

## A Guide To Social Studies Fair Projects

This portion of the Social Studies Fair Bulletin is intended to identify key elements in a social studies fair project, describe how those elements should be developed, and offer incidental information for teachers and students about how to initiate, develop, and present a social studies fair project.

This information is intended for teachers, students and fair committee members. Teachers are an essential resource in the development of social studies fair projects. Therefore, it is important that they have proper, accurate information about fair projects to share with their students. Students will find this guide and any additional information given by their teacher useful in developing projects. Hopefully, it will avoid the wasted time students spend casting about for scattered information related to the projects. The information here also can be useful to fair committee members who must respond to many questions from both teachers and students about social studies fair projects. Finally, the information within this section can be of use to judges who must decide which project, among many, is most worthy of recognition.

### The Basics of a Social Studies Project

The development of every social studies fair project should consider these things:

- A. A topic
- B. A physical display
- C. A research paper
- D. An oral presentation

How to select a topic:

The best way for a student to select a topic is to identify something that they are curious about. Students always have questions about many different topics, subjects, events, people, and places. The student should identify one of these things or anything else they might be curious about and begin to think about it.

In considering a topic these things should be kept in mind:

1. Value—The topic should shed light on some significant aspect of human experience.
2. Originality—If a project has been the subject of a previous investigation, the proposed new study should either furnish substantial new evidence or provide a significant new interpretation.
3. Practicality—Sources must be available which one may use conveniently and without fear of censorship. The scope of the subject should be neither too limited nor too broad.
4. Unity—Every project must have a unifying theme, or be directed to a certain question or thesis, so that there is a point of departure, the development of the subject, and specific conclusions.

There are unlimited topics for study, especially at the local level. These include studies of business, churches, governments, biographies, community changes, and other such topics. It must be understood, however, that any one phase may involve one or all of the social sciences. For example, the evolution of business represents one phase of economics; its impact on people involves sociology; and its influence on people involves psychology. Even though the project encompasses many disciplines, it must be entered for competition in the discipline of major emphasis.

In selecting a topic the student should exercise care about the scope of the project. The project topic should not be so broad that it cannot be given good in-depth treatment. Conversely, the student's topic should not be too specific. For example, a topic such as World War II might be too broad, and it might be too difficult to cover everything about that historical event in one comprehensive project. On the other hand, a topic such as Louisiana in World War II might be too narrow because information on Louisiana's involvement in the war would be too limited. Some topics in between would, perhaps, be more suitable. Some examples are the War in the Pacific, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Allied invasion of Europe, the development of the atomic bomb, or the Battle of the Bulge.