

German Yearbook on Business History 1981

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Editors:
Wolfram Engels and Hans Pohl (Editor in charge)

Editorial Staff:
Manfred Pohl and Horst A. Wessel



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Editors

Prof. Dr. WOLFRAM ENGELS, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität,
Seminar für Bankbetriebslehre, Senkenberganlage 31, 6000 Frankfurt
am Main

Prof. Dr. HANS POHL (Editor in charge), Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-
Universität, Historisches Seminar, Abt. Verfassungs-, Sozial- und Wirt-
schaftsgeschichte, Konviktstraße 11, 5300 Bonn 1

Editorial Staff

Dr. MANFRED POHL, Manager of the Historical Archive of the Deutsche
Bank AG, Goetheplatz 1–3, 6000 Frankfurt am Main 1

Dr. HORST A. WESSEL, Manager of the German Society for Business His-
tory, Schönhauser Str. 62, 5000 Köln 51

Letters are to be addressed to Dr. Horst A. Wessel

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Translator

EILEEN MARTIN, 74 Kings Road, Richmond, Surrey

*Advertisements' Management by the Society for Business History, Schönhauser
Straße 62, 5000 Köln 1*

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Introductory Remarks

For at least one hundred years Germany besides England and France in Europe and besides the United States and Japan in the world has been that country with the most private and public enterprises. This is easily explained by the fact that our economy has been predominantly characterized by small and medium-sized enterprises. Yet, until the Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte e. V. (Business History Society) had been founded in 1976, there was no institution in the universities and outside, which researched into the entrepreneurial economy and its achievements in and for society during the last centuries. Only in the banking business there has been the Institut für bank-historische Forschung in Frankfurt since 1969.

Nevertheless books on German business history can be traced back as far as 1811. We owe a lot of memorial publications to many economists, historians, journalists, archivists, and hobby historians from the economy. Most of them were ordered by entrepreneurs and managers interested in history. Even though economic history has been getting more and more important at German universities since the days of the historical school of national economy, and especially after World War II, business history hasn't been institutionalized, neither in a private nor in a public research institute. In marked contrast to the development in Germany, a special periodical, professors' chairs, and the Research Center for Business History in Harvard fostered by the Rockefeller Foundation came into being in the United States since the 1930s. Yet, we have to realize, that the business schools there with their empirical and theoretical teaching and researching concepts formed a much better platform.

Even the fact that there was no institutionalized business history in Germany didn't prevent some scholars from publishing important studies in business history, scholars like Richard Ehrenberg, Bruno Kuske, Walter Däbritz, Conrad Matschoss or Wilhelm Treue, who founded a periodical for business history and entrepreneurial biography back in 1956. That was only possible because of some entrepreneurs and enterprises being interested in history, following the example of Krupp, Siemens, and Deutsche Bank in keeping their records. Men from the entrepreneurial economy and German economic historians thus suggested to institutionalize business history by found-

ing a scientific society. The Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte e. V., which was founded in 1976, is

- “to do and to promote research in business history
- to make available the results of that research to science, the economy and the public
- to work for the preservation of historic sources in the economy”.

The Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte and the Institut für bankhistorische Forschung are striving for a close cooperation with all those persons and institutions in Germany and abroad working on the same subject. They endeavour to cope with these aims

- by editing the Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte and the Bankhistorisches Archiv
- by initiating research work, for instance studies of the image of the entrepreneurs’ economy in schoolbooks or of the history of the German banking business
- by arranging public lecture and discussion meetings with representatives of various scientific disciplines, of the economy, of the administration, of the media for example on the concentration movement in the German economy, on co-determination law, on marketing strategies, or on the universal bank system, on the development of bank legislation (state superintendance of banks), or financing an adverse balance of payments
- by arranging scientific symposions, for example on entrepreneurial welfare policy, on professional education and on the job training, on the development of labor dispute legislation in an international comparison
- by providing material for scientific research, for instance by publishing two volumes of a guide to archives in the economy
- by counselling and helping German and foreign scholars in their research work
- by cooperating with scholars from abroad. In 1979 and 1981 there were symposions together with the Business History Society of Japan and in 1979 there was the first international symposion on bank history in Berlin.

This Yearbook is to help German research in keeping contact and in cooperating with scholars and enterprises from abroad, by making available some select articles on business history from German periodicals to the English speaking world. Thus we want to promote the international dialogue between business historians and want to arouse more consciousness in history among representatives of the economy around the world. We hope at the same time to contribute to the strengthening and further development of our free economic and social order, because only that person who is able to understand the interdependence in the world economy that has developed in the past centuries will feel sure to promote a free world economy.

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List of Contributors

Prof. Drs. HORST ALBACH
Institut für Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften
der Universität Bonn, Adenauer-Allee 24–42
5300 Bonn

Priv.-Doz. Dr. WILFRIED FELDENKIRCHEN
Historisches Seminar der Universität Bonn, Konviktstraße 11
5300 Bonn

Prof. Drs. WOLFRAM FISCHER
Zentralinstitut für sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung der Freien
Universität Berlin, Hittorfstraße 2–4
1000 Berlin 33

Dr. WILFRIED GUTH
Member of the board of directors of the Deutsche Bank AG,
Große Gallusstraße 12–14
6000 Frankfurt am Main 1

Prof. Dr. HANSJOACHIM HENNING
Fachbereich 1 der Universität Duisburg – Gesamthochschule –
Lotharstraße 65
4100 Duisburg 1

Prof. Dr. JÜRGEN KOCKA
Fakultät für Geschichtswissenschaft der Universität Bielefeld,
Postfach 8640
4800 Bielefeld 1