

# H-Net Reviews

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*Network Conference for German Scholars of Book History and Print Culture / Netzwerk-Tagung für deutschsprachige Wissenschaftler\_innen im Bereich Buch-, Schrift- und Druckgeschichte.* Doris Lechner, Englisch Seminar der Universität Freiburg; mit Stefanie Lethbridge, Englisch Seminar der Universität Freiburg; Corinna Norrick-Rühl, Institut für Buchwissenschaft der Universität Mainz, 09.05.2013-10.05.2013.

Reviewed by Doris Lechner

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## Network Conference for German Scholars of Book History and Print Culture / Netzwerk-Tagung für deutschsprachige Wissenschaftler\_innen im Bereich Buch-, Schrift- und Druckgeschichte

There are plenty of social network sites that accommodate academics, but in the end, meeting colleagues face-to-face and personal academic exchange remain indispensable. The “Network-Conference for German Scholars of Book History and Print Culture” at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau on 9-10 May 2013 (organised by the authors of this report) was initiated with the aim to discuss the set-up for a small-scale forum of exchange with a specific local focus. The idea for such a forum originated from the fact that while the German discipline of the study of the book (Buchwissenschaft) has a long tradition, it seems to be rather thinly represented internationally. Following this demand to found a local platform for exchange and to increase international visibility, the conference brought together scholars of book and print culture who are based in German-speaking countries (D-A-CH) as well as international scholars working on German-language topics. The papers presented by scholars in the traditional book studies fields (Buchwissenschaft) as well as neighbouring fields (literature and culture studies, history, bibliography) covered the full breadth of book history approaches. An extensive discussion served to plan and put into action future forms of collaboration.

Fitting the network idea of the conference, a set of papers addressed the issue of collaborative book production. SIMONE ZWEIFEL (Basle) specifically emphasised the analysis of social networks when analysing book compilations, and exemplified this by approaching early modern (medicinal) recipe books - in particular those published by Johann Jacob and Anna Wecker - through the idea of collective authorship. ANETTE LÖFFLER (Frankfurt) reported on her project on the so-called *Libri de schismate*, short texts that were collected and written during the period of Papal Schism in the late fourteenth

and early fifteenth centuries. The Parisian manuscript indicates that a writers’ collective was involved in copying the text from an unrecorded original. CHARLOTTE KEMPF (Freiburg) underlined the Sorbonne print shop’s position between the manuscript age and the age of printing on the basis of dedication letters by editors and authors: Initially, these letters were used to characterise the content of the product while later they rather took on an advertising function. In her paper on the Native American translation of the Bible by John Eliot (*Up-Biblum God*, 1663), STEFFI DIPPOLD (Kansas City) looked at the transatlantic networks of colonial bookmaking and traced luxury bindings from the Colonies to England and back to the USA.

Quoting Isabel Hofmeier (“When books travel, they change shape”), MICHELE K. TROY (Hartford) also took a transcultural approach to publishing history. She discussed the role of the publisher Albatross as a cosmopolitan firm during a time when nationalism was firmly established in Europe, emphasising contradictions in Nazi censorship policy. Troy showed that censorship does not only have a cultural but also a financial dimension, as the circulation of Albatross’s books to some extent contradicted Nazi-propaganda. As book export was an important means for Nazi-Germany to gain foreign currency, they did not censor the whole company but only single titles of the publisher’s programme. SANDRA MARTINA SCHWAB (Mainz) also considered a commercial aspect of book production, as she surveyed the popularity and long afterlife of Richard Johnson’s bestseller *The Seven Champions of Christendom*. First printed in 1596/7, the book was continuously reprinted and adopted into transgenre versions until the twentieth century. Schwab argued for a closer look at this ‘forgotten’ longseller which appears to have been neglected because of an academic tendency

to ignore popular culture phenomena. WILLIAM A. KELLY (Edinburgh) in the presentation of his extensive work on German imprints in Scottish libraries, similarly pointed towards a deficit. He showed that although there are useful handbooks like VD16 (*Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*), there is still much bibliographical work to be done to supplement this important database.

DAVID OELS (Mainz) and SILKE KÖRBER (Berlin) both focused on the German *Sachbuch*. Oels considered the concept and genesis of the *Sachbuch* in the early twentieth century as a specifically German phenomenon. The *Sachbuch* always incorporates a form of knowledge transfer but also entertainment, and therefore neither translates into the English concepts 'textbook' or 'non-fiction book'. Oels argued that the *Sachbuch* serves to compensate the experience of crises - for instance the perceived crises of education, of reality, of the novel and of the book - through the transfer of knowledge into a popular format. Subsequent to this, Körber analysed illustrated non-fiction (or textbooks) of the twentieth century. With the incorporation of illustrations and photographs, they use a communication strategy distinct from text-oriented non-fiction and, as Körber concluded, ask for a new mode of reception and literacy of readers.

