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Chapter 3

EDUCATING INTERNATIONALISTS: THE CONTEXT, ROLE AND LEGACIES OF THE UIA'S 'INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY'

Daniel Laqua

In September 1920, the Union of International Associations hosted the inaugural session of its *Université Internationale* at the Palais Mondial in Brussels. While this 'International University' was not a degree-awarding institution but rather a two-week lecture cycle, its programme was certainly impressive: forty-seven speakers from ten countries, including prominent figures from academia, politics and culture, gave altogether 143 lectures.¹ Further sessions followed in 1921, 1922 and 1927. The organizers conceived these events as the basis for a more permanent institution, which was to supplement the work of existing universities by providing 'an initiation into international and comparative aspects of all great questions.'² Intended to educate a new generation of leaders, the initiative chimed with the UIA's agenda for organizing international life: the university venture sought to 'unite universities and international associations in a movement of both higher education and higher universal culture'.

Eventually, the International University joined the ranks of several grandiose but unsuccessful schemes that had been conceived by UIA founders Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine. In the same period, the pair also sought to transform their institutions into an intellectual branch of the League of Nations and championed plans for a world capital city (*cit  mondiale*). Like those endeavours, the International University did not reach the heights that its creators had anticipated: it never went beyond being a summer school and, notwithstanding a final attempt in 1927, its momentum had largely passed by 1923. Yet the scheme was nonetheless significant, as it represented an influential strand of internationalist thinking: many activists considered educational ventures as ways of building international cooperation.

As Jo lle Droux and Rita Hofstetter have argued, 'the field of education' offers 'a relevant platform for an analysis of transnational dynamics.'³ Accordingly, a growing literature examines the channels through which pedagogical expertise was disseminated across national borders.⁴ The UIA's undertaking relates to a particular area of educational research and practice, namely 'international education' – a field

that is ‘wide enough to embrace both education for international understanding ... and education for world citizenship’.⁵ This chapter first analyses the ideas that underpinned the International University and traces their partial implementation. Its final section addresses legacies and echoes of this project. As a whole, the chapter contributes to our understanding of internationalism, yet it also sheds light on the history of education by helping to historicize international education.⁶

Education and Internationalism

Well before the First World War, peace campaigners aimed some of their activities at children and schools, as part of their quest to foster pacific attitudes.⁷ Such efforts constituted early examples of peace education – that is, pedagogical approaches aimed at ‘empowering people with the skills, attitudes and knowledge to create a world where conflicts are solved non-violently and [to] build a sustainable environment’.⁸ The pursuit of these objectives extended to higher education. For instance, two proposals for an international university were submitted to the Universal Peace Congresses of 1905, a major pacifist gathering in Lucerne.⁹ Congress delegates subsequently called for ‘an International University, endowed by the different States, in which the most eminent personages of each should be called on to teach all that can assist human progress’. Moreover, they encouraged national peace societies ‘to continue their inquiry as to the organisation of an international system of instruction and education’.¹⁰ Subsequent Universal Peace Congresses did not result in a new institution, yet delegates reaffirmed their commitment to academic exchange.¹¹ Such examples highlight a conceptual link between peace education and international education: the conviction that international exchanges would foster goodwill and understanding.

American philanthropy was a second influence for such educational schemes. In 1910, Edwin Ginn established the International School of Peace in Boston, partly funded by profits he had made as a textbook publisher. The body was meant to ‘educate all nations about the waste and destructiveness of war, and to promote international justice and the brotherhood of man’.¹² Although the International School eventually became the World Peace Foundation – a think tank rather than a site of instruction – it demonstrated the resonance of educational ideas within American internationalist settings. Significantly, Ginn’s initiative also impacted on the shape Andrew Carnegie gave to his Endowment for International Peace.¹³

A third development occurred within universities, linked to the emergence of international student organizations that promoted cultural exchange and international cooperation. In 1898, Italian students launched the association *Corda Fratres* to foster internationalism among their peers. In 1907, their efforts were complemented by the US-based Cosmopolitan Clubs, whose members proclaimed humanity to be ‘above all nations’.¹⁴ The Cosmopolitan Clubs maintained links to the peace movement. For instance, shortly before the outbreak of the Great War, some of its members participated in a British summer school led by the renowned pacifist author Norman Angell.¹⁵

The UIA's founders had direct connections to each of these three pre-war strands. Henri La Fontaine was a major presence at the Universal Peace Congresses and in 1907 became president of the body that coordinated them, the International Peace Bureau. Moreover, during the Great War, Ginn's World Peace Foundation published La Fontaine's proposal for a future world organization.¹⁶ Further interactions between the UIA and American philanthropy are discussed in Christophe Verbruggen's contribution to this volume. The UIA founders were also aware of efforts among students, covering the Cosmopolitan Club movement in their periodical.¹⁷

Yet links to activists and philanthropists were not the only factors that accounted for La Fontaine and Otlet's interest in international higher education. After all, the Belgians' bibliographical work constituted a transnational research venture in its own right. As early as 1894, La Fontaine had mentioned the idea of an international university, primarily in terms of providing access to scholarly literature from around the world.¹⁸ The same year, he also became involved in the *Université Nouvelle* in Brussels – a radical educational venture that, despite having no degree-awarding powers, attracted an international cast of students and scholars.¹⁹

These intersections with internationalist and academic milieus help to explain the genesis of the UIA's project. By 1912, the *Annuaire de la Vie Internationale* suggested that specialists at the UIA's 'Centre International' might become the 'professorial body of a veritable international university'. It also portrayed a future 'world school' as an organic extension of traditional universities.²⁰ In 1913, the second World Congress of International Associations agreed on general principles for an international university.²¹

