

MoW Register Nominations - Key documents for Deaf communities: the Milan Congress, 1880.

1. Title / Titre

1.0 Title / Titre

Key documents for Deaf communities: the Milan Congress, 1880.

2. Summary / Résumé

2.0 Summary / Résumé

This documentary heritage consists of the records of an event of great significance for Deaf communities in many countries. The 2nd International Congress on Education of the Deaf (ICED) in Milan, Italy, in 1880, is seen as a watershed event in Deaf history. Among its resolutions was, 'That the Oral method ought to be preferred to that of signs for the education and instruction of the deaf and dumb.'

The resolutions of this Congress impacted negatively on deaf people's access to language and education in many countries, excluded deaf teachers from the profession, and contributed to the widespread devaluing of signed languages. The 'Milan Congress' has ongoing symbolic significance in international Deaf history.

This submission nominates three original reports of the Milan Congress, in English, French and Italian. All were published soon after the Congress, and are considered to be authentic records of the event. They reflect some of the emerging social and cultural movements of their time, such as the rise of social and linguistic Darwinism.

The resolutions taken at Milan were eventually rejected by ICED in 2010. That declaration, mounted in a book with over 5000 supporting signatures, constitutes the fourth item in this nomination.

3. Nominator contact details / Coordonnées de l'auteur

3.1 Name of nominator / Nom de l'auteur de la proposition

World Federation of the Deaf (WFD)

3.2 Relationship to the nominated material / Relation avec l'élément considéré du patrimoine documentaire

Owner of part of documentary heritage being nominated

3.3 Address / Adresse

P.O. Box 65, FIN-00401, Helsinki, FINLAND

3.4 Telephone / Téléphone

3.5 Email / Courriel

info@wfdeaf.org, susana.stiglich@wfdeaf.org

3.6 Co-nominator(s), if any / Co-auteur(s), le cas échéant

4. Declaration of Authority / Déclaration sur l'honneur

I certify that I have the authority to nominate the item, or items, described in this document to the Memory of the World Register.
Je certifie sur l'honneur, proposer le patrimoine documentaire décrit dans ce document au Registre international de la Mémoire du monde

Declaration of authority / Déclaration sur l'honneur

Yes

Full name / Nom et prénom

Dr. Joseph J. Murray

Date

11/4/2021

5. Legal information / Informations juridiques

5.1 Name of owner / Nom du propriétaire

Items 1-3: Gallaudet University Archives Item 4: World Federation of the Deaf

5.2 Address / Adresse

Gallaudet University Archives, Jordan Student Academic Center, Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Ave NE, Washington, D.C. 20002, USA

World Federation of the Deaf P.O. Box 65, FIN-00401, Helsinki, FINLAND

5.3 Telephone / Téléphone

(202) 250-2604 (videophone)

5.4 Email / Adresse électronique

archives@gallaudet.edu info@wfdeaf.org susana.stiglich@wfdeaf.org

5.5 Name and contact details of custodian / Nom et coordonnées du dépositaire

Same as for owners

5.6 Legal status / Statut juridique

Items 1-3: There is no formal legal arrangement in place for the Gallaudet University Archives' preservation of these items, however they are managed in full compliance with the Society of American Archivists' Archival and Special Collections Facilities: Guidelines for Archivists, Librarians, Architects, and Engineers, and their Guidelines for College and University Archives.

Item 4: There is no formal legal arrangement in place for WFD's preservation of this item, however it is managed in accordance with the values of The National Archives of Finland.

5.7 Copyright status / Droits d'auteur

Items 1-3 (all published in 1880-81) are now in the public domain.

Item 4 does not have any copyright status.

5.8 Accessibility / Accessibilité

Items 1-3 are held in secure storage, on behalf of the Gallaudet Archives, in the Washington Research Library Consortium Shared Collections Facility. They may be viewed in the Archives' reading rooms under supervision. They have been digitised using OCR technology and digital copies may be viewed online (see below).

Item 4 is held in secure storage in the offices of the World Federation of the Deaf. Interested people may view the book in the WFD office, but it cannot be borrowed.

Items may not be borrowed or removed from the Gallaudet Archives or from the WFD office, and may not be copied without authorisation.

Items 1-3 have been digitised and are available on the Internet Archive.

Item 1: <https://archive.org/details/b20419892/page/n3/mode/2up>

Item 2: https://archive.org/details/gu_congresmilanp00roch

Item 3: https://archive.org/details/gu_atticongressoi00inte/page/n3/mode/2up

Item 4 has not been digitised. There are no plans to digitise it at this time.

