

### **Editors and the Editing of Scientific Periodicals: Constructing Knowledge and Identity, 1760s-1910s**

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Today's scholars and scientists have a crucial instrument in common: the learned journal. But despite its ubiquity in academia as well as our familiarity with it, historians still know relatively little about past developments of the learned periodical. Additionally, research from different European countries suggests that these developments differed greatly from country to country – but due to a lack of exchange, scholars remain somewhat unaware about the diverging findings of their peers. The international two-day workshop „Editors and the Editing of Scientific Periodicals: Constructing Knowledge and Identity, 1760s-1910s“ sought to confront these challenges.

Based on his study of eighteenth century editors in Göttingen, MARTIN GIERL (Lichtenberg-Kolleg, Göttingen Institute for Advanced Study) showed that, during the Enlightenment, philosophical editorship was used as an instrument to advance careers in academia. Philosophy was not special in this regard, Gierl argued: learned editorship in general benefitted university lecturers and professors.

NOAH MOXHAM (University of Kent) demonstrated that academy-based editorship could, de facto, rest in the hand of one influential individual: he presented his research on the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society under President Sir Joseph Banks, stating that formal editorial practices (such as, for example, reading submitted papers before the committee of the journal in the chronological order of their arrival) could and were easily undermined by the Society's leading actor – and prompted next generations of Fellows to consider alterations to the editorial structures of the Philosophical Transactions.

DOMINIK HÜNNIGER (Lichtenberg-Kolleg, Göttingen Institute for Advanced

Study) turned to another important element of philosophical periodicals: their contribution to discipline-building, in this case entomology. He did so with attention to the Heiliges Römisches Reich. Hünninger's individual case studies – editors from the second half of the eighteenth century – demonstrated that journals bore notably ambitious goals of their editors. One such case was Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Herbst who created his journal as part of the plan for an 'entomological republic' and suggested that entomological practitioners should only contribute to his periodical, for the sake of strengthening the field.

Also working on entomology, MATTHEW WALE (University of Leicester) brought up a different example of how philosophical editorship contributed to discipline-building. He discussed editorial practices in England of the mid-nineteenth century and showed that some of these tactics aimed to exclude the audience of 'amateurs' and cater to men-of-science. Among these practices were publishing long articles in Latin as well as foregoing practical information. Wale used several entomological periodicals to demonstrate the editorial tactics of exclusion and also alluded to the political nature of philosophical editorship since 'amateur entomologists' were oftentimes members of the working classes.

BILL JENKINS (University of Edinburgh) cast light on editorial rivalry and power struggles surrounding the three philosophical journals of Edinburgh between 1824 and 1832. Jenkins identified competitive advantages and disadvantages of the rivals. The most successful of the editors was Robert Jameson, well-known professor of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh and founder as well as President of the Wernerian Natural History Society. His strong roots in the city's philosophical community gave him the competitive edge. Moreover, according to Jenkins, the Wernerian Society provided opportunities for Jameson to forge a network of contributors that reached beyond Edinburgh. His competitors, in turn, tried to undercut his quarterly publication on price and publishing frequency. Altogether, Jenkins identified editorial practices and processes that turned a philosophical journal into a commodity.

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JENNY BECKMAN (University of Uppsala) provided an interesting contrast to Jenkins: she depicted editorial ambitions that were not set on commercial success – but on free exchange of philosophical periodicals. Beckman demonstrated how the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences turned its transactions into an instrument to both acquire and disseminate philosophical information through the exchange of its transactions with foreign academies. This allowed the Academy to gain international prestige among learned societies and institutions during the first half of the nineteenth century. Here, editorial responsibilities and tasks did not rest with a sole editor but with the group, including the Academy's librarians.

SALLY FRAMPTON (Oxford University) talked about English editors of medical periodicals such as „The Lancet, Medical Times and the Medical Miscellany“. She discussed the goals of medical journal conductors to shape broader medical practice as well as to influence public health policies – and editors' notable successes. Furthermore, Frampton shared examples of editorial practices such as means to safeguard the 'editorial character' of a periodical, even when it was a co-production of several individuals.

