Chapter 2
The Repertorium Academicum Germanicum (RAG) and the Geography of German Universities and Academics (1350–1550)

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In the Holy Roman Empire universities were not founded by universal rulers such as kings, emperors, or popes but rather by local sovereigns or municipal authorities. Founding universities was considered a sovereign right like the right to build castles, found cities, or endow churches and monasteries. The three great royal dynasties of late medieval Germany led the way. The House of Luxembourg created a university in Prague; the House of Habsburg, in Vienna; and the house of Wittelsbach, in Heidelberg. Other princes of the Empire followed suit and established their own state universities, as was the case with the Houses of Saxony (the Universities of Leipzig and Wittenberg), Brabant (Louvain), Bavaria (Ingolstadt), Württemberg (Tübingen), and Brandenburg (Frankfurt on the Oder). Major cities such as Cologne, Erfurt, and Basle did so as well.

As important as the universal powers were for the legitimation of the universities—and as important as they remained under the ancien régime—it was the regional powers that sustained these new institutions through the centuries. The Empire was a loosely federated territorial entity, a political structure that explains the rapid proliferation of the universities (Fig. 2.1). At the turn of the sixteenth century, there were already 17 of them in the German Empire, more than anywhere else in Europe. For their founders—whether sovereigns or cities—universities mostly meant prestige and profit for the dynasty, dominion, or location: In Germany they stood in the service of their lands or rulers (see Schwinges, 1998a, 1998b; Verger, 1994).

However, what was more of a marginal benefit to the universities' founders—academic studies, science, and scholarship—ended up initiating one of the most momentous developments in the Empire. After the founding of Prague University in 1348 and of the subsequent German universities, it was possible to acquire scholarly

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Fig. 2.1 The RAG website showing the German Universities founded in the Middle Ages.
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knowledge within the borders of the Empire north of the Alps for the first time. The
numbers of students and graduates continued to increase, and the supply of aca-
demics of varying degrees and faculties steadily rose. These scholars came from the
older universities as well as from the new ones, the founding of which increased the
recruitment pool in their surrounding areas. With a growth rate of 1.75% per year
since 1400 and a total of six thousand people attending annually, the German
universities generated an unprecedented volume of academics in the last two decades
of the fifteenth century (Schwinges, 1984, pp. 14–16; Schwinges, 1986a, pp. 23–37).
By 1550, these numbers had summed to about 300,000 persons. The local sover-
eigns and cities gradually learned to use this supply of students, scholars, and
academic experts.

   A purely chronological examination of the history of medieval education and
science and the pertinent institutions would, of course, inevitably begin with France
and Italy—Europe's centers of theology and philosophy in Paris and of law and
medicine in Bologna, Padua, Pavia, Siena, Florence, and Montpellier. Their equiv-
alents founded north of the Alps 150 years later do not seem to compare favorably to
these universities. Quantitatively and qualitatively, it took quite a long time for the

younger, northern institutions of learning to catch up with those of western and southern Europe (see Schwinges, 1994, pp. 187–191).

However, considering the Empire's graduates and their achievements in theology, canon and civil law, medicine, and the liberal arts,[1] and given their accomplishments regarding the nation, the cities, the church, and society in general, the universities of the Empire well deserve focused attention. For nowhere else in Europe is it possible to learn so much about scholars offering themselves and their knowledge to the world. This opportunity constitutes the initial setting for a comprehensive endeavor, the Repertorium Academicum Germanicum (RAG) and the *Gelehrtenatlas* (Atlas of Scholars).

Repertorium Academicum Germanicum

The RAG is a study in German of the personal histories, life paths, knowledge, and social impact of the academically educated scholars of the Old Empire[2] and of the specific culture that developed around these persons (see Andresen, 2011; Hesse, 2007, 2016; Maurer, 2011; Schwinges, 2008a, 2013; Wagner, 2010). Several other experts and I have been working on this project for more than a decade and have presented results to the public from the outset at www.rag-online.org[3]

The goal of the RAG is (a) to encompass all of the approximately 60,000 scholars who graduated with a *magister artium* (master of liberal arts) or higher degree between 1250 and 1550 and who were active within the Empire and (b) to provide exhaustive curriculum vitae based on a wide selection of sources. So far, all of our approximately 60,000 known figures can be accessed in our online database. Ultimately, we want to understand how the medieval and premodern foundations of a knowledge economy came to exist via these people.

The RAG classifies as scholars all persons who acquired the title of *magister artium* or *baccalareus*, *licentiatus*, or *doctor* of one of the higher faculties (law, medicine, or theology). It includes all those who demonstrably completed study in one of these higher faculties without taking the exams necessary for graduation. That practice was common among the higher nobility, who usually did not want to forgo academic education but whose status was still above university degrees, for they considered it demeaning to be examined by their social inferiors. These approximately 60,000 graduates spearheaded the 300,000 above-mentioned persons

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[1]Grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

[2]The term Old Empire is equivalent to the Holy Roman Empire from the Middle Ages until its dissolution in 1806.

[3]Under the auspices of the Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (Munich), the RAG has long been funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the Schweizerischer Nationalfonds (SNF). The Fritz Thyssen Foundation, too, supported the project from 2001 to 2006. In 2007 the German Union of Academies agreed to contribute to our funding, as did the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2008.

originating in the Empire and studying at European universities before 1550. Our ability to state those numbers is due directly to the excellent source material for the Old Empire. The relevant registries and other records of the universities and faculties, including those of the German nations in France and Italy, are preserved in unmatched quantity and are partially accessible digitally or in print (see Giessler-Wirsig & Böhm-Klein, 2006; Paquet, 1992). In addition, the Vatican Archives and the Apostolic Penitentiary contain a wealth of sources from which we have most fruitfully drawn information on the regions of the Old Empire (see Esch, 2010, pp. 52–58; Hörnschemeyer, 2009; Schmugge, 2003; Schmugge, 1998–2014). Only our primary sources lie in these repositories, however. For details on the lives of scholars beyond academia, we comb through virtually the entire historical record.

