

EDITORIAL

The End of a Long Tradition

This issue is the first without the Bibliography, marking the end of a long tradition. Since its foundation in 1956, the *International Review of Social History* (IRSH) has featured an annotated Bibliography. The section is even older than IRSH, as it was already part of the *Bulletin of the International Institute of Social History*, published in ten volumes (1937–1940, 1950–1955) until it was incorporated in IRSH. In the *Bulletin's* first issue, the editor and founder of the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Professor Nicolaas Posthumus, announced that it would feature a “detailed list of international literature on social historical subjects, published in the last few months, with a short indication of its contents”, indicating that this was a relatively new format in social history journals: “On such an extensive scale this work is not yet being undertaken anywhere.” He called upon publishers and authors to help the IISH in “this difficult task” by sending in review copies.

The IRSH Bibliography has been a steady source of reliable information on newly published books in the broad field of social history ever since. The choice of topic areas and the way it was organized by theme and by geography evolved over the seventy-five years of its existence, but it remained based on a division between general issues and continents and countries. With the evolution of the IISH into a leading archive and research institute for labour history and the social history of labour in the broadest sense, the topic areas covered by the Bibliography also expanded. More regions of the world and new topic areas were included, reflecting the developments in our field. What has stayed largely the same is the basic, neutral information on the contents of the books included, mostly within a 120 word limit.

The Bibliography thus was able to provide a valuable source of information for historians and other researchers working on social and labour history, and also for librarians who had to decide which books to include in their collections. In a world that still relied on print and postal services well into the 1990s, this information quickly became an essential service for anyone working in the field, and has remained so for a long time. A service that could only be provided and upheld thanks to the willingness of publishers and authors around the world to send review copies to Amsterdam. This steady stream of books has also helped to build IISH's well-equipped library collection in the field of social history, an essential research tool for the many visitors to the institute.

In consultation and agreement with the IISH management, the IRSH editors have decided to end the IRSH Bibliography as of this issue. A number of considerations have led to this step. Scholarly information and communication, including academic book publishing, started to change drastically when the digital and online revolution

took off firmly in the 2000s. Information on books published, including bibliographical information, became increasingly available online, provided by publishers and a myriad of online services. At the same time, the digitization and the concomitant rise of people working in academia worldwide has led to a substantial growth in the number of academic books published, certainly within the field of social and labour history. Furthermore, the globalization of the field, which led to the emergence of global labour history as a new research field, has broadened the geographical and thematic scope of both our field and our journal, leading to further challenges for our staff with respect to monitoring and annotating relevant new book titles from a diverse and ever-growing pool. For a Bibliography publishing c.100 book annotations per issue, three times a year, these developments have slowly but steadily eroded its reach and coverage.

Additionally, the development of open access publishing has also influenced *IRSH*. The IISH and *IRSH* are engaged in promoting open scholarship, including open access, insofar as it is financially possible and sustainable, while explicitly maintaining optimal inclusivity for authors and readers alike. To this end, we are lucky to be able to work together with our publisher, Cambridge University Press, in finding a sustainable model for publishing *IRSH*. In consideration of this aim, alongside the aforementioned points, it was felt that the pages previously allocated to the Bibliography could be filled with articles eligible for open access, thereby increasing the “openness”, and, consequently, the accessibility of *IRSH*.

The end of the *IRSH* Bibliography marks the end of a tradition, but is certainly not the end of a valued information service. Together with colleagues from the IISH and beyond, our Publications Department is exploring the possibilities of creating a new online bibliographic information service that will fill the void that the *IRSH* Bibliography leaves behind. We will keep the *IRSH* readership, and the broader global community of social and labour historians, posted.

The Editorial Committee