ALRUN SCHMIDTKE (Humboldt University) presented a particularly interesting contrast in editorial styles and different degrees of gatekeeping, based on her comparison of Ernst Behm of „Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen“ and Paul Rosbaud of „Metallwirtschaft“. In the course of his editorship, Behm developed a scrutinising editorial approach, condemning guesswork and speculations. Meanwhile, Rosbaud, according to his own words, 'behaved like a pike in a pond full of carps'<sup>1</sup>, accepting as well as actively soliciting bits and pieces, without ensuring their scientific quality as rigorously as Behm. These vastly divergent editorial styles were rooted in the fact that Rosbaud worked on a weekly, whereas Behm conducted a bi-monthly.

Speakers JON TOPHAM (University of Leeds), MARCO SEGALA (University of L'Aquila) and ADAM DUNN (University of St Andrews) spoke about English, German and Scottish editors in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and together offered

a striking insight into the differences in editorial set-up, including a team of assistants under the auspices of one editor who made all decisions himself, a group of equal co-editors, and sole editors who carried out all work themselves.

All in all, the workshop mirrored the astonishing versatility of the journal as a philosophical instrument and unearthed editorial strategies and tactics that shaped the periodical for its individual purposes and ends. The event also shed light on editing individuals, including the ways in which they perceived – and termed – their editorial roles. In their 'language of self-description', some referred to themselves as 'collectors', pointing attention to the importance of contributors and their papers. Some described themselves as 'editors', as we do today. Sir Joseph Banks, in turn, defined his editorial role as being an 'accoucheur of literature', while Paul Rosbaud understood his editorial task as: somehow filling 12 pages with articles each week.<sup>2</sup>

The two-day workshop offered a valuable opportunity to scholars from different countries to share their insights into the chronically under-researched editorial history of scientific periodicals and to compare their findings with observations of their peers. One peculiarity that stood out and is worth mentioning is the conflation of the journal and its editor: despite the focus on editors and editorial processes set forward by the workshop organizers, speakers tended to talk about journals. In some cases, this was unavoidable due to a lack of sources on editors and their strategies. However, it would be worth keeping in mind that by leaving the editor and his goals and motives aside, we do not only ignore a crucial context of the periodical but also risk erroneous interpretations of the journal and its contents.

#### Conference overview:

*Early Commercial Scientific Editorship in Britain and the Heiliges Römisches Reich*

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<sup>1</sup> Archive of the Max Planck Society, Dpt. III, Rep. 62A (Gentner), box 12, unsigned autobiographical fragment by Paul Rosbaud with some editing by his daughter Angela Rosbaud, [87 pp.], p. 66 [in English].

<sup>2</sup> Ebd.

Jon Topham (University of Leeds): 'Constructing Scientific Communities: Editing Scientific Periodicals in Late Georgian Britain'

Martin Gierl (Lichtenberg-Kolleg, The Göttingen Institute for Advanced Study): 'Editing Scientific Periodicals in the Heiliges Römisches Reich between 1765 and 1815'

*Editorship in Britain and the German Lands at the Turn of the Century*

Marco Segala (University of L'Aquila): 'Johann Christian Reil and the editorship of Archiv für die Physiologie' (1796 -1805)

Noah Moxham (University of Kent): „'Accoucheur of literature': Joseph Banks and the Philosophical Transactions" (1790s and 1800s)

*Editorial Strategies: From Preparing 'Philosophical Intelligence' to Constructing Scientific Knowledge*

Adam Dunn (University of St Andrews): 'Editing Statistics: From Individuals to Societies. Changes in the publication of statistics from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century'

Matthew Wale (University of Leicester): „'Dear Mr Intelligencer': Editing Entomology Periodicals in the Nineteenth Century"

*Editorship as a Contributing Factor to Discipline-Building*

Dominik Hünninger (Lichtenberg-Kolleg, The Göttingen Institute for Advanced Study): 'Improving the entomological system – editing specialised journals and the making of a discipline in the German speaking lands, ca 1800'

Bill Jenkins (University of Edinburgh): 'Robert Jameson and the Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal'

*Editorship as a Means of Professional and Social Advancement*

Jenny Beckman (Uppsala University ): „'Editors and exchange': Medical Journal Editors in the Nineteenth Century" 'Editors and exchange'

*The Advent of the Role of Gatekeeping*

Alrun Schmidtke (Humboldt University of Berlin): 'Gatekeeping, scouting and selling: Editorial approaches in late 19th-and early

20th-century periodical publishing'

Aileen Fyfe (University of St Andrews): 'Editing without an editor: learned societies in the nineteenth century'

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