Arising from the intent to provide a who's who database of the scholars in the Old Empire, the RAG offers broad perspectives. It facilitates qualitative and quantitative conclusions about the Empire's intellectual elite as a whole, about their European connections, and about types and ways of knowledge transfer and personal relations, and it makes institutional and territorial comparisons possible. Processes of academization and professionalization within the German realm, which so far have only been assumed, can now be confirmed empirically.[4]

An Initial Example—A Database Query

A user's query prompts the first search in a search box. With a theoretically unlimited number of fields, the search can be narrowed down by further queries. The period can be specified on the time line running from 1250 to 1550. To find Winand von Steeg, for example (see Fig. 2.2), the user clicks to call up a short biography of him (see Table 2.1). The information is organized thematically, with the first bloc giving his personal data; the second bloc, the data on his education; the third bloc, the year-by-year information on his secular and spiritual activities, offices, positions, and functions; and the fourth bloc (not shown in Table 2.1), sources, literature, and current Internet links to other online data sources concerning the searched person.

To visualize the paths of a scholar's life—at least from the geographical perspective—one clicks to call up a map of Europe showing all the places where the person stayed or left his marks. In Winand's case the image shows the stages of his education (the yellow symbols) in the Netherlands, perhaps at Deventer with the famous Brethren of the Common Life, and at the Universities of Heidelberg and Würzburg. The violet symbols represent his spiritual career stations in Rome, at the Councils of Constance and Basle, and as a churchman in Cologne and Bacharach; his secular activities in the service of King Sigismund in Austria and Hungary; and as a legal advisor to the cities of Nuremberg and Augsburg. Clicking on the life

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[4]For basic ideas and relevant literature see Hammerstein (2003) and Schwinges (2008a, 2008b).

Fig. 2.2 The RAG website, showing a self-portrait of the scholar Winand von Steeg writing an approval certificate. Source and copyright: RAG. Reprinted with permission.

stations (e.g., in Heidelberg, Figs. 2.3 & 2.4) displays each local event along with the corresponding observations. Of course, one can browse for additional scholars and contemporaries and then compare their careers with those of Winand (for his biography see also Schmidt & Heimpel, 1977, pp. 9–31).

Table 2.1 Career steps, activities, and whereabouts of Winand von Steeg (Winand Ort von Steeg; Winandus de Stega; Winandus Ort; Winandus Ort de Stega; Wynand der Stalberger; Wynandus de Stega; Wynandus Ort; Wynandus Ort de Stega) according to a query in the Repertorium Academicum Germanicum (RAG)

Personal Data				
	Origin, geographic		1394	Steeg, diocese: Trier
	Origin, social		1371-05-01	Upper class Steeg
	Birth		1371-05-01	Steeg
Possible	Death		1453-01-19	Koblenz
Possible	Death		1453-07-09	
Education				
Possible	School attendance	before	1394	Deventer, School of the Brethren of the Common Life
	Registration		1394 summer	Heidelberg, group registration: yes
	Graduation		1396-07	Heidelberg, baccalaureus artium
	Graduation		1401-01	Heidelberg, baccalaureus iuris
	Graduation	before	1404	Würzburg, Dr. decretorum (doctor of canon law)
Activities				
	Stay	between	1391 and 1392	Rome, Curia, benefices
	Minister	start	1392-12-16	Weisel, St. Andreas
	Cleric		1392-12-16	Diocese: Trier
	Stay	from	1397 to 1398	Rome, Curia, benefices
	Professor	start	1403	Würzburg, law faculty, subject: Clementines, subject: Liber Sextus
	Professor	end	1411	
	Assessor		1405	
		around	1409–1410	
	Assessor		1404	Würzburg, manorial court
	Canon	start	1405-05-09	Würzburg, St. Johannes in Haug
	Canon	end	1453	
	Canon	after	1405-05-09	Limburg, St. George
Possible	Rector		1407	Würzburg, University
	Preacher		1407	Würzburg
	Preacher		1409	
			1410	
	Speaker		1407	Würzburg, graduation
	General vicar		1409–1410	Diocese: Würzburg
	Arbitrator	before	1409	Würzburg, client: Carmelites
	Lawyer	around	1409	Würzburg, client: Scots' monastery
	Envoy		1410-10-28	Rothenburg, client: German Order
	Legal consultant	start	1411	Nuremberg
	Preacher		1412-12-18	Passau
	Preacher		1413	
			1414	
	Envoy		1415	Konstanz, council, client: Nuremberg, city
	Witness		1416-10-03	Regensburg
	Stay	from	1416 to 1417	Brandenburg, court
	Witness	before	1417-10-22	Amberg, court, marriage contract
	Attendance		1417-11	Konstanz, council
	Trial	start	1417	Passau, cathedral, subject: benefices
	Trial	end	1421	
	Attendance		1418-05	Konstanz, council