The Interwar Moment for International Education

The outbreak of the First World War prevented the immediate implementation of any such scheme. The wartime ruptures within the academic world are well known: in the present volume, Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann have noted their impact on historians, and similar observations apply to other disciplines. Tomás Irish has cautioned against viewing the divisions as complete, noting that 'ties between scholars in different countries were often much more durable than has been credited'.²² Nor did formal academic exchanges come to a halt. However, their meaning changed, as 'the war inaugurated a move to redefine international exchange in accordance with wartime geopolitical configurations'.²³ This ambiguity was evident in Paul Otlet's wartime writings: his 500-page study of 'international problems' not only extensively discussed ruptures in the academic world, but also sought to demonstrate the ongoing momentum for international education.²⁴

Academic cooperation faced significant challenges well beyond the war years. When the International University was launched in 1920, the exclusion of Germans mirrored the situation in other international academic institutions before the Locarno era.²⁵ This stance was far from uncontroversial. A UIA note

from May 1921 reported 'two opposing attitudes': whereas some 'expressed regret not to have seen Germany immediately admitted to the International University', others suggested that the Germans would 'never become part of it'.²⁶ The document suggested that the time had not yet come for 'a rapprochement between yesterday's enemies, as pacification is far from being complete in the political sphere'. The International University, they argued, had to proceed in multiple steps, starting with those who were currently integrated into international structures.

Precisely because of such persistent antagonisms, the promotion of international education acquired great significance. As Akira Iriye has pointed out, school exchanges and textbook reform were prominent features of cultural internationalism in the interwar years.²⁷ The League of Nations ultimately developed activities in this field during the 1920s.²⁸ Prior to League action, however, private efforts were under way. For instance, reform pedagogues such as Beatrice Ensor and Elisabeth Rotten promoted international education through the New Education Fellowship.²⁹ Meanwhile, in New York, the academic Stephen Duggan established the International Institute of Education to facilitate academic exchanges and disseminate information about different study opportunities.³⁰ Duggan's institute cooperated with key figures in American internationalism, including Nicholas Murray Butler, the chair of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. According to Katharina Rietzler, the Carnegie Endowment underwent a 'transition from funding peace advocacy to the production and dissemination of knowledge on international relations' in this period.³¹ As a result, 'the American leaders devoted more and more energy to projects with an academic or scientific bent'. This reorientation included not only links with Duggan's institute but also support for an 'international summer academy for the teaching of international law' at The Hague.³²

Of course, nationalism continued to matter in university settings – yet the efforts to facilitate transnational contacts were plentiful and diverse. Students were actively engaged in this process. The 1920s and 1930s saw a revival in student mobility and a plethora of travel schemes. Moreover, with regard to Britain, Georgina Brewis has highlighted students' involvement in various transnational activities, including humanitarian relief efforts.³³ Cooperation in this period was facilitated by the creation of a host of new international student organizations. Clearly, then, the UIA's International University formed part of a much wider pattern.

Concept and Design of the International University

The International University tied in with key aspects of the UIA's post-war agenda, notably the promotion of an intellectual branch for the League of Nations. As a UIA document on the 'international organization of intellectual labour' stated, 'Humanity has to create for itself a vast collective brain.' In this respect, the International University was to serve as an intellectual 'Centre of Centres'.³⁴ This ambition was also apparent to external observers. For instance, when *The New York Times* reported on the International University in 1921, it described it as 'organizing [the] world's intellectual work'.³⁵

At one level, the proposed institution was meant to perform traditional university functions, for instance, by operating as a ‘research centre on comparative education.’³⁶ Yet it was also supposed to offer ‘complementary education for an elite of students’ and ‘serve as a pedagogical centre at the service of democracy.’³⁷ Otlet and La Fontaine envisaged a system whereby students would participate in an international tour of distinguished universities, with a core course at the Palais Mondial. Each student who, within two years of graduation in their home country, had been to universities of at least three different countries would receive the title ‘international student’. Recognition as a ‘world student’ was reserved for those who, within three years after graduation, had spent study time at ten universities in five countries, situated in at least two continents.

The proposed curriculum reflected two prominent strands in the thought of Otlet and La Fontaine: encyclopaedism – as exemplified by their bibliographical work – and internationalism. These dimensions manifested themselves in the plan to dedicate one university section to the ‘synthesis and encyclopaedia of the sciences’ and another one to the League of Nations.³⁸ The idea of a ‘universal encyclopaedia as synthesis of ideas and knowledge’ was reiterated as late as 1927.³⁹ Yet even in a venture with such universal ambitions, nationhood figured prominently – confirming Glenda Sluga’s observations on the way in which internationalism was conceptualized in national terms.⁴⁰ From the outset, ‘comparative national studies’ featured alongside ‘international studies’ within the proposed curriculum.⁴¹ A later document suggested that students would cover four areas: ‘national problems’; ‘international problems’ (focusing on international organizations); ‘universal problems’ (providing ‘the foundations of a universal spirit’) and, finally, the ‘sociological study of Belgium’, involving visits to various Belgian institutions.⁴²

The institution’s intended audience reached beyond university students: it was also meant to serve as the ‘educational centre for international associations’ and to help develop ‘the doctrine of the League of Nations.’⁴³ Between 1920 and 1927, the Brussels-based sessions sought to put some of these ideas into practice. On all four occasions, the International University formed part of the UIA’s *Quinzaine Internationale* – an ‘international fortnight’ comprising congresses and meetings. The organizers enlisted participants of the *Quinzaine* events as lecturers for the university sessions and invited affiliated organizations to establish ‘chairs’. In 1920, they listed thirteen such collaborations. For example, the Union Internationale des Villes – whose work is discussed in Wouter Van Acker’s chapter – supplied the British town planner Patrick Abercrombie and the French economist Edgard Milhaud.⁴⁴

The UIA anticipated formal links with the League of Nations as part of its university venture. Prior to the first *Quinzaine Internationale*, Inazō Nitobe – the League’s under-secretary-general – visited the Palais Mondial, and League secretary-general Eric Dummond subsequently offered encouraging words.⁴⁵ Moreover, Nitobe contributed a lecture on ‘What the League of Nations has done and is doing’ to the International University session of 1920. Yet despite further correspondence, neither the League Secretariat nor the Council deemed the

scheme ready for being placed under the League's auspices.⁴⁶ This stance evidently disappointed the UIA's leaders, who had hoped for such patronage.

