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Background

The European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH) is the only reference index created and developed by European researchers both for their own purposes and in order to present their ongoing research achievements systematically to the rest of the world. It is also a unique project because, in the context of a world dominated by publication in English, it highlights the vast range of world-class research published by humanities researchers in the European languages.

In 2001, researchers and representatives of ESF Member Organisations (MOs) met in Budapest to discuss the problem of the low visibility of much European humanities research. It was agreed that this was largely caused by the inadequacy of existing bibliographic/bibliometric indices, which were all USA-based with a stress on the experimental and exact sciences and their methodologies and with a marked bias towards English-language publication. A new Reference Index was needed which would represent the full range of high-quality research published in Europe in the humanities and thus also serve as a tool of access to this research. ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities took responsibility for the development of the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH).

The first phase of the project was completed with the publication in late autumn 2007 and in early 2008 of fourteen ERIH Initial Lists, covering academic journals. The term 'initial lists' was chosen to indicate that this is the first stage in the establishment of categorised lists of quality research journals for the Humanities. From the beginning the project has been based on the assumption that further rounds of feedback and structured stakeholder involvement would lead to revisions and updates of the lists.

The ERIH Revised Lists 2011 published herewith are the result of the second round of the ERIH project, following the revisions of the ERIH Initial Lists.

The ERIH process

The ERIH peer-review process is necessarily complex and is kept under continual scrutiny. In the first phase of ERIH an initial list of core disciplines was identified and an Expert Panel set up for each of these to review 14,000 which had been proposed by the ESF Member Organisations. Following this first review, the draft initial lists were subject to consultation involving MOs, European-level and some national subject associations and a number of specialist research centres. With this feedback, the Panels established ERIH Initial Lists and, following validation by the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities and the HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) ERA NET Board, these were published in late autumn 2007 and in early 2008.

In the second round of ERIH (2008â 2011) a formal online feedback procedure was set up to enable researchers, editors, publishers and any other interested parties to provide information on subscriptions, the countries of origin of authors, acceptance and rejection percentages etc. (the feedback information form is available here). In their work, the Expert Panels, which met between November 2008 and January 2011, used information provided on over 3540 forms by editors and publishers as well as data from publicly available sources â journal websites, ULRICHâ s database, European Library Portal, etc.). To ensure fairness, a mechanism of systematic turnover of panel membership was also implemented in the second round.

The outcome is the ERIH Revised Lists 2011 which include many new journals as well as those updated from the ERIH Initial Lists. However it should be noted that the lists include only journals

that were submitted to ERIH before a closing date (list of closing dates available here) and were evaluated by the Panel. Therefore even in the Revised List 2011 some scholarly journals may be missing despite being of high quality and important to their research field.

Impact and challenges

ERIH is an extremely timely project which has contributed substantially to debates on impact and the appropriate evaluation mechanisms for humanities research within Europe as well as globally. The project has triggered lively debate among humanities researchers and funders on topics such as research evaluation, impact assessment, bibliometrics, and publication cultures in the humanities. (Information on relevant events is available : Relevance and Impact of the Humanities and Changing Publication Cultures in the Humanities).

This radical undertaking has inevitably involved a steep learning curve, and one valuable aspect has been the opportunity to learn in practice how the community of European humanities researchers can best benchmark its outputs across the vast variety of its methodologies, disciplines and languages. This multiplicity is, as is well known, both a richness and a challenge.

One key aim of the first phase of the project, which covers academic journals only, was to raise the threshold of editorial standards throughout Europe. Any journal accepted in the ERIH lists has had to meet stringent benchmark standards: peer review of submissions, an active international editorial board, timeliness of turnaround, openness to new authors, professional bibliographic information, etc (full definitions of criteria available here). It can already be observed that in order to seek inclusion in the ERIH lists more and more academic journals in the Humanities are adhering to these standards.

The pilot phase of ERIH revealed a number of challenges. One key issue was how to represent at an international level the high-quality work being published in nationally-based journals. ERIH is unique in having brought this question to the fore. In the three categories of journals into which the lists were divided, there is a category unique to ERIH, that of European publications with a particular (generally linguistically circumscribed) readership in Europe. In the publication of the ERIH Initial Lists, this category was listed third, following the two groups of international-category journals which comprise both European and non-European publications in English and major international languages, and the three categories were named â Aâ , â Bâ and â Câ . The difference between the categories, as has been stressed in numerous statements of the Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH) and ERIH Steering Committee, is not of quality but of kind. Yet the nomenclature resulted in the misunderstanding that the order was qualitatively hierarchical. In response to concerns voiced by the community of researchers, these three categories have been renamed, reordered and based on verbal descriptors, which indicate the crucial difference between the NATional journals and the INTernational journals:

NATional (NAT) European publications with a recognised scholarly significance among researchers in the respective research domains in a particular (mostly linguistically circumscribed) readership group in Europe; occasionally cited outside the publishing country, though their main target group is the domestic academic community.

INTernational (INT): both European and non-European publications with an internationally recognised scholarly significance among researchers in the respective research domains, and which are regularly cited worldwide.

International journals are themselves classified into two sub-categories based on a combination of two criteria: influence and scope:

INT1 Sub-Category: international publications with high visibility and

influence among researchers in the various research domains in different countries, regularly cited all over the world.

INT2 Sub-Category: international publications with significant visibility and influence in the various research domains in different countries.

W Category Journals: journals which published their first issue three years or less before the closing date for feedbacks for a given panelâ . Closing dates list is available here.

