Brief report on the most important activities und publications of the DGEJ

The German Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Erforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts [DGEJ]), is the German national branch of ISECS. The DGEJ consists of about 750 members, many of whom gather regularly at the society’s annual conferences, where they discuss their common goals and principal activities. The DGEJ is constantly engaged in a wide variety of publication efforts and research projects. Its official seat is the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, one of Germany’s leading research libraries of international importance with a large collection of books from the early modern period. The library houses about 900,000 books, of which 350,000 were printed between the 15th to 18th centuries. Notable librarians have included Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1691-1716) and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1770-1781)

1.) DGEJ Activities (Research, Conferences)

Because of the formal and firm affiliations between the two institutions, several of the recent DGEJ-conferences have been – or will be – hosted by the Herzog August Library. In September 2019, the Herzog August Library will host the annual conference of the DGEJ – in collaboration with Prof. Dr. Marian Füssel of the University of Göttingen. Recent DGEJ-conferences outside Wolfenbüttel were held at the universities of Halle (2015), Leipzig (2016), Münster (2017), and Paderborn (2018).

Because the Herzog August Library promotes and finances electronic editions of the works of Lessing and other enlightenment authors, the DGEJ is interested in participating in these and other projects usually labelled “Digital Humanities”. Dr. Hole Rößler of the Herzog August Bibliothek is the coordinator of these efforts.
An important event for the DGEJ will be the 2020 ISECS-Meeting in Potsdam (3rd – 6th July 2020), where the German Society for Eighteenth Century Studies will have the honour and the privilege to act as the inviting national branch of ISECS. Preparations for this meeting are well underway, and the society has secured finances as well as the support of the local authorities (University of Potsdam and the City of Potsdam).

2.) DGEJ Publications

The German Society for Eighteenth Century Studies publishes a journal, “Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert”, which is distributed to all DGEJ members. Most university libraries in Germany subscribe to it. The main section of the journal is dedicated to scholarly articles on eighteenth century topics, but there is also a review section; every second volume is dedicated to a particular topic, suggested by the volume’s editors and finally proposed and accepted by the society’s executive board. Recent themes were “Emotions and Enlightenment” vol. 39/2 (2015), “Global Enlightenment” vol. 40/2 (2016), “Economic knowledge in encyclopedic compilations of the 18th century vol. 41/2 (2017), and “Erotic and pornographic literature in Germany, 1750-1800” vol. 42/2 (2018). The journal “Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert” is published by Wallstein Verlag, Göttingen.

Two book series are also edited and sponsored by the DGEJ:


b) „Studien zum 18. Jahrhundert“ is published in collaboration with Meiner Verlag, Hamburg. The most recent volumes designed for publication in this series in 2018 are studies on “Enlightenment narratives“ as well as “The quest for Perfection and the concept of perfectibility in Pietism and Enlightenment”.

At their annual meetings in Wolfenbüttel (and at annual DGEJ-conferences), the DGEJ executive board discusses several publication proposals and selects the most promising studies with regard to style, originality and relevance.