

PREFACE

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the first *Bulletin* reporting on GHI activities since I assumed the Institute's directorship last October. I arrived from Braunschweig, where I had served as director of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research and Professor of History since 2006. I have been delighted to return to Washington and to the GHI, where I was a Research Fellow from 2002 to 2006, and look forward to working together with old and new colleagues throughout North America.

As many of you will know, one of the great strengths of the German Historical Institute is the remarkable range of the research conducted at the Institute. This thematic breadth and openness fosters innovation as well as academic exchange and cooperation. The current projects of the GHI research fellows reflect the diversity and innovative potential of German and international historical research: ranging from a global history of the soy bean to a history of freemasons in the Atlantic World, from a history of risk and insurance in the early American Republic to a history of Jewish educational media, and from a history of German penal reform to an imperial history of the Boy Scouts of America. As director I will continue to cultivate this diversity of topics and approaches in order to attract the best junior scholars to the GHI and to make the Institute a place of vibrant intellectual exchange.

While thematic and conceptual diversity is essential for fostering creativity, each of the institutes in the Max Weber Foundation also needs to establish specific areas of research concentration and expertise. As the new director, I am introducing a set of research initiatives that offer not only the potential for innovation but also a maximum of opportunities for cooperating with colleagues in a wide variety of fields. I would like briefly to share two of these initiatives with you. The first is in the history of knowledge, a new approach that offers a great opportunity to pursue many topics and connect with many areas of historical scholarship. The history of knowledge is a dynamic field focusing on the actors, processes, and practices involved in the generation and circulation of knowledge, especially those extending beyond academic institutions. Since knowledge does not recognize borders, this initiative will also strengthen transnational perspectives. One special research focus will be on the intersection of knowledge

and migration, highlighting the role of adolescents as cultural translators in the shaping of “migrant knowledge.” You will read more about the research initiative in the history of knowledge and some of the individual projects associated with it in the next (Fall 2016) issue of the GHI *Bulletin*, which will have a thematic focus on the history of knowledge.

The second research initiative builds on and expands the GHI’s pioneering work in digital history. Most of you will be familiar with the GHI’s *German History in Documents and Images* (GHDI), an unparalleled online collection of primary source materials on German history in both German and English, which won the AHA’s James Harvey Robinson Prize. We have begun the process of revamping the GHDI project, drawing on leading experts in German history in order to review its content and conception — including the introduction of transnational perspectives on German history — and cooperating with digital history experts in order to make the project more responsive to its users. We are grateful for the tremendous interest in GHDI, especially in North America, and the support of our North American colleagues for the relaunch project. Beyond GHDI, our wider initiative in digital history seeks to connect European and North American developments in the field of digital history, defined broadly to include digital source collection and publication, digital forms of scholarly communication, and digital humanities tools for the analysis of historical sources. It is our goal to further transatlantic exchange on the challenges and opportunities of the digital turn in history through a variety of formats, including conferences, fellowships, and cooperative projects.

My term as GHI director began with a fall season of intellectually engaging events, the highlights of which we are sharing with you in this issue. The first feature article presents last fall’s Annual Lecture, delivered by Jerry Z. Muller (Catholic University of America) on the topic “Capitalism and the Jews Revisited.” In his lecture, Professor Muller brilliantly combines religious, intellectual, social, and economic history to explore the difficult, and potentially controversial, question of why Jews have been disproportionately successful in entrepreneurial and capitalist societies. In her incisive comment, Miriam Rürup (Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden, Hamburg) expands both the historical and historiographical context from “Jews and Capitalism” to the larger subject of “minorities and modernity.” The following feature article presents the Leibniz lecture delivered

by Leibniz Prize Winner Friedrich Lenger (University of Gießen) at the GHI on “Defining the Modern Metropolis.” In this article, Lenger, a former chair of the GHI’s Academic Advisory Board, uses his deep knowledge of the history of the city to analyze the connections between the famous “universal expositions” that punctuated the era from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century and the enduring transformations of the cities that hosted these expositions.

The next feature article presents the dissertation research of the latest winner of the Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize, awarded by the Friends of the GHI each November. In her article “The Prussians of the East: Samurai, Bushido, and Japanese Honor in the German Imagination, 1905-1945,” Sarah Panzer gives an overview of her study of German-Japanese transcultural engagement between the Russo-Japanese War and the end of the Second World War. Instead of reifying markers of difference, as in Orientalism or Exoticism, she argues, Germany’s engagement was framed around the reception and emulation of Japanese martial culture. In our final feature article, GHI Research Fellow Elisabeth Engel presents her research project on “Risk and Insurance during the Beginnings of American Independence, 1770-1840.” By analyzing the complex procedures by which insurers and insured systematized the world around them, she seeks to elucidate a new culture of “risk” that characterized and transformed the early American Republic.

As always, the conference reports reflect the diversity of the topics explored at our conferences and seminars, ranging from the history of fraternal networks in the Atlantic world since the late eighteenth century to post-WWII Allied war crimes trials to the economic history of “financialization” in the recent development of capitalism to the role of “heritage” in Jewish diaspora culture. The news section informs you about other Institute activities and publications and the upcoming events calendar gives you a preview of activities. Please also check our website <http://www.ghi-dc.org> as well as our Facebook page for up-to-date information on upcoming events, new publications, and calls for papers.

In closing, I would like to draw your attention to a series of new fellowships, including fellowships in the history of knowledge, digital history, the history of migration, the history of religion and religiosity, the history of family and kinship, and the history of race and ethnicity. I would also like to announce that, starting this year, the GHI will

be issuing an annual call for conference proposals, seeking not only proposals in the GHI's core areas of research but also proposals involving new topics of exploration and new approaches to historical research. For the current "Call for Proposals" (deadline: Aug. 1, 2016) and our fellowship program, please see our website. Finally, I would like to issue a special invitation to those of you working in the history of knowledge or in digital history to contact me if you have any ideas for possible cooperation.

Simone Lässig (Director)