

From local to global:

The expanding horizons of libraries and
related information organizations

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Background

- Context of this presentation
- My background in international LIS
- The book
- Part I: Conceptual foundations
- Chapter 1
- This presentation
 - “Capita selecta” – reflections & questions/provocations

Periodization

- Natural human response
 - Making sense, giving structure
- A means of control
 - Manipulation of perceptions
 - Diminish or obliterate the past
 - E.g. “pre-colonial” Africa

Periodization (2)

- Eurocentric schemes
- Americentric schemes
- Technology as the driver
 - “...Society”; “...Economy”
 - “Post-....”
 - Periodization not about the past
 - Technological determinism
- Problems
 - Discontinuity; leapfrogging; capitalism; Western bias

Six horizons

- Attempt to organize this chapter; alternative to periodization
- Evolution of spatial & intellectual horizons of LIS
- Geographic and intellectual space
- Horizons can coexist
- Not synchronized geographically
- Alas: Western bias

Six horizons (2)

1. Local
2. Imperial
3. Universal
4. National
5. International
6. Global



A braided channel

Image:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Braided_river

Horizons 1 & 2: Local & Imperial

- Continuing, co-existing
 - Tension between periodization and horizons
- **Question #1: Relationship of LIS to Time**
 - Old books, heritage from earlier **times**
 - Preservation, blunting the tooth of **time**
 - “Save the **time** of the reader” (Ranganathan)
 - “Just in **time**” vs. “Just in case”
 - “Ticking **time** bomb” of digital media
 - More?

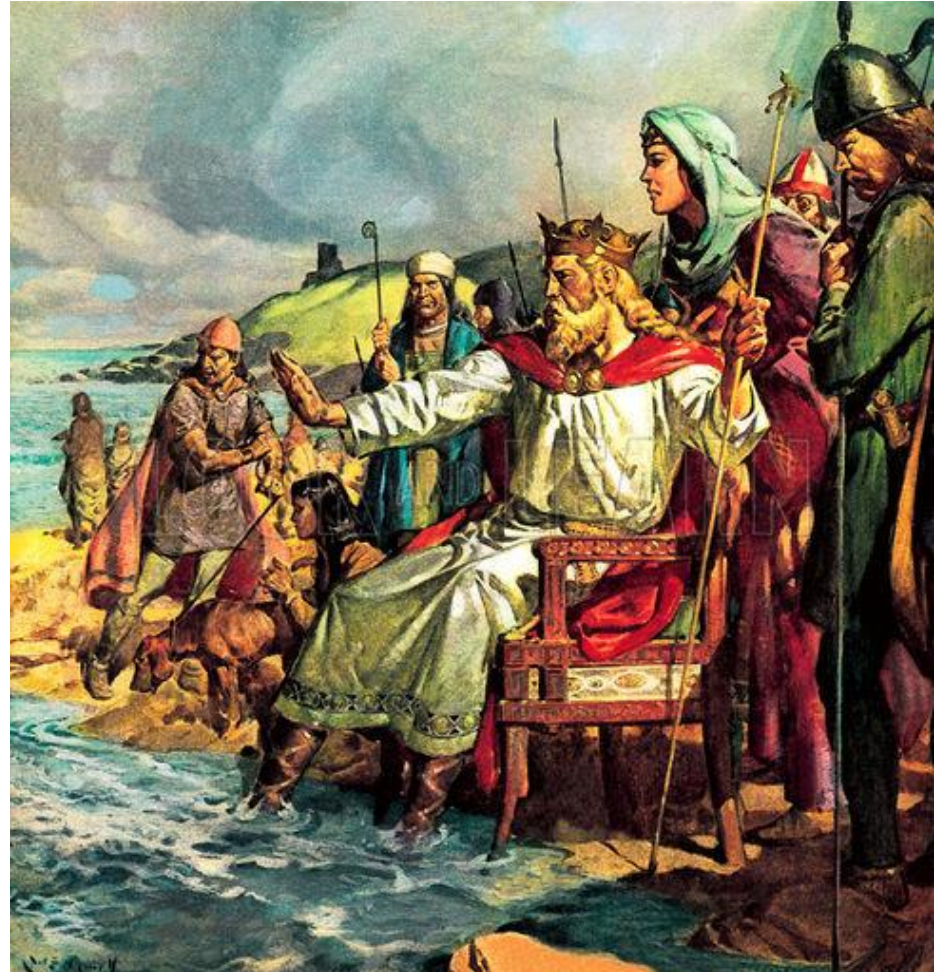
Horizon 3: Universal

- Medieval paradox
 - Spatial horizon contracted
 - Intellectual horizon: Latin universal language?
- Obstacles to universalism
 - Political instability, insecurity (barbarians)
 - Language (Proto Indo-European root **barbar-* echoic of unintelligible speech of foreigners (compare Sanskrit *barbara-* "stammering...")
(<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=barbarian>)

