Understanding Markets: Information, Institutions and History

Sponsored by the Hagley Museum and Library and the German Historical Institute

October 30 and 31, 2009 in Wilmington, DE, USA

To recognize the contributions of Austrian immigrant and market analyst Ernest Dichter, and to celebrate the opening of his rich business records, the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware and the German Historical Institute in Washington D.C. jointly invite proposals for the conference, “Understanding Markets: Information, Institutions and History” October 30-31, 2009 at Hagley.

Since markets are not transparent to those engage in them, and change continually over time, understanding markets is a complex process that involves a wide range of individuals and institutions. This conference invites historically-grounded contributions that explore the practices and institutions through which such efforts have proceeded in Europe and North America, ca. 1750-2000. Papers may consider many aspects of efforts to understand markets, such as the acquisition, dissemination, cost and reliability of information; institutionalization of research activities; the impact of secrecy, deception, bias, and misinformation; the influence of market research on production and marketing decisions; conceptual or theoretical foundations and assumptions; and instructive failures or successes. We encourage proposals to address who was engaged in efforts to understand markets, whether individuals such as salesmen, merchants, researchers, or purchasing officers; organizations, including firms, agencies, and consortia; or third party institutions, e.g. trade associations, information providers, and governments.

The conveners are Roger Horowitz and Philip Scranton of the Hagley Museum and Library and Hartmut Berghoff and Uwe Spiekermann of the German Historical Institute.

Proposals should be no more than 500 words and should be accompanied by a short c.v. The deadline for submissions is March 31, 2009. Travel support is available for those presenting papers at the conference. To submit a proposal or to obtain more information, please contact Carol Lockman, Hagley Museum and Library, PO Box 3630, Wilmington DE 19807, 302-658-2400, ext. 243; 302-655-3188 (fax); clockman@Hagley.org.