6. Identity and description of the documentary heritage / Identité et description de l'élément du patrimoine documentaire

6.1 Name and identification details / Nom et identification de l'élément proposé

Four key items of documentary heritage are being nominated, all relating to the 2nd International Congress on the Education of the Deaf, Milan, 1880, and its later rejection:

1. Report of the Proceedings of the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf, held at Milan, September 6th-11th, 1880; Taken from the English official minutes, read by A. A. Kinsey. With an appendix, containing papers written for the Congress members of the "Society for Training Teachers of the Deaf: and diffusion of the 'German' System in the United Kingdom." London: W. H. Allen & Co, 1880. [Held in Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives, Washington, DC]
2. Ernest La Rochelle, Le Congrès de Milan pour l'Amélioration du Sort des Sourds-Muets: Rapport adressé à M. Eugène Pereire. Paris: Chez M. Saint-Jorre, October 1880. [Held in Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives, Washington, DC]
3. Atti del Congresso Internazionale. Tenuto in Milano del 6 all' 11 de Settembre 1880, Pel Miglioramento della Sorte dei Sordomuti.

Roma: Tipografia Eredi Botta, 1881. [Held in Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives, Washington, DC]
4. Legacy. A book comprising an original signed copy of the Statement rejecting the Milan 1880 resolutions - A New Era: Deaf Participation and Collaboration, with 5205 supporting signatures of deaf people and their supporters from around the world. 2010. [Held in the World Federation of the Deaf headquarters, Helsinki]

6.2 Type of document/ Type de document

All four items are books.

6.3 Catalogue or registration details / Détails du catalogue ou de l'inscription

Three of these items are from the same archive (Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives in Washington DC). The fourth item is held separately. Descriptions and catalogue entries for each item are as follows:

Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives, Washington, DC. Catalog link: https://wrlc-gal.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GAL/uesicn/alma9930056143604104

Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives, Washington, D.C. Catalog link: <http://catalog.wrlc.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3008220>

Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives, Washington, D.C. Catalog link: <http://catalog.wrlc.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3008467>

Item 4 is a faux-leather (polyurethane)-bound book, 30 cm x 20 cm, with 127 pages. It is held in the Helsinki headquarters of the World Federation of the Deaf, and does not have a catalog entry or registration number.

6.4 Visual documentation (if available and appropriate) / Documentation visuelle le cas échéant (si disponible et approprié)

See attached photographs of each item. The images for Items 1-3 (the copies of the Milan Reports) are all from the digitized versions on The Internet Archive. All three are listed with a Creative Commons license, which states "This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighboring rights".

6.5 History/Provenance / Histoire/Provenance

1. Item 1 (Kinsey) has a stamp indicating that it was originally owned by the National Bureau for Promoting the General Welfare of the Deaf, Gwydir Chambers, High Holborn, London WC. It also has a 1950s-era Gallaudet library bookplate, so it is likely to have been obtained by the library around that time.

2. Item 2 (Rochelle) has no identifying marks, and there are no other details about its provenance.

3. Item 3 (Italian report) has a stamp from the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb library, which suggests it was originally owned by them and later transferred to the Gallaudet Library (probably for historical preservation). However, there is no information about when the transfer was made.

4. The 'Legacy' book was created by the organisers of the 21st International Congress on Education of the Deaf in Vancouver, Canada, in July 2010. It was presented to the World Federation of the Deaf President at the end of that conference.

6.6 Bibliography / Bibliographie

Bauman, H.-D. L. & Murray, J.J. (Eds.). (2014). Deaf gain: Raising the stakes for human diversity. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Baynton, D. (1996). Forbidden signs: American culture and the campaign against sign language. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brill, R. G. (1984). International congresses on education of the deaf: An analytical history 1878-1980. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

De Meulder, M. & Murray, J. J. (2017). Buttering their bread on both sides? The recognition of sign languages and the aspirations of deaf communities. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 41(2), 136-158.

De Meulder, M. Krausnecker, V. Turner, G. & Conama, J. B. (2019). Sign language communities. In G. Hogan-Brun & B. O'Rourke (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of minority languages and communities* (pp. 207-231). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fischer, R. & Lane, H. (Eds.). (1993). Looking back: A reader on the history of Deaf communities and their sign languages. Hamburg: Signum.

Gallaudet, E. M. (1881). The Milan Convention. *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb*, 26(1), 1-16.