Horizon 3: Universal (2)

- **Question #2**
- Bibliographic control
 - Centrality of **control** in LIS
 - Naming, description, enumeration (Genesis 2:20)
 - Arresting time
 - Ambition overvaults itself...

Image: King Canute (Knut)
<http://www.lookandlearn.com/history-images/B000369>



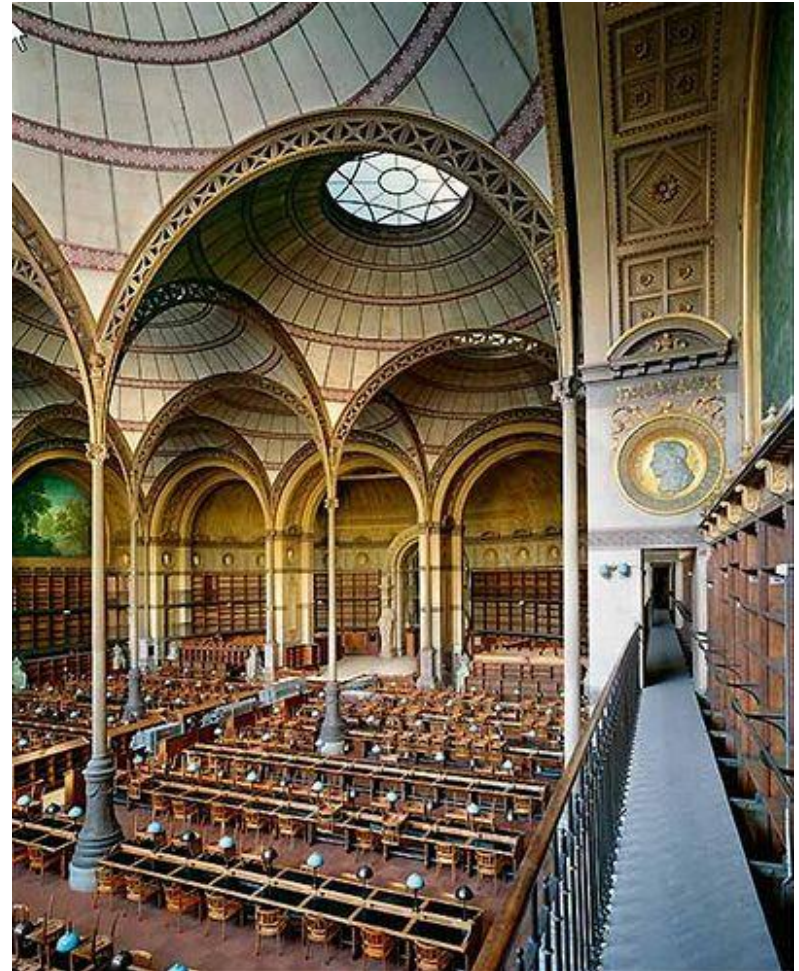
Horizon 4: National (2)

- National libraries
- National library “systems”
- Cataloguing codes
- Imperial ambitions
 - Control!
- Universal scope

Bibliothèque Nationale, rue Richelieu,
Paris. Architect Henri Labrouste

Image:

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/400398223091617696/>



Horizon 5: International

- “International”:
 - Coined by the English utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, introduced in 1789 in his *Introduction to Principles of Morals and Legislation* to refer to the law of nations. (OED)
- “Internationalism”:
 - First recorded in 1843. The OED lists four meanings. Relevant here is no. 2 (first recorded in 1851): “The principle of cooperation and understanding between different nations; belief or advocacy of this principle”.
- International librarianship: starting now?

