

## This Edition

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What is the future of professional journals? And what about *our* future as print periodical readers and subscribers? With the pressures in day-to-day university life, this question might never cross the one or other historian's mind. He or she may think, the important journals have always been around, and there is nothing likely to change here. Life without the big periodicals: no 'Historische Zeitschrift', no 'Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung', no 'Annales', no 'Geschichte und Gesellschaft' or 'Past & Present'? Unthinkable. So no cause for concern and no reason whatsoever to get involved in such exotic things as e-journals. However, in the libraries, ministries and German study groups most people are taking a somewhat different view - and none too optimistic.

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"A spectre is haunting Germany today. The spectre is called the library crisis." Not without reason was a famous ancestor quoted at a large Librarians' Conference in 2002. There does indeed seem to be bleak times ahead for the institutes and research institutions. The library shelves used to be almost overflowing with specialist periodicals and today? Today there is often just a gaping void. In the light of sometimes grotesque increases in prices for periodical subscriptions many (university departmental) libraries have had to cancel many traditional periodicals. There is a certain constraint - the argument is to cancel the 'doubles' or journals "that are not absolutely necessary". However, what remains of the inspiring diversity at the end of these necessary cuts? Where is the red pencil going to be applied?

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The apologists of electronic publishing think they have the answer to the periodical crisis: the saviour could be electronic journals, which have already been successfully established in the field of Natural Sciences. Their merits are beyond dispute, whether it's the promptness of their publication, the integration of multi-medial material, the inclusion of interactive functions, their space-saving or, of course, the cost reductions that can be expected. Another interesting aspect would be - also for historians - the exciting possibilities of 'changing roles'. In Internet times, in co-operation with the university libraries and computer centres, there is nothing to prevent interested scientists in being their own publisher, and consequently developing alternative, independent publication forms.

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Other than some time ago, such arguments are also gradually falling on fertile ground in the field of Humanities. In the past few years a whole series of new, experimental and creative e-journals with an historical focus has appeared and captured the readers. Other projects - such as an e-journal on media history, initiated at the University of Konstanz by Prof. Rudolf Schlögl, is already in the pipeline.

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However, are the e-journals already an alternative to print periodicals, the patent remedy for the periodical crisis? In this edition of **zeitenblicke** we would like to do a critical stock-taking. On the one hand, we want to establish the potential of history e-journals, on the other hand also pursue the "teething problems" of electronic publishing which are expressed again and again in project reports. Only in theory do the e-journals 'pay for themselves', even the greatest enthusiasm can still fade in the light of material conditions. In view of creating a sound technical foundation there is not only a lack of experience but also the issue of long-time archiving etc. The easier it may be to get such an enterprise going - maybe even with third-party start-up financing - the more difficult it is for most companies to find the necessary staying power. And here we are not even mentioning the contents: how can 'Peer Review' processes be implemented to ensure the quality of the journals concerned? How can you win

over 'good' writers for a new e-journal that does normally not have the same pulling power as a time-honoured periodical?

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Some of the articles published in this edition go back to the panel discussion on 'E-journals in the Science of History' at the Historian Conference held in Halle 2002. They want to highlight this topic from a multitude of perspectives, starting with the foray through the history of historical periodicals (Winfried Schulze) up to the attempts to outline the 'state of the art' of electronic specialist publications (Alice Keller, Matthias Schnettger). It covers a wide range: of experience with electronic review magazines (Peter Helmberger) and university servers (Volker Schallehn) to systematic user re-evaluation (Sven Kuttner). The publisher's prospect is also taken into consideration (Vittorio Klostermann) as too is the recent demand for 'Open-Access' concepts (Klaus Graf). Practical reports round everything off. A broadening of the horizon is brought in by the American Robert Darnton, a specialist for the history of the book trade and prohibited books during the Enlightenment, who proves in a virtual interview that a love of old books need not collide with a passion for Internet ("I like contradictions").

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With the new 'Forum' rubric in **zeitenblicke** we would like to anchor something that will, so to speak, help us see beyond the end of our nose. Two experiments on the current trends and tendencies in the Danish and Australian science of history, do not simply deal with electronic specialist information alone. We wish our readers inspiring reading.

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