jure, this new union is placed under the auspices of the Belgian Group of Specialists (GBS-VBS : the national medical association of Belgium - official NMA) which is therefore in contact with and member at European level of the UEMS (Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes) whose 60th anniversary we celebrated in 2018. Within the UEMS, there is also a European Radiological Section representing all European radiologists which is precisely meeting in Rome today and whose President Prof. Paolo RICCI send us his best wishes. The aims of the BSR as a professional union are defined both by the Law and the Statutes: the defence, study, protection and promotion of the scientific and professional interests of all Belgian radiologists. This merger increases the visibility of the radiology profession and allows for more effective and influential representation by speaking with a single voice. In 2063, if all goes well, the Belgian Society of Radiology will be able theoretically to resume its honorary title of Royal. Thus, the history of the radiology’s section will benefit from this double visibility through its double anchoring: the Museum on the one hand, whose sustainability must be ensured with its own organization and the Belgian Society of Radiology as a scientific and professional body. As such, this section will participate automatically in the work and meetings of the Scientific Council as all other sections.

I therefore wish long life to this new Section of the History of Radiology, which de facto benefits from the support of all radiologists in Belgium who, through their membership to the BSR, are automatically full members of the Section.

Long life to the Section !!!

Dr Jean-Paul Joris, m.d.
Co-President Section History BSR
Secretary Radiological Section UEMS