

ARCHIVAL SUMMER SEMINAR IN GERMANY, 2007

Seminar in Koblenz, Cologne, and Weimar, June 24–July 6, 2007. Jointly organized by the GHI, the Bundesarchiv Koblenz, and the Landeshauptarchiv Koblenz. Convener: Corinna Unger (GHI).

Between June 24 and July 6, the GHI's fifteenth archival summer seminar for American doctoral students took place in Germany. This year's group visited research institutions and met with archivists and scholars in Koblenz, Cologne, and Weimar. The aim of the seminar was to introduce the participants to the practical aspects of their prospective dissertation research in German archives and libraries. In the first part of the seminar, the doctoral students learned to read documents in old German handwriting. During the second week, they visited local, state, and federal archives and libraries to develop a sense of the diversity of the research institutions available. They also met with scholars engaged in archival research to discuss research methods and practices.

As in former years, the seminar started off with a one-week course in paleography, led by Walter Rummel of the Landeshauptarchiv Koblenz. In accordance with the participants' research topics, the documents he taught the group to read covered the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. In addition to an introduction to the evolution of German handwriting and the technical aspects of paleography, the course included an introduction to *Quellenkunde* and a tour through the Landeshauptarchiv.

Parallel to the paleography course, the group spent two afternoons at the Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Archivist Jörg Filthaut introduced the participants to the basics of *Archivkunde* and to the problem of "historical relativity": Not every document contained in the files has necessarily had influence on the course of history, whereas many of the decisions that did shape history never left a trace in the files. Nevertheless, the immense extent of the archive's holdings, which the group was shown during a tour through the stacks, suggests that there are many new perspectives yet to be discovered.

On the second afternoon at the Bundesarchiv, Tim Geiger, a historian working at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Berlin on the *Edition der Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik*, shared his own research experiences with the seminar's participants. Using his PhD dissertation—a study of the conflict between Atlanticists and Gaullists within the CDU/CSU in the 1960s—as an example, he offered helpful advice on how to identify relevant material and approach archives, and how to organize and structure archival research.

The next station of the summer seminar was Cologne, home to a large number of archives. The first one the group visited was the Archiv des

Erzbistum Köln. Joachim Oepen received the American students and explained the *Provenienzprinzip*, the system of organizing archival material most common in Germany. To understand this concept, one needs to realize how archival structures and holdings were shaped by historical developments. In the early nineteenth century, for example, secularization resulted in the breakup of church archives' holdings, which were transferred to state and local archives, creating a complicated network of diverse archives. When looking for material on a specific topic, one has to be aware of this multifaceted archival structure, a fact the participants came to realize by doing a hands-on exercise in working with finding aids.

This was followed by an afternoon at the NS-Dokumentationszentrum der Stadt Köln. Karola Fings led the group through the permanent exhibition set up in the EL-DE-Haus, the former Gestapo office and prison building, recounting the history of National Socialism in Cologne. Next, a presentation of non-printed sources such as inscriptions in the former prison cells and *Feldpostbriefe* emphasized how important it is for a historian to consider non-traditional sources as a means of integrating multiple historical perspectives and experiences.

On the second day in Cologne, Eberhard Illner welcomed the seminar group to the Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln. Illner started the day with a session on archival methodology, followed by a presentation of finding aids, historical dictionaries, and paleographical aids. He then gave a fascinating tour of the archive's holdings that told of the city's rich history: from papal charters and real estate books of the Middle Ages to the personal papers of Heinrich Böll, architectural models of the postwar era, and the remnants of Cologne's leftist scene of the 1980s.

The last station in Cologne was the photography department of the Museum Ludwig. By recounting the history of the collection, which includes the famous Agfa Archive, Bodo von Dewitz discussed both general museological questions and the specific nature of photographs as historical sources. Talking about the problem of how to present pictures that seem to portray reality but are themselves artifacts, he offered a lively account of the changes historical and artistic work with photography have experienced in the last decades.

After a quick stroll through the Museum Ludwig, the participants took a train to Weimar, the third and last station of the seminar. There, the group went to the Gedenkstätte Buchenwald, where it was given an excellent tour of the grounds by Daniel Gaede, who also illustrated the museological challenges that archivists, historians, and educators at the Gedenkstätte face every day. The questions of what to show, how to show it, and what not to show were also discussed with Wolfgang Röhl, who

opened the Gedenkstätte's collection to the participants. This collection includes archeological findings and donated as well as post-1945 memorabilia. In the third session at Buchenwald, Sabine Stein presented the archival holdings of the Gedenkstätte. Since the SS destroyed most of its documents at the end of the war, sources are scattered and incomplete, but the researchers at Buchenwald make a great effort to reconstruct the camp's history in detail. One of the most recent projects is the *Gedenkbuch*, a publication containing the names of those killed at Buchenwald.

The last day of the seminar was devoted to the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar. Michael Knoche led the group through the wonderful new building and explained its structure. This was even more impressive considering that the library, which specializes in German classical literature and writing, had suffered a great loss when a fire destroyed its Rococo reading room and library in 2004. Johannes Mangei presented the library's efforts to regain those books lost in the fire. The participants were also given insight into the library's digitization project of its famous holdings on Faust. A much smaller collection of the library is the so-called *NS-Raubgut*, which Jürgen Weber addressed. Some of the books the Nazis stole from Social Democratic libraries were kept in the library for documentation purposes, but were inaccessible to the public; under communist rule, many of them remained locked away.

Last but not least, Dorothee Brantz (SUNY Buffalo/TU Berlin) spent an afternoon with the group talking about practical aspects of archival research and answering the participants' questions. Drawing on her own experience as a graduate student from Chicago who did research in Germany, France, and the United States, she discussed different archival cultures and gave recommendations on how to approach archivists, manage one's limited time in the archives, and take notes efficiently. She encouraged the students to keep sight of their research interest in the midst of masses of fascinating but not necessarily relevant documents.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the individuals and organizations that contributed to the 2007 Summer Seminar in Germany. An announcement of the program for the 2008 seminar can be found on our web site at http://www.ghi-dc.org/scholarship_summer.html.

Corinna R. Unger

Summer Seminar Participants and Their Topics:

MICHAEL CALLAHAN, University of Virginia, dissertation project: "Making Witches: Torture, Scholarship, and Imagination in Twentieth Century Germany"

ANTHONY CANTOR, University of Toronto, dissertation project: "Learning to Listen: Music Education and Identity Formation in Early Twentieth-Century Germany"

KRISTEN EHRENBERGER, University of Illinois, dissertation project: "Through the Hygiene Eye: Public Health in Germany from the Perspective of the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden, 1900–1933"

KATHERINE HUBLER, Boston College, dissertation project: "Male Allies of the German Women's Movement, 1865–1919"

ADAM ROSENBAUM, Emory University, dissertation project: "The *Gemütlichkeit* of God's Country: Tourism and the Evolution of Regional and National Identity in Bavaria, 1870–1939"

SAGI SCHAEFER, Columbia University, dissertation project: "The Boundaries of Rural Identification: The German-German Border and the Transformations of Provincial Society, 1939–1961"

ERIC STEINHART, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, dissertation project: "The Black Sea Germans and the Holocaust, 1850–1945"

ELIZABETH STRAUSS, University of Notre Dame, dissertation project: "The Elderly in the Ghettos: A Study of Łódź, Vilna, and Riga, 1939–1944"

LYNN WOLFF, University of Wisconsin, dissertation project: "The Presence of the Past: W.G. Sebald's Literary Historiography"