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Activities			
Stay		1418 and 1419	Passau, Vienna, Preßburg, Linz, Stuhlweissenburg, royal court
Secretary		1419-04-14	Buda
Legal consultant		1419-11	Augsburg
Legal consultant		1421-03	
Stay		1419-04-14	Buda, royal court
Stay		1419-08	Bacharach
Legal consultant	start before	1419-07-11	Nuremberg
Legal consultant	end after	1422-03-23	
Scholar		1420-10-02	Würzburg, St. Johannes in Haug, resignation
Scholar	end	1423	
Priest	start before	1420-10-02	Resignation
Priest	end	1421-07-08	Hartkirchen, St. Peter
Altarist		1420-10-02	
Altarist	further evidence	1431-12-17	Würzburg, St. Maria
Altarist		1420-10-02	
Altarist	further evidence	1431-12-17	Röttingen, St. Peter
Canon	start	1421-03-21	Cologne, St. Andreas
Canon	end	1453	
Priest	start	1421-07-16	Bacharach, St. Peter
Priest	end	1453	
Envoy		1421 and 1422	Nuremberg, Imperial Diet
Artist		1426	Bacharach, book illumination, mural painting
Artist	around	1426	Steeg, St. Anna, mural painting
Secretary		1426	
Consultant		1426	
Artist	around	1430	Oberdiebach, St. Mauritius, mural painting
Chaplain	around	1430	
Canon	start	1431-12-17	Koblenz, St. Kastor
Canon	further evidence	1451	
Cantor		1431-12-17	Koblenz, St. Kastor
Dean	start	1439-09	Koblenz, St. Kastor, resignation
Dean	end before	1447-08-14	
Supplicant		1439-10-23	Koblenz, St. Kastor, benefices: Dean
Priest	start	1441-12	Ostheim, St. George
Priest	end	1453	
Judge		1441	Diocese: Trier, ecclesiastical court(s)
Judge		1443	

Note. Retrieved April 20, 2017, from http://www.rag-online.org/pnd/118633562 (translated by the author). The content and data of RAG are in German.
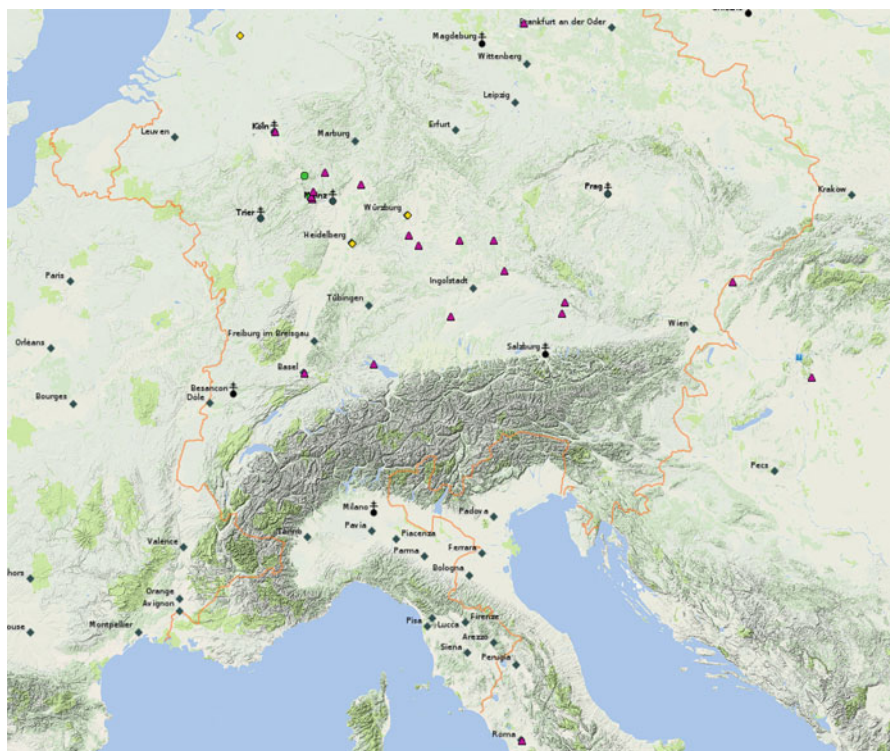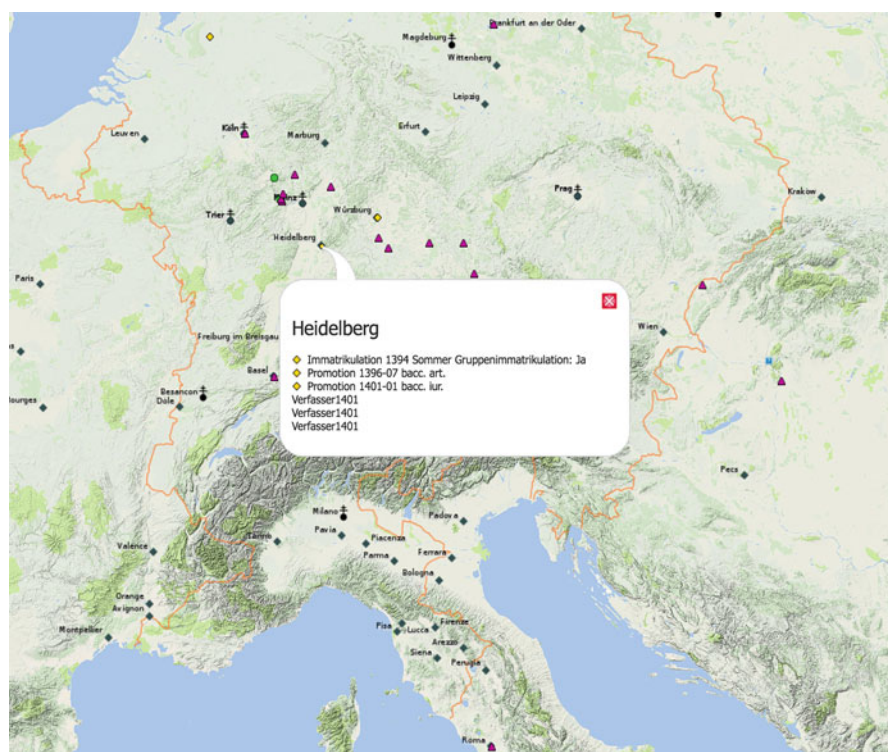
Fig. 2.3 The RAG website showing Winand von Steeg's whereabouts in life
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The *Gelehrtenatlas* (Atlas of Scholars)[5]

