Prehistory

The history of German research institutes abroad reaches back to the founding of an archeological institute in Rome in 1829 under the patronage of the Prussian Crown Prince and later King Frederick William IV, which became a Prussian state institution in 1871 and a Reichsinstitut in 1874, and still exists today as part of the German Archaeological Institute. The history of German Historical Institutes abroad also began in Rome, with the founding of the first German Historical Institute, established in 1888 to facilitate the access of German scholars to the Vatican archives, which had been opened seven years earlier. The establishment of the next German Historical Institute did not occur until seventy years later, when a Deutsche Historische Forschungsstelle was opened in Paris in 1958 in the context of reconciliation of France and Germany under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer und Charles de Gaulle and the signing of the Treaty of Rome (1957), which established the European Economic Community. After the signing of the Franco-German Friendship Treaty in 1963, this research center was renamed German Historical Institute (GHI) in Paris to reflect its new status as a federal institute (Bundesinstitut) financed by West Germany’s Federal Ministry for Research and Technology.

Serious discussions about opening a GHI in North America began to take shape in the aftermath of the opening of a German Historical Institute in London in 1976. By 1978 a group of German and American scholars won the support of the Federal Ministry of Research and Technology for holding a series of exploratory meetings to study the feasibility of opening a GHI in the United States. This group included two German professors of American history: Erich Angermann (University of Cologne) and Günter Moltmann (University of Hamburg); two American professors of German history: Gordon Craig (Stanford University) and Gerald Feldman (University of California at Berkeley); the director of the German Historical Institute in London, Wolfgang Mommsen; the director of the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen, Rudolf Vierhaus; and the historian Gerhard A. Ritter (University of Munich). Under Angermann’s leadership and...
with financing from the Volkswagen Stiftung, this group held symposia in Cologne (1981) and Berkeley (1982), which resulted in a detailed proposal for a German Historical Institute in the United States, which Angermann drafted and submitted to the Ministry in July 1983. In November of that year, the Minister for Research and Technology forwarded this proposal to the Wissenschaftsrat, Germany’s top advisory body on research and science, with the formal request to study the possibility of opening a German Historical Institute in the United States. A year later, in November 1984, the Wissenschaftsrat issued a formal report endorsing the Angermann group’s proposal for an American GHI and recommending that the Institute be located in Washington, DC. The following year, on the recommendation of the Ministry for Research and Technology, the Bundeskabinett under Chancellor Kohl made the formal decision to found a German Historical Institute in the United States. Regarding the larger political context, there can be little doubt that the U.S. government’s decision (1980) to establish a Holocaust Museum in the nation’s capital made the proposal for a German Historical Institute in Washington especially timely in the eyes of some officials and politicians in Bonn. Charged with setting up the new Institute, the Ministry for Research and Technology convened an advisory founding commission “Aufbau DHI USA,” which included four members of the original Angermann group—Angermann, Mommsen, Ritter, and Vierhaus—as well as the historians Klaus Hildebrand (Bonn) and Michael Stürmer (Erlangen-Nürnberg) and the political scientist Peter Graf Kielmannsegg (Cologne). In March 1986, the Ministry presented the proposal for the opening of the GHI Washington to the parliamentary committee on research and technology and then advertised the directorship of the GHI Washington.  

Hartmut Lehmann, Founding Director of the GHI. Photo: GHI.


address by the German Minister for Research and Technology, Heinz Riesenhuber, and a lecture by Wolfgang Mommsen, president of the German Association of Historians (Historikerverband).  

The Institute was organized as a foundation (Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Institut in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika) financed by Germany’s Federal Ministry for Research and Technology and governed by a Board of Trustees that was chaired by Ministerialdirektor Josef Rembser as a representative of that ministry and included representatives of the Foreign Ministry and major German academic organizations such as the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the Max Planck Gesellschaft, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and the German Association of Historians. After the foundation of the GHI in Warsaw in 1993, the German Historical Institutes in Washington, London, and Warsaw were incorporated into a newly formed Stiftung Deutsche Historische Institute im Ausland (Foundation German Historical Institutes Abroad) financed by the ministry (renamed Ministry of Education and Research) and governed by a board of trustees. In 2002, all five German Historical Institutes then in existence (Rome, Paris, London, Washington, and Warsaw) became part of the new Stiftung Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland (DGIA, Foundation German Humanities Institutes Abroad), together with the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo and the Institute for Oriental Studies in Beirut. The DGIA, too, is financed by the Ministry of Education and Research and governed by a board of trustees mostly composed of representatives of major German academic organizations. In 2009, the newly founded GHI Moscow was incorporated into the DGIA, which will be renamed Max Weber Stiftung in the summer of 2012.

From the outset, the Institute’s academic work was supported and monitored by an Academic Advisory Council (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat), chaired by Erich Angermann (Cologne), that was composed of prominent German and American scholars including several members of the “founding commission”—Peter Graf Kielmannsegg (Cologne), Wolfgang J. Mommsen (GHI London), Michael Stürmer (Erlangen-Nürnberg), and Rudolf Vierhaus (Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen)—as well as Guenter Barth (Berkeley), Karl-Dietrich Bracher (Bonn), Thomas Nipperdey (Munich), and Mack Walker (Johns Hopkins).  

