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REHYDRATE - an international HELPING working group to REtrieve historical HYDRologic dATa and Estimates

Miriam Bertola¹, Paola Mazzoglio², and the HELPING REHYDRATE working group*

¹Vienna University of Technology, Institute of Hydraulic Engineering and Water Resources Management, Wien, Austria

(bertola@hydro.tuwien.ac.at)

²Politecnico di Torino, Department of Environment, Land and Infrastructure Engineering, Torino, Italy

(paola.mazzoglio@polito.it)

*A full list of authors appears at the end of the abstract

Historical hydrological observations are often stored in printed documents and volumes of archives worldwide. This makes them practically inaccessible and unusable for modern hydrological studies as well as puts them at risk of permanent loss due to the deterioration of their medium. In addition to the intrinsic value of rescuing past observations, having access to historical data is essential for understanding better the complexity and changes in the hydrological cycle and its extremes.

Several data rescue initiatives exist, but the efforts are highly fragmented in space and time. Current tools for data digitization include optical character recognition (OCR) software and manual transcription. The latter is often carried out through participatory citizen science projects. The use of OCR software is cheap and fast, but it still requires a considerable amount of manual work due to the diversity of the documents, and its accuracy is, to date, not always acceptable. Manual transcription is more accurate, but extremely resource-intensive. For these reasons, there is a general need for better and less costly methods for hydrological data rescue. New tools are becoming available, and new technologies are developing rapidly.

In response to these challenges, the REHYDRATE Working Group has been proposed as part of the IAHS HELPING Science for Water Solutions decade in summer 2023 (<https://iahs.info/uploads/HELPING/WG%20Proposal%20REHYDRATE.pdf>). The Working Group aims to connect scientists engaged in data rescue, fostering a collaborative community to exchange knowledge, experiences, and best practices in hydrological data rescue and digitization. The ultimate objective is to promote and facilitate hydrologic data digitization initiatives and to ensure their accessibility through open-access repositories.

Approximately 80 scientists from diverse geographical regions have joined the Working Group at the time of writing this abstract. Initial meetings were organized in late 2023, and the group is currently working towards its first short-term objective: conducting a comprehensive state-of-the-art assessment of methods, initiatives, and articles related to the digitization of historical hydrological data.

HELPING REHYDRATE working group: Ayano Hirbo Gelebo, Ajin Rajendran Shobha, Mahesh Jampani, Shailesh Singh, Cristina Prieto, Subhabrata Panda, Hasan Zaifoglu, Anirban Bhowmik, Mourad Guesri, Stephan Dietrich, Zemedkun Tegegn, Alberto Viglione, Brunella Bonaccorso, Pierluigi Claps, Salvatore Manfreda, Gerbrand Koren, Simon Moulds, Abinesh Ganapathy, Alonso Pizarro, Igor Leščičen, Joaquín Jorquera, Renato Morbidelli, Grey Nearing, Dario Treppiedi, Sara Alexander, Kioni Gilite, Eleonora Dallan, Washington Otieno, Djan'Na Koubodana Houteta, Valeriya Filipova, Joan Rosselló-Geli, Sifan Koriche, Claudia Faerber, Jean-Philippe Vidal, Akpoti Komlavi, Kevin Vincent, Hasnat Aslam, John Musau, Alessio Domeneghetti, Riki Rahmad, Benedetta Moccia, Badji Amina, Serena Ceola, Paturel Jean-Emmanuel, Tirthankar Roy, Siva Sai Syam Nandikanti, Qian Zhang, Pedro Chaffe, Eduardo Mario Menciondo, Christophe Cudennec, Amina Badji, Xinyang Fan, Emna Gargouri, Maazouzi Izzeddine, Ayoub Korichi , Derdour Abdessamed, Mohammad Merheb, Rachdi Lamia, Benhamida Slimane , Kate De Smeth, Nigel Goody, Michelle Newcomer, Benhamida Slimane, Fairouz Slama, Benhamida Slimane Abdeldjabbar, Andrew Whitaker, Surendran U, Geetika Chauhan, Alberto Montanari, Aifang Chen, Xuezhi Tan, Yupeng Li, Shuanglei Wu, Yixin Yang, Junqiang Yao, Tarryn Payne