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Lothar Gall, Andreas Schulz. *Wissenskommunikation im 19. Jahrhundert.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003. 241 S. EUR 30.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-515-08226-6.

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Not every conference or workshop merits a conference volume. Unfortunately, many conference organizers feel pressured to produce volumes to legitimate their meetings and the funding they received, regardless of whether or not participants were able to generate enough synergy to come to broader conclusions about the issues that brought them together. As a result, the quality of these volumes varies widely, ranging from the provocative to the mundane. This volume lies somewhere in between.

It is not a user-friendly book. There is no index and no bibliography (although the essays include substantial notation) and the introduction is frustrating. In their opening pages, Lothar Gall and Andreas Schulz explain the origins of the volume: it stemmed from one meeting in the *Nassauer GesprÃ¤che* series, hosted in 2000. The focus of that meeting was on one part of the bigger project of the Frankfurt Forschungskolleg on the cultures of science and social transformation. Gall and Schultz stress that the purpose of the project has been to engage, in the broadest possible way, the question of what constitutes knowledge and how it is created and exchanged. During this particular meeting in 2000, their desire was to explore the "revolution" in the production and distribution of knowledge that took place in the nineteenth century. Their hope was to move beyond traditional *Bildungsgeschichte*, with its focus on the institutionalization of knowledge in universities and the creation of scientific disciplines, and analyze the many social institutions that channeled and shaped the flow of knowledge during this age of rapid transformation. The meeting resulted in the eight essays in this book, which deal with family, schools, religion, associational culture, museums and *Volksbibliotheken*–areas that (with the possible exception of museums) have indeed seen less attention in the history of science than they should. Regrettably, the editors made only the most cursory effort to tie the essays together in their introduction or to draw out the implications these essays might have for broader questions in either German history or the history of science. That is a shame, because the essays do share critical arguments and insights that merit more attention.

Taken together, these essays underscore the multiple, co-existing knowledge systems that persisted in the large, homogenizing nation-states of the nineteenth century. They point to the many worlds of childhood experienced by German children, the great disparity of educational experiences within the newly established and ever growing schools, and the radical disjunction between the state's educational mandates and the social practices in its scientific and pedagogical institutions. One of the authors illustrates the striking persistence of metaphysical thought that accompanied efforts to normalize knowledge under a secular domain, and all of them shy away

from limiting their analysis to the communication of particular information through texts or displays, recognizing the ways in which social experiences shape knowledge and world views as well. Most importantly, while all of the contributors agree that knowledge is not easily quantified, they are convinced that scholars can trace out the ways in which knowledge has been produced. As each of them engages in that effort, a picture of almost overwhelming complexity arises, in which the knowledge vectors criss-cross, twist, and braid in such a way that any effort to sketch out a linear history of the production of knowledge in nineteenth-century Germany begins to look futile.

If Andreas Schulz's essay on conceptions of childhood since the Enlightenment remind us of the degree to which the literate classes across Europe took the malleability of children for granted and set out to actively shape their children into particular kinds of human beings, JÃ¼rgen Schlumbohm shows in his essay on the socialization of children outside of schools that even during the era in which childhood was perhaps most cherished (1850-1950), the multiplicity of childhood experiences makes it difficult to talk about the relationships between the intentions of the shapers and the people who came out of their regimes. The difficulty turns around the question of reception, a critical point in any effort to trace out the production and distribution of knowledge. Analyzing the connections between instruction and reception is hard enough when focused on one model of childhood experiences from a given family or neighborhood. But as Schlumbohm shows, the multiple worlds of childhood in nineteenth-century Germany varied according to class, by location, and by the kinds of interactions within individual families (as well as other contexts). Moreover, because children gained knowledge from many places, not simply through their parents or official institutions, it is difficult to pinpoint who was teaching what to whom. Education within communities, he reminds us, remained as important as education through parents and schools, even as parents became more cognizant of their responsibilities and the percentage of children in public schools grew.

Schlumbohm's arguments tie in very well with Notker Hammerstein's observations that school reform was never as comprehensive or effective in practice as it was in theory. It was only during the *Kaiserreich* that one saw exceptional reforms in the schools, and even then one suspects that Schlumbohm's observations about the multiplicity of experiences and the extracurricular acquisition of knowledge still held true. Hammerstein illustrates the difficulties associated with attempting to trace out the distribution of knowledge through the schools, indicating that it is more effective to approach the flow of knowledge from the point of acquisition. But the sources for this kind of research are limited, even if one turns, as Schlumbohm did, to autobiography.