9 For the April 1990 move-in date, see Bulletin of the GHI 6 (Spring 1990): 25.

10 In November 1991 Angermann resigned his chairmanship of the Academic Advisory Council for health reasons; the Council then elected Rudolf Vierhaus as its chairman; Angermann continued as a member of the Advisory Council until his death in November 1992.
included representatives of the American Historical Association, the German Studies Association, the Society for German-American Studies, and the Conference Group for Central European History of the American Historical Association and was chaired by Vernon Lidtke (Johns Hopkins University), later by Geoffrey Giles (University of Florida), Konrad Jarausch (University of North Carolina), Gerald Feldman (University of California Berkeley), and David Blackbourn (Harvard University). Incorporated as a nonprofit organization, the Friends of the GHI have served as a vital link between the American scholarly community and the GHI and have also done fundraising for a variety of GHI projects.

The new Institute was to serve four core functions: to be a forum for the exchange of ideas between American and German historians and scholars in neighboring disciplines like political science, sociology, and economics; to assist German scholars who were pursuing research in the United States; to assist American historians of Germany, especially younger scholars embarking on research in Germany; and, finally, to give the junior scholars who joined the Institute as research fellows the opportunity to pursue their own research projects. The first group of research fellows was composed of junior historians working on wide range of topics in American history, German-American relations, and German history: Axel Frohn (1987-92), who studied nuclear control in German-American relations during the 1950s; Jörg Nagler (1987-92), who worked on enemy aliens and the American homefront during the First World War; Jürgen Heideking (1988-90), who researched the Office of Strategic Services and the German opposition to Hitler; Hanna Schissler (1988-92), who...
studied the role of gender in the restructuring of West German society, 1945-55; Sybille Quack (1989-92), who worked on Jewish women refugees in the United States; Stig Förster (1989-92), who investigated imperialism and slavery; and Kenneth Ledford (1989-91), who studied the history of German lawyers.12

The Institute’s public outreach began with its first lecture series in the spring of 1988, which featured five German scholars speaking on topics ranging from the history of gender relations in Germany to the history of life expectancy to the role of the legacy of National Socialism in the formation of West German political culture. Quite appropriately, the Institute’s first conference in December 1988 examined the work and influence of the first generation of German-speaking refugee historians, who had received their training as historians in Germany before emigrating to the United States after the Nazi seizure of power. Attended by several of the refugee scholars, including Felix Gilbert and Stephan Kuttner, this landmark conference set the story of the refugee historians in the context of the evolution of the German historical profession in the twentieth century, the onset of Nazi persecution, and the relationship between German and American historiography.13 The conference proceedings were published in the essay collection An Interrupted Past: German-Speaking Refugee Historians in the United States after 1933, edited by Hartmut Lehmann and James J. Sheehan, which appeared as the first volume in the GHI’s book series with Cambridge University Press in 1991. In addition to sponsoring the conference, the Institute hired Catherine Epstein as a research associate (1987-90) to compile a biographical and bibliographical handbook of German refugee historians, which was published in 1993 as A Past Renewed: A Catalog of German-Speaking Refugee Historians in the United States after 1933.14

The first conference’s interest in historiography was continued by the conference “Paths of Continuity: Central European Historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s” (1990), which examined the work of prominent German and Austrian historians including Friedrich Meinecke, Gerhard Ritter, Hans Rothfels, and Franz Schnabel in order to assess the impact of the Nazi regime on historical scholarship and the effect that professional continuity had on the practice of history in postwar West Germany.14 The Institute’s early focus on German-American history was pursued in a series of conferences (and essay volumes) examining German-American relations and the experience of emigration from the eighteenth to the twentieth century from a wide variety of perspectives. Thus the 1990 conference “German

12 For descriptions of most of these projects see Bulletin of the GHI 6 (Spring 1990): 11-26.
14 Hartmut Lehmann and James Van Horn Melton, eds., Paths of Continuity: Central European Historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
Influences on Education in the United States to 1917" examined American perceptions of Germany’s educational system (and vice-versa) as well as the complex process of reciprocal exchanges, adaptations, and adoptions in the field of secondary and university education. A year later, the conference “Women in the Emigration After 1933” (1991) employed the approaches of gender history and oral history to compare the experience of German women refugees in a wide variety of countries, including Great Britain, France, Palestine, the United States, Brazil, and China, while the conference “The Influence of German Immigrants on American Political Thought After World War II: Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss” (1991) examined Arendt and Strauss’s academic training and experiences in Germany and their subsequent careers and intellectual influence in the United States.

The fortieth anniversary of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1989 gave rise to a series of conferences on postwar German history, including “A Framework for Democracy: Forty Years of Experience with the Grundgesetz of the Federal Republic of Germany” (organized in cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania), “American Policy toward Germany, 1949-1955” (organized in cooperation with the University of Marburg), and “1949-1989: The Federal Republic of Germany as History” (organized in cooperation with Harvard University). In addition to these areas of special interest, from the outset the GHI sponsored conferences on a wide range of other topics, ranging from to the history of the Reformation (“The Reformation in Germany and Europe: Interpretations and Issues”) to the history of modern electoral politics (“Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Germany, 1890-1933”) and gender history (“Women in Postwar Germany: Culture, Society, and Politics”).

The preparation of the conference on the Federal Republic that took place at Harvard gave rise to a conflict over the Institute’s scholarly independence. Early in 1989, the Ministry of Research and Technology had indicated that it would make available extra funds for the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the Federal Republic. Shortly afterwards, the GHI’s director, Hartmut Lehmann was approached by...

