

**European Science Foundation  
Humanities (SCH)**

**Final report  
July 2005**

**Scientific periodicals in modern Europe**

Exploratory Workshop

Herzog August Bibliothek,  
Wolfenbüttel, Germany, June 1-4, 2005

Convened by

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and

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## 1. Executive summary

The workshop “Scientific periodicals in modern Europe” (Wolfenbuettel, 1-4 June 2005) was concerned with the history of learned journals created in moderne Europe, during the period that spans more than a century, from 1665 to the end of the eighteenth century. Methodologically, it aims at integrating history of science with history of the book, and history of ideas with history of material culture in order to study texts and their interpretations hand in hand with the periodicals, which are the vehicles of these texts, and their uses. The central question addressed by 15 speakers from 8 European countries concerned the practices of scientific knowledge production and exchange, conditioned by a periodical system endowed itself with some autonomy. Four main aspects of this question structured the collective work :

- Circulating journals and knowledge transfer
- Interactions between medium and knowledge production
- Uses of scientific periodicals
- Reassessing the Republic of Letters

Number of interesting and innovative case studies were presented in the four sessions on less and better known periodicals. These studies were more generally discussed in a final session.

The workshop made a significant contribution to the understanding of the following issues :

- Journals depend on networks of contributors who convey the information to be published and circulated. The material circulation of single titles all over Europe is likewise based on networks who are at the origin of knowledge transfers. The study of these networks associated with learned journals is central to the theme of the workshop.
- The relationship between local and global aspects emerged as a dominant theme. Periodicals generally aim at making kown local knowledge to a broad public all over Europe and also at communicating knowledge produced in the main centers to a local public.

- Closeness of the *historia litteraria* with some functions of periodicals: recording, collecting and classifying.

New topics were suggested for future investigation, namely :

- Periodicals being also economic enterprises, it is necessary to better understand their legal, statutory and financial dimensions.
- The relations between periodicals and other institutions of learning, like academies, universities, observatories, need to be reassessed.
- The answers to the compelling question of the interactions between an editorial and textual form on one hand, and the scientific content on the other, remain largely programmatic. Some interesting approaches were discussed and merit to be further explored.
- In a comparative perspective, it is necessary to open new case studies of journals concerning a broader geographical area and a wider range of disciplines.

Some of these topics will be further explored during a future meeting of the group in Oxford in spring 2006. A publication of the grouped proceedings of several workshops is foreseen.

## 2. Scientific content of the event

From 1 June to 4 June 2005, an exploratory workshop of the European Science Foundation, entitled “Scientific Periodicals in Modern Europe”, was held at the Herzog-August-Bibliothek Wolfenbuettel. The workshop was to discuss questions related to the practices of scientific knowledge production and exchange, conditioned by a periodical communication system, endowed with some autonomy. Twenty participants from Universities and Research Centers of Bremen, Goettingen, Hannover, Lisbon, Nijmegen, Orléans, Oxford, Paris, Potsdam, Rome, Sofia, Turin, Valenciennes, Vienna, and Wolfenbuettel assembled in the *Bibelsaal* of the Library and discussed 15 papers. The fact that the Herzog-August-Bibliothek kindly agreed to host the workshop was of inestimable benefit ; the periodicals discussed intensively by the papers are available in the Library and were present during the papers in the *Bibelsaal*. The speakers had been asked by the organizers of the workshop, Jeanne Peiffer and Jean-Pierre Vittu, to address all or some of the following requests :

- Attention should be paid to the explicit programmatic statements of the editors.
- The material constitution (typography, structure, format, periodicity) of the journal is to be described.
- The question of the commercial importance, links and networks of the journals’ editors should be addressed.
- Attention is to be paid to the emergence and evolution of specific research themes in the journal you study.
- The role of singular disciplines in the journal, their relative importance, and the changes they undergo, is to be assessed.
- The possible publication strategies of single authors are to be studied.
- Examples of the interactions between periodicity and knowledge production are important.
- Which are the tools of *topicality* (bibliographies, indexes, tables), their nature, their periodicity (annual or recapitulatory), their structure by title, keyword, matter, etc.? Are they univocal (one or more entries for each piece)? How do they change over time?
- What are the dynamics of disciplinary change as embodied in the classificatory structure and the classes ?
- Attention is to be paid to translations or summaries of the contents of a journal, to the migration of themes over Europe, to discussions and controversies implying several journals.