The new nomenclature is applied in ERIH Revised Lists 2011 and will remain from now on.

Another challenge was how to represent expertise in sub-disciplines within panels which cover very large and diverse fields, like History, Literature and Linguistics. In the future it may be advisable to consider dividing these large disciplines into smaller ones to achieve better expertise coverage.

ERIH aims to cover periodicals in most European languages. Again it is a challenge to ensure such coverage and in the future a mechanism of external consultations to achieve even better linguistic coverage may be introduced.

The Work of ERIH Panels

Over 140 researchers from 28 countries participated on a voluntary basis in the work of the ERIH panels in the two rounds. They did preparation work, participated in panel meetings and electronic discussions. Their effort was crucial to the success of the project. Special thanks go to the panel chairs who were responsible for leading the work of their panels and maintaining motivation throughout the complex process. List of ERIH Panel Experts is available here.

Future plans

The ERIH Revised Lists 2011 published herewith are part of a dynamic ongoing process, as the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities seeks to develop a framework that will not only enable the research excellence of the humanities in Europe to be better recognised internationally but also help national research systems in Europe to determine the international impact of the research activity carried out in various disciplines in their country. In order to achieve these aims, more dialogue with the research community is required through both its disciplinary and geographical representations (e.g. disciplinary associations on European and national levels).

The completion of the second phase of ERIH is an appropriate moment to take stock of what has been learned through this pilot project and to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses as well as on its future. At a meeting in March 2010 with the ESF Member Organisations discussion began on how to carry the work forward. This is the subject of a separate ongoing project. In this framework, exploratory work is being developed by the SCH and ESF office together with the ESF MOs to see how the ERIH lists can be linked to existing and proposed national databases; this would take advantage of and bring together work being done in the national contexts. Another major challenge for the next phase is how to include books (monographs and edited volumes).

ERIH belongs to European researchers and the bodies that fund and support them. In the face of the â impact measurementsâ that are being developed in all areas of academic life, it enables European academics in the humanities to highlight and develop their research in an autonomous, rigorous and flexible way and also better to understand and promote its national and international importance.

ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities
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The following lists are now published:*

  • Anthropology (inicijalna lista)
  • Gender Studies (inicijalna lista)
  • History (inicijalna lista)
  • Philosophy of science (inicijalna lista)
  • Linguistics (inicijalna lista)
  • Musicology (inicijalna lista)
  • Pedagogical and educational research (inicijalna lista)
  • Philosophy (inicijalna lista)
  • Psychology (inicijalna lista)

The following lists will be published later in 2011:

  • Archeology (inicijalna lista)
  • Art and Art history (inicijalna lista)
  • Literature (inicijalna lista)
  • Classical Studies (inicijalna lista)
  • Religious Studies (inicijalna lista)

News, Announcements & Press Releases
11. July 2011 12:25
European Science Foundation releases the 2011 Revised Lists of European Research Index for Humanities
Unique lists of European humanities journals are reviewed and updated

Strasbourg, 11 July 2011 - The European Science Foundation (ESF) has released 9 of 15 the European Research Index for Humanities (ERIH) Revised Lists 2011. Launched in 2002, the ERIH is a list of high-quality humanities journals intended to help identify research excellence in Europe and also serve as a tool of access to this research. The ERIH Revised List 2011 is an outcome of the second round of the ERIH project.

This second round (2008â 2011) has involved a formal online feedback procedure, set up to enable researchers, editors, publishers and any other interested parties to provide information on humanities journals. This information includes i.a. subscriptions, the authorsâ countries of origin, as well as submission acceptance and rejection percentages. Over 3,540 forms were completed and these were reviewed and evaluated by Expert Panels resulting in the production of the ERIH Revised Lists 2011.

The aim of ERIH is to help European academics in the field of humanities to highlight and develop their research in an autonomous, rigorous and flexible way. The index also enables researchers to better understand and promote the national and international importance of their research.

â One key aim of the first phase of the project, which covers academic journals only, was to raise the threshold of editorial standards throughout Europeâ Milena Å½ic Fuchs, Chair of the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities commented. â Any journal accepted in the ERIH lists has had to meet stringent benchmark standards and weâ ve noticed an increasing number of journals are adhering to these standards in order to seek inclusion in the ERIH lists.â

Michael Worton, Chair of the ERIH committee said: â ERIH is a unique project because, in the context of a world dominated by English speaking publications, it highlights the vast range of world-class research published by humanities researchers in other European languages.â

He continued: â The Revised List 2011 represents part of a dynamic ongoing process. ESF seeks to develop a framework that will not only promote the excellence of humanities research in Europe, but also help national research systems in Europe to determine the international impact of the research carried out in various disciplines in their country.â

ERIH is the only reference index created and developed by European researchers both for their own purposes and in order to present their ongoing research achievements systematically to the rest of the world. Exploratory work is being developed to see how the ERIH lists can be linked to existing and proposed national databases; in order to take advantage of and bring together work being done in the national contexts.

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Notes to editors
For more information, please contact â ¨Emma Knott, Kaizo
+44 (0) 207 3176 4715
Emma.knott[at]kaizo.net

About The European Science Foundation
The European Science Foundation coordinates collaboration in research, networking, and funding of international research programmes, as well as carrying out strategic and science policy activities at a European level. Its members are 78 national research funding and performing agencies, learned societies and academies in 30 countries. www.esf.org

Links:
    www.esf.org/research-areas/humanities/erih-european-reference-index-for-the-humanities.html

Category: Homepage, Press Releases 2011, Media Centre