Horizon 5: International (2)

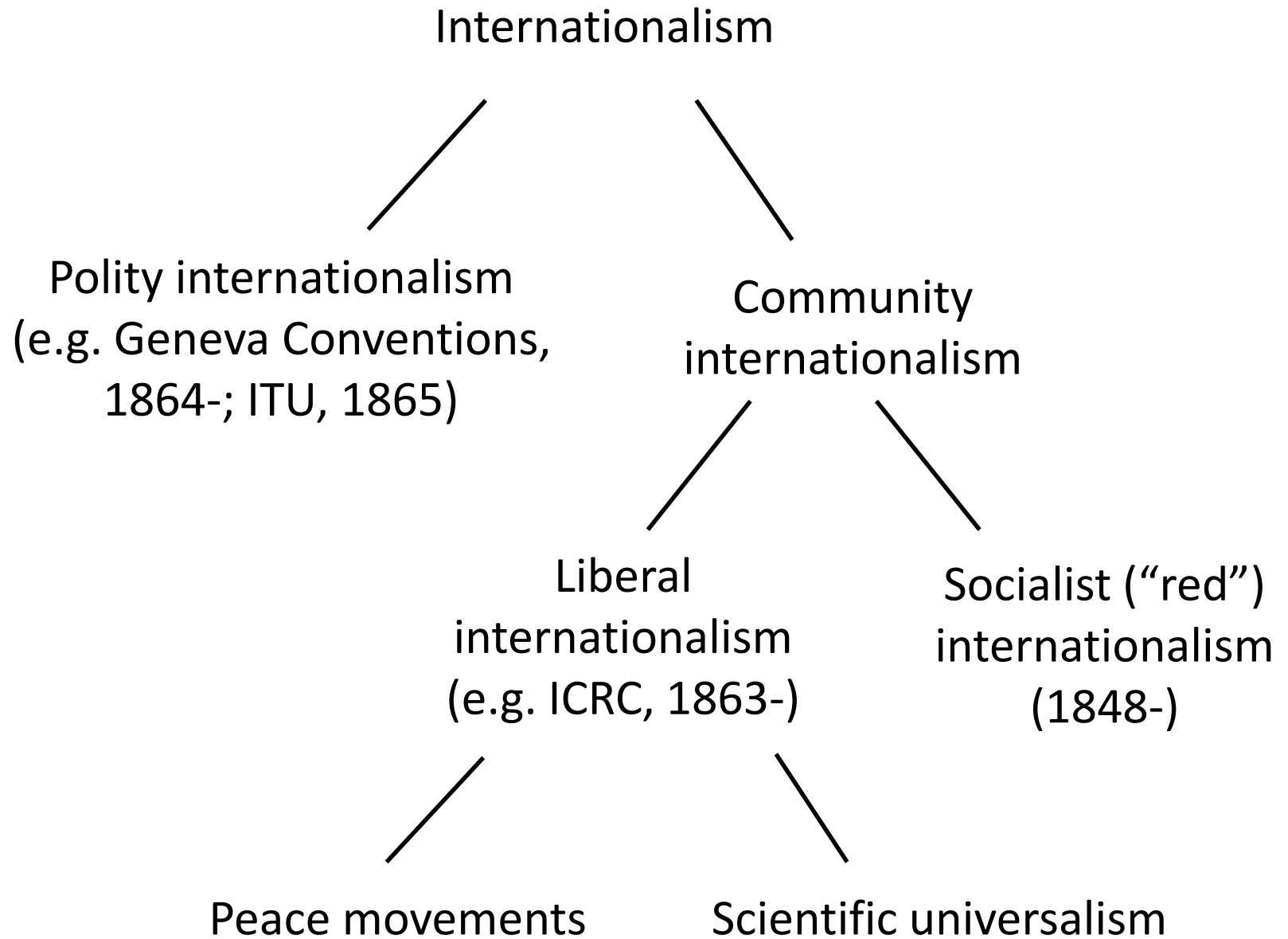
- Two main strands of Internationalism:
 - Polity internationalism
 - Community internationalism
- World peace a common goal
- Different approaches