The contributions of the first morning all addressed the general topic “Circulating journals and knowledge transfers”. Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck gave a case study on the *Nouveau journal des savants* published first in Rotterdam (1694) then in Berlin by Etienne Chauvin. She characterized Chauvin as cultural mediator between his host country, Brandenburg, and the Republic of Letters, then singled out three different networks, on which he relied for collecting informations : the international community of Huguenot ministers ; the teachers of the French college in Berlin ; and the savants from the court of Brandenburg. Two personalities played a role in the conception of the journal, on the one hand Leibniz who, like Chauvin, aimed at promoting the German intellectual productions and make them known to the whole Republic of Letters, on the other Ezechiel Spanheim who had a more classical conception of the journal, conceived as a means to circulate information from the whole world of learning.

Jordan Avramov chose likewise, in his presentation, to focus on an actor : Henry Oldenburg in the early years of the *Philosophical Transactions*, one of the first European learned journals. He showed how Oldenburg’s roles of intelligencer and secretary of the Royal Society interfered with his editorial business. Oldenburg being a prolific letter writer, his journal is described by Avramov as an upgrade of epistolary communication. The journal is considered as an interactive medium, as an outgoing letter would be. The widening of the circulation implied however the necessity of controlling the provided information. Thus, Boyle for instance publishes in two languages (Latin and English) in order to control himself the Latin diffusion of his article.

Andrea Seidler spoke next on journals in the Hungarian kingdom, the first of which, *Pressburger Zeitung*, appeared in 1764, a century after the foundation of the first learned journals in France and England. The role of an important actor, Karl Gottlieb Windisch, fluent in five languages, was emphasized. He published several journals, and especially from 1782 on his *Ungrisches Magazin*, which included a lot of informations and observations from abroad in the fields of medicine, or agrarian sciences. Natural sciences were nearly absent.

Fernando Reis gave a precise presentation of a Portuguese journal published monthly in Lisbon from 1779 to 1816, the *Jornal Enciclopedico*. This journal, with an encyclopedic matrix, and a utilitarian orientation, is one of the best Portuguese examples of the efforts of some Portuguese editors to bring science to a wide audience. The main driving force behind the journal was the promotion of practical knowledge useful to public welfare. There were several changes in the editorial orientation of the *Jornal*. Natural philosophy was not introduced until 1806. Medicine and chemistry (with references to Lavoisier and Berthollet) were then dominant. Translated and abstracted texts were taken from French, German, Italian and Spanish periodicals and books (in decreasing order).

The afternoon session, devoted to the “Interactions between medium and knowledge production”, began with the paper of Jeanne Peiffer asking the question of how the creation of the periodical form in the second half of the seventeenth century shapes the way in which mathematical knowledge is produced, circulated, and debated at the turn of the century. She showed that the possibility, for savants, to publish in a short term brief pieces of mathematics accelerated considerably the acceptance of new and highly innovative problems into the corpus of mathematics. The style of mathematical writing underwent changes from communicating mere results to focussing on methods (often kept secret in epistolary communication). From the statements of the *Journal des savants*’s editors as well as from the letters exchanged by mathematicians, it became clear that the emergence of a broader audience for mathematics was problematic.

Studying an Italian periodical, *Giornale de’ Letterati d’Italia* published from 1710 on in Venice by Maffei, Valisnieri and Zeno, historian of mathematics Silvia Roero underlined the importance of the journal for the reception of the Leibnizian calculus in Italy. Taking the Leipzig *Acta eruditorum* and the *Journal des savants* as a model, the Italian journal published original papers and extracts from books published in Italy and abroad. Mathematics, with 110 articles, ranked second after medicine. Results were published, methods compared and controversially debated. The printing of mathematical formulae was of high quality. Roero insisted on the necessity of interdisciplinary research in order to avoid false appreciations of the scientific climate at that time in Italy.

Her Roman colleague, historian of medicine Maria Conforti, compared two *Giornale de’ Letterati* published in Rome in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. She aimed at assessing the kind, quality and breadth of the information offered to *curiosi*, as well as to medical practitioners, on medical topics. The first Roman *Giornale*, published by Francesco Nazzari, followed not only the model of the *Journal des savants*, but translated number of its articles, completely or only partially. It considered medicine (15% of the articles) to be an essential part of the debate on hot topics such as corpuscularianism, spontaneous generation or blood transfusion. The second *Giornale* presented itself as a journal of translation and information from abroad. It showed a deep awareness of the problems and threats posed by the ongoing changes in pathology, therapy and public health. The articles published in the two Roman journals were often considered more like texts in their own right, medical cases to be studied, than like repositories of news.

