

REVISTA DE HISTÓRIA DAS IDEIAS 15

Rituais e Cerimónias



INSTITUTO DE HISTÓRIA E TEORIA DAS IDEIAS
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contudo interessante deixar aqui as minutas da reunião, elaboradas pelos organizadores, e a lista dos responsáveis presentes, que poderão ser preciosas ao estabelecimento de contactos internacionais — afinal o objectivo principal da reunião.

Joaquim Ramos de Carvalho

MINUTES

About thirty History editors from fifteen countries gathered on October 9 at the Sala Igea dell'Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana for a workshop to discuss how they could better assist each other's work. The workshop was hosted by the United States Information Service and the Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana. The editors came from Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, and the United States.

During the morning each editor described the mission and problems of his or her journal. Perhaps the fairest conclusion about the journals is that they are very diverse. Some have large circulations among individual scholars and popular audiences. Others have small circulations, primarily of institutions. They focus on different countries and periods. But their editors came to Rome at least to explore whether editors from other countries, perhaps formed into a group, could help them solve their unique problems.

But there were some themes that many editors mentioned:

1. The literature of history has grown so large (as some emphasized) and so specialized (as others emphasized) that we face a major problem in knowing which books and articles are significant or important, particularly books and articles published abroad.

2. While we want to maintain the unique perspectives of our journals and national historical cultures, we also want to know more about how historians practice their crafts in other countries. People from other countries can present experiences and alternatives for us to consider. What books are people reading and talking about? What political problems and opportunities do they face when they practice history? What new research trends seem to be catching on? How has history entered public debate?

3. This interest in what colleagues are doing in other countries reflected a further theme that some editors mentioned: a desire for alternative experiences and perspectives that seem to reflect changes — different in each country — in the relation of professional historical

practice to wider audiences and public cultures. Several editors seemed particularly interested in foreign perspectives and experiences on how historical practice is or can be related to larger public culture and debate.

4. There was another theme that individuals spoke a great deal about, perhaps more in private than in public session: a sense that both the content and practice of history was (or should be) becoming more transor inter-national. Editors used words like "borderlands," "comparative," "sub-national," "trans-national," "global," to describe historical realities and themes they wanted their journals to explore more often.

We proceeded along two fronts: bi-lateral arrangements between editors to meet their particular needs, and agreements of things we would share with each other. The spirit of the meeting was to encourage editors to approach colleagues, to develop cooperative activities in whatever directions they wanted. Some editors might develop connections among journals that centered on history from a general, national, or international perspective, or that adopted an interdisciplinary perspective on the study of North America.

We agreed immediately to send each other xeroxed copies of the tables of contents of our issues for the past two years as well as plans for special issues and topics we will be featuring in the next two or four years.

We agreed to send each other a "two-page" "informal letter" in which we would inform people from other countries about the most significant developments and contributions that affect historical practice in our countries. We thought we would do this twice a year. No one expects this letter to be a formal or comprehensive statement. Rather, it should be an editor's informal observations on some of the following issues in which your own experiences can help colleagues in other countries better appreciate historical practice in your country. This "letter" could include:

1. What are the most significant history books that have had the largest professional and popular impact in your country? (Many editors wanted to know about foreign books they should review in their own journals.)

2. What are the larger factors and contexts that are currently shaping historical practice in your country? How are they changing?

3. What are the most important political factors shaping historical practice?

4. What are the most exciting new areas of research?

5. What are most promising developments in connecting scholars with more public audiences?

6. Are there promising technological developments for speeding communication across borders or for distributing your journal?

Many editors made exchange agreements between their journals.

Many expressed a willingness to help each other with particular problems. We could share databases on Ph.D. dissertations, book reviewers, journal articles. We could recommend reviewers to editors for particular books. Some agreed to waive copyright to permit other journals to reprint each other's articles and more generally to assist another editor in choosing or using articles that originally appeared in one of our journals, while others wanted to publish only original research.

On the theory that journal editors have a special interest and platform as the people who must decide which of the vast outpouring of scholarship is significant (and published), we agreed that individuals or groups might try out ideas for statements that could call attention to problems in historical practice that might interest readers from several countries. One group, for example, might imagine what a more trans-national, comparative, or borderland history might look like as content and process in this era when international trends lower borders but resources for history (including jobs, journals, and readers) are defined in national terms. Another group might imagine alternative historical practices that might better connect scholars with other audiences. We agreed to read and criticize any proposals that editors wanted to try on their colleagues, and several expressed a willingness to sign such statements and publish them in several journals as a way of calling attention to such developments.

We wanted to encourage and invite editors to use each other as sounding boards. Editors should feel encouraged at any time to circulate ideas or drafts of statements for which they would find it useful to receive feedback from any or all of the editors on the enclosed list.

David Ransel said that he would report whether it would be possible to arrange a future gathering at the World Congress of Historical Sciences in Montreal in 1995, and Steve Ickringill indicated that the European Association of American Studies would welcome a workshop of history editors at its Luxembourg meeting in March 1994. Ransel also will report whether one of the bulletin board services of electronic mail would open a special channel for history journal

editors to communicate among each other.

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