

From the president's desk

Dear colleagues,

the local committee of the 2003 ESEH conference in Prague is busy with preparations for an exiting scientific program and for a warm personal welcome to all participants. We are looking forward to the conference and hope that you will be able to join us there.

At this time I would like to remind you that for ESEH members, the General Assembly of our Society is an important part of the program for Prague. Even if we are now all connected via e-mail, the opportunity to speak directly to each other remains very important.

Thanks to the effort of Vice-President Christian Pfister, the final version of our statutes is currently under review by the board and we will hopefully be able to register the society this fall. The legal procedures have taken unduly long, but as the European Union, despite its efforts to create a transnational research space, does not allow for international scholarly societies, we have had some obstacles to overcome. The financial support by the Breuninger Foundation for the legal assistance we require in this matter is gratefully acknowledged.

At the Prague meeting, we will hold elections for all board members. The executive board is elected for terms of two years, the regional representatives serve four year terms. While we have already held contested elections for the executive board at the St. Andrews conference in 1999, this will be the first time Regional Representatives are elected by the general assembly. Likewise we will for the first time elect a financial control committee.

While the role of the latter is most probably clear from the name, regional representatives are a specialty of ESEH. Let me therefore review what the statutes have to say about their role:

“RR’s serve as information platforms for Environmental History (EH) within their region. RR’s will forward information from the Association to the members in their region and to other individuals and institutions. They will also collect information on relevant activities in their region and forward it to the Association executive board. RR’s are elected by the General Assembly. They shall serve Four-year terms. Their number is not determined.”

This broad description leaves room for personal choices and priorities, which is what it should. Scholarly communities, their ways of communication and disseminating information are remarkably different in Europe. The state and status of EH differs widely, as does the size of the community a representative has to serve. Therefore, each of the regional representatives faces different challenges and opportunities. There is probably no ‘ideal’ way of being an ESEH regional representative, although some of our current representatives have been so very helpful and ingenious in furthering the goals of ESEH that I can hardly refrain from thinking of them as ideal ones.

This is volunteer’s work and the only benefit regional representatives have at this point is a travel reimbursement for attending the ESEH conferences – and even that depends on the vagaries of funding.

In the upcoming issues of *notepad* we will invite the current representatives to introduce themselves and share their vision of how to be a representative with you. This will be the first step in a process of discussion and development of this important part of our society.

ESEH is not very big in numbers, but we have many dedicated members who share their experience and ingenuity with us. I would like to invite you to contribute to the preparation of the election in September 2003 by sharing with the board what ideas and comments you might have. Please write either directly to me at verena.winiwarter@univie.ac.at, or send your thoughts to Sofia Akerberg, who will distribute them. As we collect ideas on the matter, we will open up a section of our homepage for material concerning the elections.

This brings me to my last point. Jan Oosthoek, secretary of ESEH since September, 2001, has always been very active and motivated to develop ESEH. His efforts in incorporating European material into the FHS bibliographic database are already bearing some fruit. His newest project is the re-development of our website, which will have been launched at the time you read these lines. I have followed the tedious process of redesigning and further developing the site, and I know just how much work Jan put into this. On behalf of all our members, who rely on the internet for being connected with ESEH, I would like to express my gratitude to Jan. If we were at a meeting, standing ovations would be appropriate for what he's done....

With my best wishes for the coming months, and looking forward to exchanges about the regional representatives and all other ESEH matters of concern to you,

Yours,

Verena Winiwarter

President

Launch redeveloped website

Since its launch in 1999 the ESEH website has developed into the major platform of communication between the society, its members and the wider academic community. The aim of the site is threefold and its objectives include: to present information about the society and its activities, to disseminate the latest news and information relevant to researchers in the field of environmental history and the provision of resources such as a bibliography, reviews and links to other websites. During the three years of its existence the site has proven its value and the number of visitors is ever rising which reflects the growth of environmental history in Europe. Another indication of the growth of the field is the continuing expansion of the site. Over time so many new features were added to the site that a new, more user friendly navigation system became desirable to make the website more accessible. In addition the site suffered from the fact that the different pages had no consistent layout, which made it difficult to refresh or add new content. Finally, the old site started to suffer from the fact that Internet technology develops so fast that its code caused problems in the latest browser versions. It was for these reasons that the ESEH site was completely redeveloped during the summer months.

The most visible changes of the website are the navigation bar and the standardisation of page layout throughout the site. The navigation system has been improved by implementing a dynamic menu at the top of every page. If the cursor is moved over a menu item a dropdown menu appears with active links. Not visible are the changes to make the site compatible with IE 5+, Netscape 6+ and Mozilla. Further information about compatibility can be found on the front page of the ESEH web site. We further added or updated the following features:

- Site map

- A new regional representative page
- The event archive is now organised by year
- Publishers. Publishing houses with environmental history in their programme
- Forthcoming & new publications
- Reviews
- Notepad newsletters
- Membership directory
- Information and registration forms ESEH meeting 2003
- Instructions bibliographical project, including new title submission form
- New links were added to the link page

The new site was launched in late September and can be visited at our well know address www.esch.org. We appreciate to receive your comments about the website and suggestions for its further development. Please write to Jan Oosthoek at k.j.w.oosthoek@phil.uni-goettingen.de.

European Society for Environmental History

Executive Board:

President: Verena Winiwarter, *University of Vienna*

Vice-President: Christian Pfister, *University of Bern*

Vice-President: Sverker Sörlin, *University of Umeå*

Secretary: Jan Oosthoek, *Georg-August University Göttingen*

Treasurer: Ulrich Koppitz, *University of Düsseldorf*

Ex officio:

Leos Jelecek, *Charles University, Prague*

Regional Representatives:

Benelux, Myriam Daru, The Netherlands

British Isles, Fiona Watson, Scotland, UK

Czechia & Slovakia, Leos Jelecek, Czechia

Francophone Countries, Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, France

Germanophone Countries Andreas Dix, Germany

Hungary, Lajos Racz, Hungary

Iberian Peninsula, Mariano Barriendos, Spain

Italy, Marco Armiero, Italy

Nordic Countries, Eva Jakobsson, Norway

Russia & additional Eastern European Countries, Alexei Karimov, Russia

ESEH aims to promote environmental history in Europe, by encouraging and supporting research, teaching and publications in the field. The ESEH maintains their web site at <www.esch.org>.

Items for the next Notepad should be sent by 2 January, 2003 to the address shown below.

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