Gertz, G. & Boudreault, P. (2016) *The Sage deaf studies encyclopedia*, Vols. 1-3. London: Sage Publications.

Humphries, T., Kushalnagar, P., Mathur, G., Napoli, D. J., Padden, C., Rathmann, C. & Smith, S. R. (2012). Language acquisition for deaf children: Reducing the harms of zero tolerance to the use of alternative approaches. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 9(16), 1-9.

Knooks, H., Brons, M. & Marsharc, M. (Eds.). (2019). Deaf education beyond the western world: Context, challenges and prospects. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190880514.001.0001>

Lane, H. (1984b). When the mind hears: A history of the deaf. New York: Random House.

Leigh, G. & Marschark, M. (2016). Recognizing diversity in deaf education: From Paris to Athens with a diversion to Milan. In M. Marschark, V. Lampropoulou & E. K. Skordilis (Eds.), Diversity in deaf education. New York: Oxford University Press.

Moores, D. (2010). The history of language and communication issues in deaf education. In M. Marschark & P. E. Spencer, (Eds.), The Oxford handbook of deaf studies, language and education. Vol. 2, (pp. 17-30). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moores, D. F. (Ed.). (2011). Partners in education: Issues and trends from the 21st International Congress on the Education of the Deaf. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University press.

Murray, J. J. & Greenwald, B. H. (2015). How the past informs the present: Intersections of deaf history with deaf studies. In Proceedings of 2010 Deaf Studies Today! Conference. Utah Valley University.

Payne, A. H. (1918). King silence: A story. London: Jarrolds Publishers.

Quartararo, A. T. (2008). Deaf identity and social images in nineteenth-century France. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Ree, J. (1999). I see a voice: A philosophical history of language, deafness and the senses. London: HarperCollins.

Sinclair, W. (2010). We did it! The rejection of Milan resolutions. Deaf History International Newsletter, Nos 42-43, 6-12.

Sturley, N. (2006). Milan. Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing.

Van Cleve, J.V. & Crouch, B. (1989). A place of their own: Creating the deaf community in America. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

6.7 Referees

1. Jim McCarthy
Master of Library and Information Science
jim.mccarthy@gallaudet.edu

2. Professor Jordan Eickman
PhD, Professor of Deaf Studies;
Secretary of Deaf History International
jordan.eickman@csun.edu

3. Dr Joseph McLaughlin
Ed.D, Adjunct Professor, University of British Columbia;
Former Co-chair, International Committee, International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED)
Joe5mclaughlin@gmail.com

7. Assessment against the selection criteria / Evaluation des critères de sélection

7.1 Primary criteria - significance value to the world. Comment on one or more of the following significance criteria / Critères principaux - valeur d'importance mondiale. Commentez sur un ou plusieurs des critères d'importance suivants

Not all the criteria will apply to your documentary heritage. Choose only those criteria that are relevant to your nomination.

Tous les critères ne s'appliqueront pas à votre patrimoine documentaire. Choisissez uniquement les critères pertinents pour votre candidature.

7.1.1 Historic significance / Signification historique

Yes, the documentary heritage has historic significance.

(a) Items 1-3, the reports from the 2nd ICED Milan Congress in 1880, reflect the significant rise in social and linguistic Darwinism during the late 19th century, which privileged certain languages and forms of communication over others, and believed that 'inferior' languages would die out.

The Congress chair, Abba Tarra, asked rhetorically, 'Who would dare say that these disconnected and crude signs that mechanically reproduce objects and actions are the elements of a language?' He and others claimed that speech was necessary for religious salvation. (cited in Lane, 1984, p. 393)

The use of speech rather than signing was claimed to confer unrealistic health benefits. E. Symes Thompson, who gave a paper 'On the Health of Deaf-Mutes' at Milan, reported an informant asserting that by using the oral system, deaf people 'are saved from premature death, brought on through insufficient action of the lungs.' Another informant claimed that 'the articulated language ... expands the chest, brightens the intellect, and the countenances of those who speak are much nobler than of those who express themselves only by signs.' (Item 1: Kinsey, p. 136)

(b) The reports from the Milan Congress in 1880 encapsulate a turning point in history for Deaf communities and their social status, and for education and language policy for deaf people.

(c) The reports of the Milan Congress feature leading personalities in Deaf history, notably Edward Miner Gallaudet, who established the current Gallaudet University in Washington DC, the world's only liberal arts university for deaf people.