15 Henry Geitz, Jürgen Heideking, and Jürgen Herbst, eds. German Influences on Education in the United States to 1917 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
17 Peter Graf Kielmansegg, Horst Mewes, and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt, eds., Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss: German Emigres and American Political Thought after...
the Center for European Studies at Harvard University about co-organizing a conference on the history of the Federal Republic. When Lehmann sent the program of the planned conference to the ministry in order to secure the promised special funding, the ministry refused funding on the grounds that the proposed program was too critical of the Federal Republic. Lehmann immediately contacted the chair of the Institute’s Academic Advisory Council, who convened an emergency meeting, at which the Advisory Council strenuously insisted on the Institute’s academic independence and opposed any interference from the ministry. In the end, the ministry gave in and agreed to make available the promised funding for the conference. Lehmann and the Academic Advisory Council had won an important victory for the Institute’s academic freedom.\textsuperscript{23}

The GHI’s academic independence and its integration into American academia probably helped to disperse any initial suspicions that the Institute might function as the purveyor of a government-sponsored version of German history.

\textbf{The Junker Era (1994-1999)}

After Hartmut Lehmann’s term as director ended in 1993, Hartmut Keil served as acting director for a year until Detlef Junker of the University of Heidelberg took up the post of director in 1994. The position of deputy director was held by Martin Geyer from 1995 to 1997 and by Christof Mauch from 1998. While the Institute’s research and conference program continued to be characterized by a diverse range of topics and approaches, under Junker’s leadership the GHI developed an academic focus in the area of twentieth-century
international relations and the history of the Cold War. This thematic focus gave rise to a collaborative research project on the history of the United States and Germany during the Cold War that resulted in the publication of the two-volume handbook *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War, 1945-1990*. Published in both German (2001) and English (2004) and comprised of more than a hundred essays by specialists in postwar German-American history, this handbook quickly established itself as a standard reference work providing unrivaled coverage of German-American political, economic, social, and cultural relations from the end of the Nazi regime to German unification in 1990.24

The Institute’s focus on international history under Junker’s leadership was also reflected in a series of major GHI conferences (and essay volumes) on the history of international relations and transnational history that had begun in the Lehman years. The nineteenth-century foundations of the international system were explored in the 1997 conference “The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848: Episode or Model?” which focused on whether this era witnessed a transformation of European politics from a competitive system to a concert of powers.25 Two GHI conferences examined key international conferences and treaties of the interwar period: While “Genoa/Rapallo and the Reconstruction of Europe” (1989) reexamined the 1922 Genoa conference, one of the great failures of interwar diplomacy, and presented new findings on the German-Soviet Rapallo treaty,26 “Germany and Versailles 75 years After” (1994) drew on newly available sources and a wealth of recent scholarship to assemble a new synthesis revising negative assessments of the Versailles Treaty.27 Focusing on German-American relations, the 1993 conference “Mutual Images and Multiple Implications: American Views of Germany and German Views of America” probed the interaction between stereotypical images and changing historical circumstances,28 whereas the


1995 conference “National Interest and European Order” analyzed Germany’s role in European politics from the interwar period through the era of detente to the post-Cold War period. Several conferences moved beyond the history of international relations to study transnational history. Thus the landmark conference “The Mechanics of Internationalization,” co-sponsored with the GHI London in 1996, proposed the term “internationalism” to analyze two interrelated processes that gained critical momentum from the mid-nineteenth century: the internationalization of cultural, political, and economic practices and the effort to reform society by way of transnational cooperation. The conferences “1968: The World Transformed”(1996) and “America’s War and the World: Vietnam in International and Comparative Perspectives” (1998) approached their subjects from transnational and international perspectives.

Conferences on “Total War”

Another major series of GHI conferences and edited collections, which began already during the Lehmann years, were the “Total War” conferences, organized by Stig Förster and Roger Chickering in collaboration with other scholars, which systematically investigated the origins and development of modern warfare. The first conference, “On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861-1871,” took place in 1992 and investigated the complex antecedents of total war by comparing the experiences of the U.S. Civil War and the German wars of unification, arguing that changes in weaponry, the reorganization of national economies for war, and the increasing importance of propaganda made these wars distinctly modern. The next conference, “Anticipating Total War?” (1994), explored the discourse on war in Germany and the United States in the years 1871-1914 in a great variety of forums, including soldiers, statesmen, women’s groups, and educators. The third conference, “How Total Was the Great War?”, convened in 1996, analyzed the experience of the First World War as the first large-scale industrialized military conflict in world history, paying special attention to the systematic erosion of distinctions between military and civilian spheres that was characteristic of “total war.” The next conference (1999) studied the interwar era’s “Shadows of Total War” in Europe, East Asia, and the United States by exploring the lingering consequences of the First World War, including efforts to analyze its military significance, attempts to plan for another general war, and several 1930s episodes that foreshadowed the war that erupted in 1939. The fifth conference, held in 2001, used the
“total war” paradigm to examine the Second World War by analyzing modes of combat, the mobilization of economies and societies, the vulnerability of noncombatants, and the legal and moral issues raised by industrialized warfare.\textsuperscript{37} Finally, a conference on “War in an Age of Revolution” addressed the question whether revolutionary warfare on both sides of the Atlantic extended 18th-century practices or introduced new forms of warfare.\textsuperscript{38}