As the examples illustrate, we have begun to build an atlas of scholars, parallel to the RAG and based on its data. This *Gelehrtenatlas* is a web-based geographical information system, a tool for analyzing and visualizing the geographical mobility of our scholars. It will eventually also show the transfer of knowledge within the Old Empire. In this series entitled Knowledge and Space, I hardly need to justify why the distribution of scholars of every discipline since the late medieval period is one of European history's most fascinating topics, along with the application of their knowledge in their areas of origin and occupation. Students and scholars were a group in transit from their place of origin, the school town, and the place where they attended university—not to mention several benefices and occupations during and

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[5]The digital *Gelehrtenatlas* described in this chapter is still a prototype, a work in progress. A new application, the Repertorium Academicum Germanicum, is scheduled for late 2017. By applying the principles of "incoming" and "outgoing," one may include not only the universities but all institutions (e.g., churches, towns, and courts) where scholars have worked during their lifetimes. For the work in progress, consult www.rag-online.org.

Fig. 2.4 The RAG website showing the dates of Winand von Steeg at the University of Heidelberg. Clicking on a place name (e.g., Heidelberg) calls up a list of Winand von Steeg's activities there Source and copyright: RAG. Reprinted with permission.

after their studies—to the places where their careers took them or their masters sent them. The masters themselves were similarly diverse, ranging from churches and monasteries, emperors and kings, and local sovereigns to cities, schools, and universities. The scholars traveled and operated alone or in groups. They mingled with people, forged links, and left traces both social and intellectual.

During their lives, scholars crafted conference spaces, which functioned both physically and virtually through personal correspondence and dissemination of their writings, for example, or through testaments and foundings. Such geographical data is available along with prosopographic data on our online database (www.rag-online.org), making it possible to examine personal records for a scholar's name, place of origin, universities attended, graduate degrees, registration dates, and sometimes other facts of education and career moves. The details can be linked to geographic or topographic references throughout the Empire and the rest of Europe. We thereby hope to build a fundamental work for addressing both current and future research questions ranging from those about the regional peculiarities of professionalization and transfer to those about the functioning and collaboration of whole regions (for past experiments see, for example, Schwinges, 1986b, 1988, 2003 with maps).

