

Call for papers
Annual Conference of the International Society for History Didactics
Wrocław (Poland), September 8-10, 2014

History and Edutainment

In today's world of education attention is paid not only to the transmission of knowledge and practice of skills but more and more also to attracting learners. Edutainment – a combination of education and entertainment – seems to answer these needs.

The entertainment market is rapidly developing, partly thanks to the technological progress that opens new fields of entertainment, partly because people nowadays have more free time to spend, and partly because it became a style of life. Today's American teens spend more than 7¹/₂ hours a day consuming media – watching TV, listening to music, surfing the Web, social networking, and playing video games, according to a 2010 study of 8- to 18-year-olds conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation. The developers have noticed education as a potential field of expanding this market.

Combining education, entertainment and history is at least as old as the works of Homer. A lot of today's edutainment applications also refer to history. Computer and board games try to reflect the realities of the past, film productions use fantastic technologies to reconstruct, in particular, its visual aspects. Historical museums do not limit their activities to presenting 'ordinary' exhibitions but organize a wide range of entertaining activities for their visitors, enthusiasts of history and professional companies sponsor archeological picnics and reconstruction of battles from the past, historical magazines and TV programs proliferate and struggle for their share in the market trying to attract the readers in multiple ways, history teachers striving for pupils' attention use entertaining materials and activities in their classrooms.

Academic research has noticed relations between history and edutainment. There is a big deficit, however, in many aspects of the research in this field, starting with the very definition of historical edutainment. Can any form of entertainment that refers to the past or uses historical costumes/artifacts be called historical EDUtainment? What are the criteria of inclusion? What are the relations between such concepts as historical edutainment and historical culture? Can edutainment cover the full range of functions ascribed to history education in the present? What are the advantages and dangers of using edutainment in history education?

There are enthusiasts of combining education and entertainment in the field of history education. But there are also sceptics. What arguments do both sides use? How are their opinions grounded in the research? What research needs to be done?

The goal of our conference is to investigate the phenomenon of historical edutainment inside and outside of school. We will accept papers based on theoretical, analytical or empirical research, related to edutainment in any historical period and in any country (or combination of countries).

The list of possible questions that can be addressed contains (but is not limited to) the following ones:

- 1) How can history edutainment – inside and outside of the classroom – be defined from the point of view of history didactics?
- 2) When history edutainment started, how did it develop, what forms and types we do face in the present?
- 3) Which kind of “history” is predominantly offered by history edutainment to learners? What are the significant features of the “history” presented by history edutainment? How does the commercial nature of many forms of edutainment influence the presentation and interpretation of historical topics?
- 4) How do teachers and learners use history edutainment? How does history edutainment influence the practice of teachers and the ways in which learners understand the past?
- 5) How effective is history edutainment in the classroom in terms of helping learners to acquire historical knowledge, skills and understanding, and in shaping learners’ attitudes to the past?
- 6) What criteria might be used to evaluate historical edutainment resources and practices?
- 7) What does best practice in history edutainment look like: experiences, opportunities, challenges?

We prefer proposals to be in English. There will be three conference languages (English, German, and French). If a lecture is held in German or French the content has to be made available to the audience in English during the lecture by translation (Powerpoint, transparencies, copies).

All proposals have to be submitted by using the application form provided on the ISHD website from 15th October 2013 to 31st of January, 2014.