The Mauch Era (1999-2007)

When Detlef Junker’s term as director ended in 1999, Deputy Director Christof Mauch became acting director and was appointed to a regular term as GHI director starting in 2002. From mid-2002 until early 2007 Dirk Schumann served as deputy director. Under Mauch’s leadership, the GHI initiated two major collaborative projects: “German History in Documents and Images” and “Competing Modernities.” Started in 2003, “German History in Documents and Images” aimed at making available online a large collection of primary sources (both texts and images) on German history since 1500 in both the original German and in English translation.\textsuperscript{39} Coordinated by Kelly McCullough and funded by generous grants from the Max Kade Foundation and the ZEIT Foundation Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius, the project was divided into ten chronological sections, whose primary sources were selected and introduced by leading historians: Thomas Brady (for the period 1500-1648), William Hagen (1648-1815), Jonathan Sperber (1815-1866), James Retallack (1866-1890), Roger Chickering (1890-1918), Eric Weitz (1918-1933), Richard Breitman (1933-1945), Volker Berghahn and Uta Poiger (1945-1961), Konrad Jarausch and Helga Welsh (1961-present). Completed in the spring of 2012, the GHDI project has won widespread acclaim and is being used in countless history classes across the United States and abroad; its website is visited by more than 8000 unique visitors per day from all over the world. In 2011, it was awarded the American Historical Association’s prestigious James Harvey Robinson Prize, which honors teaching aids that have made outstanding contributions to the teaching and learning of history.

The second collaborative research project, “Competing Modernities: Germany and the United States, 1890 to the Present,” sought to systematically compare the historical development of the United States and Germany from a number of vantage points over an extended period. Funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung (Stuttgart)

\textsuperscript{37} Roger Chickering, Stig Förster, and Bernd Greiner, eds., \textit{A World of Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937-1945} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

\textsuperscript{38} Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, eds., \textit{War in an Age of Revolution, 1775-1815} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

\textsuperscript{39} \url{http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org}
and co-directed by Mauch and Kiran Patel (then Humboldt University Berlin), the project resulted in the publication (in German and English) of a collection of essays co-written by German and American scholars that compare numerous aspects of American and German politics, society, economy, and culture since 1890—including religion, the environment, law, consumption, gender, popular culture, the welfare state, education, and the media—revealing that the two countries were in some respects more similar and in others more different than is widely assumed.40

The GHI’s program of conferences (and essay volumes) continued to expand, with several areas of concentration. First, a number of conferences continued the GHI’s exploration of the history of German-American relations: “GI’s in Germany” (2000) analyzed the social, military, and political history of the American military presence in Germany since 1945; “Berlin-Washington, 1800-2000” (2000) sought to assemble a comparative cultural history of the relations between architecture, political ideas, and social reality in the two capitals;41 “American Detente and German Ostpolitik”(2002) investigated Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik with a focus on how West Germany’s allies, adversaries, and governments around the world reacted to it.42 Another series of conferences provided broader comparative and transnational perspectives on European and transatlantic history: the 2001 conference “Europe in Cross-National and Comparative Perspective” offered a critical analysis of the cross-national turn European history by engaging the methodological, and theoretical questions involved in comparative history;43 the 2004 conference “The Atlantic Community Unravelling? States, Protest Movements, and the Transformation of U.S.-European Relations, 1969-1983” provided new insights into the changing dynamics of transatlantic relations during the era of détente;44

40 Christof Mauch and Kiran Patel, eds., Wettlauf um die Moderne: Die USA und Deutschland von 1890 bis heute (Munich: Pantheon, 2008); Mauch and Patel, eds., The United States and Germany during the Twentieth Century: Competition and Convergence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).


43 Deborah Cohen and Maura O’Connor, eds., Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective (New York: Routledge, 2004).

and the 2007 conference “Histories of the Aftermath: The European Postwar in Comparative Perspective” revised research on postwar Europe by arguing that postwar political stability must not be viewed as a quasi-natural return to previous patterns but as a conscious attempt to establish normality against the lingering memories of wartime violence.45 A third group of conferences approached a variety of topics from the perspective of broader international and sometimes global history: the 2001 conference “Global Hollywood: Rethinking the National, Transnationality and Globalization” probed the relationship between cinema and identity by examining the ways in which Hollywood’s influence has figured in the articulation of regional, national and transnational cinemas, and the 2003 conference “Historical Justice and International Perspective: How Societies Are Trying to Right the Wrongs of the Past” (2003) explored the diversity of the ways societies have tried to right past wrongs by studying the problems of material restitution, criminal justice, memory, and reconciliation in comparative perspective.46

The Mauch era’s major new thematic accent in the GHI’s program of conferences (and essay volumes) was on environmental history. The first conferences on this theme explored key features of the physical environment: while the 2002 conference “Landscapes and Roads in North America and Europe” explored the relationship between roads and landscapes,47 “Rivers in History: Designing and Conceiving Waterways in Modern Europe” (2003) studied the impact of rivers on humans and that of humans on rivers in national and transnational settings.48 The relationship between nature and the built environment was the subject of the conferences “The Pursuit of Public Happiness: Gardens and Parks in Europe and North America” (2005)49 and “The Place of Nature in the City in Twentieth-Century Europe and North America” (2005).50 Finally, an important series of conferences focused on the intersection of environmental history with other fields of history: “Natural Disasters and Cultural Strategies: Responses to Catastrophe in Global Perspective” (2004) demonstrated that how people have dealt with natural disasters has depended on social and cultural patterns as well as political and economic structures;51 “War and the Environment” (2004) examined how warfare has affected the environment and how environmental conditions have changed the character of combat;52 “Turning Points in Environmental History” (2005) tackled big-picture questions in environmental history, including the land use, the challenges of cities, the rise of nation-states, and environmental

