As an economic and social historian, one of the first things I did after assuming the directorship of the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, in April 2008 was to discuss how the GHI could be instrumental in supporting research on American business history with my new American colleagues. Comparing research in Europe and the United States, we noted how much more difficult it is to find archival collections—to even know of their existence—and, once familiar with them, to know whom to contact to gain access to them, in the United States. This is because Europe has a system of state and regional archives for business records, but American records are scattered across the country in a variety of public and private repositories with often disparate collections. We also quickly realized that, despite the rich history of American business and the exponential growth of business history as a discipline in the United States in the last few decades, there was no guide to introduce new researchers to archives in the field or to help experienced business historians discover new archival sources.

The GHI seemed perfectly suited to fill this gap. In its aims of fostering historical research on the United States and connecting academic communities across the Atlantic, the GHI has published a number of guides to archival resources in the past, such as *German Jews in the United States* (No. 24, 2008) and *The GDR in German Archives* (No. 14, 2002). Moreover, some of the institute’s new projects are now in the field of economic, business, and consumption history. Producing a guide to business history sources in the U.S., thus, fits well into our overall aims and supports our own research as it improves access to archival materials on U.S. business history for us and others as well.

To my delight, when I visited the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware, in the spring of 2008 and brought up this idea, Terry Snyder, Hagley’s Deputy Director for Library Administration, volunteered to take on the challenging task of compiling such a guide. She selected archives of interest and sent them a questionnaire that asked for pertinent contact information, an overview of the collections, and, most importantly, a listing of noteworthy collections of particular interest to business historians.

Given this procedure, the quality and depth of information on each archive presented varies according to the responses received. In some
cases, information from an archive’s web site or from published archival guides was used to supplement or, when no response was received, to supply information. Yet, for the most part, the entries represent the information that the archivists and librarians provided. As such, the guide is certainly not intended to be comprehensive. Mistakes and omissions are inevitable, and I encourage scholars to send corrections or suggestions to be incorporated into the online version of the guide (info@ghi-dc.org). Nevertheless, it is my hope that the guide will be of use to business historians around the world, offering them direction or making them aware of a wealth of business archives they may not be familiar with. In this respect, the guide’s geographical organization and index should be especially helpful, allowing scholars to search for individuals or businesses at a glance. Moreover, as a pdf file online at the GHI’s web site (www.ghi-dc.org, see publications and then search for reference guides), the guide can be searched by keyword.

Of course, a guide of this sort is not possible without the cooperation of a great many people, and not least of the archivists and librarians at all the participating institutions that gave selflessly of their time to complete the questionnaire. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to them. I would also like to express my appreciation to my colleagues at Hagley—to Associate Director Roger Horowitz for helping me find a highly knowledgeable person for the job, to Janet Hilyard for her assistance, and, above all, to Terry Snyder for the outstanding job she did compiling the guide, as well as for providing the cover photograph from Hagley’s collections. Finally, I would also like to thank Patricia Sutcliffe of the GHI for assisting in preparing the manuscript for publication. It is particularly gratifying, now two years into my tenure as GHI director, to see this initial goal come to fruition.

Hartmut Berghoff
Washington, DC, July 2010