



**David L. Sheffler.** *Schools and Schooling in Late Medieval Germany: Regensburg, 1250-1500.* Education and Society in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008. xvi + 417 pp. \$186.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-16664-6.



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**Published on** H-German (February, 2010)

**Commissioned by** Susan R. Boettcher

## Education in Medieval Regensburg

If “Regensburg, 1250-1500” were simply substituted for “Late Medieval Germany” in the main title, it would more accurately describe the monograph by David L. Sheffler. He provides a detailed analysis of curricula, teachers, and pupils in Regensburg during the period in question, as well as comprehensive data on students from Regensburg at universities throughout Europe. A short introductory chapter and an even shorter final one surround chapters called “The Educational Landscape of Medieval Regensburg,” “Inside the Schools,” and “Regensburg and the Universities.” The main text is then followed by four appendices: “Students and Other School Personnel,” “Biographical Register—‘Regensburg’ University Students,” “Chronological List—‘Regensburg’ University Students,” and “‘Regensburg’ University Students—Tables and Maps.” These appendices precede a bibliography and an index. In addition to the usual table of contents, acknowledgments, and list of maps, the prefatory material also includes a list of fifty-nine abbreviations used both in the text and in the appendices to identify sources. It is, in short, a staggeringly detailed compila-

tion of information.

The concluding chapter admirably and concisely summarizes Sheffler’s conclusions. The fifteenth century was a particularly active period for Regensburg schools, both those run by churches and those operated by the mendicant orders. Little evidence suggests that strife arose between churchmen and the city fathers, and students from Regensburg studied at universities from “Krakow to Salamanca and most of the universities in between” (p. 213), but particularly at the nearby ones, especially Ingolstadt, Vienna, and Leipzig. Sheffler emphasizes that students listed as “de Ratispona” or otherwise designated as coming from Regensburg in the university matriculation lists were supported by benefices or other sources of income from Regensburg, but this epithet did not necessarily indicate that they had attended school there (hence the quote marks around Regensburg in the titles of the final three appendices). The distinction between having gone to school in Regensburg and being identified as from Regensburg in matriculation rolls is implicit in the material, but it does create a certain dis-

continuity between chapters 2 and 3 on the one hand and chapter 4 on the other. The unifying point is presumably that many of these university-educated students returned to Regensburg and became teachers in the schools. Many such examples are discussed in the text and can also be gleaned from the biographical register that makes up appendix 2.

Among the individuals who played a role in the annals of schooling in Regensburg, Franciscan preacher Berthold of Regensburg, humanist Conrad Celtis, Albertus Magnus, and especially polymath Conrad of Megenberg play prominent roles in Sheffler's narrative. Discussion of texts by them lends further interest to the overall story. Conrad, in particular, wrote extensively and insightfully about schools and learning.

Sheffler also stresses the point that the schools operated by the Franciscans and the Dominicans, even if they were not external schools, contributed to the intellectual life of the city through their libraries, the individuals they attracted as teachers, and the evidence of close interaction between the convents and the city, including their role in the education of cloistered women. In attempting to assess the literacy rate, Sheffler arrives at a conservative estimate of 14 percent, likely to be somewhat too low, but in line with calculations for comparable late medieval cities in Germany. The growth of a city library in Regensburg since the fourteenth century provides further evidence of the increasing interest in books.

On the whole, Sheffler comes down in the middle of arguments about late medieval education: why people attended universities, whether conflict arose between cities and bishops over control of schools, or whether the curriculum changed to accommodate the needs of bureaucracies. The data from his monograph supports these conclusions, yet one also senses something of the cautious scholar who is trying to avoid staking out a position that could easily be caricatured by an advocate of

one side or the other of one of these arguments.

The footnotes not infrequently take up more of the page than does the narrative argument, and they both document and elaborate points made in the main text. Modern scholars are incorporated in the index only if they are mentioned in the primary text, while medieval individuals mentioned only in the notes appear to be partially, but not consistently, indexed. Names of medieval pupils, teachers, and students appearing in the appendices are included in the index, but the sources from which Sheffler drew his information are not. One can hardly hold this decision against the author, since it would be an enormously time-consuming project to incorporate all this material. It does, however, suggest that such a remarkably detailed and valuable archive of information would be ideally suited for a searchable online archive. As matters stand, the cost of the volume is such that even some research libraries might hesitate to order it. On a more positive note, the tables and maps of appendix 4 nicely summarize the information from appendices 2 and 3, including well-executed maps showing where Regensburg students attended university with graphical representation of those most frequented.

This data brings us back to the opening point: how much do we learn about schools and schooling in late medieval Germany, as opposed to specifically about Regensburg? Sheffler certainly draws comparisons with schools in other cities, but only Eichstätt, Augsburg, Ulm, and Nuremberg are mentioned more than once or twice. Granted, these cities retain good surviving documentation and reveal many similarities to Regensburg. But they also represent a rather small geographical area, and generalization to "late medieval Germany" seems a bit overdrawn. Nonetheless, for those mainly interested in Sheffler's general conclusions, chapters 1 and 5 provide concise statements of what he has learned from an exceptionally rich body of data.

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**Citation:** William C. Crossgrove. Review of Sheffler, David L., *Schools and Schooling in Late Medieval Germany: Regensburg, 1250-1500*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. February, 2010.

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