Written by ILM
Monday, 09 October 2006 07:49 - Last Updated Tuesday, 12 February 2008 22:26

WWW-VL History Project's Description

Why and how this page was made of elements taken to the WWW VL Central catalogue?

The WWW-VL -the World Wide Web Virtual Library- is the oldest catalog of the web, started by Tim Berners-Lee, ([*](#)) the creator of html and of the web itself. Unlike commercial catalogs, it consists of a loose confederation of volunteers who compile indexes of key links for the particular fields in which they are expert. Though it is not the largest or most visible index of the web, WWW-VL is widely recognised, particularly by teachers and scholars, as offering the highest-quality web guides to many particular fields.

The central affairs of WWW-VL are now co-ordinated by an elected council, which took office in January 2000. Major decisions, including a set of bylaws are decided by the membership at large. With a solid democratic foundation in place, the WWW-VL expects to greatly increase the breadth of the Project by recruiting and developing new sites, and to increase the quality of sites with technical and organisational support for all members.

Copyrights belonging to the Main WWW-VL

The title "WWW Virtual Library" and the book-and-globe logo

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VL mailing lists

Old WWW-VL Lists Archives

A plain text, continuously updated archive of both mailing lists was established online by Bernard Ibrahim at [http://cuisung.unige.ch/vl/ScanListArch.html] . The archive is protected: use the username vl and the password Democracy. A hypermail archive of the WWW-VL Announcement and Discussion lists was maintained at Stanford, but these lists are no longer current. We now offer all WWW-VL maintainers the access to the HISTOPS-L list of discussion for the WWW-VL History Central catalogue. Please inform
 Lynn H.Nelson
of your wish to participate to the list.

What is involved in joining the History Virtual Library?

The key quality WWW-VL expects from its members is that they will maintain indexes that are or aim to be the definitive reference guide to online resources in a particular area. Can you create a truly useful guide to your area of expertise and can you maintain that guide, with input from readers and others? That is the purpose of WWW-VL History Network and the reason for its existence. Since it is a group project, all maintainers are expected to stay in touch with their colleagues via the organization's mailing lists and participate, at least to some extent, in the overall project by voting in elections, giving opinions, and linking their own indexes to other, relevant WWW-VL sites.

After considerable and continued discussion, the members of WWW-VL have also set some technical requirements on the content and layout of VL pages. The purpose of these requirements is not to produce uniformity, but to ensure basic quality standards and a clear identification of each WWW-VL site. The WWW-VL History Network adhere to these standards , as well as having developed additional standards of its own to facilitate the integration and cross-referencing of individual indexes.

What are the Benefits of being part of the WWW-VL History ?

Everyone has their own reasons, but some of the benefits that members have reported include:

1. Expertise - researching sites for your own index is an excellent way of learning about resources available through the web and of achieving a knowledge of internet reference materials (even for a Ph.D. thesis if you are researcher at the EUI).

2. Professional advancement - WWW-VL sites are renowned for often being the best online resources in particular areas. Being the WWW-VL maintainer in a specific area can enhance one's personal profile and can lead to useful opportunities and interactions with some of the leading members in a field. Some WWW-VL sections are maintained by organisations rather than individuals -- the EUI organization of the European History project is in between a personal and an institutional project- and, at the EUI, these indexes and their maintainers are also gaining great positive exposure from their WWW-VL affiliation. Affiliating with the WWW-VL is also a powerful stamp of approval and generator of web traffic, as can be seen from the statistics available through the Shynistat society.

3. Personal satisfaction - the web is a wild and disorganised place. Creating and maintaining a high quality guide to specific part of the web can be a very satisfying accomplishment and a way of helping users who will rely on the WWW-VL guides and on the different indexes belonging to the WWW-VL European History. We have all benefitted from the net, and maintaining a VL site is an excellent way to take advantage of our own expertise to give back to the net and help others in our field also inside our own EUI institution. A WWW-VL maintainer empowers many others to accomplish more and to reach a higher standard of competency. We strive both to embody ecellence in ourselves and to promote that same excellence in others.

4. Technical Assistance - The WWW-VL History Network is a community of like-minded individuals who provide each other with encouragement, support and technical assistance. The group has developed a number of facilities to promote and enhance their common effort. Such services include a search engine [http://vlib.iue.it/history/index.html#vlsearch].

5. Personal Responsibility - We all benefit from our profession and from the public who support us and our work. We should not allow ourselves to sink to the level of being content with simply doing the work for which we are paid or seeking only those pursuits that promise personal rewards or advancement. As citizens of a free society, we have the obligation of looking to the welfare of our fellows. In this new age of digital information, the work of the WWW-VL is one way of meeting this obligation.

6. Corporate and institutional behaviour - Becoming member of the History Project is important to get in touch with other maintainers, discuss and work together the aims and strategies of the project, integrate solutions and work and precise some aspects regarding the new internet technologies in relation with History, European history and EUI's Ph.D. specific topics.

In conclusion, there are a few technical requirements to maintaining a WWW-VL index, a Virtual Library. It is far more important is that one share the overall goals of the other members of the group: to provide clear, current, easy-to-use and unbiased guides to the most important online sources in a field. If somebody believes that making life easier for web users is a worthwhile activity, he should pick his area and join the project. Maintaining a WWW-VL index is a good way of obtaining recognition in a field, of keeping abreast with what resources have become available on the net, and an unique opportunity to being at the forefront of a new and pwerful form of public service.

The Content of WWW-VL History Indexes

Each index should contain an unbiased and relatively comprehensive guide to the most valuable sources in their historical field. The site should aim to be one of the best resources in its area. Maintainers should not merely duplicate the information offered by a colleague in those areas in which relevant pointers appear to overlap, but should attempt to complement and cross-reference the efforts of others when possible. One must remember that, although users may focus on one or another of the constituuent sites, the eventual goal of the WWW-VL is to appear as one great whole reflecting the best of the entire web. Finally, although WWW-VL indexes are largely collections of links to other sources rather than primary data, a brief introduction to the field and to the index contents for the inexperienced visitor is encouraged.

How to start a new VL for the History Central Catalogue ?

Step 1. Pick a field

A potential maintainer should look at an area he or she would like to manage, usually something he in which he or she works or has expertise . He or she should then check to see if the topic is already listed in the central catalog of the WWW-VL History Network. Those topics listed in bold face on the central catalogue already have maintainers, while the others are either WWW-VL History indexes waiting for a maintainer, or a pointer to another WWW-VL index that includes, but is not specifically devoted, to History. If the desired subject is already being handled by a maintainer, it is often possible that he or she would welcome the opportunity to develop some sort of collaboration such as the development of a neighboring field or making a section of the existing index a separate site. One must remember that it is a principal of WWW-VL that every

constituent site is independent and every maintainer is a full member of the organisation.

At the EUI, at the beginning of each academic year, an introduction to the History Project is done and new members are offered the opportunity of developing indexes linked to their Ph.D. topic, to specific national or chronological European history interests or to History as a whole. In October each year, all potential new maintainers will meet the maintainers of the History Central cataloge, Iñaki López Martín , The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies or Serg e Noiret , EUI Library. This is the place to discuss all developments to indexes. If somebody is willing to collaborate but not able to create HTML pages, an individual HTML course will be made in order to teach HTML basics.

Step 2. Get in touch

Once one has chosen a history subject, developed an index, he should register the new history index with the maintainers of the History Central catalogue, Serge Noiret . Once a potential maintainer receives a reply from the WWW-VL central catalofue, he can then inform Serge Noiret serge.noiret@i ue.it who will then announce the new index in the HISTOPS-L, [histops-l@raven.cc.ku.edu] the discussion list for WWW-VL History Network maintainers. There is then a period of two weeks in which other members may offer criticisms and suggestions.

Step 3: Prototype

A new VL maintainer then starts exploring the web and putting together a prototype page or set of pages in his area. He ensures that his prototypes meets the technical requirements for the WWW-VL History Network (see "standards"). When he thinks he has got a reasonable starting point and he's happy with his new index, he should send the URL of the new site to the History Central Catalog maintainers for initial review. They will load the new History index on to the EUI server or link to the new remote URL from the History Central catalogue .