Next, Martin Gierl examined the *Goettingische gelehrte Anzeigen* in the network of more than hundred “gelehrte Zeitungen”, which constituted the leading instrument for the Enlightenment’s effort to achieve the complete inventory of all ever and currently printed

texts. As an organ of the university of Goettingen, the *Anzeigen* followed the social rules of the institution. A group of professors administrated and controlled the production of the extracts of books read by the Goettingen professors. The journal offers a map of the sciences in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as seen from Goettingen. More than the half of the reviewed books came from abroad. After Goettingen, Paris, London and Leipzig were ranking highest. But who should review the works of the leading Goettingen professors ? Certainly not savants of lower rank. The professors did it themselves, anonymously, as if the journal were speaking by itself.

Friday morning's session, entitled "Uses of scientific periodicals", was opened by Uwe Mayer with a contribution on the Leipzig *Acta eruditorum* founded by the University professor Otto Mencke in 1682. Published in Latin, the journal contained reviews of scientific books from all over Europe and served as an international platform for Germanic scholars. As for mathematics, it became soon the most important forum for the new Leibnizian calculus. Mayer confronted Mencke's principles, guided by impartiality and avoidance of controversies, to the practice of his editorship. As the case of Tschirnhaus clearly shows, when German scientists were involved, Mencke was partial and keen on defending as far as he could – by communicating papers before their publication in the journal, by delaying the publication of others, etc. – the scientific interests of his compatriots, especially when they were linked to the Dresden court.

The next speaker, Patrizia Delpiano, presented a paper on "Reading sciences in 18<sup>th</sup> century Italy". She started from the editors' policies regarding their potential readers for different types of journals founded in the 1760s-1770s, from almanachs to the *Biblioteca physica*, adressed to scientists. She tried then to identify the real readers of each of these types. Some readers were also authors and contributed to the journals. The readership thus included professionals like doctors, the educated urban middle class keen on scientific information, but rarely members of the lower classes, although the role of oral transmission by some cultural mediators (as landowners) was not insignificant. Delpiano insisted on the necessity to take into account, in a study like hers, education systems, the influence of the church, and studies of literacy in the various Italian states.

Yasmine Marcil's paper was entitled "L'écriture du compte rendu de voyage scientifique dans les périodiques des années 1780" and was devoted to the emergence of new rhetorical devices concerning the presentation of travel accounts. Even if periodicals of the 1780s showed a taste for scientific travel accounts, the journalists did rarely elaborate, in their reviews, on the scientific aspects. Attention was paid to the training of the traveller, to the description of the terrain and to the exactness of the observations. The question of the validation of more theoretical aspects and of scientific results was often

absent or at least problematic. The role played by the journalists as intermediaries appears to have been crucial.

The last contribution of the session, by Brendan Dooley, was on “The verification of fact in early scientific periodicals”. Did the learned journals, by involving more people in the effort, increase the production of “truth” ? Like every advance in communication, they certainly increased the number of solutions to the great problems of the time, but they increased also the number of problems. To sort out the credible work was one of the challenges the journals had to face. Their criteria, in the case of the early *Philosophical Transactions* for instance, had more to do with social characteristics, the quality of the witnesses, their being “less outlandish”, etc.

The session of Friday afternoon was devoted to the broader question of “Reassessing the Republic of Letters”. The first paper by Christian Albertan concentrated on the function of the Jesuit’s *Mémoires sur l’histoire des sciences et des beaux arts* (the so-called *Mémoires de Trévoux*) as a vector of scientific production. Albertan exposed that, owing to the network established by the Jesuit fathers, the editors of these *Mémoires* disposed of a large range of informations from all over the world and he argued that they aimed at instituting a newsletter and a forum open to professional scientists as well as amateurs. The Jesuit journal published informations about learned and scientific institutions (e.g. universities, academies, observatories), it indicated the sales of private libraries and collections of scientific instruments and curiosities, and it published the results of scientific experiments and astronomical observations.

Jens Haeseler’s paper was devoted to the collaboration of Jean-Henri Formey (1711-1797) with two learned journals: the *Bibliothèque germanique* published from 1720 onwards, and the *Journal encyclopédique* founded in 1756. These two periodicals were established on the editorial model of the universal learned journals and they took advantage of the correspondence of their editors within the Huguenot Refuge and of their connections with German learned circles and booksellers. Haeseler’s paper focussed on the relation between local and global: on the one hand, the *Bibliothèque germanique* published informations on books and learned research issued from the “German” area (an area extending from Switzerland to Sweden, and from Germany to Russia); and on the other hand, the aim of the *Journal encyclopédique* was to cover the whole Europe, including areas formerly covered by regional periodicals.