(d) Item 4 of the documentary heritage, the 'New Era' statement from the 2010 ICED in Vancouver rejecting the Milan resolutions, is an example of late 20th and early 21st century movements to seek national apologies or institutional responses to systemic and historical injustices (e.g. the South African government's apology for apartheid in 1992, the Australian government's apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, and the United States Government's apology for slavery in 2008).

7.1.2 Form and style / Forme et style

N/A (This documentary heritage is not unusual or distinctive in form or style).

7.1.3 Social, community or spiritual significance / Importance sociale, spirituelle ou communautaire

The documentary heritage of the Milan Congress has great social significance for Deaf communities around the world. Even for those in countries not directly affected by the Milan resolutions, they hold a symbolic and explanatory power for the language deprivation experienced by many deaf children and for the precarious status of signed languages in many countries.

Lane (1984) considered that 'the meeting at Milan was the single most critical event in driving the languages of the deaf beneath the surface; it is the single most important cause – more important than hearing loss – of the limited educational achievement of today's deaf men and women' (p. 387). Although this claim would be seen as an overstatement by many, it is indicative of the causative power that is often attributed to the Milan Congress in Deaf cultures.

The social significance of Milan is referenced in artworks created by deaf people. Examples include the American deaf painter Mary Thornley, who is known for her painting 'Milan, Italy 1880' which depicts a group of assassins taking aim at the letters ASL (American Sign Language). British author Nick Sturley created a science fiction novel called simply Milan (2007), in which a mysterious force targets deaf people and changes them into hearing people, threatening the survival of sign language. These and other works reveal the symbolic power of the Milan Congress in deaf people lives.

7.2 Comparative criteria. Comment on one or more of the following comparative criteria / Critères comparatifs. Commentez sur un ou plusieurs des critères comparatifs suivants :

7.2.1 Comparative criteria: Rarity / Critères comparatifs: Rareté

Copies of Item 1 (Kinsey) are also held in the British Library and the Wellcome Library in the UK, and a number of other European libraries.

Items 2-3 are rare, and no details of other holdings have been found.

Item 4 is unique. The 'New Era' statement is available on the internet, but the book Legacy, which includes a copy of the 'New Era' statement signed by representatives of key organizations, and over 5,000 signatures from deaf people and their supporters around the world, does not exist anywhere else.

7.2.2 Integrity, completeness, condition / Intégrité, complétude, état

All items of the documentary heritage are complete, with no missing sections.
All are in very good condition for their age.

7.3 Statement of significance / Déclaration d'importance

This documentary heritage has historic significance. For Deaf communities, it records two turning points in the history of their education and social status – (1) the 2nd ICED Congress in Milan, 1880, with its resolutions in favour of the Pure Oral approach rather than the use of signed languages in education; and (2) the rejection of the Milan resolutions by the 23rd ICED Congress in Vancouver, 2010.

The events of these two Congresses reflected the social and cultural developments of their respective eras. The 1880 Congress in Milan took place against a backdrop of rising social and linguistic Darwinism, and illustrates how such ideologies were expressed within particular communities and professions. The 2010 Congress in Vancouver occurred at a time when nations and institutions faced demands to acknowledge past injustices and formally reject them, and provides an example of one such institutional rejection of historic decisions.

The 1880 ICED Congress in Milan impacted on world history and culture in a number of ways. It was the first international articulation

of policy and ideological position in deaf education – which was one of the earliest forms of organized education for children with disabilities. It was an early example of how Darwin's theories affected the social status of those who were 'different' and perceived to be inferior.

This documentary heritage is important to the memory of the world. It provides authentic records of an event which serves as a reminder of the damage that can be done to vulnerable populations by those in power, and the processes by which they can be disempowered. At a time of increasing language loss, the records of the Milan Congress are a valuable part of the heritage of humanity.

8. Consultation with stakeholders / Consultation des partenaires

8.1 Details of consultation / Consultation des partenaires

Consultation was held with the former Co-Chair of the International Committee for ICED, who is also a member of the Deaf community of British Columbia, Canada. He provided information about the extensive consultation leading up to the 21st ICED Congress in Vancouver, Canada, in 2010. Lengthy negotiations were held between the Deaf community of British Columbia and the ICED Organising Committee, concerning the Deaf community's request for a formal apology for the Milan resolutions (see Sindair, 2010). These discussions generated an international momentum among deaf people, reflecting the historic and ongoing pain and anger expressed by Deaf communities in many parts of the world about the Milan Congress resolutions. Recognition of the original documentary heritage will be highly valued by these communities.