Areas of Mobility and Catchment Areas

In addition to tracking individuals, one can try to present cohorts of scholars in a specific area of mobility, such as the catchment areas of the graduates in canon or civil law at the University of Bologna or Padua within a period defined by the user. Figure 2.5 shows that graduates came from all over the Empire, but primarily from the Rhineland, extending from the Netherlands to Switzerland. The latter catchment area may not be surprising, for during the Middle Ages the Rhine area was one of the Empire's leaders in political, economic, ecclesiastical, and cultural management (see Schwinges, 2001). Adding in the law graduates from the University of Padua over the same period, one can easily compare both catchment areas. Even for Padua, the Rhineland remained the center for recruiting lawyers, but, obviously, more people came from the southeastern parts of the Empire, ranging from Franconia to Austria. Explaining why this pattern emerged requires research. Note that the bubbles on the map in this resolution represent only spatial clusters but that zooming in may enable
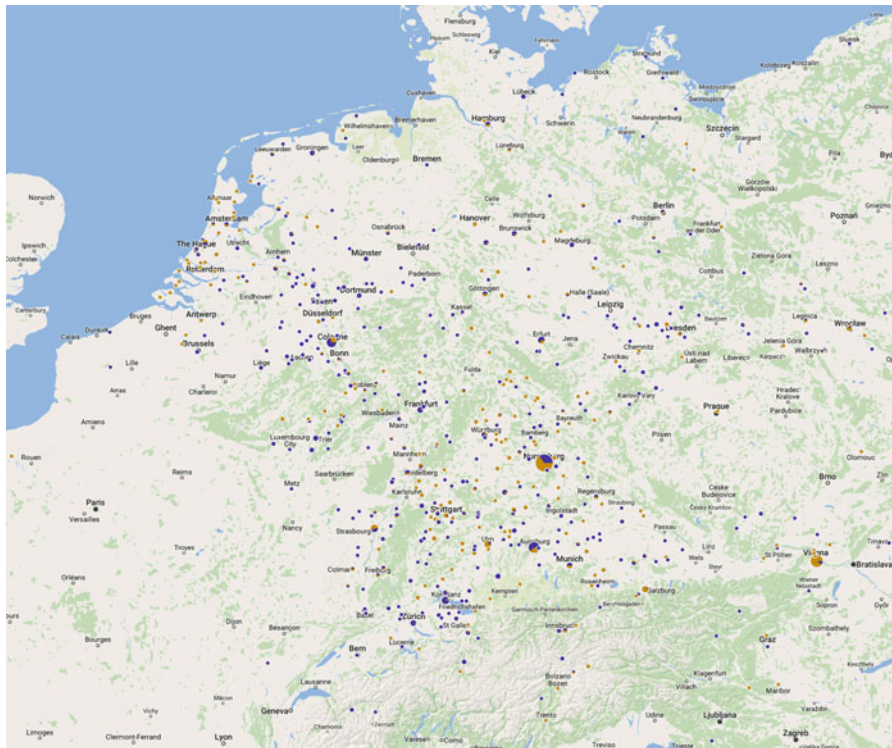
Fig. 2.5 The RAG website showing the catchment areas of Bologna (violet) and Padua (orange) in the Old Empire, 1250–1550.
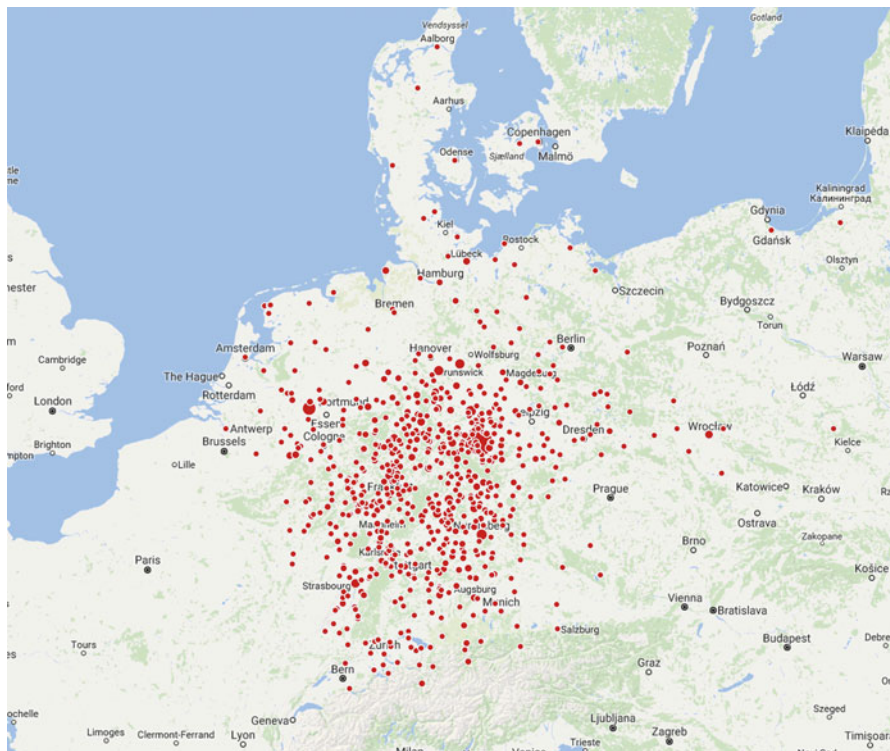Source and copyright: RAG. Reprinted with permission.

one to find smaller places of scholars' origins. In the final display of the map, all of these locations can be placed on a list of the persons in question.

Another way to visualize a catchment query is through comparative depiction and analysis of the catchment areas of the German and other European universities, considering either all students or only the graduates. This approach will enable users to draw connections that have been observed only inadequately, if at all. There are maps for individual universities at different points in time, as in the *Wissenschaftsatlas of Heidelberg University* (Meusburger & Schuch, 2012), but there has been no comprehensive, comparative survey of the university spaces, no *Atlas of German Universities and/or Scholars* from their origins until 1550 or later. Those waters are uncharted, a blind spot that requires us to identify and accurately locate all places of origin, profession, and life of the scholars included in the RAG. At present, our target accuracy is more than 80%.

The catchment area of each university has a what is known as a core region, the area in which the university and its scholars were socially rooted at first. The German universities required the protection of a local or municipal authority to ensure the continuity that a foreign body such as a university always initially represented (see Schwinges, 1986a, pp. 229–260; 2000, pp. 36–41). If the founding had no support from a sovereign, it would fail, as happened numerous times (e.g., Cracow in 1364; Vienna in 1365; and Würzburg, Chełmno, Buda, and Geneva). In this spirit prospering universities had a wide, secure regional base that they gradually expanded, forging a relatively stable network that linked the university, the sovereign, and the city with their environment. This framework used to be mistaken for insularity and attributed to recruitment customs supposedly different from those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In fact, however, that insularity should be seen as regional *proximity*, which was ordinarily the basis for successful recruitment of scholars in the late Middle Ages. Anything beyond that scope was an exception calling for a specific explanation.

The universities in the Empire up to the time of the Reformation about the 1520s generally developed their catchment areas in three steps. In an early phase a tight network of relationships was forged between the university, the court, the city, and the core region. This period was followed by one of development and strengthening, during which the core region was expanded, new areas for recruitment found, and the potential of the existing ones boosted. Lastly, during a phase of expansion, the university sometimes attracted as many or even more students from outside its core region than from within it, owing to the extensive geographic mobility of the persons attending. In the more densely populated regions of the Empire—the Rhine area, southern Germany, and the Danube region—the core regions were obviously more compact. Toward the east, with its decreased population density in the low mountain ranges, and in the Baltic, the core regions looked different but generally had the same function.

