

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



*Clio-online Research Workshop.* Berlin: Clio-online - Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 23.01.2003.

**Reviewed by** Alexander Moulton

**Published on** H-Soz-u-Kult (February, 2003)

## Clio-online Research Workshop

Archival research â in any country and in any language â poses many challenges for a doctoral student or scholar. For those who have yet to set foot in an archive, these challenges can loom even larger, as the trepidation of finding oneâs way through the masses of documents and through the seeming maze of bureaucracy that often surrounds them can often be overwhelming.

The Clio-online Workshop for Doctoral Students in Berlin, a joint venture between Clio-online ([www.clio-online.de](http://www.clio-online.de)) and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, PreuÃischer Kulturbesitz ([www.sbb.spk-berlin.de](http://www.sbb.spk-berlin.de)), held on the 23rd of January, 2003 at the Staatsbibliothek, provided both a comprehensive introduction to archival research in Germany and also demonstrated the great advances that many key archives and research institutions have made in providing valuable information to scholars via the Web.

Clio-online, a self-described âFachportal fÃ¼r die Geschichtswissenschaftenâ based at the history department of the Humboldt University, is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and was represented at the workshop by Max VÃ¶gler. While the web offers historians a wide range of valuable resources, finding and accessing these resources is not always easy. Clio-online is setting out to tackle this problem through close cooperation with other key institutions and websites and through the development of a âgateway siteâ for historians. Currently still in the testing stages, Clio-online will allow users to navigate and search a vast array of historical resources, publications,

databases, reviews, and archival collections through one single site. Clio-online is also associated with the invaluable list-server H-Soz-u-Kult (<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de>), which has over 7,000 members and publishes, among other items, over 500 reviews of scholarly works per year. Also a partner in Clio-online and present at the conference was the *Jahresberichte fÃ¼r deutsche Geschichte* ([www.bbaw.de/vh/jdg](http://www.bbaw.de/vh/jdg)). Dr. Johannes Thomassen, who is the director of the *Jahresberichte* at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, presented the newly available database, which includes entries for all years since 1986.

The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, represented by Robert Zepf and also a partner in Clio-online, has made access to many of its particular resources â from the *Manuscripta Mediaevalia* ([www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de](http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de)) to the *Zeitschriftendatenbank* (ZDB) ([www.zdb-opac.de](http://www.zdb-opac.de)) â possible over the web. The synergy between the two institutions that organized the conference, as Zepf described, was thus also an attempt to bridge the distance between archives and libraries, as well as between the libraries and their users in Germany. Zepf and two other colleagues from the Staatsbibliothek, Dr. Bernd Michael and Dagmar Bouziane, also presented a âWegweiserâ through the vast holdings and divisions of the library, with a particular emphasis to the online resources, such as *Kalliope* (<http://kalliope.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de>), an online catalogue of *NachlÃasse* and *Handschriften* in over 150 libraries, archives, museums, and research institutions

in Germany. Zepf provided not only a virtual tour through the organization of the library, but also explained several key institutional and cultural differences between libraries in North America and those in Germany. For example, while many scholars from North America are used to seeking out a designated reference librarian for the questions, the German system is divided along specialized academic branches, with individuals responsible for specific questions regarding their area of specialty (for a list of the different Fachreferate at the Staatsbibliothek, visit: <http://lsfr.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de>).

The workshop also served as a valuable introduction to Germany's key archives by bringing together representatives from some of the most important institutions in and around Berlin. The Geheimes Staatsarchiv â Preu'sischer Kulturbesitz (<http://gsta.spk-berlin.de>), represented by Dr. Ingeborg Schnelling-Reinicke and Dr. Jürggen Kloosterhuis, possesses a trove of valuable documents on Prussian history that date as far back as 1188. Through their homepage, one can access (in German, English, and Polish) information about their collections of documents relating to Prussia in addition to links to current archives located in former Prussian territories. Dr. Michael Hollmann, from the Bundesarchiv ([www.bundesarchiv.de](http://www.bundesarchiv.de)), described the set-up of the federal archives and introduced their new homepage, which offers links to the eight primary branches of the archives and online versions of the Findbücher and Nachlässe within those branches. For those interested in the history of Berlin proper, the Landesarchiv Berlin ([www.landearchiv-berlin.de](http://www.landearchiv-berlin.de)), which was founded in 1824, has holdings covering the span and is also a repository of official documents (municipal administration, institutions, industry) from East Berlin during the division of the city. The archive also possess the complete set of Berlin residents' registration files from 1875

to 1970. For scholars concerned with any aspect of the history of education in Germany, the Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung ([www.bbf.dipf.de](http://www.bbf.dipf.de)), located on Warschauer Strasse and represented by Dr. Stefan Cramme, is an invaluable resource. The research library contains the second-largest collection of documents, books, and files on educational history – over 695,000 – in Europe, as well as a wide variety of online resources, such as newspaper excerpts, reviews, and collected works on pedagogy and education.

The workshop provided not only an introduction to the archives in Germany and to the resources available on the web but also an introduction to other doctoral students currently working on projects in Berlin. Although most of the students were based at North American universities, the chance to meet as a group afforded many the opportunity to discuss their projects – which ranged from themes such as the development of Reformation anatomical prints to the impact of German unification upon the eastern expansion of the European Union – and their experiences in the archives.

Such synergies – between archives and libraries, between research institutions and their users, between different online resources, and between the students who are there to access all of these resources – are a central force in making archival research in Germany far less intimidating and far more fruitful. While it is still the work of the scholar to actually read and analyze the primary sources, access to all of these resources via the Internet, as well as an understanding of how to approach the very task of research, makes that first step into archival research far less intimidating and less time-consuming. Amidst the various conversations at lunch and after the conference, one could not help but hear the comment – "if I had only known about these resources when I first got here!" – over and over again.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

**Citation:** Alexander Moulton. Review of , *Clio-online Research Workshop*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. February, 2003.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=27001>

Copyright © 2003 by H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved. This work may be copied and redistributed for non-commercial, educational purposes, if permission is granted by the author and usage right holders. For permission please contact H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU.