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Scholarly societies have helped shape the academic conversation for centuries. Bringing scholars together for meetings and conferences, these societies are also responsible for publication of many scholarly journals. The *Scholarly Societies Project* (or the Project) is one of the largest free databases of these societies.

The Project has been collecting and providing information about scholarly societies since 1994. As of this writing, the database includes 4,113 scholarly societies from around the world, with links to 2,783 society web sites. There are strict criteria for inclusion in the database, notably a requirement that URLs must be in standard domain name format (inclusion is more lenient for societies formed before 1900). Societies can be from any field, any country, and use any language on their web site. Information provided for the societies includes society name, official abbreviations, web site URL (with URL stability indicator), languages, subject area, history of the society and the founding date, and geographic region.

The Project's search engine, powered by Cold Fusion, is complicated for a novice user, but allows the experienced searcher to perform complex searches over multiple fields. The search form includes links to controlled vocabulary for targeting searches. The database can be browsed by geographic region, language, subject areas, and chronological period. Unfortunately the information displayed on the browse screens varies between browsing options; most frustrating is the frequent lack of links to complete records.

Of particular interest is the Inventory of the Oldest Scholarly Societies (1323-1849), which includes history pages with source citations and catalogues of the societies' publications. It is fascinating to explore the nature of the earliest scholarly societies, to browse to see what societies were formed in a certain year or to explore the history of their publications.

One of the editor's current projects is identifying abbreviations used for the historical journal titles, a detail which often makes locating older literature very difficult. Initially taken from indexes of the journal literature, the editor is now locating abbreviations by searching the journal literature itself via JSTOR. In addition to the editorials explaining the process, there are also substantial bibliographies identifying the sources of the information. The inclusion of this hard-to-find information adds value and uniqueness to this Project.

Additional content provided by the Project includes meeting and conference announcements, lists of standards, essays on scholarly societies and scholarly communication, and news and editorials. One of the best features of the site is the extensive documentation. In addition to explaining how the database was constructed, there is a great deal of information included on why different choices were made and where the Project is heading. The transparency of the process and the voluminous references to additional resources make this a librarian's dream.

The Project makes no claims of comprehensiveness, instead providing comparisons with analogous print sources, such as *World Guide to Scientific Associations and Learned Societies* (Kirchner, 2006), as well as other internet resources. References to additional sources are also included on each subject page. The scope of the Project and these references to alternative sources make the Scholarly Societies Project a good starting point. Recommended especially for academic libraries as an excellent resource to support historical and discipline specific studies.

References:

Kirchner, F. (2006), *World Guide to Scientific Associations and Learned Societies*, 10th ed., Saur, München.
