Digitale Bibliothek. Manfred Overesch, et al., eds.

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A Digital Reference Library on the Third Reich

One of the great promises that digitized media have held out to scholars is that documents, artwork, images, and data about the past could be made readily available to scholars and students. Properly organized and put into a computerized form, such media would make it possible for a user to search for a letter or photograph by or about a particular person with just a few key strokes. The <cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite>, and in particular volume 49 of that series which focuses on the era of the Third Reich, fulfills many of these promises. <p> The <cite>Bibliothek</cite> is nicely packaged in a single CD-Rom which contains the program and the library's contents divided into four major sections (according to the publisher this encompasses more than 9,000 printed pages). Overall, the program is relatively easy to navigate. Text can be copied from the <cite>Bibliothek</cite> to the computer clipboard and then pasted into another program such as a word processor. Such text automatically includes source information which makes citing the <cite>Bibliothek</cite> easier. The program also permits the user to prepare notes which can include copied text. Such notes can be saved or printed. <p> The first section, and the core of the <cite>Bibliothek</cite>, is the chronology– a month-by month and day-by-day accounting of what happened during the era of the Third Reich from January 1933 through the end of June 1945. Significant historical moments are covered along with information about what was happening outside the ruling party and its elite. The chronology gives detailed reporting on the course of the war, and provides extensive coverage of all fronts. Each day is divided into topical subsections which may focus on politics, economy, and culture– though every day does not include all of these. <p> Two examples will illustrate the variety of material included. On January 30, 1933, in addition to detailing the events surrounding the appointment of Hitler as Reichskanzler, the <cite>Bibliothek</cite> provides the reactions of prominent politicians and cultural leaders, including Theodor Heuss's statement to Georg Halpern, "Das wird fr euch Juden eine schlimme Zeit werden" ("Tageschronik": January 30, 1933; <cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite>, vol. 49: <cite>Das Dritte Reich</cite>, p. 22). On Sunday, March 21, 1937, the chronology informs us that in cultural developments Josef Goebbels appointed Heinrich Glassmeier of Cologne as Reichsintendant des deutschen Rundfunks, actor Emil von Dollen died in Hamburg, and Germany defeated France four to nil in soccer. Some of the events reported may seem at first glance to be mundane, but by tracking these kinds of "little events" one can begin to see some glimpses of what life was like on a daily basis for the people of Germany. <p> While the chronology is extensive and provides the user with a timeline for the history of the Third Reich, it does not provide extensive historical context. For this, one must turn to other materials. The day-by-day format also makes it difficult to follow an event which lasts for more than a single day. One must do the work of piecing together the reports in the daily chronology into a coherent whole. <p> The second section of the <cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite> is its collection of 1,700 images. The entire photograph collection is organized into ten topics: Nacht ber Deutschland; Vom Geist verlassen; Auf

Kriegskurs; Die "Volksgemeinschaft"; Zuspitzung der Widersprche; Um die Weltherrschaft; Auf Leben und Tod; bermenschen/Untermenschen; Der Totale Krieg; and Der Zusammenbruch. This collection is extensive and provides the user with photographs which would otherwise be very difficult to find, and, of equal importance, provides them in a format which is easy to use and compatible with other computer programs. <p> The table of contents for this section organizes the photographs in chronological order under each topic. There is a brief description for each photograph with a bulls eye shaped blue hyperlink embedded in the description. Placing the mouse pointer over the hyperlink displays a thumbnail of the photograph; clicking on the hyperlink opens the photograph in a separate window. The program also allows you to display thumbnails of the photographs in chronological order on the left of the screen. Right clicking on the thumbnail allows you to open the photograph in a separate window, go to the text description of the photograph, or print the photograph. <p> The opened photograph displays in a separate window from which one can print, zoom into or out of the picture, copy the photograph to the clipboard to use in another application, or save it in a format (such as bitmap, "jpeg," "tif," etc.) which can be used by another application. The photograph files are sufficiently detailed to allow one to zoom in on a specific part of the picture. The reviewer used this feature to zoom in on Jakob Sprenger (Gauleiter of Hessen-Nassau) in a group photograph in order to export an image of Sprenger's face isolated from the other figures in the larger photograph. The detail was excellent. <p> The reviewer used some of the photographs in this collection to enhance a PowerPoint lecture presentation on the Nazis for a world history course–where the topic must be covered in a relatively short period. The pictures were easy to use and the program made it possible to accurately describe the period of the photograph and to give credit for the pictures. This is a very useful feature. <p> The third section of the <cite>Bibliothek</cite> is the extensive document collection. There are 427 of these which cover a wide variety of topics including government documents, economic statistics, newspaper articles, letters, and political flyers, and range from the most important documents of the Nazi era to some which are less widely known. Document 284 is an extract from the Protocol of the Wannsee Conference held on January 20, 1942 to set in motion "[die] Endlsung der europischen Judenfrage" (<cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite>, vol. 49, p. 8716). There are documents that provide evidence of the ways in which some Germans supported the Nazi regime and its leadership. Document 372 is part of "einer

