

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES, SYMPOSIA, SEMINARS

BUCERIUS SEMINAR 2004: AMERICAN ARCHIVES AND AMERICAN HISTORY

Conveners: Kathleen Conzen (University of Chicago), Andreas Etges (Free University of Berlin), Christof Mauch (GHI). Made possible by a grant from the ZEIT Foundation Gerd and Ebelin Bucerius, Hamburg.

The first Bucerius Seminar on American History and American Archives took place from September 6–18, 2004. Based on the GHI's highly successful archival summer seminar in Germany, the GHI, the department of history of the University of Chicago, and the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies of the Free University of Berlin designed the new summer archives course. Ten doctoral students—seven from different German universities and three from the University of Chicago—visited American archives and libraries in Chicago, Madison, Washington, DC, and Boston.

The goal of the seminar was to prepare Ph.D. students in American history for their prospective dissertation research trips. They learned how to contact archives, use finding aids, and identify important reference tools, and they became acquainted with a dozen American research facilities. They gained insight into how historical materials are acquired, stored, and made accessible to scholars. In addition, the group met a number of prominent scholars who discussed their research strategies with them.

The program started with a reception on Labor Day. Kathleen Conzen, who had suggested such a seminar to the GHI, invited the group as well as colleagues and graduate students to her house. To our great pleasure, Oliver Gnad of the ZEIT Foundation was able to come to Chicago for a couple of days to say some words of welcome and to describe the foundation's programs.

The first two days of the seminar were organized by the excellent staff of Chicago's Newberry Library, led by Jim Grossman, Hjordis Halvorson, and Martha Briggs. Their task was both to give a general introduction to the American archival system, major finding aids, and research strategies, as well as present the large collections of the library. In one of the sessions on the second day, Kathleen Conzen, a specialist on urban history and German-Americans, and her colleagues Mae Ngai, who recently published a book on illegal aliens and American immigration policy, and Thomas Holt, one of the most prominent African-American

historians and a former president of the American Historical Association, shared their experiences and the unexpected trails they followed doing research. The most memorable credo was Mae Ngai's: "I believe in xeroxing everything."

The last day in Chicago began with a visit to the archive of the Circuit Court of Cook County in downtown Chicago, where Philip J. Costello described how social history can profit from using court records. Before taking the bus to Madison, the group was welcomed at the Special Collections Research Center of the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library. Daniel Meyer and his colleagues discussed the peculiarities of their archive, which includes many of the papers of famous professors who taught at Chicago.

The day in Madison included a very full program. Michael Edmonds and Harry Miller presented the immense library and archival collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society, and eloquently and impressively described the public mission of the institution. Stanley Kutler joined the group for lunch at the University Club and talked about "Chasing Sources": his fight for the Nixon tapes. In the afternoon, John Kaminski introduced the "Ratification of the Constitution Project," a major editorial project centered at the University of Wisconsin. The day had been very interesting, but long. Nevertheless, Jack Holzhueter, a former editor of the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* and arguably *the* expert on the history of Wisconsin, was able to revive the group with his many stories of sometimes difficult and unexpected discoveries, as well as some ingenious tips for someone doing local history. Trying to find descendants of a person? One way is to go to the cemetery and find out who is still sending flowers. Exhausted but full of ideas, the group enjoyed the student union's terrace on Lake Mendota, and more than one decided to come back to Madison for research.

After passing through major security on Saturday, September 11, 2004, the group flew to Washington. Sunday was free, but most of the participants met for an extended tour of monuments on and near the National Mall. Led by Kristina Scholz and Andreas Etges, the tour started at the National Japanese American Memorial and ended at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.

Monday was spent at the National Archives and Records Administration building in College Park, Maryland. Bob Coren had put together sessions on divisions of the archive, including Textual and Electronic Records, Records of Congress and Congressional Committees, Presidential Libraries, and the Nixon Presidential Materials. A highlight was the tour of the Special Media Division, where Bob Richardson showed Civil War battlefield maps, aerial photographs of Germany during World War II, and the original patent of Eli Whitney's cotton gin.