Although the International University remained a predominantly European phenomenon, the UIA cast its venture in universalist terms. The actual implementation reflected these global ambitions only to a limited degree. For instance, the programme for the 1921 session listed three Japanese academics, but two of these talks were cancelled.⁴⁷ The same year, the lecture cycle also featured an Indian speaker, B. P. Wadia – an influential figure in international theosophy – who a few weeks earlier had attended the Paris-based world congress of the Theosophical Society.⁴⁸ The UIA's leaders were also aware of another Indian thinker: Rabindranath Tagore worked towards the aim of an international university by founding Visva-Bharati in 1921.⁴⁹ Yet, in contrast to Tagore's scheme, the UIA's venture was largely based on Western institutional and educational ideas. As one scholar has argued, it 'did not take into account the knowledge traditions' of people in non-Western territories that were under colonial rule.⁵⁰

In considering the role of education, the UIA's founders hardly challenged the civilizational assumptions that underpinned global power-political structures. For instance, in 1919, Otlet discussed the efforts of the African American scholar and activist W. E. B. Du Bois, who organized a Pan-African Congress to coincide with the Paris Peace Conference. Otlet cited the event as evidence of a new era of 'globality' (*mondialité*) and suggested that Pan-Africanism offered opportunities for educational exchanges between the United States and Africa. However, Otlet's sympathetic portrayal was couched in the language of a 'civilizing mission'. Moreover, with regard to Belgian practices in the Congo, his article claimed that any 'errors, abuses' had ended following 'the energetic action of Belgium's parliament'.⁵¹ Despite Otlet's ambivalent stance, his subsequent correspondence with Du Bois resulted in the UIA hosting parts of the Pan-African Congress of 1921. The event took place during the *Quinzaine Internationale*. As such, it coincided with the International University – and, accordingly, Du Bois was invited to contribute 'two or three' lectures to the latter.⁵² In the end, one such lecture featured on the programme, addressing 'the situation of black people throughout the world'.⁵³ Furthermore, delegates to the Pan-African Congress were made aware of the university session: in a congress report, the African American author Jessie Fauset noted that 'a fine, fresh-faced youth from the International University gave us a welcome from the students of all nations'.⁵⁴

As noted in the Introduction to the present volume, the Brussels segment of the Pan-African Congress proved controversial. Parts of the Belgian press accused it of revolutionary tendencies, whereas Pan-Africanists were disappointed that the deliberations in Brussels had muted any criticism of colonial practices.⁵⁵ Moreover, there were underlying conceptual and strategic differences about the nature of international work. From the beginning, Otlet and his fellow organizer, the Congolese activist Paul Panda Farnana, had envisaged the congress as a 'scientific' event.⁵⁶ By contrast, Du Bois placed the emphasis 'on the spiritual and inspirational side': only once a spirit of unity had been achieved would it be possible to address 'the matter of funds for scientific research'.⁵⁷ These differing

priorities indicate why a venture such as the International University held limited attraction to activists – and, as such, they highlight wider difficulties in fostering links with international movements.

Scholars and Students

Cooperation with protagonists of interwar internationalism played an important role in the UIA's work – yet any university venture depended on the backing of researchers and educators. The organization seems to have had some success in this respect: by 1922, 347 professors from 23 countries had pledged their support.⁵⁸ Speakers at its sessions included some high-ranking academics, for instance Jules Payot, rector of the University of Aix-Marseille. The cast of contributors extended to experts such as Edouard Claparède and Adolphe Ferrière, who headed the Rousseau Institute – a body for educational research which later became the International Bureau of Education and nowadays is a UNESCO institute.⁵⁹ Moreover, the UIA claimed that several universities had affiliated to the International University – seemingly in line with its aims for a 'federation of universities'.⁶⁰ By 1921, it cited support from institutions in Bucharest, Lisbon, Leiden, Copenhagen, Madrid, Beijing, Poznan, Prague, Sofia, Tokyo, Warsaw, Vilnius and Zurich.⁶¹ Impressive as this may sound, such 'affiliations' meant little. At best, they were a general expression of sympathy; at worst, an example of the UIA leaders' tendency to overstate the extent of their backing.

In the same period, the UIA also built links with a specific academic constituency: Russian exile scholars. In 1921, sixteen Russian speakers featured at the International University – from the Orientalist Vladimir Fedorovich Minorsky to anti-Bolshevik politicians such as Mark Slonim and Peter Struve.⁶² Their involvement had been facilitated by contacts between the UIA and the Russian Academic Group in Paris. After the October Revolution, Russian Academic Groups had been established in several European cities, helping to sustain a 'Russia abroad'.⁶³ The UIA combined its 1921 lecture programme with a meeting at which it offered special services to its Russian guests: access to the collections of the Palais Mondial and the proposed creation of a repository for exile publications. A subsequent account optimistically reported that the bibliographer Nikolai Rubakin had 'agreed in principle' to transfer his Russian Library – a collection he had built after leaving Tsarist Russia in 1907 – from Baugy-sur-Clarens, Switzerland, to the Palais Mondial.⁶⁴ Despite Rubakin's long-standing links to Otlet, the collection ultimately moved to Lausanne instead.⁶⁵ Yet such discussions illustrate how the UIA sought to integrate the International University with its other activities, including the documentation work of its founders and the development of an International Museum at the Palais Mondial.