Deaf History International (DHI), an organization for those interested in the study, preservation and dissemination of deaf people's history, was also consulted. DHI membership reflects both those who research the documentary heritage of deaf people's lives around the world, and those who read, study and teach it. DHI supported the nomination, emphasizing not only the real and symbolic significance of the Milan conference in Deaf history, but the importance of grounding understanding of its impacts in the original documentary heritage. They welcomed the identification of original reports of the 2nd ICED congress in three languages, and the nomination of these items to the UNESCO International Memory of the World Register.

Consultation was held with archivists at the Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives, the owner of Items 1-3 on this nomination. They provided information on the provenance and condition of the items and confirmed that the Archives supported their nomination to the UNESCO International Memory of the World Register.

9. Risk assessment / Evaluation des risques

9.1 Nature and scope of threats / Evaluation des risques

The documentary heritage is not currently at risk or under threat.

Items 1-3 are securely stored in the Washington Research Library Consortium Shared Collections Facility, in archivally appropriate housing and in a temperature and humidity-controlled environment. The bound copies are still in good condition and access is supervised appropriately. They have been digitized using OCR technologies. Full-time archival staff monitor them and provide controlled access.

Item 4 is securely stored in the WFD office; however, a digital copy has not been made.

10. Preservation and access management plan / Plan de preservation et d'accessibilité

10.1 Existing plans or proposed conservation, storage and access strategies / Plans existants ou stratégies de conservation, de stockage et d'accès proposées

Items 1-3: Gallaudet University Deaf Collections and Archives does not have a specific management plan for these items. They are stored in acid-free envelopes in a temperature- and humidity-controlled vault, with access limited by Archives staff.

Item 4: WFD does not have a specific management plan for this item. It is required to be retained in the WFD office at all times.

11. Additional information / Informations complémentaires

11.1 Additional information / Informations complémentaires

It will be beneficial for this documentary heritage to be acknowledged and made accessible for education and research, in the fields of Deaf studies, language policy and education for people with disability.

Deaf communities around the world have unique challenges in identifying and preserving their heritage. Their signed languages usually do not have written forms, and film or video records are rare before the mid to late 20th century. Educational disadvantage means that many have low levels of print literacy and difficulty accessing written records. A highly visible and accessible online repository of such key records will be of great value.

Due in part to its symbolic significance, there are some persistent myths about the Milan Congress. It is often claimed that the Congress 'banned sign languages around the world'. The Congress did not have the power to impose bans, and its influence did not extend all over the world. It is also claimed that historically important figures like Alexander Graham Bell were in attendance at the Congress – although he was influential in the spread of oral approaches to education and the rejection of sign language, he did not attend the

Milan Congress. The availability of authentic records from this event will help to ensure that historical interpretation is accurate and relevant.

In 2025 the 24th ICED Congress will return to Italy (Rome) for the first time since 1880. This will be an auspicious time to acknowledge and promote the documentary heritage of the 2nd ICED Congress in Milan, and the 21st ICED Congress in Vancouver, and their far-reaching impacts.

Submission / Soumission

Submit to UNESCO

Yes

12. Checklist / Liste de contrôle

Summary completed / Résumé terminé (section 2)

Yes

Nomination and contact details completed / Nomination et coordonnées complétées (section 3)

Yes

Declaration of Authority signed and dated / Déclaration sur l'honneur signée et datée (section 4)

Yes

If this is a joint nomination, section 4 is appropriately modified, and all Declarations of Authority obtained / S'il s'agit d'une proposition d'inscription conjointe, la section 4 est modifiée de manière appropriée et toutes les déclarations d'autorité s

Yes

Legal information / Informations légales (section 5)

Yes

Details of custodian if different from owner / Détails du dépositaire si différent du propriétaire (section 5)

Yes

Details of legal status completed / Détails du statut juridique complétés (section 5)

Yes

Details of accessibility completed / Détails de l'accessibilité complétés (section 5)

Yes

Copyright permission for images completed / Autorisation de copyright pour les images complétée (section 5)

Yes

Catalogue and registration information / Catalogue et informations d'enregistrement (section 6)

Yes

History/provenance completed / Histoire / provenance complétée (section 6)

Yes

Bibliography completed / Bibliographie terminée (section 6)

Yes

Independent referees identified / Arbitres indépendants identifiés (section 6)

Yes

Significance – primary criteria / Importance - critères principaux (section 7)

Yes