

Files and Books

Paul Otlet and Administrative Sciences

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First International Congress of Administrative Sciences (Brussels, 1910)

- opens a new field of studies
- administrative sciencess = theory and practice
- Otlet chairs section on ‚administrative documentation‘
- resolution in favor of index cards (= model of bibliographical system-building)

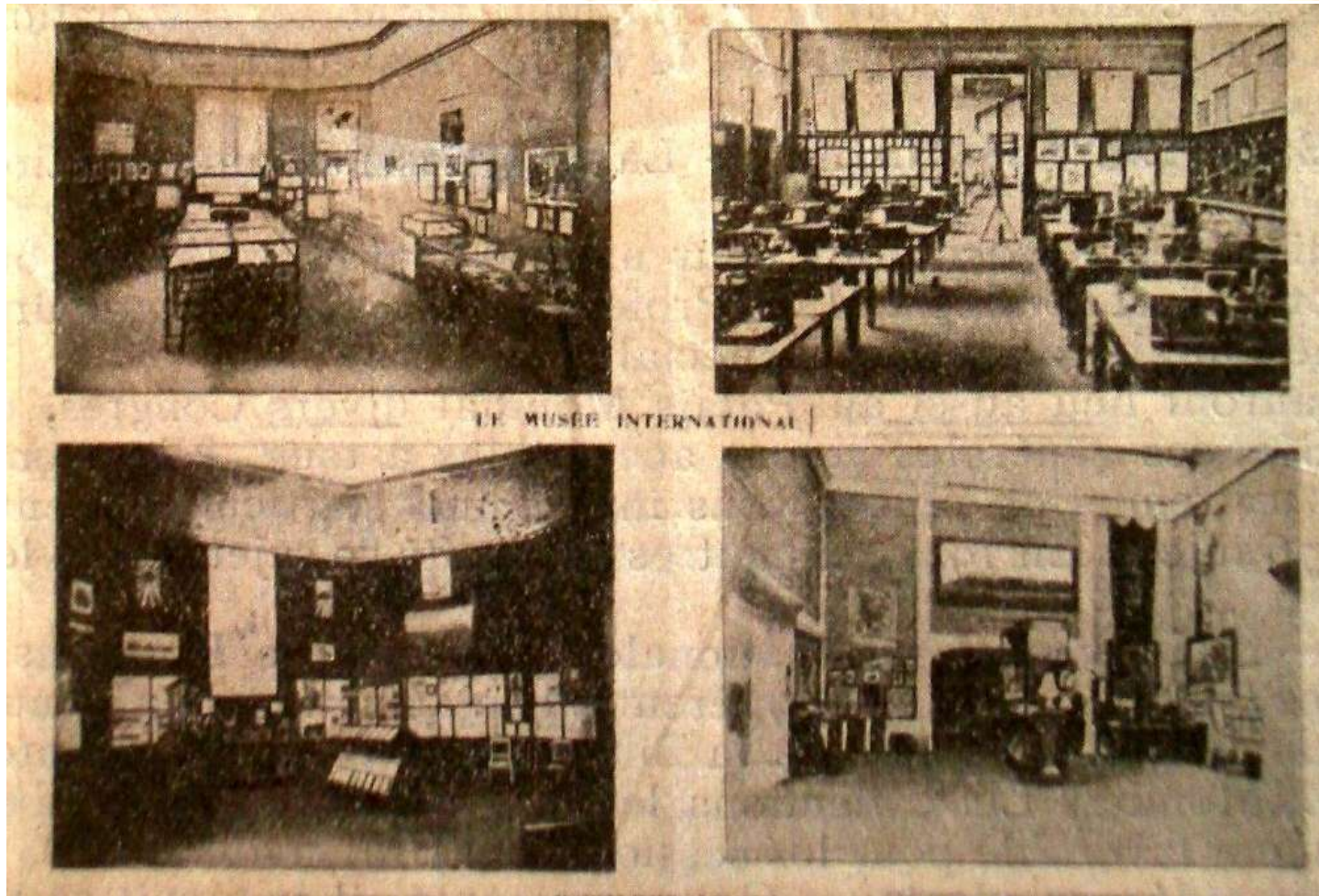
Otlet's proposal for permanent organisation, 1923

- second international congress of administrative sciences, Brussels 1923:
- decentralized national groups, and
- permanent commission on international level

Otlet and the ‚Musée Administratif International‘ (Brussels, 1920s)

- origins: donation by Spain in 1910
- Otlet acts as museum director - part of his international documentation initiative
- housed in the ‚Musée International‘/ ‚Palais Mondial‘ complex at Brussels

The ‚Musée International‘ (Brussels, after 1918)



A critical view from outside: French diplomats at Brussels, 1920s

- ‚prolific use of „mondial“ by Otlet‘ and his (too) many organizations
- ‚totally illusoric and even sometimes childish character‘ of Otlet’s efforts
- verdict on Otlet: he ‘ingeniously reduced the whole of science to files and index cards’

Bypassing Otlet: Foundation of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, 1930/32

- eventually, IIAS was founded at the Madrid congress not by Otlet, but by a pragmatic Swiss administrator (vice-chancellor Leimgruber)
- administrative documentation is no longer a major theme

Files are not books: Otlet's achievements and shortcomings in administrative sciences

- + shows, that international orientation and exchange are needed
- + favors a decentralized organization

Files are not books: Otlet's achievements and shortcomings in administrative sciences

- his way of systemizing titles renounces of reading the contents
- he neglects the basic need of administrative sciences in an international perspective: translation and understanding of essential concepts in public administration

Thank you very much!

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