The International University evidently attracted interest from different scholars, associations and institutions. What about another core constituency, namely university students? In line with the UIA's general *modus operandi*, its engagement with university students was channelled through an international organization,

the International Confederation of Students (*Confédération Internationale des Étudiants*, CIE). Having been founded in 1919, the CIE brought together representatives of national unions of students.⁶⁶ During the early 1920s, the UIA hosted the confederation's secretariat at its Palais Mondial, forming part of a wider strategy of attracting international associations to these premises. Reflecting their anticipated partnership, the UIA listed the CIE's leaders and national affiliates in the initial programme of the International University.⁶⁷

Relations with the student leaders proved more ambiguous than the UIA had anticipated. During the UIA's 'international fortnight' of September 1920, the CIE's executive council met at the Palais Mondial and Otlet personally welcomed the delegates. He 'emphasized with great enthusiasm the importance of the International University's tasks' and stressed the need for the 'effective support and cooperation of all intellectual associations.'⁶⁸ Yet several CIE council members raised organizational and conceptual objections.⁶⁹ Moreover, Otlet's claims about support from national governments met with scepticism, as they seemed largely unsubstantiated. In the end, the CIE did not offer unequivocal backing. While it affiliated to the International University 'in principle', it postponed its formal adhesion to a later stage.⁷⁰ The debate in Brussels reflected wider tensions within the CIE. French and Belgian activists played a prominent role during its formative years – the Belgian Marc Van Laer managed the confederation's office at the Palais Mondial. However, other student leaders – in particular from the Netherlands and Scandinavia – feared that the CIE might become too much of a francophone or quasi-Allied venture.

Despite reservations within the CIE, the programme for the International University of 1922 noted that the confederation would organize social activities for its students.⁷¹ Moreover, a report from the CIE's council meeting of January 1923 mentioned that the confederation could continue to base its offices 'without cost at the Palais Mondial, as hitherto.'⁷² Later that year, the CIE expressed its support for the International University in two letters to the League of Nations.⁷³ There is, however, little evidence of an ongoing relationship beyond the early 1920s, and the CIE's operations soon moved outside Belgium.

Relations with the CIE raise the wider question of student participation. Strikingly, the preserved records offer little information on this subject. A document from 1922 is a rare exception. At the closing event of that year's International University, Ludmila Genttnerová from Czechoslovakia praised the 'hospitality and friendliness' that she had received, hoping that social bonds would result in a return visit to Prague.⁷⁴ Genttnerová's comments indicate that the Maison des Étudiantes in Brussels had hosted her alongside delegates from Italy. However, as this building – which usually catered for female students from the Free University of Brussels – housed a mere twenty-five residents, we cannot draw any conclusions about the wider number of students involved.⁷⁵

The lack of student voices in the archival record is not entirely unexpected. The organizers focused on assembling a programme rather than a student body. This limitation is illustrated by a letter after the 1922 session. The Italian astronomer Giovanni Boccardi complained that a shortage of students had led the organizers

‘to open the door to everyone’. Boccardi’s concern was less with the student audience than with the calibre of speakers. He wanted professors who ‘deserve this label’ and suggested that ‘misguided idealism’ might have led the organizers to think that ‘everyone should have the right to expose their ideas.’⁷⁶ In this regard, his assessment was harsh – many speakers did have strong credentials. However, Boccardi’s comments highlight an intrinsic contradiction. The UIA frequently raised expectations by speaking of an ‘elite’ of students.⁷⁷ Yet this elitism, and an underlying desire for prestige, stood at odds with a more inclusive impulse: the hope to reach a broad audience for the cause of internationalism.

Successes and Setbacks

Notwithstanding their shortcomings, the 1920, 1921 and 1922 International University sessions attracted many distinguished contributors. Individuals such as Ferdinand Buisson – the French educator, politician and president of the *Ligue des Droits de l’Homme* – certainly were far from marginal.⁷⁸ With sixty-nine speakers, the 1921 programme was even more extensive.⁷⁹ Boyd Rayward has described the International University and *Quinzaine Internationale* of 1922 as ‘rather small’ by comparison,⁸⁰ yet with over seventy-two professors from sixteen countries giving hundred lessons, the programme still reached a considerable scale.⁸¹

In its quest for support, the UIA seized opportunities as they presented themselves. For instance, when an American trade delegation from the Southern Commercial Congress travelled to Europe in 1922, Otlet arranged a meeting with its director-general Clarence Owens. Having described the encounter as ‘the most delightful experience of my present visit to Europe’, Owens agreed to support ‘the plan to build a great International University in Brussels’, believing that the venture would ‘inspire the peoples of the earth to promote the ideals of peace.’⁸² Owens was subsequently designated as the university’s ‘Vice-President for the Western Hemisphere’ while the Southern Commercial Congress became its ‘corresponding body.’⁸³ Neither of these roles had practical consequences. Indeed, a report that the Americans presented to the US Congress revealed various misconceptions: it erroneously referred to the ‘International University at the Palais de Ville where students from various European universities are taking postgraduate research work and lectures on cultural subjects.’⁸⁴ Nonetheless, the example illustrates how flattery could draw in potential supporters.

At the time of the American visit, there was still some optimism about the International University’s prospects. Prior to the 1922 session, *Le Figaro* claimed that the project was backed by ‘all the country’s personalities, the government and the King himself.’⁸⁵ The French newspaper linked the initiative to a wider agenda, namely ‘Belgium’s evident desire ... to attract anything international that it can have.’⁸⁶ In the *Journal du Droit International*, Barthélemy Raynaud – Professor of Law at the University of Aix-Marseille – seemed to anticipate steady progress: he suggested that ‘the flexibility of its organization, [and] the breadth of its founders’ vision’ would assure the ‘most beautiful future’ for the university.⁸⁷ His prediction

turned out to be wrong. No further sessions took place from 1923 to 1926, and the fourth International University, held in 1927, formed a somewhat sad epilogue. Boyd Rayward has noted its 'much reduced' nature and the 'insignificance' of that year's *Quinzaine Internationale*.⁸⁸ This development reflected the UIA's general fate in the later 1920s. Its decline was partly linked to worsening relations with the Belgian government, which Christophe Verbruggen has covered in this volume.