The maps available by clicking on the localities in Figures 2.6 through 2.11 compare the emergence of core regions as well as their expansion and full range for several universities: Erfurt, Prague, Heidelberg, Vienna, Cologne, Rostock, Greifswald, Wittenberg, and Leipzig. Core regions of the University of Erfurt

Fig. 2.6 The RAG website showing the core regions and catchment areas of the University of Erfurt, 1440–1550.
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(Fig. 2.6) were Thuringia, Hesse, and the southern parts of Lower Saxony. The orientation of recruitment was clearly to the West, nearly between the Elbe and Rhine rivers, territory that also constituted the main sphere of influence of the Prince Elector Archbishop of Mainz (see Schwinges, 1995, pp. 213–222). Core regions usually formed very quickly because they were not randomly composed. An individual's choice of a university was usually not an abstract decision; it was not a rational choice for or against a college town. Apart from political and economic factors, personal connections and bonds of patronage had the greatest influence on the decision (see chapter by Meusburger & Probáld in this volume).

Between students and professors alike, the most apparent connections were those between fellow countrymen. Wherever the students or scholars hailed from, the most common trait between them was simply that the new university was close to their place of origin. Local provenance therefore always meant provenance from a certain social area (see Fig. 2.7, for example). Everyone who left Prague for Heidelberg in
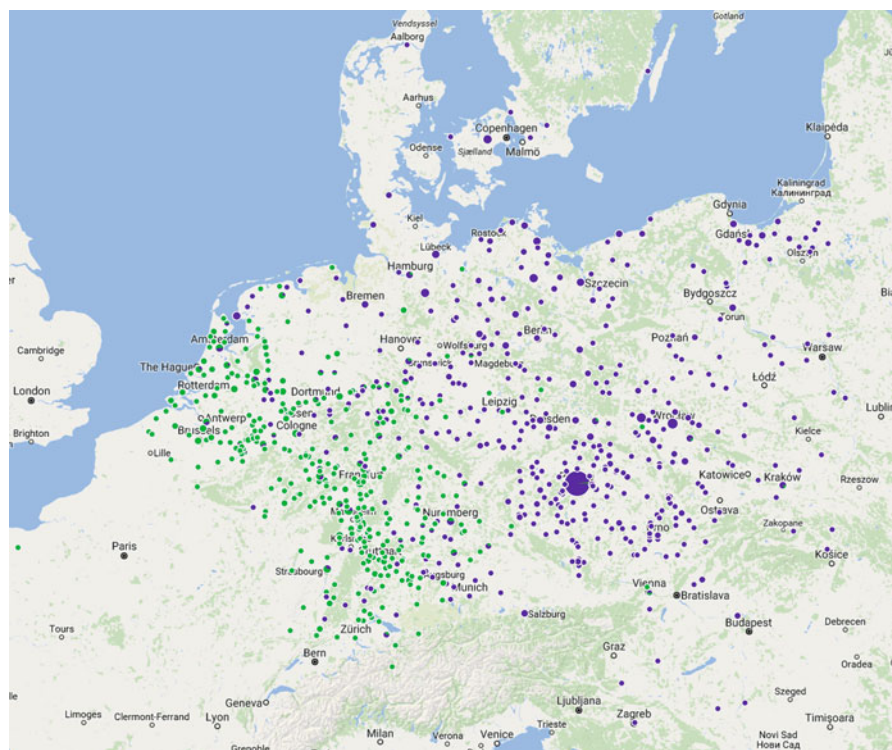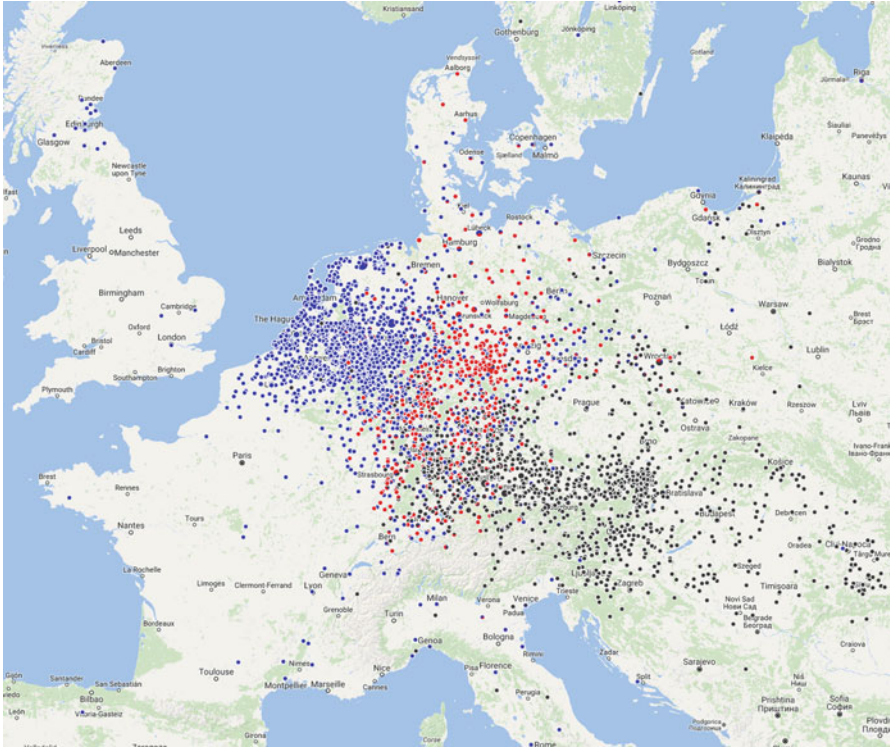
Fig. 2.7 The RAG website showing the catchment areas of Prague (purple) and Heidelberg (green), 1386–1420.
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and after 1386 came from the Bishopric of Worms, the Electoral Palatinate, or the Rhineland (including the Netherlands). Everyone else would have been as foreign in Heidelberg as they were in Prague, so they just remained in their home area. The renegades had good reason to expect better social opportunities at the new university founded closer to home than in the surroundings of foreign universities. The determining factors for a successful career were bonds to sovereigns, families, friendships, and relationships between fellow countrymen—in short, the system of patronage and social networks. The universities themselves were embedded in those networks from the very beginning and became ever more deeply enmeshed therein from generation to generation. Where this system failed to develop, prosperity was short-lived.

