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From: Pieter Dhondt <pieter.dhondt@helsinki.fi>
Subject: [Ylhist-verkosto] University jubilees and university history at the beginning of the
21st century
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Because of the postponement of the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen from November to the middle of December, we also need to postpone our own conference on "University jubilees and university history at the beginning of the 21st century" from the 10th and 11th of December to the 14th and 15th of January. We are sorry for the inconvenience.

University jubilees and university history at the beginning of the 21st century Copenhagen, 14th and 15th of January 2010

Researching and writing its history, has always been one of the tasks of the university. From the late Middle Ages, rectores magnifici and other professors delivered speeches on the occasion of anniversary celebrations and university jubilees, in which they presented the glorious past of their own institution. In the nineteenth century, these speeches were often replaced by thick and impressive commemorative volumes. Of course, this kind of research was concentrated on one university only, with little or no attention to other universities in the same country and even less to those in other countries. In general, such homage offered a celebratory, institutional history, in which less handsome episodes were often disregarded.

At the beginning of the 21st century, university jubilees still cause huge university history projects. This year, extensive volumes have been published to commemorate the foundation of the Helsinki University of Technology in 1908; the Forum for University History is established some years ago in order to prepare the 200th anniversary of the University of Oslo in 2011; the University of Iceland will celebrate its first centenary in 2011 with an extensive study of its own history. And apart from these projects, various Northern European universities have set up in recent years specific research projects to study their own history, e.g. Copenhagen, Turku and Uppsala.

Nordic universities are no exception in this regard: a "Kommission zur Erforschung der Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte" is established on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the University of Leipzig, the University of Cambridge is preparing a huge celebration of its 8th centenary in 2009 and also the 200th anniversary of the University of Berlin (historically closely connected to some of its Nordic counterparts) will not pass unnoticed in 2010. All of these university history projects face the challenge to

commemorate "the own glorious past" in a critical way and without losing out of sight the relationships with other institutions of higher education at home and abroad.

The aim of this historiographical workshop is especially to study these challenges and to find ways how to deal with them. Representatives of the various jubilee committees and project leaders of other research projects are invited to present the state of the art in university history at their institution, especially indicating the difficulties and limitations. Together they will provide the participants of an extensive overview of the ongoing research in university history in Northern Europe, with special attention for the existing lacks. The picture will be enlarged by three keynote lectures on the university jubilees, and university history projects connected to these celebrations, in Cambridge (Elizabeth Leedham-Green), Leipzig (Jonas Flöter) and Berlin (Peter-Thomas Walther).

The programme of the workshop will offer much time for discussion in order to indicate and initiate possibilities for future collaborative and comparative research. The main question is how to make use of the results obtained through the existing projects, which are however always concentrated on one particular university (mindful of the tradition of university history as jubilee history), to obtain new insights and perspectives in the history of Northern European universities in general, nation-building, the formation of elites and other related themes.

Paper proposals (500 words) should be submitted to the following e-mail address: pieter.dhondt@helsinki.fi before the 31st of August 2009. Presentations must be no longer than 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes discussion time. Travelling expenses and subsistence are covered by the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and the Social Sciences (NOS-HS), although we encourage the participants to have their costs paid by their own institution if possible.

LIT Verlag - Berlin is interested to publish the conference papers and conference results. The conclusions of the workshop will be brought together by Pieter Dhondt and Laura Kolbe.

On behalf of the organising committee,
Pieter Dhondt

Organising committee: Pieter Dhondt (University of Helsinki / Université libre de Bruxelles), Robert Marc Friedman (University of Oslo), Guðmundur Hálfðánarson (University of Iceland) and Ejvind Slottved (University of Copenhagen).