Yet the collapse of the International University was not solely due to the rift with the Belgian state. Another key factor was related to a League of Nations enquiry into different 'international university' proposals. The League's engagement with this subject was channelled through its International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC). In 1922, the ICIC's creation had seemingly met the UIA's demand for an 'intellectual League of Nations' – but without providing a role for the two Belgians.⁸⁹ Indeed, the ICIC investigation of university schemes was not triggered by the UIA, but by a separate initiative from the Spanish government. Moreover, within the ICIC, the Indian political economist D. N. Bannerjea had produced another proposal, supporting 'an international system of education which may be at once truly national and genuinely international without being cosmopolitan or unduly propagandistic'.⁹⁰

The Polish art historian and ICIC secretary Oskar Halecki was charged with producing a report on the matter. Being fearful of potential rivals, the UIA responded critically. Otlet asserted his organization's 'anterior rights', regarding it as 'truly inconceivable' if the League of Nations created a new university 'instead of helping an institution such as ours'.⁹¹ Halecki subsequently described the question of an International University as 'one of the most litigious and most contested ones in the area of intellectual cooperation'.⁹² The UIA's stance was only one factor – government responses to the enquiry revealed starkly contrasting viewpoints, raised by concerns that such a body might duplicate or challenge the work of national institutions.⁹³

Otlet need not have worried about the League launching a rival scheme: the ICIC report dismissed plans for an International University altogether.⁹⁴ To some extent, Halecki's rejection seems surprising. After all, he had featured on the programme of International University sessions in Brussels, although his 1921 lecture on the 'accomplishments and future of the League of Nations' was cancelled.⁹⁵ Halecki did not deem a permanent institution feasible, partly because of the fragility of existing international structures and partly because existing universities were keen to avoid competition. Based on his report, the ICIC concluded in July 1924 that the imminent implementation of any 'international university' scheme was unrealistic.⁹⁶ Accordingly, later proposals submitted to the League met with a negative response.⁹⁷ Instead, the Leagues' engagement with university matters focused on more limited concerns such as the promotion of academic exchanges.

Meanwhile, outside of formal League structures, Geneva became the site of several international educational ventures during the 1920s. From 1924 onwards, Alfred and Lucie Zimmern organized the Geneva School of International Studies – also known as 'Zimmern School' – each July and August. In mid-August, this was followed by the Geneva Institute of International Relations, a two-week lecture

cycle run by Britain's League of Nations Union and the US's League of Nations Association. Finally, in August–September, the International Federation of League of Nations Societies hosted its International Summer School.⁹⁸ Daniel Gorman has described these ventures as exemplifying the 'emergence of international society' in the 1920s.⁹⁹

These were not the only Geneva-based ventures. From 1924 to 1940, the Students' International Union (SIU) opened its gates in the Swiss city. This institution was funded by American philanthropists and run by an American couple, Alexander and Maude Miner Hadden, while the Oxford classicist and ICIC member Gilbert Murray served as its president. The institution aimed not only 'to establish a student centre as a headquarters for international student groups and an institute of international relations' but also to 'promote mutual understanding and service among youth of different nationalities'.¹⁰⁰ The SIU staged events throughout the year, including an annual summer course that was initially led by the Spanish diplomat and academic Salvador de Madariaga. Furthermore, in 1927, William Rappard and Paul Mantoux established another, highly influential and more durable institution – the Graduate Institute of International Studies which, to this day, offers postgraduate education (now known as the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies).

There were several parallels between these initiatives and the UIA's International University sessions. One key difference was that, from the outset, the Geneva-based schemes were more limited in scope and thus less likely to provoke objections. Moreover, compared to the Brussels activities, they drew on personal and physical proximity to the League. Madariaga served as the director of the Disarmament Section from 1922 to 1928 while Alfred Zimmermann became the deputy director of the League's International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in 1926. And prior to founding their Graduate School, Rappard and Mantoux had, respectively, headed the League's Mandates and Political Section. Such links allowed organizers to recruit leading officials for guest lectures.

By comparison, cooperation between the UIA and the League remained limited. Nor could the UIA draw on a mass membership – unlike, for instance, the League of Nations Union as co-organizer of the Geneva Institute of International Affairs.¹⁰¹ The attempt to attract support elsewhere, namely in academia, was hampered by the fact that neither Otlet nor La Fontaine primarily operated in university settings. At times, they did appeal to other constituencies, as illustrated by Otlet's address to the World Federation of Education Associations in 1925.¹⁰² By and large, however, the realization of the UIA's scheme seemed to become an ever-more distant prospect during the 1920s.

Legacies and Echoes

Patricia Clavin has stressed the importance of a long-term perspective when assessing the impact and influence of internationalist endeavours.¹⁰³ This point is relevant with regard to the UIA's initiative because, while its plan was never fully

implemented, it did not sink without trace either. After the Second World War, various schemes for an international university directly referenced Otlet and La Fontaine's work.

Alexandre Marc was one activist who built on the UIA's educational undertakings. Born to Russian-Jewish parents in 1904, Marc had moved to France in his youth. After completing his studies, he became an influential figure in the 'nonconformist' movement of the 1930s, championing Third Way economics, pacifism and European cooperation through the periodicals *Esprit* and *L'Ordre Nouveau*.¹⁰⁴ Having spent the occupation years in Swiss exile, Marc returned to France in 1945 and soon became a leading voice for a united Europe. Marc served as secretary-general of the Union of European Federalists, contributed to the major 'Congress of Europe' at The Hague (1948) and later led the European Federalist Movement.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Marc viewed education as a vehicle for international cooperation. In 1948, he set up the World Federalist University in Royaumont, north of Paris, building on the Inter-University Union of Federalists, which he had co-founded in Paris in 1946.