Treuebekundung der Hitler-Verehrerin Walpurga Kurz an Goebbels" dated July 22, 1944. Others show opposition to the Nazis ranging from the famous White Rose– the February 1943 flyer of this group is document number 329–and a group of women in Berlin who issued a flyer in April 1945 calling on all women to express "entschlossene und rcksichtslose Notwehr gegen die Kriegsverlngerer, die zur Herauszgerung ihres eigenen verwirkten Lebens Euch und Euer Liebstes in die Vernichtung treiben" (Document 418, <cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite>, vol. 49, p. 8960). The collection provides access to examples of the German press of the era including extracts from articles in the <cite>Vlkische Beobachter</cite>, <cite>Frankfurter Zeitung</cite>, <cite>Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung</cite>, and others. <p> While extensive, the collection has some gaps. The reviewer would have appreciated a more extensive index to the documents other than its numerical table of contents (in the absence of such a tool, one must rely on the search engine and create one's own search by words or names). There are also very few personal accounts of life in Nazi Germany and only limited examples from average Germans. Despite the fact that large collections of letters and personal accounts of the early Nazi Party and its members are available in archival collections, the <cite>Bibliothek</cite> provides no first person coverage of rank and file Nazis or the lives of workers, soldiers, or women. Some documentation of the everyday world of Germans under the Third Reich would be a valuable improvement to the <cite>Bibliothek</cite>. <p> The documentary collection focuses heavily on the actions of the government and the Nazi Party. This institutional emphasis does not extend to all institutions of the German society of the time. The churches, for example, are mentioned in the "Tageschronik," but there are few documents on the churches in the document collection. There are extracts from the German-Catholic Concordat and the resolution of the <cite>Deutsche Christen</cite> movement at its November 13, 1933 Berlin <cite>Sportspalast</cite> rally, but little on the Confessing Church movement or the Catholic Church hierarchy's ambivalent relationship with the Nazi government. Opposition groups other than the White Rose, are given only limited coverage; some resources for examining how other political parties and their members reacted to the Nazi government would have broadened the picture which this collection provides. <p> The fourth and final section of the <cite>Bibliothek</cite> is the "Personenverzeichnis." This is organized alphabetically by last name and provides very brief biographical information about a wide cross-section of key peo-

ple from the era of the Third Reich. In many ways this is the weakest section in the <cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite>. The entries include birth and death dates along with the places where these occurred (if known) and information about the individual. The entries are so brief, however, that they provide little context about the individual covered. Adolf Hitler, for example, is described as follows: "Hitler, Adolf. (* 20.04.1889 Braunau/sterreich, ? 30.04.1945 Berlin), Politiker (NSDAP), Reichskanzler" ("Personenverzeichnis": <cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite>, vol. 49, 9246). Such entries are typical of even the less well-known figures of the era. There are no links between this section and other parts of the program which might help give some context. It is not possible, for example, to go from an individual's "Personenverzeichnis" entry to any of the historical events, documents, or photographs where the individual is included. For historical context, the user will have to look elsewhere. <p> Another feature of the <cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite> which is useful to the user is the program's powerful search feature. This is an excellent way to find photographs or documents which deal with a particular individual or group. The search engine allows one to look for all occurrences of a word, name, or combination of words and names in the <cite>Digitale Bibliothek</cite>, and to build a list of all of occurrences. From this list, one can then go to each occurrence by sim-ply pointing at the item in the search list. Searching for a prominent Nazi yields a long list of "hits"–Hitler yielded 2,791 and Goering 509. Some other prominent Germans also are extensively covered in the various sections of the <cite>Bibliothek</cite>; von Papen was found thirty-two times. Less prominent figures in the Nazi regime are predictably less well covered. The reviewer's particular interest in the Third Reich is in the Nazi Party in Gau Hessen-Nassau. The Gauleiter of Hessen-Nassau, Jakob Sprenger, is not widely known outside of his home region. Searching for Sprenger yielded, in addition to the photograph mentioned above, four entries including his brief biography in the "Personenverzeichnis" and three listings in the chronology. Using the "highlight" utility, one can create a specialized list of marked passages which functions in the same fashion as a search list. This permits users to create their own specialized indexes which can be saved for later use. This too is a valuable and very useful feature of this program. <p> Overall, despite the few weaknesses, this is an excellent reference tool and resource for the scholar or teacher of the history of the Nazi era. The CD will also be valuable to graduate students with a good knowledge of German. The detailed chronology and the outstanding photograph collection alone are worth the cost of this program. The many primary sources and the program's powerful search engine add to its value.

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