In the late afternoon, Robert Dallek, author of the best-selling Kennedy biography and a leading expert on the American presidency, came to the GHI to talk about doing research in Presidential Libraries. Every president tries to fool the public in order to create a certain image, Dallek argued, and one of his goals is to look behind this image. Since it takes several decades for enough relevant documents to be opened, Dallek's books on Lyndon Johnson and John F. Kennedy will be followed by a study of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. A reception at the GHI gave the group a chance to talk to Dallek in more detail and to get to know the GHI, its director, and some of its research fellows. On Tuesday, the group visited three different institutions in Washington. John Fleckner of the archive of the National Museum of American History presented the large holdings in business, engineering, communications, and advertising history, and also gave a brief overview of the Smithsonian Institution and its other collections. Later that day, William Burr, senior analyst at the National Security Archive, expertly discussed the intricacies of the Freedom of Information Act and strategies to gain access to classified documents. The day ended with a visit to Howard University and its famous Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, one of the largest collections on the history of African Americans. This was followed by a reception organized by Howard University's history department, where the group met faculty members and graduate students and was given a brief overview of the history of this important educational institution by the chairperson, Emory Joel Tolbert.

On its final day in Washington, DC, the group visited the Library of Congress. Daun Van Ee gave a behind-the-scenes tour of the stacks of the Manuscripts Division. Sara Duke and Martha Kennedy of the Prints and Photographs Division impressed everyone with the material they presented relating to the participants' topics. Next, Kathy Kerst talked about the vast and diverse holdings of the American Folklife Center. In addition, the group got a tour of the building and an introduction to the library's ever-expanding website.

At the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, the group got an in-depth look at a Presidential Library. Stephen Plotkin, Maura Porter, and James Hill described the textual and audiovisual collections, discussed questions of declassification, and presented photos as well as audio recordings, among them a couple of hilarious telephone conversations of John F. Kennedy about the reporting of the military's purchase of a special bed for his pregnant wife. He had not authorized this action, was rather angry, and enjoyed showing his anger.

The next and final day, the group visited the Massachusetts Archives. Michael Comeau and Martha Clark gave a tour of the archives and presented some of its treasures, among them the charter of the Massachusetts

Bay Colony, the Massachusetts copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, and Paul Revere's bill for his famous ride. In the afternoon, the group was welcomed at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. Even though the main building was under construction, Ellen M. Shea and others had prepared a wide selection of the library's holdings.

The Bucerius Seminar ended with a farewell dinner in Boston at the home of the parents of one of the American participants. Everyone agreed that the seminar had been enormously helpful, and expressed their hopes that other doctoral students will have a chance to take part in a similar summer course in the future.

The group and the organizers would like to thank the ZEIT Foundation and the GHI for their generous support, as well as all those institutions and individuals involved in making this first Bucerius Seminar a big success.

Andreas Etges

Participants and Their Projects

JULIA BROOKINS (University of Chicago), "White racial identities within the mobile societies of nineteenth-century America"

LEVKE HARDERS (Humboldt University Berlin), "Gender—Discipline—History: Female Graduates of German and American Studies from the 1920s to the 1950s"

GWENNAN ICKES (University of Chicago), "Changes in conceptions and understanding of American selfhood in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century"

TINA KÜHR (University of Bonn), "Imperial Propaganda and Education in the United States and the German Kaiserreich, 1889–1914"

RICHARD MERTENS (University of Chicago), "Stockbridge Indians"

MARTINA PURUCKER (University of Regensburg), "Monstrosities in Seventeenth-Century New England"

RALF RICHTER (University of Göttingen), "Innovation Clusters and Flexible Specialization: The Networks of the Machine Tool Industry in Chemnitz (Germany) and Cincinnati (U.S.), 1870–1930"

KRISTINA SCHOLZ (Free University of Berlin), "The Greatest Story Ever Remembered: American Ways of Memorializing the Second World War and Its Meaning"

STEFANIE TROJA (University of Göttingen), "Squatters in the Northwest Territory/Ohio, 1763–1812: A study in cultural and social history"

DAVID WIRTH, (University of Duisburg), "Western Diplomacy during the second Berlin Crisis (1958–1963)"