Marc directly referenced Otlet and La Fontaine's project in his submission to UNESCO's *International Social Science Bulletin* in 1952.¹⁰⁶ To him, the UIA's efforts constituted 'a first attempt to set up an International University' and 'valuable experiments deserving of attentive study'. The work of the 1920s seemed to offer insights even within the context of a new global order: 'The scheme, the syllabus and the actual work of the Brussels International University still have so close a bearing on some of the problems with which we have to grapple as a result of World War II that they provide food for thought and serve as useful pointers.'¹⁰⁷ Marc was not oblivious to the obstacles that such a venture might encounter. He noted that an international body should not act 'as a rival to existing universities' and credited the Brussels activists with having been conscious of this.¹⁰⁸

Although his own Royaumont venture proved short-lived, Marc himself was a key player in internationalist ventures, extending to a movement that attracted some attention in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War: world federalism. The latter was compatible with Marc's Europeanism as many world federalists conceived regional federations as elements of global organization.¹⁰⁹ He supported the Chicago-based proposal for a world constitution of 1948 – one of the key expressions of federalist ideas. Mark Mazower has described the latter as a 'staggeringly implausible document'.¹¹⁰ Yet, as Mazower's monograph on the history of global governance shows, world federalists were but one of many post-1945 ventures in which American internationalists played a prominent role.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the most extensive engagement with the UIA's scheme featured in an American publication: Michael Zweig's 1967 book on *The Idea of a World University*. Both Zweig's preface and his chapter on the 'History of the Idea of World Education' started with the UIA's efforts.¹¹¹ Elsewhere, he described the scheme as 'the first proposal for an international university to emerge after World War I'.¹¹² Throughout his study, he quoted extensively from UIA documents, even reprinting the International University's statutes.¹¹³ In analysing later schemes, Zweig frequently compared them to the pioneering

efforts from Brussels. For instance, he described the abortive proposal for a School of International Contacts – developed within the context of early UNESCO debates – as being ‘identical in structure with Otlet’s unsuccessful Brussels International University’.¹¹⁴

Zweig’s study partly resulted from his personal involvement in internationalist circles. In 1960, he had participated in Americans Committed to World Responsibility, a student group at the University of Michigan. Its members influenced the creation of the Peace Corps under the John F. Kennedy administration while promoting wider ideas about international education. Elise Boulding – the American academic whose work Sarah Hellawell discusses in the present volume – later recalled ‘watching the students who formed Americans Committed to World Responsibility travel across Europe gaining support for the idea of a world university’. To Boulding, the work of this group demonstrated ‘how creative new institutions can be shaped by the imagination and the willingness to act of youth’.¹¹⁵

Zweig himself was not involved in subsequent work towards a world university. Instead, his activism shifted to Students for a Democratic Society, which emerged as the leading voice of student radicalism in the United States. Zweig’s study appeared partly thanks to the American academic Harold Taylor, who edited the manuscript, wrote a foreword and added further material. Taylor was an influential figure in educational debates. From 1945 to 1959, he had served as president of Sarah Lawrence College, the prestigious liberal arts institution in New York State. Having left this post, he dedicated much of his subsequent career to promoting international education.¹¹⁶ In his foreword to Zweig’s study, Taylor suggested that a world university might help to address the ongoing Cold War tensions. As he saw it, ‘the world’s educational system’ was ‘in danger of becoming less, rather than more, internationalized as the political divisions and antagonisms multiply and coalesce into institutional forms’.¹¹⁷

To address these challenges, Taylor lent support to practical efforts at the international level. For example, when a Japanese grant helped to create the United Nations University (UNU) in 1973, Taylor led an American committee to support the new body.¹¹⁸ In 1974, he further discussed UNU in a magazine for American educators, praising the idea of a ‘university for the world’. According to Taylor, it was necessary to ‘mobilize the intelligence of the human race to solve the world’s problems on a global scale, using the powers of the imagination and intellectual to invent new solutions’.¹¹⁹ Tellingly, Elise Boulding drew a direct connection between UNU and earlier efforts in the United States, claiming that the group Americans Committed to World Responsibility ‘had laid the groundwork for the present United Nations University’.¹²⁰

Based in Tokyo and partly sponsored by UNESCO, UNU bears echoes of earlier internationalist endeavours. As its charter puts it, the university was set up to study topics such as

coexistence between peoples having different cultures, languages and social systems; peaceful relations between States and the maintenance of peace and security; human rights; economic and social change and development; the

environment and the proper use of resources; basic scientific research and the application of the results of science and technology in the interests of development; and universal human values related to the improvement of the quality of life.¹²¹

At the time of UNU's creation, Taylor mentioned a 'central danger', namely 'that the new institution may remain isolated within the UN system and the bureaucracies of the world academic community'.¹²² Acting primarily as a research institution and think tank, UNU has sought to avoid isolation. It maintains a network of eleven UNU research and training institutes (based in ten different countries) as well as collaborating with forty institutions within the UN system.¹²³ By contrast, its role as an education provider has been limited: UNU only gained degree-awarding powers in 2010 and in 2016, its postgraduate cohort comprised 240 Master's students and 18 PhD candidates.¹²⁴

Regardless of its limitations, the creation of UNU showed that a quasi-university could have a place within the UN system. In 1980, it was joined by the University for Peace (UPEACE), a Treaty Organization established by the UN General Assembly. The aims of the Costa Rica-based institution resonate with long-standing ideas of cultural internationalism. Its charter speaks of the 'clear determination to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace and ... the aim of promoting among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence'.¹²⁵ At present, UPEACE runs Master's programmes on issues such as peacebuilding, development and human rights while maintaining joint degree programmes with institutions in Colombia, Ethiopia, Monaco, the Philippines, South Korea and the United States.¹²⁶ That said, recent reports still indicate a relatively small number of students.¹²⁷

Conclusion

At first sight, the UIA's International University appears to be a product of its time, exemplifying the optimism with which many internationalists sought to build a new international order after the Great War. However, as this chapter has shown, matters are more complex. On the one hand, the sessions of the 1920s addressed long-standing concerns for education among pacifists and philanthropists. On the other hand, initiatives after 1945 showed that the idea still enjoyed resonance: even within a new geo-political configuration, the interwar project remained a point of reference.

