

International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science  
Division of History of Science

related to UNESCO through the International Council for Science (ICSU)  
and the Conseil International de la Philosophie et des Sciences Humaines (CIPSH)

*The Secretary General*

**Report:**

**Survey on current activities related to the DHS project “World  
History of Science Online: databases of bibliographical and  
archival sources”**

**Preamble**

Between April and November 2004, the Secretary General of the International Union of Philosophy and History of Science/Division of History of Science (IUHPS/DHS) conducted a survey amongst its 67 member organizations (National Committees, Historical Commissions, Inter-Union Commissions and Scientific Sections) in order to learn about the concerns of the history of science international community in regard to the activities related to the World History of Science Online (WHSO) project. This survey was to function as the basis for a vast debate on the vision, future organization, services and activities of the WHSO project<sup>1</sup>.

The following report displays the results obtained so far from the responses of the member bodies and associates of the DHS to the survey, consisting of an e-mail interview<sup>2</sup>. The rate of response was 39%<sup>3</sup> and the

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 67 DHS Members, 58 of them were contacted (The rest did not count with electronic addresses, their contact information could not be updated, or had an unclear status within the DHS at the time) of which 36 were National Committees, 3 were Scientific Sections, 13 were Historical Commissions, 5 were Inter-Union Commissions and one was the Joint Commission between the IUHPS/DHS and its sister Division of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science (IUHPD/DLMPS).

<sup>2</sup> With the responses to the survey received we have elaborated a database which, in an ulterior phase of development, shall provide valuable information on the activities of the member of the DHS.

<sup>3</sup> Taking into consideration that the WHSO is an innovative international project, and that the knowledge in modern technologies and in the methodologies of digital bibliographies and archival sources is still reduced; and also, being aware of the fact that the DHS had

respondents were 13 National Committees, 7 Commissions, the Joint Commission, 4 Inter-Union Commissions and one Scientific Section.

### **Main activities of the member bodies and associates of the DHS in relation to bibliographic and archival sources**

#### Archival sources

The results show that the main activities conducted by the surveyed in regard to archival sources are ten archival guides, three of which have a general character, five are limited to a particular geographical region, one is limited to a single mathematician and one is devoted to local scientists from a particular geographical region. Of all these projects, six of them have been digitalized and have been published online.

#### Bibliographies

What concerns bibliographical projects, there are six of them of general character and four of them have, besides that, a national scope. There are also four projects restricted to a certain region and to particular subjects and two more with restrictions on the time period studied. Finally, there is one compilation of annotated and commented bibliographies and one undetermined project. Of these projects, ten of them can be found digitally and nine of them are online.

#### Plans for the future

At least eight member organizations and associates have stated their will to continue their current activities in bibliographies and archival sources; and some of them plan to expand these activities in order to include other subjects or time periods. The process of expansion makes also reference to the inclusion of some of the existing projects into the WHSO project.

Besides these two main plans of action for the future, the results show that there are some organizations which currently do not have activities related to bibliographic and archival sources. This fraction of the surveyed consider nevertheless, desirable to begin activities within the WHSO project.

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never before conducted a survey amongst its entire membership, it is possible to explain the low rate of replies received. Nevertheless it was deemed appropriate to make a partial review of the information obtained to the date in order use an analysis to better be able to plan the most effective ways to continue the project and to stimulate those member of the DHS family that have not yet answered to the survey.

It is also worth noticing that some member bodies also plan to continue their work on projects on specific issues, which by the moment do not form part of the WHSO project, but that eventually could be included, such as biographies and iconographic data bases. Other surveyed are also working on subjects outside of the project such as current bibliographies.

### Policy relevant activities and tangible results

Major policy relevant activities with tangible results of the DHS members and associates surveyed are: guides of historical research resources, anthologies or selected historical documents, data bases of commented bibliographies, information in electronic formats such as CD ROM, web sites, and publications of journals on historical records. Also, but to a lesser extent there are projects on specific issues such as lists of manuscripts, iconographies, etc.

### **Support required from the DHS**

When asked about the kind of support required from the DHS the surveyed mentioned that their main concern was to create and have access to an international scientific online research network; and even if financing was the most recurrent answer, once translated to practical requirements, the specific needs to be met are technical support such as website hosting and methodological issues.

### Areas to be encouraged by the DHS

The topics mentioned by DHS members, to be encouraged by the DHS, can be grouped in three main categories:

- **Social Impact:** science and cultural diversity, science education and dissemination of scientific information.
- **Methodology:** bibliographies, archival sources and advice on information and communication technologies.
- **Global Issues:** both by providing the existing resources with a global dimension and by incorporating information from regions before unable to diffuse its work worldwide.

### Partnering

The surveyed bodies recommended the DHS to encourage partnering outside our scientific community. Examples of organizations to be contacted are:

- Intergovernmental institutions.
- Regional bodies — European Union, Organization of American States, etc.
- Policy-makers and international agencies.
- Sub-state representative assemblies and executives.
- Multinational companies.
- United Nations, World Bank, major NGOs.
- Ministries, private research organizations.

### Future activities

For future activities of the WHSO project, member organizations and associates suggest the engagement of the DHS mainly in:

- The aiding of researchers of developing countries to participate in its activities.
- The promotion of comparative research.
- The enhancement of archiving, documentation and dissemination of data.

Other suggestions for the DHS are:

- The involvement in the creation of policy-relevant history of science.
- The facilitation of free access to publicly funded data.
- The expansion of the DHS net as a virtual communication platform.
- The organization of international conferences and symposia.

## **Main Findings & Conclusions**

### Main activities

The main activities of member organizations and associates are catalogues of archival sources and bibliographical compilations; and to a lesser extent, works on current bibliographies of history of science (outside the scope of the project).

### Expected support from the DHS

- International scientific research networking online.
- Projects on comparative history of science research.
- Methodological support for bibliographies and archival sources as well as technical support such as website hosting and training.

### Research areas to be encouraged by the DHS

## Scientific bibliographies archives and iconographic databases

### Partners to be encouraged outside the scientific community.

- Public sector players.
- Regional and intergovernmental institutions.
- Policy-makers.
- Multinational companies and global organizations.

### Proposed future activities for the DHS.

The aims for the future are, on one hand, to continue and to expand current activities of the member bodies counting already with projects in the scope of the WHSO; and on the other hand, to start exploring the existing resources of other member bodies and eventually incorporate them into our project.

Additionally, the surveyed mentioned:

- The expansion of the virtual networking platform of the DHS.
- The promotion of history of science research with modern technologies.
- The transformation of the DHS into a more efficient source of knowledge and information.
- The helping of researchers with fewer resources to participate in the WHSO project and other DHS activities.

Mexico City, November 2004