This year’s fall issue reflects the German Historical Institute’s new research focus on economic and social history as well as the continuing diversity of its research and programs. This issue’s first article is devoted to a key topic in modern economic history: the history of capitalism. Although the term “capitalism” has fallen out of usage among economists and economic historians for some time, Jürgen Kocka’s article demonstrates that capitalism remains a powerful category of historical analysis. His magisterial reflections on the history of the concept, practice, and crises of capitalism shed new light not only on the past two centuries of social and economic history but also on the current economic crisis. His article was first delivered as the inaugural Gerald D. Feldman Memorial Lecture this past spring. The Feldman Lectures, which are to take place annually, commemorate Berkeley historian Gerald D. Feldman, who was a major contributor to the field of economic history and a stalwart supporter of the GHI. To ensure the continuation of the lecture series, the Friends of the GHI are raising funds for a Gerald D. Feldman Memorial Lecture Endowment. We thank everyone who has already contributed for their generous support, and encourage potential donors to visit our homepage www.ghi-dc.org for further information.

The Institute’s research concentration in a broadly-conceived economic history that includes cultural and social perspectives is also reflected in this issue’s “GHI Research” section. It introduces readers to the GHI’s new collaborative research project “Immigrant Entrepreneurship.” By researching the biographies of about 250 German-American entrepreneurs from 1720 to the present, this project seeks to open up new connections between economic history and the history of migration that should provide new insights in American, German, and transnational history.

The remainder of the articles in this issue reflect the continuing diversity of the Institute’s scholarly interests and public outreach. Pamela Smith’s article “Why Write a Book?” explores the connection between lived experience and the written word in early modern European books. What makes her article so engrossing is that she brilliantly connects the history of the book to early modern European intellectual history, the history of science, and economic and social history. Smith’s essay reflects the GHI’s continued commitment to the
history of early modern Europe; next year’s Transatlantic Seminar will also be devoted to the early modern era. Both Pamela Smith’s and Wolfgang Huber’s articles also illustrate the diversity of the cooperative ventures that the GHI is engaged in: Smith’s lecture was delivered at the Grolier Club in New York City at the opening of an exhibit of rare books and manuscripts from the Leipzig University Library, titled “In Pursuit of Knowledge,” which was part of the celebrations of the 600-year anniversary of the founding of the University of Leipzig. Huber’s article makes available the GHI’s Eleventh Gerd Bucerius Lecture, which he delivered this past June. The Bucerius Lectures, generously sponsored by the ZEIT Foundation Gerd and Ebelin Bucerius, are part of the GHI’s effort to foster transatlantic dialogue by inviting prominent public figures from Germany to Washington for public lectures and discussions. Huber, the former chair of the governing body of the Protestant Church in Germany, who has taken a leading role in inter-faith dialogue, spoke on the timely topic “Religion and Violence in a Globalized World.” The theme of globalization is also taken up in the reflections on the role that the humanities should play in the globalization process that Annette Schavan has contributed from her pivotal vantage point as Germany’s Federal Minister of Education and Research. Her remarks were presented during her visit to the German Historical Institute this past spring.

We hope that readers will also enjoy this issue’s conference reports and GHI news, which document the GHI’s commitment to supporting outstanding research on a great variety of historical topics. Please also check our website www.ghi-dc.org for a remarkable lineup of events and conferences during the coming year. If you live in the Washington metropolitan area, we hope to see you at one of our public events.

Hartmut Berghoff, Director