This is not to say that the climate after the Second World War became more conducive to implementing such ideas on a large scale. Tellingly, a 1967 review of Zweig's book on *The Idea of a World University* viewed many of the arguments surrounding such an institution as idealistic and suggested that 'its prospects for the future appear to be no better than its record in the past'.¹²⁸ The subsequent creation of UNU and UPEACE does not in itself disprove this point, as these ventures remained limited in scale.

Moreover, there have been criticisms of ‘world university’ schemes in terms of their premises, for instance the idea ‘that greater understanding of other cultures leads to peace, and that the university is an appropriate institutional model for the inclusion and study of the knowledge of all societies without the domination of the norms of any one culture over the others.’¹²⁹ From one angle, one might therefore conclude that the challenges encountered by the International University reflected problems with its very design. Yet it is also clear that there were external obstacles. For instance, inability to gain League of Nations support only partly reflected issues with the Brussels organizers, as it was also linked to the League’s limited scope for action in the educational realm. Notwithstanding such challenges, the International University’s contributors, partners and afterlives highlight the inspiration that such a venture could offer. As such, it demonstrates the importance of educational endeavours for the history of internationalism.

Notes

- 1 For these numbers, see ‘Quelques dates dans l’existence d’une institution sexagénaire’, *International Associations* 22, nos. 8–9 (1970): 431; *Université Internationale: Ière session 5–20 septembre 1920: programme des cours et conférences* (Brussels: UIA, 1920).
- 2 UIA, *L’Université Internationale: Notice et Programme* (Brussels: Palais Mondial, 1920), 3.
- 3 Joëlle Droux and Rita Hofstetter, ‘Constructing Worlds of Education: A Historical Perspective’, *Prospects* 45, no. 1 (2015): 6.
- 4 Eckhardt Fuchs, ‘Educational Sciences, Morality and Politics: International Educational Congresses in the Early Twentieth Century’, *Paedagogica Historica* 40, nos. 5–6 (2004): 757–84; Damiano Matasci, ‘International Congresses of Education and the Circulation of Pedagogical Ideas in Western Europe (1876–1910)’, in *Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Experts, Networks, and Issues (1850–1930)*, ed. Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck and Jacob Vogel (New York: Berghahn 2015), 218–38.
- 5 Robert Sylvester, ‘Historical Resources for Research in International Education (1851–1950)’, in *The SAGE Handbook for Research in International Education*, 2nd edn, ed. Mary Hayden, Jack Levy and Jeff Thompson (London: SAGE, 2015), 13.
- 6 Theodore Vestal, *International Education: Its History and Value for Today* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); Robert Sylvester, ‘Mapping International Education: A Historical Survey 1893–1944’, *Journal of Research in International Education* 1, no. 1 (2002): 90–125; Ian Hill, ‘Evolution of Education for International Mindedness’, *Journal of Research in International Education* 11, no. 3 (2012): 245–61; Joëlle Droux and Rita Hofstetter, eds, *Border-Crossing in Education: Historical Perspectives on Transnational Connections and Circulations* (London: Routledge, 2016).
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- 9 Bureau international de la Paix, *Bulletin officiel du XIVe Congrès Universel de la Paix, tenu à Lucerne du 19 au 23 septembre 1905* (Bern: Büchner, 1905), 23.