50 Sonja Dümpelmann and Dorothee Brantz, eds., The Place of Nature in the City in Twentieth-Century Europe and the United States (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, forthcoming).
52 Charles E. Closmann, ed., War and the Environment: Contexts and Consequences of Military Destruction in the Modern Age (College Station, TX, 2009).
activism;53 “Colonialism, Post-colonialism, and the Environment” (2006) explored how colonial governments translated ideas about the management of exotic nature and foreign people into practice;54 and “Environmental History and the Cold War” (2007) investigated the links between the Cold War and the global environment, ranging from the impact of nuclear weapons to the political repercussions of environmentalism.55 To bring the topic of environmental history to a larger public, the GHI also organized a public lecture series on “nature in German history,” which resulted in an important essay volume.56

Bucerius Lectures, German Unification Symposia, Feldman Memorial Lectures

Under Mauch’s directorship the GHI Washington inaugurated two new public lecture series. The first was the Gerd Bucerius Lectures financed by the ZEIT Foundation Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius, which have brought to Washington a number of eminent German and European public figures, including former German Chancellors Helmut Schmidt (2003) and Gerhard Schröder (2011) as well as former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer (2007); distinguished British experts on German affairs Ralf Dahrendorf (2001) and Timothy Garton Ash (2005); Rita Süßmuth (2003), former President of the German Bundestag; and Jutta Limbach (2008), former chief judge of the German Supreme Court; Catholic theologian Hans Küng (2002) and Protestant Bishop Wolfgang Huber (2010); the director of Berlin’s Jewish Museum, Michael Blumenthal (2004); Leipzig conductor Kurt Masur (2006) as well as former Saxon Minister President Kurt Biedenkopf (2009). The second new lecture series was the German Unification Symposium, which has taken place annually on October 3, since 2001, and features lectures by public figures who played important roles in the East German revolution of 1989 and German unification. Speakers in the series have included: Joachim Gauck and Marianne Birthler, the first two Federal Commissioners for the Records of the Ministry for State Security of the Former GDR; Jens Reich and Bärbel Bohley, two key figures in the East German opposition movement; as well as Markus Meckel, Foreign Minister of the German Federal Republic in 1990. Since 2007, this annual symposium has been financed

53 Frank Uekötter, ed., Turning Points in Environmental History (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).
by the Hertie Foundation. Under Hartmut Berghoff’s directorship, the GHI added another annual lecture series, the Gerald D. Feldman Memorial Lectures, which honor the memory of the late Gerald Feldman (University of California at Berkeley) who had a long association with the Institute and served as president of the Friends of the GHI. The first three Feldman lectures were delivered by the distinguished historians Jürgen Kocka, Margaret Lavinia Anderson, and Gerhard A. Ritter.

**African Americans and Germany**

Since the middle of the past decade, another thematic focus of the GHI’s activities has been African American history and the experiences of African Americans in Germany. Following an earlier GHI conference (2000) on the theme “Ethnic Encounters and Identities: German, American, and African Perspectives,” the 2006 conference “Crossovers: African-Americans and Germany,” organized in cooperation with the University of Münster, sought to translate the paradigms of the black diaspora and the Black Atlantic into the German context and to reconstruct the interaction of African Americans and Germans from the 18th century to the present. Exploring the subject further, the 2009 conference “Black Diaspora and Germany Across the Centuries” retraced six centuries of perception and contact between blacks of diverse origins (from the Americas, the Caribbean, the Byzantine Empire, Asia, Africa, and Europe) and people from the German-speaking parts of Europe from the Late Middle Ages to the First World War. Shifting focus to the 20th century, the 2009 conference “African-American Civil Rights and Germany in the 20th Century,” organized in cooperation with Vassar College, brought together scholars of history, literature, and cultural studies to explore the links between the African-American Civil Rights Movement and Germany throughout the twentieth century. In collaboration with Vassar College and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies, the GHI also participated in the collaborative research initiative “The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany,” which

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received the NAACP’s Julius E. Williams Distinguished Community Service Award in 2009. This research project has created a digital archive and online research portal on *The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany*, which explores the connection between the U.S. military presence abroad and the advancement of civil rights in the U.S.59 As part of this collaborative project, the GHI mounted the 2008 exhibition “African American Civil Rights and Germany,” which has since travelled to nearly twenty cites in the U.S., Germany, and Great Britain. To promote research on African American and German interactions, under Hartmut Berghoff’s directorship the Institute also established a doctoral fellowship program that enables two graduate students to spend a year in residence at the GHI. Most recently, the thematic focus on African American history was reflected in a 2012 conference on “The Globalization of African-American Business and Consumer Culture,” which investigated the global impact of African-American businesses and consumer cultures.