Cities located along key communication routes had the best prospects for attracting students from outside their immediate surroundings. Such places included Vienna, Cologne, and Erfurt (Fig. 2.8). The same advantage was enjoyed by smaller,
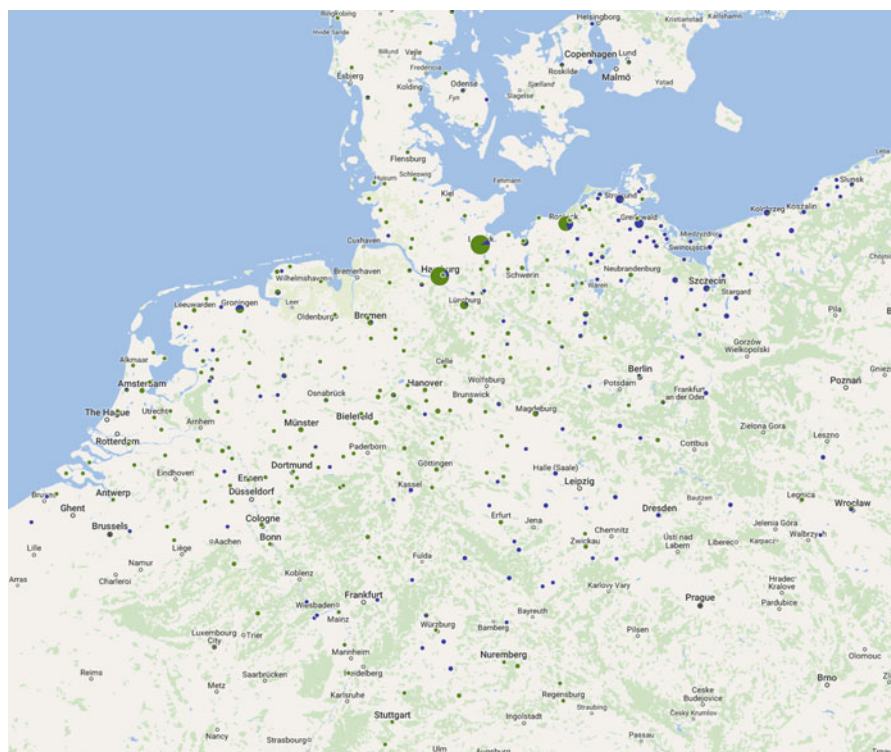
Fig. 2.8 The RAG website showing the catchment areas of the Universities of Vienna (gray), Cologne (blue) and Erfurt (red), 1395–1520.
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regional universities managed in collaboration with the town in which they were sited. Examples were Rostock and Greifswald (Fig. 2.9), which were Hanseatic universities as it were. They were centers of attraction far beyond their regions of Mecklenburg and Pomerania and drew students from the entire coastal Hansa region from Flanders to the Baltic. But Greifswald was a very small university of no more than 60 students a year and, accordingly, few graduates (Asche, 2010; Link, 2000, with maps; Pluns, 2007).

The University of Cologne was especially successful in attracting students. Starting with a rather extensive core region consisting of the Bishoprics of Cologne, Utrecht, and Liège, it was recruiting from all over the northwestern parts of the Empire by the end of the fifteenth century, with the external recruits even competing with those from the areas of other universities in the south (Fig. 2.8). Sometimes, old social and economic ties (even long-distance ones) and more recent compatriot links between students and teachers proved stronger than the pull of their more closely
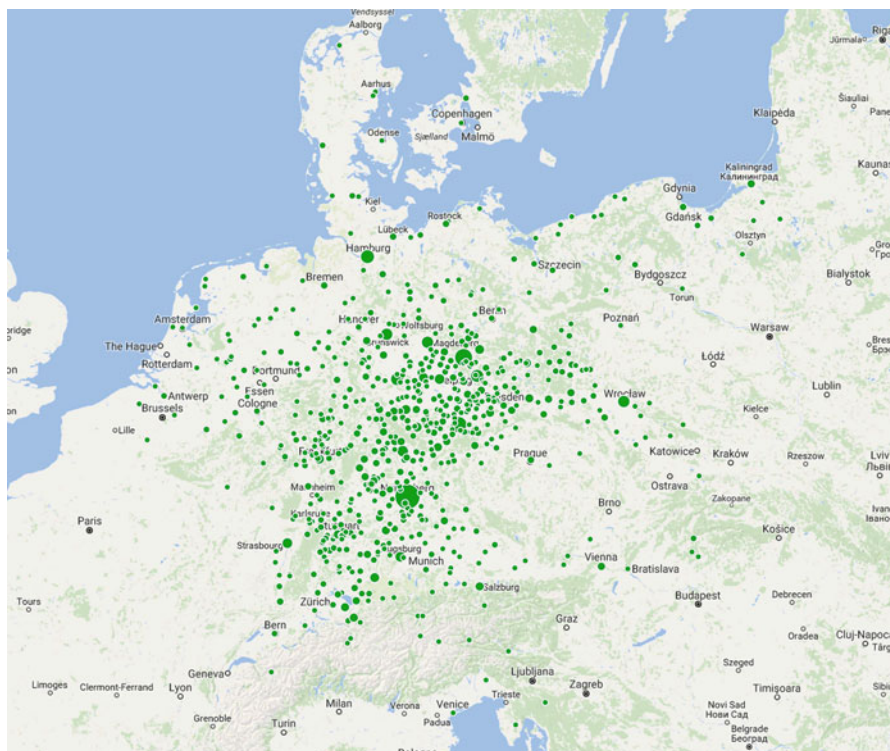
Fig. 2.9 The RAG website showing the catchment areas of the Universities of Rostock (chartreuse) and Greifswald (blue), 1425–1550.
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located universities (Meuthen, 1988, pp. 80–85; Schwinges, 1986a, pp. 244–260). This observation also applies to Vienna (Fig. 2.8), which recruited heavily from southern Germany, where most of the imperial cities were naturally aligned with Vienna as one of the imperial centers. Another example is Wittenberg, with its great catchment area after the beginning of the Reformation (Fig. 2.10).

