

HSTC Bulletin

Journal of the History of Canadian Science, Technology and Medicine
Revue d'histoire des sciences, des techniques et de la médecine au Canada

hstc
bulletin

A Home for Historians of Canadian Science and Technology

Volume 3, Number 3 (11), May 1979

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081933ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081933ar>

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Publisher(s)

HSTC Publications

ISSN

0228-0086 (print)

1918-7742 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

(1979). A Home for Historians of Canadian Science and Technology. *HSTC Bulletin*, 3(3), 1–1. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081933ar>

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A HOME FOR HISTORIANS OF CANADIAN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The rapid growth of the field of the history of Canadian science and technology once again brings up the question of whether we should have (or even need) an institutional framework, in short, a society to promote our subject. Talk on this issue has been going on for some years but with no action. In many ways this field, or what amounts to a loose association of fields, has operated along the lines of what Derek Price named 'Invisible Colleges', that is, informal collectivities for research and teaching. No one existing society in Canada fulfills the role we might envision, but the possibility of creating a new learned society seems remote, since it would never be very large. Recent rumours that the Federal government may cut off funding to small societies simply underscores the unlikelihood of a new organization.

Nevertheless, there is a feeling amongst many of us that something permanent is needed and the widespread interest showed at the Kingston Conference tells us that there are many potential members of a Canadian studies group, at least 150 and, with amateurs, perhaps twice that number. But if we cannot think in terms of our own society, who would offer us a comfortable home? The Canadian Historical Association has never shown much interest. The Association for Canadian Studies (see News) is interested, but since they do not meet with the Learned Societies, many potential members might see this as a drawback.

The one society that enrolls a good number of Canadian historians of science and technology is the Canadian Society for History and Philosophy of Science (CSHPS). Attempts made in 1975-76 to have Canadian studies recognized by that society were rebuffed. Now we have a report of a Task Force of CSHPS, authored by John Farley, Polly Winsor, and Michael Ruse, which suggests that an accommodation should be reached with what they call the 'Canadian Group.' Their feeling is that the HSTC BULLETIN should merge with their societal bulletin, a move that the present editors have declined to take since we feel that our constituency is very different (although not entirely lacking in overlap). While the BULLETIN and HSTC Publications shall remain independent, perhaps the CSHPS can, with some changes, become a home for a great number of the historians of Canadian science and technology. We hope that negotiations will proceed swiftly and cordially.