



44th Annual Conference of
The International Association of Labour History Institutions (IALHI)
September 26- 28, 2013, Budapest, Hungary

Organized by The International Association of Labour History Institutions, in cooperation with the Central European University and Open Society Archives.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Opening up Social History Repositories: New Technologies and New Methods

The 2013 IALHI conference aims at re-opening a dialog between social history research and archival curation by focusing on the ephemeral and scattered nature of transnational, postcolonial and post-communist collections in the digital age. We want to inspire discussions on the new challenges to social history research, curation and preservation of archival sources, especially in the light of recent changes in East and Central Europe and with the advent of the networked information society.

Keynote by Professor Jürgen Kocka

Section 1: Reconnecting Collection Policies and Research Interests

Social history repositories may be characterized by their transnational character, documenting movements, processes and social structures that go beyond national boundaries. While processes play an important role in social history analysis, archives of transitional periods — in post-conflict societies such as the former Yugoslavia, or post-communist societies in general — cannot always be reconstructed or rebuilt by the traditional resources, if these are available at all. Scattered written, textual and visual materials are often to be found with private individuals, families, non-profit organizations, informal social groups, local communities, and other places outside the traditional historical archive. Social history repositories have the responsibility to rescue and preserve endangered collections, ephemeral materials, underground publications, and the grey literature of these movements. The spread of digital technology and digitization makes this mandate more feasible and transferable around the globe.

But how do these repositories develop their collections in parallel with the new trends in social history research? Perhaps the question should be phrased as follows: Does the newly-accumulated visual sources and digital data offered by these repositories foster new research topics, methods and approaches for researchers? In the first instance, we invite reflections on the collection development strategies of these institutions in the digital domain. Second, we invite lively papers from practitioners and theorists that aim to stimulate a dialog between curators and users of collections, and especially those which offer innovative examples of institutional and individual collaboration in cases of collection development.

Section 2: Reusing Social History Data

Social history research includes the gathering and analysis of empirical data, and the use of statistical methods. This type of research thus also produces a vast amount of quantitative information along with qualitative reports, research studies and publications often dumped into social history repositories. However, the reuse of social data in different historical contexts, and the curation of social data repositories raise important epistemological, ethical, and legal problems for both practitioners and users. What types of new methods exist to mine, remix and recontextualize former research data to make them trusted primary sources for subsequent social history research? This strand invites papers that explore the intersection between the preservation and exploitation of social data as historical source, and seeks to demonstrate the importance of interdisciplinary methods and approaches in both archiving and using these collections. To what extent should archivists, data specialists and researchers work together to preserve and make available social history collections? How can combined efforts in interpretation, descriptions and publishing lead to successful collaborations?

Section 3: Intellectual Property Rights and the Mandate of Social History

The transformation to a networked society poses a number of fundamental questions to archives regarding their functions in digital domains. The dilemma these archives face is between commercialization of their digital collections for sustainability reasons, and the implementation of open-access regimes in line with their traditional attributes as the guardians of public interest. One of the trends in cultural heritage institutions, including social history repositories, is the outsourcing of functions to new types of commercial intermediaries in the field of digital preservation. While some of their products are innovative, current copyright legislation often demands important access restrictions on public data and cultural goods. Additionally, archives of ephemera in particular often have to deal with orphan works, whose unclear proprietary status poses further challenges. This strand invites discussions of the following questions: what are the responses available to social history institutions as users of copyrighted materials and social history repositories as owners of copyrighted materials? How might we choose policies, procedures and technological means of protection to enable these institutions to continue their work?

Call for Papers

Proposed papers need to address one of these topics and must include:

- an abstract (max. 300 words)
- the thematic section of the conference
- a biographical note (max. 200 words)
- full postal address and email-address

Proposals to be sent to Piotr Wcislik, ialhi2013@ceu.hu

- submission of proposals: June 30, 2013.
- notification of acceptance: August 19, 2013.
- deadline for full papers: September 1, 2013.