- 10 Bureau international de la Paix, *Bulletin officiel du XIVe Congrès Universel de la Paix*, 131–2.
- 11 Bureau international de la Paix, *Bulletin officiel du XVe Congrès Universel de la Paix, tenu à Milan du 15 au 22 septembre 1906* (Bern: Büchner, 1906), 155. One ‘international university’ proposal features in the annexe (195–7).
- 12 Robert Rotberg, *A Leadership for Peace: How Edwin Ginn Tried to Change the World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 112.
- 13 Rotberg, *A Leadership for Peace*, 107–17.
- 14 Regarding the Cosmopolitan Clubs, and funding by Edwin Ginn and Andrew Carnegie for them, see *ibid.* 101.
- 15 David Patterson, *The Search for a Negotiated Peace: Women’s Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2–3.
- 16 Henri La Fontaine, *The Greatest Solution – Magnissima Charta: Essay on Evolutionary and Constructive Pacifism* (Boston, MA: World Peace Foundation, 1916).
- 17 Louis Lochner, ‘Les Clubs Cosmopolites’, *La Vie Internationale* 1, no. 3 (1912): 371–5.
- 18 W. Boyd Rayward, *The Universe of Information: The Work of Paul Otlet for Documentation and International Organisation* (Moscow: VINITI, 1975), 34.
- 19 Kaat Wils and Anne Rasmussen, ‘Sociology in a Transnational Perspective: Brussels, 1890–1925’, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire* 90, no. 4 (2012): 1280–3.
- 20 ‘Les Études et l’Enseignement International’, in *Annuaire de la Vie Internationale 1910–1911* (Brussels: Office Central des Associations Internationales, 1911), 127.
- 21 Henri La Fontaine and Paul Otlet, ‘La Deuxième Session du Congrès Mondial’, *La Vie Internationale* 3, no. 14 (1912): 511.
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- 23 Irish, *The University at War, 1914–25*.
- 24 Paul Otlet, *Les Problèmes internationaux et la guerre* (Geneva and Paris: Librairie Kundig and Rousseau & Cie, 1916), 252–335. The concept of an ‘international university’ features on pages 296–7.
- 25 For post-war tensions between universalism and nationalism in one major body, the International Council of Scientific Unions, see Geert Somsen, ‘Universalism in Action: Ideals and Practices of International Scientific Cooperation’, in *European Encounters: Intellectual Exchange and the Rethinking of Europe, 1914–1945*, ed. Carlos Reijnen and Marleen Rensen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 123–37.
- 26 ‘Université Internationale: éclaircissements’, note 30 May 1921, in Folder PP PO 224, Mundaneum, Mons.
- 27 Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 73. See also Tomás Irish, ‘Peace through History? The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Inquiry into European Schoolbooks, 1921–1924’, *History of Education* 45, no. 1 (2016): 38–56.
- 28 Eckhardt Fuchs, ‘The Creation of New International Networks in Education: The League of Nations and Educational Organizations in the 1920s’, *Pedagogica Historica* 43, no. 2 (2007): 199–209.
- 29 Katherine Storr, ‘Thinking Women: International Education for Peace and Equality, 1918–1930’, in *Women, Education and Agency, 1600–2000*, ed. Jean Spence, Sarah Aiston and Maureen Meikle (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 168–86.
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- 31 Katharina Rietzler, 'From Peace Advocacy to International Relations Research: The Transformation of Transatlantic Philanthropic Networks, 1900–1930', in *Shaping the Transnational Sphere*, ed. Rodogno et al., 186.
- 32 Rietzler, 'From Peace Advocacy to International Relations Research', 187.
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- 34 UIA, *Organisation internationale du travail intellectuel* (Brussels: UIA, 1921), 8.
- 35 'Organizing World's Intellectual Work: Union of International Association at Brussels Comprises 230 Members', *The New York Times*, 3 October 1921.
- 36 UIA, *Sur la Création de l'Université Internationale* (Brussels: UIA, 1920), 11.
- 37 UIA, *Sur la Création de l'Université Internationale*, 5 and 10.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 39 'Note no. 5555. 1927-05-2. Université Internationale. Cycle d'exposés fondamentaux', in box HLF 225, Mundaneum.
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- 41 UIA, *Annuaire de l'Université Internationale 1922: Status – Programme – Organisation – Sessions* (Brussels: Palais Mondial, 1922), 3, 17.
- 42 'Université Internationale. IVme session: 15–30 juillet 1927' in box HLF 225, Mundaneum.
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- 44 UIA, *Université Internationale: Cours et Conférence annoncés. Supplément du 30 juillet au Programme du 3 juillet* (Brussels: UIA, 1920). 1. The following year, the number of such chairs rose to 23: UIA, *Annuaire de l'Université Internationale 1922*, 3.
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- 46 *Ibid.*, 234–8. See also note 'L'Université Internationale et la Société des Nations', 1921, in box PP PO 224, Mundaneum.
- 47 'Programme des Cours et Conférences de la I^ee Quinzaine', *La Vie Internationale* 6, no. 1 (1921): 153–7.
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- 50 Margaret J. Phillips, 'A Critique of the Idea of World University', *Higher Education in Europe* 14, no. 3 (1989): 73.
- 51 Paul Otlet, 'Les Noirs et la Société des Nations', *La Patrie Belge*, 19 January 1919.
- 52 Paul Otlet to W. E. B. Du Bois, 20 April 1921, in W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Series 1A. General Correspondence [hereafter: Du Bois Papers], in Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. Available online: <http://credo.library.umass.edu> (accessed 26 July 2018).
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- 59 Rita Hofstetter and Bernard Schneuwly, "The International Bureau of Education (1925–1968): A Platform for Designing a "Chart of World Aspirations for Education"", *European Educational Research Journal* 12, no. 2 (2013): 215–30.
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- 62 'La Séance Russe', *La Vie Internationale* 6, no. 1 (1922): 177.
- 63 Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration 1919–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 60–1.
- 64 'La Séance Russe', 178. On this library, see Alfred Erich Senn, 'Nikolai Rubakin's Library for Revolutionaries', *Slavic Review* 32, no. 3 (1973): 554–9.
- 65 For earlier instances of collaboration, see Rayward, *The Universe of Information*, 284. In 1922, Rubakin dedicated his large-scale *Introduction à la psychologie bibliologique* to Otlet (together with Adolphe Ferrière).
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- 67 UIA, *L'Université Internationale*, 6.
- 68 Julius Ernst Lips, *Die internationale Studentenbewegung nach dem Kriege* ('*La Confédération Internationale des Etudiants*') (Leipzig: Verlag Vivos Voco, 1921), 36.
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- 71 UIA, *Annuaire de l'Université Internationale* 1922, 13.
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- 73 Letters from the CIE to Halecki, 17 September 1923 and 16 October 1923 in folder PP PO 24/2 PO2 ('Palais Mondial 1924–25'), Mundaneum. See also Oskar Halecki, *Le Problème de l'Université Internationale: Rapport préliminaire soumis à la Commission de Coopération Intellectuelle (Sous-Commission Universitaire)*, 5 in 13 C, dossier 28370, doc. 34985, League of Nations Archives, United Nations Organization, Geneva (UNOG).
- 74 Ludmila Gentnerová, 'Clôture de la Troisième Quinzaine', 2 September 1922, in box PP PO 224, Mundaneum.
- 75 On the Maison des Étudiants, see *Université de Bruxelles 1909–1934* (Brussels: Liber Memorialis, 1934), 226–7.
- 76 Letter from Giovanni Boccardi, Osservatorio Astronomico dell'Università di Torino, 18 September 1922, in box PP PO 224, Mundaneum.
- 77 UIA, *Sur la Création de l'Université Internationale*, 5, 10 and 12; UIA, *L'Université Internationale*, 3.

- 78 UIA, *L'Université Internationale*, 4.
- 79 'Programme des Cours et Conférences', 153–7.
- 80 Rayward, *The Universe of Information*, 254.
- 81 'Palais Mondial. IIIe Quinzaine Internationale. Bruxelles 20 août – 3 September 1922' [bulletin no. 3 (17 August 1922), in box PP PO 224], Mundaneum.
- 82 Clarence Owens to Paul Otlet, 3 September 1922, in box PP PO 224, Mundaneum. On the mission that Owens formed part of, see 'Une importante mission commerciale américaine en Belgique', *L'Indépendance Belge*, 1 September 1922.
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- 88 Rayward, *The Universe of Information*, 298.
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- 93 Dossier 28370 (see note 90) contains the responses from different governments.
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