

Die Publikationsprofile Göttinger Professoren von 1750 bis 1830 und die Organisation der Wissenschaft. By Martin Gierl.

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As the title of Martin Gierl's latest volume indicates, the author has undertaken a distinctive and indeed unique methodological enterprise in reconstructing the scholarly careers of fourteen professors and one private lecturer active at the University of Göttingen between 1750 and 1830. The book is not a conventional collection of juxtaposed biographies. Rather, it is an ambitious experiment in the history of science and knowledge, which—as the author notes in the introduction—articulates the personal, institutional, local, disciplinary, and medial dimensions into a coherent reconstruction of individual scholarly careers, understood through the ways in which the execution of institutional tasks was shaped, oriented, and progressively delimited by emerging disciplinary frameworks and their growing demands for specification (p. 17).

Gierl uses the publication profile for the examination of Göttingen's evolution that re-examines the organisational, medial, and disciplinary conditions of scholarly publishing, thereby giving a specific slant to the functioning of the early modern university. In sketching the profiles of the fifteen scholars arranged into three successive generations who form the empirical foundation of this “experiment,” in each case, he organises the analysis around the questions of how often and how regularly they published, what they published and where, or what media they used for publication. In doing so, he elucidates the gradual structural transformation that led from the world of *Gelehrsamkeit* to a modern science organised into distinct academic disciplines.

Of the nearly seven hundred scholars who taught at the University of Göttingen between 1734 and 1830, fifteen are selected whose publication practices form a comparable pattern within the generational and disciplinary matrix devised by the author. It is here that Gierl's methodological innovation becomes visible: he shifts the analytical focus to the modes and media of scholarly publication. Rather than

asking what the celebrated professor of physics Georg Christoph Lichtenber thought about positive or negative electrical charge, or what Caspar Mende considered the proper use of the obstetrical forceps, he looks into how, across the three generations examined, the oeuvre of each professor, conceived as a paradigmatic case, constituted a temporally and medially structured publication trajectory. Gierl investigates the phase of life, the periodic rhythm, the genres (textbook, review, dissertation, monograph) they chose; the point when they turned, as authors or editors, toward the newly emerging scholarly journals; and the shift in language (Latin, German) and the intended readership of their publications.

The first generation, designated as the *Universitätsväter* and comprising professors born in the first third of the eighteenth century, emerged as the principal architects of Göttingen's scientific and institutional ascent after 1750. Albrecht von Haller in botany and physiology, Johann David Michaelis in Oriental studies, Johann Stephan Pütter in public and constitutional law, Christian Wilhelm Franz Walch in ecclesiastical history, and Christian Gottlob Heyne in classical philology and ancient studies appear in the volume as the founders of a new architecture of knowledge. They played a decisive role in establishing the organisational, communicative, and representational forms through which scholarship could be produced, disseminated, and legitimated: they secured the foundations of institutional infrastructure, the regularity of scholarly labour, the credibility of inquiry understood as an empirical and increasingly complex scientific system, and the international reputation of the university.

The library founded concurrently with the establishment of the university in 1734, the scholarly journal that had appeared from 1739 (*Göttingische Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen*, renamed *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* in 1753, and later *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* from 1802 onward), and the Göttingen Scientific Society (*Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*), established in 1751 under the leadership of Haller, Heyne, and Michaelis, functioned as a modern apparatus for the circulation of knowledge. They integrated the mechanisms of knowledge production, collective control, rapid access to the latest results, scholarly discussion, selection, and verification, that is, mechanisms that jointly defined the effective organisation of knowledge.

Through the activity of the *Universitätsväter* generation, a new pace of scholarly communication emerged within this research infrastructure, one structured by regular intervals of publication. Journals appeared in weekly and monthly cycles; the meetings of the learned society followed a fixed temporal sequence; and the library itself was organised on principles of immediate access and circulation. This new temporality and new rhythm generated a transformed metric of scholarly value: authority grounded in ancient authors and tradition was gradually superseded by

the principle of the “current” and the “most recent.” One may therefore say that the infrastructure of knowledge—the new sites and stages of scholarly practice—placed knowledge production within a fundamentally new temporal framework. Beyond all this, the professors also assumed active roles in the social life of the city, organising orphanages, various student activities, concerts, and other communal endeavours. In Gierl’s interpretation, this meant that the university as a space of knowledge was also a space of social representation.

