

# Proyecto Humboldt 2002-2004



2001: The millennium commenced bringing with it new intellectual routes to explore: Navigation throughout the Net. A medium which favours the universality of communication, sharing information immediately, free access to a Virtual Library, the diffusion and safeguard of ancient books, the possibility of choosing thousands of voyages for one's own pleasure. The sluggishness of printed culture was exchanged for the speed and exuberance of cybernetics. Accepting that challenge, José Luis Prieto conceived an idea: to pursue the wake left by the scientific expeditions to the Canary Islands, in which brave scholars of the past, merging calculation and romance, risked their lives in the pursuit of science.

To ensure that proposal would reach safe harbour he seduced a spirited crew to second it and was able to find the agents to supply the equipment needed. Christened the "Humboldt Project", the vessel put out to the sea from the Orotava Foundation amidst dreams and uncertainties. Their team work plotted the most promising courses on the navigation charts. The rhythmic turmoil of the waves heralded an arduous and never-ending effort. Each voyage widened the horizons and prospects. Challenging the squalls and storms they clung to the helm of a shared trust and faith in their victory. The captain's log-book gradually filled with their achievements.

Any trip is an adventure. A storm within wrecked José Luis Prieto's personal voyage. Unknown enemies, coursing as pirates through his blood, cut off his links to life. His wisdom surrendered to the arcane laws of existence. His farewell was brave and calm, with the sorrow of one who knows he will never behold firm land. Before entering the calm seas of eternity he assigned the final directives to his companions in this odyssey. Faithful to his memory, guiding star of their work, these pioneers have conveyed to the rest of the planet a fraction of the scientific learning related to the Canary Islands with an exquisite technical excellence. Now that the first stage of their voyage comes to an end they want to offer its fruits in memory of their mourned captain.

The Humboldt Project is the result of the collaboration between the Fundación Canaria Orotava de Historia de la Ciencia and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. Since April 2002 it has created an open digital library formed by nearly fifty works between books and articles, including two atlases and two herbariums. Nearly half of them come from Germany, France, Denmark and Italy.

In this library you can consult fundamental texts generated by the European expeditions that, during the 18th and 19th centuries, had the Canarian archipelago as the target of their investigations. Around twelve thousand pages have been digitized, most of them are also accessible through the ECHO Project (European Cultural Heritage Online).

We could highlight the account of Humboldt and Bonpland fruit of their stopover at Tenerife on way to South America, or the happily recuperated manuscript by the Humboldt Project of the diary of the Norwegian botanist Christen Smith, together with part of his Canarian herbarium digitized in Copenhagen. Also the *Histoire Naturelle des Îles Canaries* by Sabin Berthelot and Philip Barker Webb, without doubt the most important work upon the natural history of the Canaries in the nineteenth century. Apart from documents of first magnitude of geologists like Leopold von Buch, Hartung, von Fritsch or Reiss.

And, together with the already mentioned, some of the great works, true classics of the scientific travels and stays in the Canaries, those of George Glas, Fleurieu, Ledru, Bory de Saint-Vincent, Adelbert von Chamisso, Proust, Pitard, Mascart.

We must add, finally, the elaboration of several databases. One of them collects information on all the publications and manuscripts concerning scientific studies carried out in the Canaries during the 18th and 19th centuries. It gathers more than one thousand three hundred registers and is set to become an inexcusable reference on the theme. On the other hand, the image database, that at this moment exceeds one thousand one hundred registers, is an estimable, useful and beautiful graphic archive that classifies all the illustrations of the digitised works by the Humboldt Project with direct links to their digital edition.

# programme

friday, november 12th

- 9 - 10 Official opening: introductory speeches.
- 10 - 10:30 *Homage to José Luis Prieto*
- 10:30 - 11:30 **Alberto Relancio** and the Humboldt Project team.  
*Results of the Humboldt Project in 2002-2004*
- 11:30 - 12 Colloquium
- 12 - 12:30 Break
- 12:30 - 13:20 **Jürgen Renn**. Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. Berlin.  
*The Humboldt Project in the framework of the European ECHO Project*
- Lunch
- 16 - 16:50 **Thierry Lalande**. Musée des Arts et Métiers. CNAM. Paris.  
*Alexander von Humboldt et ses instruments scientifiques: un laboratoire en marche*
- 16:50 - 17:40 **Markus Schnöpf**. Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. Berlin.  
*Adelbert von Chamisso a la sombra del Teide*
- 17:40 - 18:10 Break
- 18:10 - 19 **José M. Oliver**. Dpto. de Filología Francesa y Románica. Universidad de La Laguna.  
*Exploraciones francesas en Canarias: ciencia y literatura*
- 19 - 19:30 Colloquium

saturday, november 13th

- 10 - 10:50 **Pietro Corsi**. Université Paris I / EHESS / Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, la Villette.  
*Bory de Saint-Vincent, the Îles Fortunées and the history of life on earth*
- 10:50 - 11:40 **Jean-Marc Drouin**. Centre Alexandre Koyré / MNHN. Paris.  
*Berthelot et la géographie botanique dans l'Histoire Naturelle des Îles Canaries*
- 11:40 - 12:10 Break
- 12:10 - 13:00 **Nicolas Morel**. Musée Vert. Musée d'Histoire Naturelle du Mans.  
*André-Pierre Ledru, un voyageur naturaliste durant la Révolution Française*
- 13 - 13:30 Colloquium
- Lunch
- 16 - 16:50 **Chiara Nepi**. Museo di Storia Naturale. Università degli Studi di Firenze.  
*Il legato di Philip Barker Webb a Firenze, ovvero i frutti di una preziosa amicizia*
- 16:50 - 17:40 **Arnoldo Santos**. Jardín de Aclimatación de La Orotava. Puerto de la Cruz.  
*Exploraciones botánicas de Christen Smith y Leopold von Buch en Canarias (1815)*
- 17:40 - 18:10 Break
- 18:10 - 19 **Manuel Hernández**. Dpto. de Historia. Universidad de La Laguna.  
*Los ilustrados canarios y los viajeros científicos del siglo XVIII*
- 19 - 19:30 Colloquium

sunday, november 14th

- 10:00 Excursion to Teide

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