Step 4: Trial membership

Once accepted as an History maintainer, the site is added to the catalog on a trial basis for one month during which other members are free to comment on the site's suitability. If no major unresolved problems arise, the site automatically becomes a full member after one month.

Step 5: Keep it going

The web changes quickly. A WWW-VL maintainer should plan on spending some time every month or so on checking links from his pages, responding to user feedback and exploring to find new resources to add to your site. A VL member should also keep involved with his fellow members via the mailing lists HISTOPS-L, the mailing list for WWW-VL History Network maintainers, and the other WWW-VL lists, and participate in the direction of the overall project where he can. Once a site is created, an hour or two per week is usually sufficient to keep up management of a small-to-moderate sized site.

The World-Wide Web Virtual Library's History Central Catalogue:

The World-Wide Web Virtual Library's History Central Catalogue: a short history by Lynn H.Nelson, former maintainer at the University of Kansa/Lawrence of the History Catalogue.

(Other information by Lynn H.Nelson are available at: [http://www.racine.ra.it/oriani/memoriaeri cerca/nelson-online.htm] : Before the Web: the early development of History on-line, published in Italian as Prima del Web: gli sviluppi della storia on line, Memoria e Ricerca, n. s., 3 (1999), pp.115-130.)

The World-Wide Web Virtual Library's History Index began operations in March of 1993 as HNSource, a lynx-based information server. In September of 1993, at the invitation of Arthur Secret, who had been assigned by W3.org (CERN in Geneva), the task of developing a World-Wide Web index, [HTTP functions were added to HNSource, which then assumed the additional identity of The History Index, the first of the World-Wide Web Virtual Library's index sites. For several years, this site was maintained as a single megapage, with categories being thrown off as separate files only when it was necessary to keep the Index from becoming larger than 275

Kb. As the number of History-related sites increased, it became more difficult to maintain satisfactory coverage, to stay abreast of changed addresses and non-operative URLs, and to keep an optimum balance between broad coverage and an effective level of selectivity. The establishment of an integrated and international network of indexes appeared to be the best solution to these problems, and several maintainers of major gateways outside of WWW-VL joined to lay the foundations for such a network. After extensive discussion within this group, a set of common standards [http://vlib.iue.it/history/about/standards.html] (**) for network sites was established, and the group began bringing their individual sites into conformity with those standards.

WWW-VL History Organization

The central catalogue of the History Network is maintained by Serge Noiret and Inaki Lopez Martin
at the
European University Institute's Library
, Florence, Italy. The central catalogue provides direct links to network sites through its index and maintains a large number of files of pointers for countries, periods, and subject for which there is not yet a member site. Network sites will increasingly supplement their own indexes by linking to appropriate sections of other member sites.

The WWW-VL History Network and its member sites individually, are members of WWW-VL, and each maintainer of a network site is a virtual librarian of WWW-VL. All maintainers are therefore equal, and decisions are reached through discussion and mutual agreement, although this does not preclude the possibility that the members may choose a more formal organization in the future. The WWW-VL History Network intends to decide, on the basis of what was already said above, what sites and maintainers it will integrate and to endorse the acceptance by WWW-VL of those sites and individuals it invites to participate. Beyond that, the members of the Network hope to govern their own activities, but to adhere to the standards of WWW-VL and to participate in that organization as actively and as fully as possible.

Invitation to Volunteer Maintainers

In order to provide users with a useful facility, the History Network will have to grow, and it can do so only if new volunteers will join us, either bringing their pre-existing site, or creating a new one, to be integrated into the Network. The updated list of History Maintainers is available at [ht tp://vlib.iue.it/history/about/maintainers.html
]

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Fundings ?

Volunteers must realize, however, that the History Network is, and will remain, unfunded.

