

Thoughts on Thirteen Years of Editing *CEH*

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WHEN I assumed the editorship of *CEH* in 1991 the discipline of history was changing rapidly. Political, diplomatic, and economic history seemed to be fading after a long run, and even the nation state was being challenged as a central focus of research. Given the increasing interest in gender, race, post-colonialism, and memory, I had to consider “whither goeth” *CEH*. In part that decision is made for the editor by the manuscripts that are submitted to the journal. My own belief is that excellent history can be written based on a variety of theories, and with the employment of a diverse number of methodologies. I also concluded that weak and unconvincing history could equally be based on very different foundations as well.

Thus, the main issues for me were: quality and depth of scholarship, how convincing the argument of a manuscript was, and the degree to which the manuscript made a serious contribution to our knowledge of the Central European past. I then appointed a Board of Editors who represented different theoretical approaches. Looking back thirteen years later, I believe my approach has worked fairly well, and allowed a graceful transition from an older generation to a younger one with a minimum of strife. During my editorship we have published articles as diverse as a commentary about a new document regarding the causes of World War I to one concerned with the question of whether men could be moved by emotions (at least, in the Romantic era). Another article on women in the DDR was based on oral interviews.

There were two successes during these years worth mentioning. The introduction of book reviews (we now take them for granted) has met with very positive responses. Excellent reviewers (all of whom I would like to thank) have been willing to take the time to write critical and analytical reviews. I never counted the words or pages. An effort was made to review books particularly in periods such as medieval and eighteenth-century Central Europe. We get few submissions in these periods (which troubles me) and I sought to keep our subscribers who concentrate on these centuries. If I had it to do over again I would devote more energy to attracting manuscripts from premodern scholars. I also should have appointed an Austrian historian to the Board of Editors.

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On a more positive note, last year I was informed by Heather Shannon, a graduate student at Rutgers University Library School, that the journal *Impact* gave its highest quality rating to *CEH* for the first time. As a result, the influential *Magazine for Libraries* rated *CEH*, “the most respected journal in its area,” among journals published in English. Also Ms. Shannon found that *CEH* was the most cited journal dealing with German-speaking Europe, followed by the *Journal of Modern History* and the *Journal of Contemporary History*. Ms. Shannon also informed me that post-1945 Central Europe has replaced the Third Reich as the subject of the largest plurality of articles published in *CEH* during the past decade.

Lastly, although we have published very distinguished authors such as Geoff Eley, Wolfgang Mommsen, Gerald Feldman, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler during my years as editor, the majority of authors were either advanced graduate students or assistant professors. The high quality of the manuscripts that they have submitted convinces me that the discipline of German and Austrian history is in very good shape in this country. The older generation of historians, who trained under emigree scholars, has successfully handed on the baton to a younger generation whose research, judging by their submissions to *CEH* (over the past thirteen years), is exemplary.

If the journal has been a success, much of the praise should go to Ursula Marcum, who sought to meet the highest standards of editing, and almost always did. She also managed to make many friends among our contributors along the way. The Board of Editors did a splendid job of maintaining the high standards that *CEH* has been known for since its founding in 1968. They also got their reports in rapidly so that our commitment to make a preliminary decision within three months was the norm. Lastly Roger Chickering and Kees Gispén helped guide the journal through a rough patch when our publisher, Humanities Press, went bankrupt. Kees Gispén was calm and practical while I was experiencing broad emotional swings. Thus, I am happy to say that Kenneth Ledford assumes the editorship of a journal that is in good shape.