The next generation, designated as the *Schülergeneration* and composed of scholars born in the middle of the eighteenth century, appears in the volume as the cohort that actively advanced and reshaped the institutional and medial frameworks established by their predecessors. Gierl demonstrates with considerable analytical acuity how the work of August Ludwig Schlözer in history and political science, Johann Beckmann in technology, Christoph Georg Lichtenberg in physics, Christoph Meiners in universal history, and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in zoology and biological anthropology meant new turning points in the selection of genres, the rhythms of publication, the linguistic medium, and, by extension, the organisational logic of scientific communication. He convincingly shows that the period is hallmarked by rendering publication into a recurrent scholarly practice: the professors listed above founded and edited a total of ten journals, several of which circulated not only within the academic sphere of the university but exerted their influence beyond it. Equally significant—both epistemologically and socially—was the shift that this new generation, unlike their predecessors, no longer published in Latin but in German. This enabled scientific discourse to move beyond the closed world of the academic elite and target a broader, cultivated readership, thereby altering the social reach and cultural embeddedness of scholarly knowledge.

Thereby, the production and circulation of knowledge were no longer understood simply as institutional obligations; they became forms of intellectual practice that required continuous cultivation. The regularity of journal publication, the intensity of scholarly correspondence, the writing of reviews, and the practices of research, collection, translation, and teaching all came to function as constituents of a single integrated process of knowledge communication with increasingly international reach. Within this framework, publishing ceased to be a supplementary task; instead it became a defining condition of the scholarly profession.

The author characterises this growing reliance on journals—and the way it organised scholarly work into periodic structures—as a process of the “journalisation” of science, linking it to a broader redefinition of the *Schülergeneration’s* scholarly ideal. The changing status of publication brought along a new work ethos: the sequential activities of reading, excerpting, reviewing, and writing required self-discipline, regularity, and the conscious planning of publication cycles.

Accordingly, the internal dynamics of the scholarly community were shaped by the day-to-day effort to maintain status and position, as well as by the shifting balance between competition and cooperation through which recognition was sought within both local and wider scholarly networks.

The third generation, termed the *Schülerschüler* and born in the final third of the eighteenth century, already thought in disciplinary terms. In their case, practices of professional self-representation, journal editing, and sustained publication in periodicals were dominant patterns. Through the publication trajectories of Carl Friedrich Stäudlin, professor of church history, theology, and the history of religion; Karl Ludwig Harding, professor of astronomy; Ludwig Julius C. Mende, professor of medicine and obstetrics; Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, professor of classical philology and archaeology; and Friedrich Albert A. Meyer, private lecturer in zoology, Gierl effectively illustrates the emerging research habitus characteristic of scholars operating in increasingly differentiated disciplinary fields, and thus the broader process of the professionalisation of science. By the early nineteenth century, the scientific field had been so differentiated that the earlier figure of the universal scholar was replaced by specialists working within increasingly narrow domains of expertise. University journals gradually transformed into disciplinary periodicals of imperial and, eventually, international reach. These shifts produced a series of profound changes in Göttingen's scholarly culture. At the organisational level, the university no longer functioned merely as an institution of instruction; it evolved into a centre of scientific knowledge production, where seminars, laboratories, clinics, collections, and journals were integrated into a single system, thereby giving rise to the European model of the research university. At the communicative level, knowledge increasingly took shape within domain-specific journals and the review systems that generated critical spaces of scholarly discourse. At the epistemological level, the principal aim of knowledge production was no longer the comprehension of the world as a whole but rather the construction of more narrowly defined systems of objects.

The professional lives of the third generation were no longer marked by rootedness in Göttingen; many of its members built mobile academic careers that led them through multiple universities. In Gierl's rendering, this transformation yields a vivid picture of the changing internal relations of research, publication, and teaching, in which disciplinary knowledge is organised through projects, networks, professional societies, and, above all, journals. Within this modern field, the university professor appears simultaneously as teacher, scholar-researcher, editor, administrator, and manager.

Gierl's use of the publication profile as an analytical "formula" reveals with remarkable precision that modern scholarship emerged less from new ideas than from the gradual transformation of institutional infrastructures and systems of

knowledge exchange. Although the author promises a separate volume devoted specifically to journals as a distinct publication medium, the reviewer notes only one minor omission: it would have been helpful to include clear, easily readable summary tables of the genres that constitute the publication profiles—especially journals—for each generation. This feature would have made the volume even more accessible to readers.

Taken together, the methodological approach and the conceptual architecture the volume presents may also be read as a synthesis of the author's longstanding engagement with the "Göttingen phenomenon" from multiple analytical perspectives. This is compellingly documented by the bibliography, which lists Martin Gierl's fourteen earlier publications, an impressive corpus both in scope and scholarly quality.