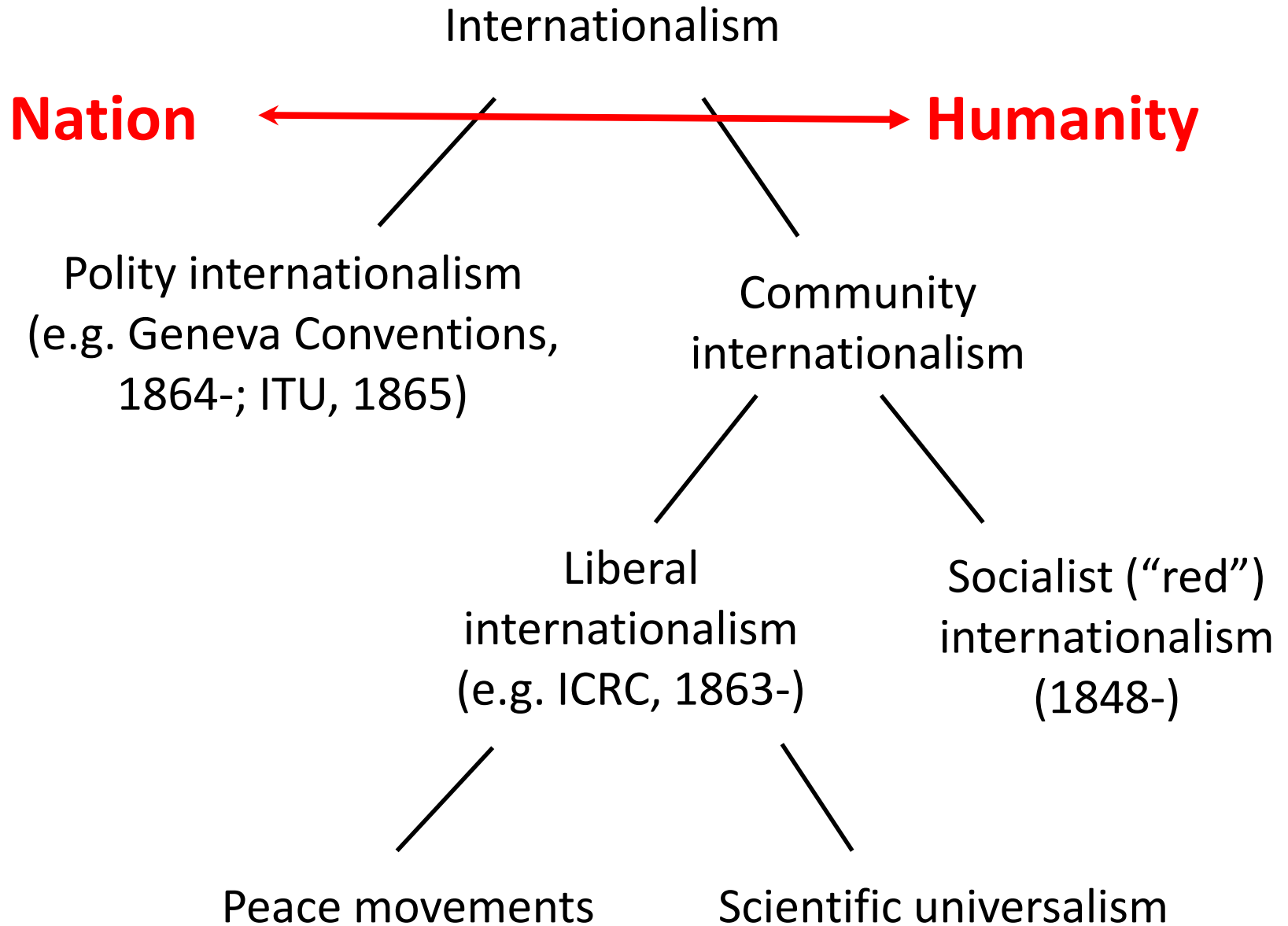
Image:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hague_Conventions_of_1899_and_1907



