

Preface

The 16th annual conference of the Wolfenbüttel Circle for the History of Libraries, the Book and Media took place on 20–22 September 2010 in the Bible Room of the Bibliotheca Augusta of the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel.

It had been agreed some years earlier that in 2010 the annual conference would be on the topic of *Volksbildung* or Popular Education. It was a relatively late development that led to the Wolfenbüttel Circle using the occasion to repeat, for the fifth time, its successful co-operation with the Library History Group of the Library Association, now the Library and Information History Group of CILIP (Chartered Institution of Library and Information Professionals). This collaboration had begun in the early 1990s, on the initiative of our British colleagues (notably Graham Jefcoate, Alistair Black and Peter Hoare) and had already achieved four productive conferences in London and Wolfenbüttel.¹

Working with British librarians on a topic that was not specifically “library history” in nature was however something new, reflecting the changing priorities of the Wolfenbüttel Circle, which in 1998 moved from being a group concerned only with library history to one extending to book and media history as well. It is true that earlier conferences had welcomed German scholars with other special interests, such as Holger Böning and Reinhart Siegert, both participants in 2010. In a similar way we were able to build on the opportunity of having English librarians and scholars among the speakers, both to include library history in our theme and to plan the whole conference on a bilingual basis. This use of the German and English languages also allowed us to widen the perspective to include the history of other European countries and to become aware of the state of research in those countries.

The topic of the conference was agreed on as

Educating the People through Reading Material in the 18th and 19th Centuries: Principles – Media – Topography

and this provided a common thematic base, with the chronological limits aligned with contemporary research interests. In recent years Popular Educa-

¹ The first joint effort was the Anglo-German seminar on “Bibliotheken in der literarischen Darstellung / Libraries in Literature”, held in 1994 in the Herzog August Bibliothek. The second was held in 1996 in the German Historical Institute in London, with the title “The Universal Library: from Alexandria to the Internet”. The third, on “Mäzenatentum für Bibliotheken / Philanthropy for Libraries” took place in Wolfenbüttel in 2001, and the fourth, on “Libraries and Innovation” again in London in 2005, in the British Library.

tion has been a frequent subject for research, particularly with regard to the 18th century and the early 19th century, when it was strongly (though not exclusively) dominated by the Enlightenment. Interest is now being extended to the 19th century, which presents new problems of comprehensive interpretation and with a less predictable history. The conference has followed the aims of the Wolfenbüttel Circle and the LIHG in seeking to draw out the part played by reading material in popular education.

The first section, *Principles*, takes the fundamental view that popular education could not be self-sufficient and required the use of reading material for its success. Education of the people through reading material could only be achieved when there was an adequate level of literacy, when systems for the production and distribution of reading material were adequately in place, and when there was also motivation to read (to oneself or to others) or to be read to. As far as the German-language area of Europe is concerned, the bibliographical basis has now been established by Böning and Siegert's four-volume bio-bibliographical handbook on the popularization of Enlightenment thought.² This records as well as primary material a remarkable number of dissertations and conference papers, which have opened up research possibilities on the efforts of individual educationalists, on the educational development of different geographical areas, and on the way different media (such as sermons, chapbooks and almanacs) were brought into use for popular education. The first contribution to the present volume goes into more detail on the construction of this catalogue and the access possibilities that could be offered by an on-line database. – Katie Halsey gives an account of a new British database of this type, which has given quite unexpected insights into the relationship with reading of even those classes thought to have been remote from the reading experience. – Piero Del Negro's paper (with a pendant from a book-history perspective) gives a charming view of the mental world of Enlightenment educationalists which lay behind the expansion of literacy and the provision of literature for the people in large areas of central Europe. – Finally Peter Vodosek illustrates the variety of methods used by supporters of Enlightenment popular education, using the example of a pioneer of public libraries.

The second section, *Media*, starts by picking out two little-studied types of material used in popular education: popular newspapers of the 19th century

² Holger Böning/ Reinhart Siegert: *Volksaufklärung. Biobibliographisches Handbuch zur Popularisierung aufklärerischen Denkens im deutschen Sprachraum von den Anfängen bis 1850.* ("Popular Enlightenment: a bio-bibliographical handbook on the popularisation of Enlightenment thought in German-speaking Europe, from the beginnings to 1850"). Vols. 1–4: Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog 1990 ff. Volumes published so far: Vol. 1: Holger Böning: *The genesis of Popular Enlightenment and its development to 1780* (1990). Vol. 2.1–2.2: Reinhart Siegert/ Holger Böning: *The Popular Enlightenment at its height and the break caused by the French Revolution* (2001).

(Holger Böning) and the publications of Economic Societies (Gerrendina Gerber-Visser). Folksongs are considered by Barbara Boock – though not through the lens of Romanticism. Danish almanacs are shown, in papers by Henrik Horstbøll and Laura Skouvig, to play a remarkably similar Enlightenment role to their better-studied German equivalents, though their external appearance was very different.³

The third section, *Topography*, owes most to the participation of the LIHG. While earlier conferences have studied the contribution of the Habsburg lands to the development of education, particularly in the 18th century, and cultural relations between Germany and France have been well covered, the papers in this section illuminate – from comparative angles, and bringing out the differences – the efforts towards popular education in the Baltic area (notably in Latvia and Estonia, where a completely new point of view is presented), in a mixed-language vassal province of Prussia, and in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. These papers illustrate not only the different historical practices, but also – and most remarkably – the hugely different conditions from which developments sprang in the various countries of Europe. We see great differences in literacy, different linguistic situations (with “minority” languages sometimes being suppressed, or sometimes presenting early stages in the development of national languages), economic structures ranging from the purely agrarian to the heavily industrialized, urban and provincial environments, conscious efforts towards self-education (such as the world’s earliest working-men’s libraries), and Enlightenment “condescension” (in the best sense of the word), partly when areas were taken over or indeed colonized by other states – all these are presented in the most varied combinations by Peter Hoare, John Crawford, Wyn James, Shauna Barrett, Liliana Górska and Thomas Taterka.

In this way contributors from Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia and Estonia – and from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, which are (significantly) treated quite separately from one another – have provided a spectrum of viewpoints which exceeds all our expectation. We thank them all most sincerely.

We are also very grateful to the director of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Prof. Dr. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, and his colleagues. Dr. Werner Arnold and his successor Dr. Thomas Stäcker have performed, as they have done so often before, as indispensable partners of the Wolfenbüttel Circle in matters of

³ A substantial volume of conference proceedings has just been published – Klaus-Dieter Herbst (Ed.): *Astronomie – Literatur – Volksaufklärung. Der Schreibkalender der Frühen Neuzeit mit seinen Text- und Bildbeigaben*. Bremen: edition lumière / Jena: HKD 2012. This volume gives a good account of the various manifestations of German almanacs (with numerous illustrations in colour) and of the present state of research.

planning, organization and finance. We are most grateful to Dr. phil. Fritz Wiedemann-Stiftung for a significant contribution to the printing costs, which has allowed us, for example, to use colour plates to display the delightful red and black pages from Danish almanacs (such colour printing is an important element in the theory of popular printing).

The present volume is a collection of lectures delivered at a conference⁴, not a handbook. Hence we have not striven for ultimate uniformity.

Reinhart Siegert (Freiburg i.Br.)

Peter Hoare (Nottingham)

Peter Vodosek (Stuttgart)

⁴ The essays by Piero Del Negro (along with the addendum), Henrik Horstbøll and E. Wyn James were not delivered at the conference but were commissioned for this volume in order to increase the range of the discussion.