**The Berghoff Era, 2008-Present**

After Christof Mauch left the directorship of the GHI to take up a professorship at the University of Munich in April 2007, Gisela Mettele and Anke Ortlepp successively served as acting directors until April 2008, when Hartmut Berghoff, until then director of the Institute of Economic and Social History at the University of Göttingen, took up the post of GHI director. With the new director, Uwe Spiekermann and Philipp Gassert arrived as deputy directors (Gassert until his departure in 2009); in 2011, Uwe Spiekermann was joined by Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson as deputy director. In line

with his own expertise as an economic historian, Berghoff brought two new thematic foci on economic history and on the history of consumption to the Institute. Most importantly, perhaps, the focus on economic history is reflected in the collaborative research project “Immigrant Entrepreneurship: German-American Business Biographies, 1720-Present,” which is funded by a large five-year grant (2010-14) from the Transatlantic Program of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany through funds of the European Recovery Program (ERP) of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. This project explores the entrepreneurial and economic capacity of immigrants through a study of the German-American example. By tracing the lives, careers, and business ventures of German-American businesspeople, the project seeks to integrate the history of German-American immigration into the larger narrative of U.S. economic and business history. Coordinated by a project team at the GHI and a distinguished board of editors, an interdisciplinary group of scholars from both sides of the Atlantic is contributing articles to an online biographical dictionary that integrates the biographical articles with broader contextual essays and a large collection of archival material.60

A second collaborative research project that has gotten underway recently is “Transatlantic Perspectives: Europe in the Eyes of European Immigrants to the United States, 1930-1980,” a four-year project (2010-14) that explores the role of European migrants in transatlantic exchange processes during the mid-twentieth century. Financed by a generous research grant from the German Ministry of Education and Research, this project is the first Nachwuchsforschergruppe (junior scholars’ group) for doctoral students within the foundation DGIA and is coordinated by postdoctoral Research Fellow Jan Logemann in close cooperation with Hartmut Berghoff. The project examines how migrant professionals involved in business, consumer culture, urban development, and the social sciences acted as conduits for social and intellectual transfer both by adapting their European professional heritage to their work in the United States and by translating American innovations
to the context of their European homelands. The project takes the form of four individual research projects, on emigrés and the transformation of American consumer culture, 1920-1970 (Jan Logemann), American urban planning and city life in the context of transatlantic migration since 1920 (Andreas Joch, Doctoral Fellow), gender, exile, and social science careers in Central Europe and the United States, 1940-1980 (Barbara Reiterer, Doctoral Fellow), and German business in the United States after 1945 (Corinna Ludwig, Doctoral Fellow). The project also organizes annual summer seminars, the first of which took place in 2011 on the theme “Europe—Migration—Identity” in cooperation with the University of Minnesota.61

The Institute thematic focus on economic history under Hartmut Berghoff has also been reflected in a series of conferences (and essay volumes) on different aspects of economic history and the history of consumption. Thus the 2008 conference “Decoding Modern Consumer Societies” featured studies of consumption in Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa in order to consider how political, business, and environmental history, cultural, gender, and intellectual history, anthropology, and the history of science can help us decode modern consumer societies.62 In 2009, a conference on “The Short- and Long-Term Economic Effects of German Exploitation in Occupied Countries” brought together research on a wide range of Nazi-occupied countries, demonstrating that German coercion played a greater role in work relations than in company decision-making and that the occupied countries displayed substantial variations in economic development. Moving into the postwar period, the conference “Falling Behind or Catching Up? The East German Economy in the Twentieth Century” (2009), co-sponsored by the Stift ung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur, challenged received historical narratives by examining not just the decline but also the relative success and longevity of East Germany’s economic system. The history of Western market economies was explored by the conference “Understanding Markets: Information, Institutions and History” (2009), co-sponsored by the Hagley Museum and Library; it examined how people have sought to understand markets and thereby reduce risk, whether based on business acumen or on the tools of scholarship.63 In 2010, “Cultures of Credit” investigated the history of consumer credit in Europe, the United States, and Japan with particular attention to the transition from face-to-face credit relations to institutionalized lending,64 while “Globalizing Beauty” examined the global development of

61 See http://www.transatlanticperspectives.org/

62 Hartmut Berghoff and Uwe Spiekermann, eds., Decoding Modern Consumer Societies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).


conceptions of beauty, especially in the context of modern consumer societies, in which the pliable body, shaped by fashion, cosmetics, or surgery, has become a major object of consumption and spending. In 2011, four conferences address different aspects of economic history: “Going Global” reappraised the role of family firms (as opposed to large managerial enterprises) in the globalization process by examining the strategies that family businesses use in their international ventures, while “Risk and Uncertainty in the Economy,” co-sponsored by the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, brought together historical, sociological, and anthropological perspectives to study how economic actors have dealt with sources of risk and uncertainty in different economic systems and periods. The conference “Feeding and Clothing the World” featured a wide range of analytical perspectives on the global history of cash crops, demonstrating the commercialization not only of goods but also of human labor; finally, the conference “Transatlantic Tourism” brought together historians of tourism, technology, and mobility to better understand the cross-continental flows of tourists from the United States to Europe, which grew to mass proportions in the last third of the nineteenth century.