"Quality" contents of the WWW-VL History Project

Although the Network will be serving the general public, maintainers should attempt to establish standards of coverage and selectivity that will make their sites effective tools for practicing historians wishing to work on-line. In order to accomplish this, each maintainer should be familiar with the needs of scholars and instructors in the area for which he or she is providing the necessary pointers. It should also be noted in this regard that the work of the members of the History Network will be justified only in the numbers and quality of users accessing it, and that only uniform excellence will gain the Network the reputation necessary to draw such a body of users.

To develop this idea of monitoring the contents of the web, the Italian History Index decided to create a Board of Editors in order to offer a logo:

 -- like the one offered by the Spanish History Index --

to the Best Italian History sites located in Italy.

To be eligible for the list of scientifically-evaluated sites, all web-sites should be aware of the following criteria's and also be accessible totally and freely to a world-wide public without any kind of restriction:

-

A website must originate out of a sound research or editorial project

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Its focus must be on intensity, novelty and reliability of content, not primarily on technology.

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The use of IT devices must be clearly validated not per se, but on the basis of the creativity of the web site communication project.

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Its authors must be clearly indicated and credits acknowledged.

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Its objectives must be stated and its intended audience identified.

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Its content must be scientific-review proof

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It must offer free access to its materials and must neither have any commercial purpose nor rely heavily on advertising, even if a moderate amount of pertinent advertising for self-funding purpose may be admitted

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If publishing is its main objective, it must be stated whether it is peer reviewed and who the members are of its scientific board; if it publishes editions of classical texts, sound philological criteria must be recognizable (original language, completeness, paratextual apparatus)

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The site must be regularly updated and developed according to its proclaimed agenda

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Eligibility for the Best of the VL Italian History Index requires that a site is high quality in its entirety and not only in one single section.

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How to Recommend a Site for the History WWW-VL Central catalogue ?

If you wish to recommend a site, please note that recommended sites, following the History Network criteria's, [http://vlib.iue.it/history/about/standards.html] should be:

-

Relevant to the study of History and, more precisely, to European History

-

Accessible without charge to the general public

-

Present original material or provide a useful facility

-

Accurate, orderly, and competently presented following common templates.

Recommended sites should not be:

-

Restricted to members or to those paying a fee

-

Without original content

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-

Primarily commercial in presentation

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Characterized by poor grammar or spelling

-

Presentations of biased or distorted views

-

Advocating or supporting improper or illegal actions

(**) WWW-VL History: Common Standards and Guidelines

The following general standards for WWW-VL History Network sites have been reached by discussion among present site maintainers and may be modified by further discussion. The object of these standards is to establish some similarity among the various component sites, allow for greater integration over time, and to make the sites accessible to the widest number of users possible. No one is expected to abandon their present site to meet these recommended elements but, if his or her present site departs significantly from them, to set up a parallel series of compliant pages.

A. General Criteria for Pages

Project Description

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Lynx Compliant

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Maximum size of 50 Kb

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Non-frames, minimal graphics with a full description placed in the ALT=""> portion of the IMG SRC format

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White background and black text is preferred, but variations within 256 colors are acceptable

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Obtrusive advertisements, especially drop-downs and animations, should be avoided.

B. Elements of Main Pages

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Logos linked to the source for WWW-VL Main Catalogue, WWW-VL: History Main Catalogue, the logo for the site itself, followed by the text: WWW-VL: History Subject name of site.

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Text links to WWW-VL Main Catalogue and WWW-VL Main Catalogue.

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WWW-VL search script and WWW-VL search script for the History section

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Pointers to Nature and Purpose of the WWW-VL History Network, a form for reporting new or broken links to the Webmaster, and date of last link-check and update

-

Index

C. Organization

1. Indexes should follow the pattern of

-

REFERENCE

-

CHRONOLOGICAL

-

GEOGRAPHICAL

-

TOPICAL

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OTHER with appropriate subcategories.

2. Sub-categories should be developed in cooperation with other maintainers in so far as it practical.

D. Index Pages

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Each page, including the Main Page, should carry the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI) elements, with multilingual description and keywords.

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When keywords for individual links are appropriate, they also should be multilingual. Â Â

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