The First Hague Conference in 1899 13





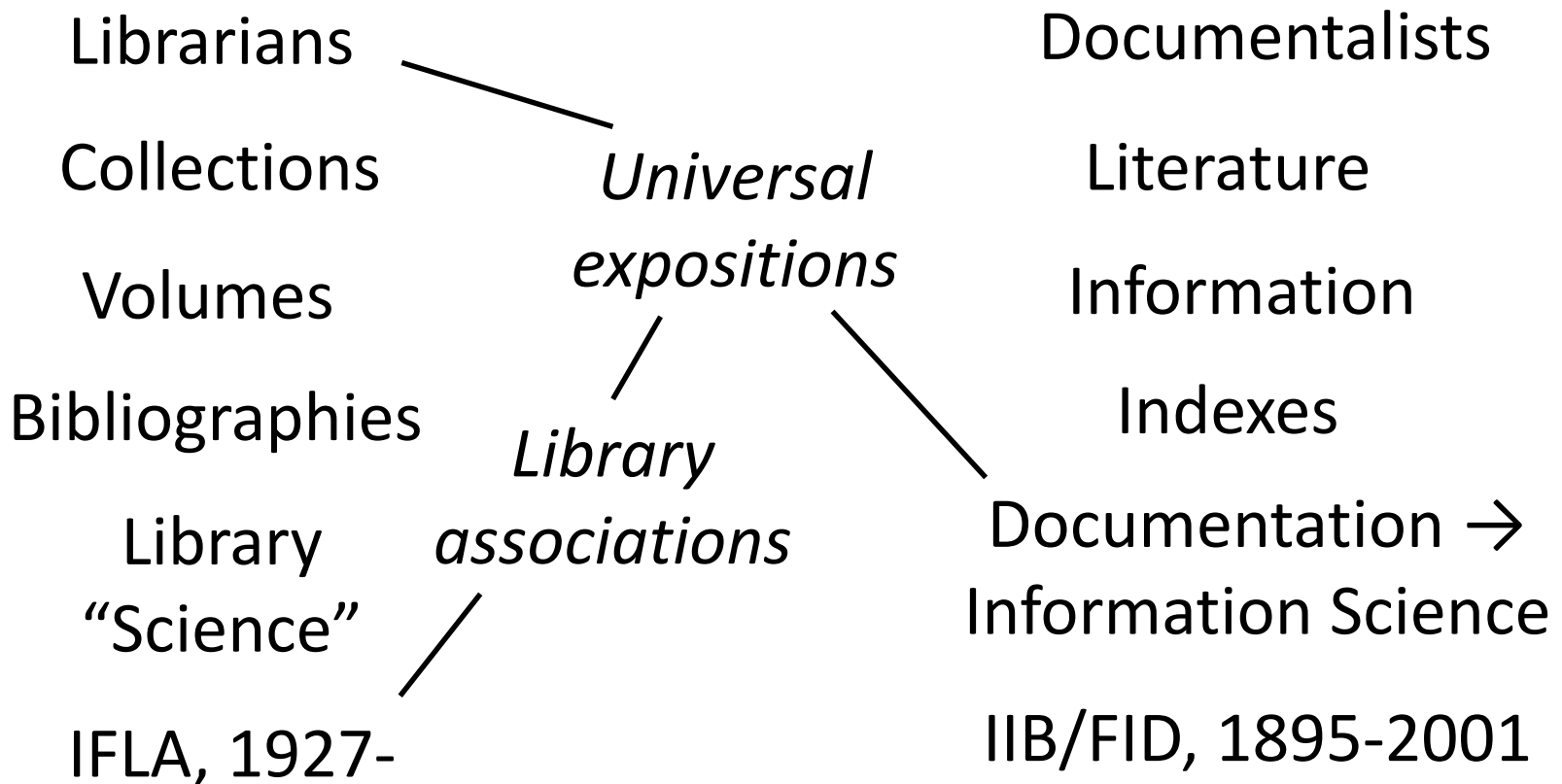
Horizon 5: International (5)

- **Question #3:**

Inter{(NATIONAL)ism}

Horizon 5: Internationalism (6)

19th Century internationalism in LIS (?)



Horizon 5: International (7)

- After WW1
 - Aid, rebuilding after wartime destruction (US; ALA)
 - US influence in France, Belgium
 - League of Nations
 - IFLA
- After WW2
 - UNESCO; libraries prioritized initially
 - Universal ideals stymied (Besterman)
 - Nation-state primacy (polity internationalism)
 - Developing countries
 - Turn to information

Horizon 5: International (8)

- After WW2:
 - Cold War rivalry
 - Decolonization
- Cultural diplomacy
- Area studies
- Internationalization in LIS education
- **Question #4: Moral issues?**