As this overview demonstrates, the thematic focus on economic history encompasses a wide variety of approaches and themes and most often takes the form of comparative or transnational projects and conferences. It is also open to other historical approaches from cultural to social and political history and to neighboring disciplines. The transnational approach to economic history is also exemplified by the research projects of GHI academic staff, including Ines Prodoehl, who studies the global history of the soybean (1900–1950), Christina Lubinski, who investigates the activities of German and American companies in India (1880–1970), and Uwe Spiekermann, who examines the history of standardization and quality control during the twentieth century in transnational perspective. The conferences dealing with the history of consumption must also be seen in connection with the GHI’s new book series “Worlds of Consumption,” published with Palgrave Macmillan, in which several essay volumes featuring revised and peer-reviewed versions of the papers from several of the conferences are being published.

Moreover, despite this thematic focus, the individual research projects of the Fellows as well as the GHI’s conference program continued to be characterized by great diversity. The current fellows are working on projects in the history of communication and technology
Clelia Caruso’s project on the use and interpretation of the telephone in the United States and Germany, 1890–1980), the history of youth and youth movements (Mischa Honeck’s project on the global history of American Boy Scouting, 1910–1960), the history of migration and citizenship (Miriam Rüurup’s project on the history of statelessness, 1919–1961), African-American history (Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson’s project on Marian Wright Edelman, the Children’s Defense Fund, and the civil rights movement) and legal history (Richard Wetzell’s project on the history of German penal reform, 1870–1970). This diversity of interest is also reflected in the GHI’s conferences, which have recently included conferences on “Twentieth-Century Youth Organizations and International Relations,” “Illegality, Politics of Removal and Statelessness”, “Criminal Justice in Modern Europe, 1870-1990,” “The Transnational Significance of the American Civil War,” and “Conceptualizing the Late Twentieth Century in German and American Historiography.” The rotation of research fellows and directors, who work at the Institute for limited terms, guarantees that GHI research will remain changing and diverse.

Library and Publication Program
As part of its mission to support American scholars of German history, the Institute has built up a substantial library collection. Public access to the library greatly improved in the spring of 1990, when the Institute moved into the Woodbury-Blair mansion, which features a beautiful reading room as well as movable stacks in two large basement rooms to house the previously scattered collection in one central place. At the time of the move, the library held about 8,000 titles and subscribed to about 150 periodicals.\(^65\) In the days before the internet, the library made a special effort to collect printed finding aids to German archives so that Americans would be able to research archival holdings before going on archive trips. Over the course of twenty-five years, the library’s holdings have now grown to over 48,000 titles and subscriptions to over 200 journals.

From the start, the Institute also developed an active publishing program. Starting in the fall of 1987, the Institute began publishing its Bulletin twice a year to inform a larger audience about the Institute’s activities. Initially not much more than a newsletter, the Bulletin has since grown into a scholarly journal with a circulation of more than 7,000 copies. In 1989, the GHI began publishing a series of “Reference Guides,” beginning with a German-American guide to scholarships for historians and social scientists and a guide to

finding aids for German archives. Publishing about one reference guide per year, the Institute has now published twenty-five guides on wide range of topics including medieval history, women’s history, Jewish history, East German history, American business history, and German Americana. In order to make the research presented at its conferences available to a larger audience, the Institute entered into an agreement with Cambridge University Press to publish the “Publications of the German Historical Institute” series. The first volume in the series appeared in 1991; to date, over fifty volumes have appeared in the series, which now includes not just essay volumes but also monographs. This series has become the signature series of the institute; books published in it have garnered several prestigious prizes including the Hans Rosenberg Prize of the Central European History Society66 and the American Historical Association’s George L. Mosse Prize.67 Sales figures also attest to the success of the series. The series’ bestseller, 1968: The World Transformed edited by Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, had sold more than 3,000 copies as of early 2012, and several other tiles had sold between 1,500 and 2,400 copies. Total sales of all titles had surpassed 52,000 copies by 2012. In 1992, the Institute also started publishing a book series dedicated to American and transatlantic history, the “Transatlantische Historische Studien,” in cooperation with the Franz Steiner Verlag. This series features both monographs and essays volumes by German scholars of American history in transatlantic relations and is widely recognized as the most prestigious series in the field; to date more than forty volumes have been published. Since 2004, the Institute also publishes the series “GHI Studies in German History” in collaboration with Berghahn books, and since 2012 the “Worlds of Consumption” series with Palgrave Macmillan.

**Programs for Junior Scholars**

From the outset, the Institute took seriously its mission to offer support to junior scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. As a service to German graduate students of American history or transatlantic relations, the Institute began offering dissertation scholarships designed to fund archival research in North American archives. In the first five years of the GHI’s existence, the Institute awarded about ten such scholarships per year. From 1991 to 1997, the Institute also offered postdoctoral fellowships funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung, which were administered in conjunction with the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies and brought three (German as well as American) scholars per year to Washington for a year of postdoctoral research. From 1997 to the present, the Institute has attempted to offer one postdoctoral fellowship in each of the four academic years.  

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66 Awarded to Monika Black’s *Death in Berlin* in 2012.
67 Awarded to Suzanne Marchand’s *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* in 2010.
Over the past twenty-five years, the Institute's fellowship program has grown tremendously. In recent years, the GHI has awarded about 25 doctoral fellowships and 12 postdoctoral fellowships per year to Germans and Americans to support archival research for up to three months. In addition, the Institute now regularly offers a number of longer-term fellowships devoted to particular topics such as a doctoral fellowship in the history of African Americans and Germans, a postdoctoral fellowship for North American history, as well as fellowships in economic and social history, the history of consumption, and international business history.