Given these authors' insights, it is perhaps best to think about the different worlds of German childhoods as diverse milieu in which particular forms of knowledge acquisition were possible–but not determined. Barbara Wolbring provides a nice example of one model subject. Indeed, the largest milieu in which German children gained and exchanged a significant quantity of knowledge may very well have been the world in and around the *Volksschule*, which was responsible for the public education of 70 percent of all German school children well into the twentieth century. Not all children attended these ever-expanding schools; some never went to school at all because they lacked the proper clothing and materials, while a striking number of those who did attend missed the last year of instruction because of conflicts and commitments within their families. Even among those who showed up for the entire eight years, sporadic attendance was common. Yet this shifting character was also part of the milieu, and Wolbring does a fine job of introducing readers to both the cultures of the schools and the bureaucracies around them, providing us with much detail about the kinds of instruction children received at different ages, as well as the ways in which the schools afforded students from the lower classes with other kinds of knowledge–such as rare opportunities to gain glimpses of the cultural world of the middle classes through school trips to theaters and museums.

Together, these four essays not only offer a nice introduction to the history of German primary education, they also reveal the difficulty of placing the multiplicity of German childhood experiences (even when limited to a focus on education and knowledge acquisition) into a theoretical model that traces out a linear development through the nineteenth century. Such models cannot accommodate the multiple strands of experience these scholars have identified in their studies.

Henning Pahl makes a similar point with his essay on *wÃ¼rttembergischer Landpfarrer*. Pahl stresses that neither earlier arguments about the secularization of nineteenth-century society that accompanied the rise of modernization theory, nor more recent efforts to counter those arguments by arguing that faith and religion actually remained important throughout the age of indus-

trialization and nation-building, can contain the realities of people's experiences. As organized religion lost some of its power, people kept much of their faith, or they sought new forms of faith outside the rationality of the secular, industrialized world–in the occult, in new and old superstitions, and by entertaining other metaphysical answers to questions about their lives. With one focused example, Pahl shows that in order to understand how knowledge was produced in the coexisting and overlapping fields of the physical and metaphysical in nineteenth-century Germany, scholars have to move beyond a focus on historical transition and accept what he terms the "Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen, von der Vielschichtigkeit und den GegenlÃ¤ufigkeiten der Prozesse der Weltbildmodulation" (p. 139).

One also has to look closely at alternative institutions in which knowledge is produced and exchanged. For example, Dieter Hein reminds us of the ways in which associations of all kinds often offered Germans semi-public spaces that functioned as alternatives to public libraries, lecture halls, and academics. They even provided many members a base from which to publish and distribute information. Whether that information was good or bad is beside the point; associations became havens for dilettantes who in turn often became authorities in their own right. Such authorities could also be found around museums, such as the Senkenberg-Museum in Frankfurt am Main, in which, as Carsten Kretschmann stresses, many forms of knowledge circulated independent of the displays.

This volume concludes with an essay by Dieter Langewiesche which ties together many of the themes the above authors share. Writing about the uses and abuses of public libraries, he argues that commercial libraries provide excellent sources about the kinds of books that were being read over a longer period of time, even if it is difficult to determine what readers gleaned from these books. The directors of these libraries, as we would suspect, often worked with the dominant classes in an effort to control the reading of their publics, removing the *Schund* literature from their shelves, and replacing it with classics that gained a lot of attention from the public. Yet the relationship between the libraries' programs (what they wanted people to read) and the praxis (what people read) was indirect at best, and although he is unable to sketch out the connection between the two and simply brackets the problem of reception, Langewiesche shows that one can describe a kind of milieu in which knowledge was distributed and acquired that reveals important patterns. He notes, for example, that an astounding number of visitors were interested in reading books from Darwin and others about the creation of their world–indicating the degree to which the lower classes were finding time to think globally and draw their lessons from outside of the German literary canon.

There is, in short, much merit in the individual contributions to this volume. They remind us yet again of the richness and complexity within nineteenth-century Germany that becomes apparent whenever one returns to the empirical data. It is thus all the more disappointing that the editors did not take the opportunity to engage the difficulties these complexities raise for either their project on the nineteenth century or broader questions about the production and distribution of knowledge.

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