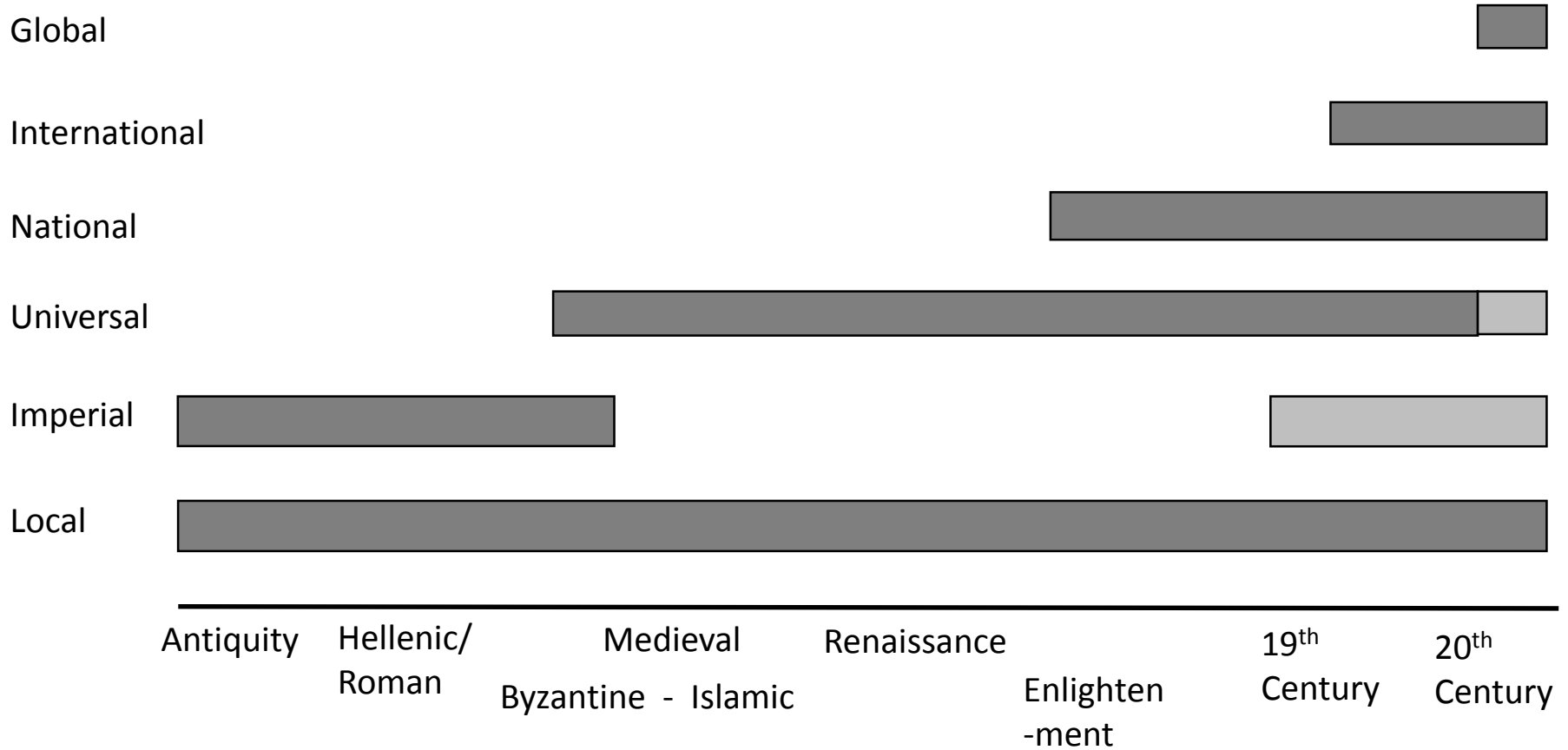
Horizon 6: Global

- **Question #5:** When did globalization begin?
 - How far back its origins?
- **Question #6:** Manifestations of globalization
 - In what ways does globalization manifest itself?