The last paper by Jean-Pierre Vittu, devoted to “Périodiques savants et République des lettres: pour la réévaluation d’une fonction”, stressed the necessity to reassess the place and the role of the learned journals in connection with the “Republic of Letters”. He argued that the learned journals constituted an editorial form with a large production and



a great number of reprints and pirated editions. Vittu's broader study of learned journals from the mid-seventeenth century to the Revolution concentrated on the tools for the recovery and location of knowledge included in the journals (i.e. tables or bibliography, as well as choices and digests). In his view, due to this editorial form and these tools, the learned journals constituted more than a medium under the sway of the learned institutions (e.g. universities, academies). They constituted a periodical communicating system endowed with some autonomy, and they were used as a forum by men of science, as well as literate, or craftsmen, or in some cases as a kind of "market place". Considered as a system, the learned journals played a prominent part in the transformation of the old "Republic of Letters".

The final discussion of the workshop took the form of a table ronde led by Stéphane Van Damme, who undertook to be the rapporteur of the workshop. He opened the general discussion with a synthesis of the papers and the issues raised. A lively debate followed during which new topics were suggested for future investigation by subsequent workshops.

### 3. Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome

There was a strong feeling amongst the participants that the workshop was a rare and unusual occasion for historians of science and cultural historians to meet on a complex new topic : periodicals as a tool for the production and circulation of scientific information studied from the double point of view of scientific content and the materiality of the medium. The workshop gave rise to a balanced exchange between history of science and social and cultural history. It made a significant contribution to the understanding of the following issues :

- Networks

In several talks, networks of contributors were singled out for journals like the *Philosophical Transactions*, the *Nouveau journal des savants*, the *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia*, the *Mémoires de Trévoux*. The networks of contributors lean on already constituted social networks (like in the case of the *Nouveau journal des savants* protestant ministers, French teachers at the Berlin college, etc.)

- Center/periphery

The relationship local / global emerged as a dominant theme present in most communications concerning the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The periodicals generally aim at making known local knowledge to a broad public all over Europe and also at communicating knowledge produced in the main centers (Paris, London, Rome, etc.) to a local public. They establish a double transfer – geographical and linguistic – from the center to the periphery and conversely, which transforms margins into peripheral centers : Hungary, Portugal, but also Berlin.

- Closeness of the *historia litteraria* with some functions of periodicals : recording, collecting and classifying

Collections of periodicals also constitute an archive, keeping pieces of knowledge that have to be ordered, classified, and made accessible through the constitution of new tools for indexation and selection. Some of these tools are close to those of the *historia litteraria*, especially in Germany, while others, in France, Italy, and England, are quite different.

Further ideas has emerged which might be developped in the future. The discussion of these more programmatic ideas has helped to determine an agenda for future research :

- Legal, statutory and economical dimensions of the periodicals

Periodicals are also an economic enterprise asking for huge investments of financial means. The existence of a market and a potential audience is one of the keys for the success of a new title. The infrastructures of exchange, including the commercial circuits, are to be better understood. A study of these infrastructures can rely on catalogues of booksellers, correspondences of printers, etc.

- Periodicals as institutions and their relationship with other institutions of learning

The relations between periodicals and academies, universities, observatories, etc. need to be reassessed. Is the fact that the journals editors are members of learned institutions, or related to them, significant ? Some case studies has shown that the journals are institutions of their own. The question of their dependence from other institutions remains open.

- Interactions between the periodical form and knowledge

The answers to the compelling question of the interactions between an editorial and textual form on one hand, and the scientific content on the other, remain largely programmatic. Some interesting approaches were discussed and merit to be further explored, especially those concerning the impact of periodicity on style – taken in the broadest sense - and the rhetoric of the various texts published in periodicals. In this context, it is also interesting to study the uses by certain savants of certain periodicals. Strategies built by these users depend on the editorial characteristics of the different periodicals.

- Finally, in order to enhance the comparative perspective, it is necessary to open new case studies of journals concerning a broader geographical area (especially in the European periphery) and a wider range of disciplines (chemistry, physics, geology, law, etc.).

