This issue’s first feature article presents the German Historical Institute’s eighth Gerald D. Feldman Memorial Lecture, which was delivered by James Van Horn Melton of Emory University this past May. Melton’s lecture on “Colonial Germans and Slavery on the Eve of the American Revolution: The Case of Ebenezer” examines the frontier community of Ebenezer in colonial Georgia, which was settled by exiled Protestant migrants from Salzburg in the 1730s and was for a time the most successful settlement in the colony. Exploring the question why the Ebenezer Salzburgers opposed slavery, Melton argues that their opposition to slavery had more to do with fear of enslaved Africans than sympathy with their condition. This fear was concerned not only with violence but with economic competition. It was precisely because the Salzburg settlers were not only farmers but showed great versatility in practicing a variety of crafts that they were concerned about competition from slaves. Melton’s article therefore sheds new light both on the economic strategies of the Salzburg settlers and on their motivations for opposing slavery.

The remainder of our features section presents a special forum with five articles on “Diversity in German History” from the early modern era to the late twentieth century. This special section is introduced by Till van Rahden, Anthony J. Steinhoff, and Richard F. Wetzell, who co-organized the recent conference from which the articles presented here were drawn. The first article in this section, by Jesse Spohnholz, presents a case study of the city of Wesel in the post-Reformation era to demonstrate that informal practices of “mutual dissimulation” played a crucial role in facilitating inter-confessional coexistence. Next, Helmut Walser Smith’s analysis of the writings of late-eighteenth-century travelers argues that travel accounts focused on observable, measurable, mapable surfaces — cities, states, territories, and people — gave way to a new way of seeing, namely a romanticization of landscape and a heightened attention to the senses that reflected a shift in the conception of nationhood from an exterior object to an interior identity. Moving forward into the nineteenth century, Nisrine Rahal’s study of the Hamburg kindergarten movement of the 1840s argues that the kindergarten became a key avenue for social and cultural reform. Since women were to play a central role in the kindergartens, disagreements over women’s proper roles led to growing divisions among kindergarten activists. H. Glenn Penny’s article uses German schools in Guatemala City, Buenos Aires, and southern Chile as lenses to study the development of German communities in Latin America in the interwar era.
Arguing that “German spaces” were not limited to Germany, Penny contends that the study of these German communities and the associated transnational networks reveals notions of “Germanness” that were much more fluid, inclusive, and diverse than is oft en assumed. In the final article in this section, Christopher Ewing analyses the intersection of sexuality and race by examining the confluence of gay sex tourism and gay rights activism in 1970s West Germany. Even as sex tourism continued to promote racial stereotypes that exoticized men of color, the increased persecution of gay men in North Africa, Greece, and postrevolutionary Iran led the West German gay community to take part in creating an international gay rights movement that was premised on extending a universalist gay identity to same-sex desiring men around the globe.

The conference report section once again reflects the wide range of the Institute’s academic program. As part of its new focus on the history of knowledge, the Institute organized conferences on missionary knowledge since the sixteenth century, the role of knowledge in journalistic practices, and knowledge production in state, scientific, and commercial bureaucracies. Other conferences and seminars from the first part of this year included the Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar on German History, the Junior Scholars Conference in Jewish History, as well as a conference on youth and rejuvenation in the twentieth century and one on twentieth-century German visions of the future. In the “news” section, we have the pleasure to report that the Institute’s “German History in Documents and Images” project has received a major grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft that will help to fund its relaunch. We would also like to draw your attention to the GHI’s new “History of Knowledge” blog, likewise announced in the news section.

This fall will see two major milestones for the German Historical Institute. In October the Institute will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary. We are using this occasion to host a panel discussion that will take a critical look back at the GHI’s founding in the context of 1980s Geschichtspolitik. In November, the Institute will officially open “GHI West,” our Pacific Regional Office in Berkeley, California. The new GHI West office will give us the opportunity to intensify and expand our cooperation with colleagues and institutions in the Western United States and Canada. We are proud of what the GHI has accomplished in cooperation with its many academic partners over the past thirty years and look forward to productive and inspiring cooperation in the future.

Simone Lässig (Director) and Richard F. Wetzell (Editor)