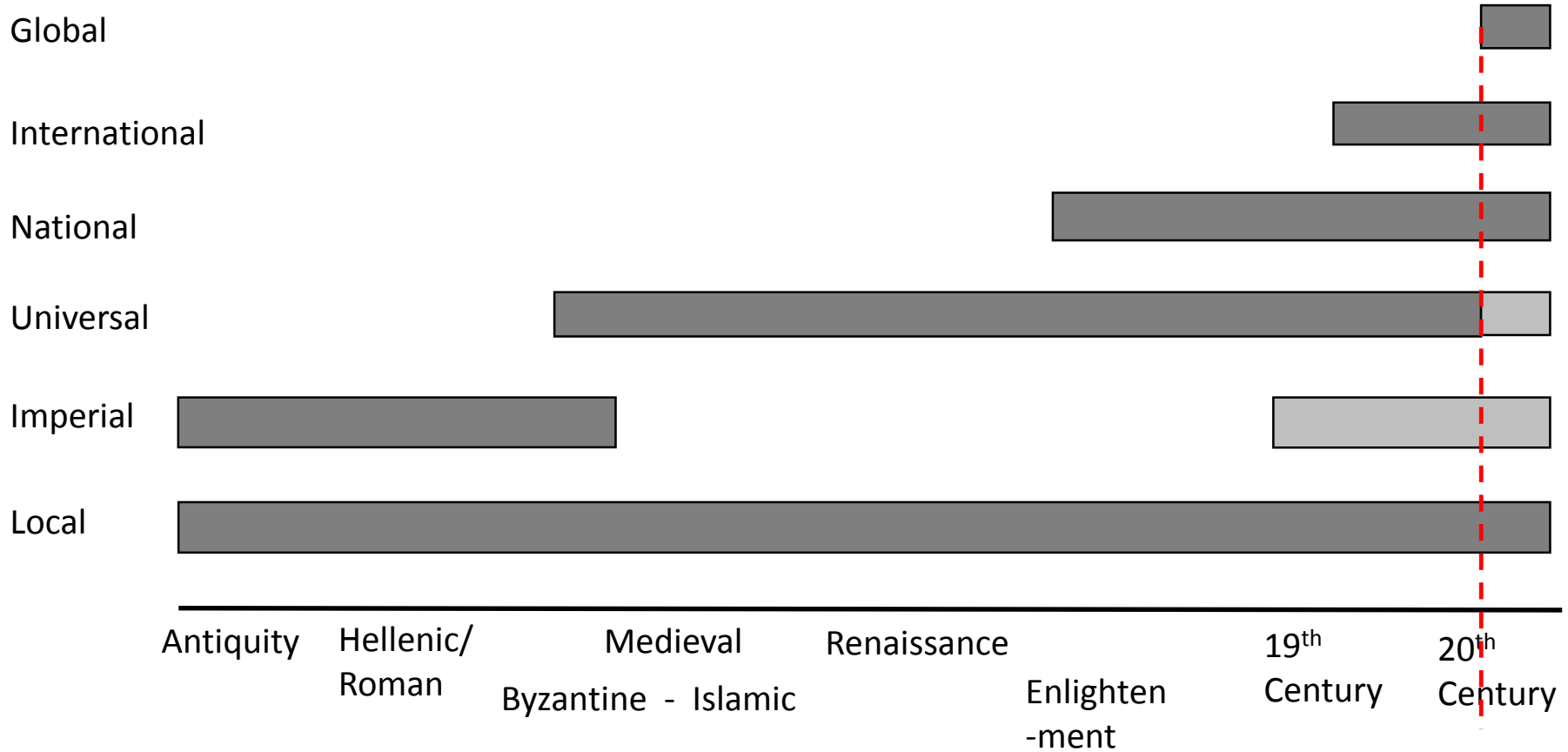
Horizon 6: Global (2)

- Impact on LIS
 - Mediated in particular by rapid development of ICTs
- Dematerialization
 - Information unbundled
 - Intellectual property rights: is digital different?
- Commodification
 - And altruism
- Resource discovery
 - OCLC

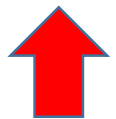
Notional timeline of the six horizons



Notional timeline of the six horizons



The end of “international librarianship”?



Thank you

Peter J Lor

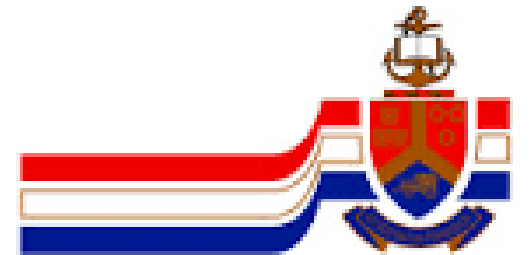
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