In two closely related papers, BIRGITTE BECK PRISTED (Karlsruhe) and ALEXANDER STARRE (Berlin) discussed the aesthetics of book production. Pristed stressed the necessity of including the venerable tradition of Book History/Book Studies in Eastern Europe and Russia, exemplified by Pavel Florenskij's and Vladimir Favorskij's philosophical work on the definition of the book. The Russian tradition emphasises the function of book cover design as part of a more general activity to organise cultural spaces. Pristed showed that under communist rule, the book developed an 'aura' distinct from its perception in capitalist countries. Starre provided insight on famous Knopf book designer William Addison Dwiggins' middlebrow concept of book design. While literary studies tends to focus on an exclusive analysis of the literary text, Starre's approach to Dwiggins' 'organic books' considers both content as well as materiality: Book designs need to be included in an analysis, as they are an integrative part of the work and the idea of its reception.

A highlight for all participants and guests was BILL BELL's (Göttingen/Cardiff) keynote address on an innovative approach to paratexts via book production networks. Using rich material from the archive of the publisher Murray, Bell convincingly expanded Gérard

Genette's theory of paratexts to also include the context of book production, that is, the actual workflow in publishing houses. Analysing the negotiations over the production of paratextual features such as illustrations, frontispieces, title pages as well as prefaces, Bell showed that paratexts not only surround the work but are an integrative part to the works themselves. Bell's keynote on the collaborative production of paratexts hence again pointed towards the importance of approaching book history via networks of production.

Most important for the purpose of the conference was a panel-length discussion dedicated to the foundation of a network of scholars of book and print culture based in or working on topics related to D-A-CH. The conference was able to bring together scholars from the UK, the USA, Israel, Switzerland, and Germany all of which agreed on the necessity for closer collaboration and communication in particular. Alberto Gabriele (Tel Aviv) emphasised the need to build bridges across national languages, traditions and disciplines in the study of the book and to find formats for a transnational layout that might already start at student level. Inspired by the blog that the *Nordisk Forum for Boghistorie* has put together <<http://nffb.wordpress.com/>> (10.07.2013), and going beyond the platform that the *Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing* (SHARP) <<http://www.sharpweb.org/>> (10.07.2013), provides internationally a short version of this report appeared in *SharpNews*, June 2013, the conference participants decided to launch a blog <<http://bookhistorynetwork.wordpress.com/>> (10.07.2013) in order to better communicate and present their research as well as to build new ties and find partners for collaborative projects. Furthermore, a study group on the relationship between texts and images (in books, periodicals, etc.) was founded, planning an online discussion group on the theory and practice of analysing the significance of interaction between text and image. The study group's goals are to hold a workshop in 2014 and collaborate on a special issue of a journal.

Overall, the conference proved how wide-spread book and print historical research is amongst German-speaking scholars not only in Europe, but worldwide. Spanning the late fourteenth to twenty-first centuries, the contributions offered several different disciplinary perspectives. Thereby the conference also brought to light many exciting possibilities for closer collaboration between dedicated scholars and ways to increase the visibility of D-A-CH research in the study of book and print culture.

**Conference Overview:***Introduction*

Stefanie Lethbridge (Freiburg); with Doris Lechner (Freiburg) and Corinna Norrick-Rühl (Mainz)

*1st Panel*

David Oels (Mainz): Sachbuch - Wissenstransfer in der Populärkultur

Silke Körber (Berlin): Das illustrierte Sachbuch. Strukturmerkmale und Entwicklungen im 20. Jahrhundert

Simone Zweifel (Basel/Luzern): Vermehren und verbessern. Zur Produktion von Kompilationen im späten 16. Jahrhundert

*Keynote Address*

Bill Bell (Cardiff/Göttingen): The Mahout on the Elephant: In Search of the Paratext

*2nd Panel*

Sandra Martina Schwab (Mainz): The History of a Forgotten Bestseller: Richard Johnson's The Seven Champions of Christendom

Anette Löffler (Frankfurt am Main): Die Libri de schismate - Überlegungen zum Umgang mit schismatischen Traktaten

*3rd Panel*

Birgitte Beck Pristed (Karlsruhe): Pavel Florenskij, Vladimir Favorskij und die Russische Buchkunst

Alexander Starre (Berlin): The Organic Book: William Addison Dwiggins, Alfred A. Knopf, and the Graphic Design of American Literature

*Network Discussion*

Corinna Norrick-Rühl (Mainz)

*4th Panel*

Charlotte Kempf (Freiburg im Br.): Johannes Heynlin von Stein und der Beginn der Druckgeschichte Frankreichs

Michele K. Troy (Hartford): The Albatross Verlag and Nazi Censorship

*5th Panel*

William A. Kelly (Edinburgh): Sixteenth-century German Imprints in Edinburgh Libraries: A Contribution to the Further Geographical Coverage of VD16

Steffi Dippold (Stanford): The Widow Factor: Gendered Transatlantic Networks of Colonial Bookmaking

*Closing Remarks and Discussion*

Doris Lechner (Freiburg)

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:

<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl>.

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