What was true even for Wittenberg was also clearly demonstrated by the Universities of Erfurt, Heidelberg, Leipzig, Vienna, and Cologne up to 1550: The three phases distinguished in this chapter made for great variety and enabled each of these centers of higher learning to cultivate a typical local identity (Fig. 2.11). Regional universities founded by sovereigns or cities recruited their students and graduates mainly from their own area or region; the tendencies of both students and scholars to migrate were aligned with demand.

Because of the importance of regionalism, switching of catchment areas from one university to the next was not an issue. There was no noteworthy interchange between the universities. Although large universities such as Cologne, Erfurt, and Leipzig (Fig. 2.11) expanded into foreign spaces, their encroachment essentially did
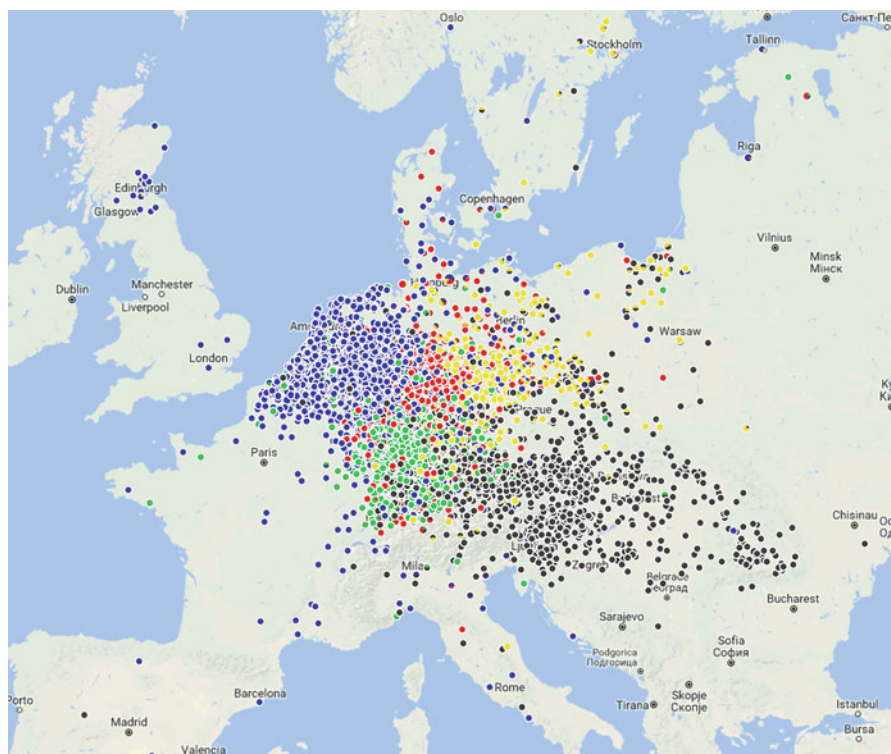
Fig. 2.10 The RAG website showing the catchment area of the University of Wittenberg, 1502–1550.
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not compromise others. The mobilization of university regions should not to be mistaken for the mobility of university students; the two processes are distinct. Relocation from one university to another was a primarily social act that must be seen in relation to the social step ladder. That is, mobility of students or academics traveling beyond a university can be interpreted as aristocratic conduct. The nobility, the cities' patricians, and the senior church dignitaries switched universities more frequently than other groups did. It was mainly the German upper class that undertook the great educational journeys to France and Italy. Over 70% of the German law students in Bologna were nobles, as currently verifiable up to 1500 (see Schmid, 2006; Schmutz, 2000, pp. 77–84). Generally, the switchers' network of local and social relationships remained intact. It was common to move within the same greater area—from Cologne to Heidelberg or Louvain, for example—with only a minority choosing more distant universities such as Erfurt, Leipzig, or Basle.

The university towns, however, were not the only important places for recruiting students or academics during the three phases in which university catchment areas developed. Every place of origin played a crucial role, too. Many factors could have a massive influence on an individual's access to a university: the developmental

Fig. 2.11 The RAG website showing the catchment areas of the Universities of Erfurt (red), Heidelberg (green), Leipzig (yellow), Vienna (gray) and Cologne (blue), 1400–1550. Source and copyright: RAG. Reprinted with permission.

stage of his place of origin; that place's status as a city, market town, or village; its population; parochial and academic circumstances; the economy and communications; and the complicated issues of authority and property, including the matter of the local ruler's stability and continuity. But these aspects go beyond the scope of this chapter, for proximity and regionalism are not just geographical matters but rather also matters of social relationships.

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