More specific outcomes :

The members of the group have decided to stay in contact and to exchange their working knowledge on scientific periodicals in modern Europe. This will be done mostly via electronic communication. A website will be created (with the help of the Centre Alexandre Koyré) including a forum opened only to the members of the group ; data

bases on different periodicals ; and a bibliography. Links to other bibliographical resources will be established. The site may progressively be opened to a larger audience.

A next meeting will be organized in the late spring 2006 by Stéphane Van Damme, Jeanne Peiffer, and Jean-Pierre Vittu in Oxford at the Maison Française d'Oxford. This meeting will be prepared by a series of seminars to be held in Paris.

Albeit the papers of the Wolfenbuettel workshop were highly innovative, their publication is postponed. Indeed, our aim is to publish in a few years'time a book covering all European areas and a large range of disciplines. In this perspective, we plan to collect additional papers presented in future meetings.

## 4. Final Program

### Thursday, June 2 : Morning Session (9h15-13h)

9.15 Opening by Dr. Jill Bepler, Herzog-August-Bibliothek

9.40 Introduction by the organizers : Jeanne Peiffer & Jean-Pierre Vittu

#### • Circulating journals and knowledge transfers

Chair : Jean-Pierre Vittu

10.10 Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, Une tentative de transmission du savoir scientifique dans l'espace allemand : le *Nouveau journal des savants* d'Etienne Chauvin.

10.40 Andrea Seidler, Wissenschaftliche Netzwerke und Medien im Koenigreich Ungarn im späten 18. Jahrhundert.

11.10 Coffee Break

11.30 Jordan Avramov, Henry Oldenburg and the early years of *Philosophical Transactions*, 1665-1677.

12.00 Fernando Reis, Disseminating science to the Portuguese, the *Jornal Encicopedico dedicado á Rainha* (1779; 1788-1793; 1806).

12.30 Discussion

13.00 Meal

### Thursday, June 2 : Afternoon Session

#### • Interactions between medium and knowledge production

Chair : Stéphane Van Damme

14.45 Jeanne Peiffer, The periodical form. Its impact on making, formulating and communicating science.

15.15 Maria Conforti, Medicine and literary curiosities in Rome : two *Giornale de' letterati* (1668-1681 ; 1742-1759).

15.45 Coffee Break

16.15 Silvia Roero, The mathematics in the *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia* (1710-1740).

16.45 Martin Gierl, The « gelehrte Zeitung » and the social presentation of knowledge.  
Self-reviews in the *Goettingischen gelehrten Anzeigen*.

17.15 -18.00 Discussion

### **Friday, June 3 : Morning Session**

#### **• Uses of scientific periodicals**

Chair : Jeanne Peiffer

9.30 Uwe Mayer, « Kein tummelplatz, darauff gelehrte leute Kugel wechseln » -  
Prinzipien und Praxis von Menckes Edition der *Acta eruditorum* im Spiegel  
mathematischer Kontroversen zwischen Tschirnhaus, Leibniz und den Bernoullis.

10.00 Patrizia Delpiano, Lire les sciences dans l'Italie du XVIIIe siècle.

10.30 Coffee Break

10.50 Yasmine Marcil, L'écriture du compte rendu de récits de voyages scientifiques  
dans les périodiques des années 1780.

11.20 Brendan Dooley, The verification of fact in early science periodicals.

11.50 Discussion

12.20 Visit of the HAB, with Jill Bepler

13.00 Meal

### **Friday, June 3 : Afternoon Session**

#### **• Reassessing the Republic of Letters**

Chair : Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck

14.30 Christian Albertan, Une académie scientifique ouverte, le *Journal de Trévoux* au  
milieu du XVIIIe siècle.

15.00 Jens Haeseler, De la *Bibliothèque germanique* au *Journal encyclopédique* : nouveaux modèles dans la presse savante – idéaux nouveaux de la République des lettres.

15.30 Coffee Break

16.00 Jean-Pierre Vittu, Périodiques savants et République des lettres : pour la réévaluation d'une fonction.

16.30 Discussion

### **Saturday, June 4 : Morning Session**

**10.00 - 13.00 General discussion**

Moderator : Stéphane Van Damme

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## 6. Statistical information on participants

### Nationality :

Austria	1
Bulgaria	1
France	6
Germany	6
Italy	3
Luxemburg	1
Netherlands (The)	1
Portugal	1

### Age range :

21-30	2
31-40	6
41-50	6
51-60	6

### Sex-ratio :

12 males and 8 females