As a service to American graduate students of German history, the Institute started an annual archival summer seminar in 1990. Initially funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung, these seminars took a dozen American doctoral students on a ten-day tour of different German archives including the Bundesarchiv followed by a three-week summer course at the Herzog-August-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel that comprised an introduction to German handwriting from the 16th to the 20th century. More than twenty years later, the annual summer seminar has introduced about 250 American graduate students to German archives and is still one of the Institute’s most successful programs. The success of the archival summer seminars in Germany eventually led the Institute to create an analogous program for American history. Starting in 2004, the Institute organized an archival seminar that brought together German and American doctoral students of U.S. history for a two-week tour of American archives and a chance to discuss the dissertation project with one another. Organized in cooperation with the University of Chicago and the Heidelberg Center for American Studies, the seminar was funded by the ZEIT Foundation from 2004 to 2006. Since 2010, the seminar has been funded by the Bosch Foundation, and the Bosch Foundation Archival Seminar for Young Historians has established itself as a regular annual program.

While the archival summer seminars serve doctoral students who are at the beginning stage of research for their dissertation projects, another GHI initiative was designed to support doctoral students who are in the final stages of writing up their dissertations. Starting in 1995, the Institute has annually convened the Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History, organized in cooperation with the BMW Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University. These annual seminars bring together sixteen advanced doctoral

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68 For the announcement of the first seminar, see Bulletin of the GHI 5 (Fall 1989): 34-35.
students—eight from each side of the Atlantic—to discuss their dissertations projects with one another and with four faculty mentors. The seminar’s location alternates between Washington and different German universities, while its chronological coverage rotates from early modern history through nineteenth-century history to the twentieth century. As a testimony to the seminar’s success, most assistant professors of German history at North American universities today are alumni of the Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar. The Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar’s success led the GHI to introduce two other seminars on the same model. From 2001 to 2005, the Institute organized an annual “Young Scholars Forum” for doctoral students and recent PhD’s that was devoted to transnational themes such as “Gender, Power, Religion” (2001) and “War and Society” (2002) and later to different themes in North American history such as environmental history and “European dimensions of American history.”

In 2001, the Institute also organized the first Medieval History Seminar, bringing together North American and German doctoral students of medieval history to discuss their work with a group of mentors that has included Stuart Airlie (University of Glasgow), Michael Borgolte (Humboldt University Berlin), Carolyn Bynum (Columbia University), Johannes Fried (Frankfurt/Main), Patrick Geary (UCLA), Frank Rexroth (Göttingen), Barbara H. Rosenwein (Loyola University...
Chicago), and Miri Rubin (Queen Mary, University of London). Taking place every two years, the Medieval History Seminar subsequently became a joint program with the GHI London, now takes place alternately in Washington and London, includes junior postdoctoral scholars in addition to doctoral students, and continues to draw a large number of excellent applications.

Since 2009, the Institute also convenes a Junior Scholars Conference in German Jewish History, co-organized with Michael Brenner (Munich) and with the Leo Baeck Institute as well as the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Modeled on the Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar, the Junior Scholars Conference reflects the GHI’s interest in strengthening cooperation with institutions of Jewish history and in making Jewish history a regular part of the Institute’s research agenda.

As part of its mission to support the work of junior scholars, the Institute also introduced several prizes. Since 1997, the Friends of the German Historical Institute have awarded the Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize for the two best dissertations on German history completed at North American universities. Many of the books that grew out of these prize-winning dissertations have been published in the GHI’s book series with Cambridge University Press.

In 2006, the Institute, in association with the Franz Steiner Verlag, began awarding the biennial Franz Steiner Prize for the best German-language manuscript in the fields of North American history or transatlantic relations. The prize-winning manuscript is published in the GHI’s book series “Transatlantische Historische Studien” with the Steiner Verlag. To honor the work of senior scholars, the Institute has been awarding the Helmut Schmidt Prize in German-American Economic

Fritz Stern speaking at the presentation of the dissertation prize named in his honor. Photo: GHI.
History since 2004 with the support of the Zeit Foundation. The distinguished honorees include Harold James (Princeton University), Volker Berghahn (Columbia University), Richard Tilly (University of Münster), and Charles Maier (Harvard University).

**Conclusion**

Over the course of the past twenty-five years, the Institute has established itself as a key institution at the intersection of the German and American historical professions. The largest center for historical research outside a university in the United States, it has succeeded in broadening its mission well beyond furthering the study of German history in the United States and supporting the study of American history in Germany: most of the Institute’s conferences and publications engage in comparative, transnational, or global history. The Institute has cooperated with more than a hundred universities in North America and its work has been supported by numerous foundations, including the Bosch Foundation, the Max Kade Foundation, the ZEIT Foundation Gerd and Ebelin Bucerius, the Hertie Foundation, the Thyssen Foundation, the Gerda Henkel Foundation, the Bertelsmann Foundation, and the Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED Diktatur. Almost all of the Institute’s former research fellows have become professors at leading European or American universities. During her 2010 visit to the GHI, Germany’s Minister of Research and Education Annette Schavan recognized the GHI as an inspiring center of scholarship and “one of the most important organizations connecting Germany and the United States.” The continued international expansion of the academic network organized under the roof of the Max Weber Foundation, the new name (effective July 2012) of the Foundation German Humanities Institutes Abroad, which is about to establish a presence in China and India, should help the GHI forge further international cooperations.