Welcome

The League of Nations Essentials – Shedding New Light on the 1st Global Multilateral Organization
1. Dispel some misconceptions about the League, primarily: was it only a failure?

2. Learn of its innovations and key achievements;

3. Understand the differences and continuities between the League and the UN; and

4. Learn why the legacy of the League is still important 100 years after its establishment.
Speakers

Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert
Chief, Institutional Memory Section

Pierre-Etienne Bourneuf
Scientific Advisor, Institutional Memory Section

Colin Wells
Project Manager, Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives Project

Cristina Giordano
Librarian, Library Services Section
The League of Nations Essentials

Shedding New Light on the First Global Multilateral Organization
Introduction

"It is common nowadays to speak of the failure of the League.

Is it true that all our efforts for those 20 years have been thrown away?"

Lord Robert Cecil,
21st Assembly of the League of Nations,
9 April 1946
Was the League of Nations only a Failure?
The League: An Overview

• Generally associated with a failure
  • Collapse of the international system during the 1930s
  • Outbreak of WW2

• A new perception of the League’s experience?
  • Recent historiography is more nuanced
  • Rediscovery of the archives of the League of Nations
  • Focus on innovations
Political activities

• Maintaining peace
  • First system of collective security
  • New procedures for peaceful settlement of international disputes
    • Aland Islands (1920)
    • Greek-Bulgarian crisis (1925)
    • Leticia dispute (1934)
• Territorial administration
  • Saarland (1920-1935)
Evacuation of Spanish artworks (1939)
“Technical” activities

- Intellectual Cooperation
- Disarmament
- Economics and Finance
- Communication & Transit
- Mandates
- Suppression of dangerous drugs
- Social & Humanitarian issues
- Protection of refugees
- Commission for the Codification of International Law

[Permanent Court of International Justice]
Innovations & Key Achievements
General innovations

• Institutionalization of multilateralism
  • System of global cooperation
  • New principles
  • Regular meetings and international conferences

• New practices
  • Open diplomacy
  • New fields of international cooperation
  • Transnational networks
  • Civil society: New forms of participation

• International Secretariat
Achievements

• Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (1925)
• Slavery Convention (1926)
• Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism (1937)
• Convention for the unification of Road Signals (1931)
• Nansen Passport (1922)
FRANCE
Passeport Nansen
Certificat d'identité et de voyage

N° 53-AB 05063

Titulaire :
Nom :
Prénoms :

Ce certificat d'identité et de voyage comprend 18 pages non compris la couverture

Visas
Reproduire dans chaque visa le nom du détenteur du titre.
Health Organization

• Technical assistance
  • Exchange of information
  • Publication of reports
  • Training programmes
  • Fighting diseases
    • programmes and “investigations”

• Epidemiological information

• Biological standardization
  • Sera & biological products
Differences & Continuities Between the League and the United Nations
Differences

• Differences Covenant / UN Charter
  • Functions better defined under the UN Charter

• Membership

• Decisions
  • Non-binding (League)
  • Unanimity rule (League)

• War not forbidden (League)

• Context
Continuities

• The League & the UN
  • Same mission
  • Transfer of functions + staff

• Similar Structure (main organs)
  • ECOSOC inspired by Bruce Reform (1939)
  • Trusteeship Council

• Indirect/direct continuities:
  • Technical activities
    • Precursor of WHO & UNESCO
The League’s Legacy
The League Archives

- League of Nations archives transferred to the UN in 1946
- 3 linear kilometers of official documents, correspondence, conventions and treaties, photos, drawings, maps
- UNESCO Memory of the World
Access the archives

- **Archives Reading Room**
  (B.340 at the Library&Archives)

- **Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives Project**: 15 million pages currently being digitized by the Library&Archives (more information)
Learn more about the history of the League

- **Publications:**
  Global Search ([here](#))

- **Research guides** ([here](#))

- **Exhibitions/Museum** (B.140)
  - Guided Tours ([here](#))
  - Virtual Exhibitions:
    - "100 Years of multilateralism" - Panel Exhibition
    - "War and Peace" - Bodmer Foundation

- **Events/Podcasts**
We can help you!

- "Find a Quote":
  https://ask.unog.ch/quotes

- "Ask us": History Helpline

- Your daily work is documenting the history of the future!
  Records Management Advisory Services
Thank you for your attention

For more information:

• Visit the Library&Archives website: https://www.ungeneva.org/en/knowledge/library
• Visit the Centenary website: https://multilateralism100.unog.ch/
• Visit the LONTAD website: https://lontad-project.unog.ch/
Geneva, 100 years ago

Genève, où la Société des Nations est établie.
Q & A
Further Resources

https://libraryresources.unog.ch/commons
Thank you for joining!

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