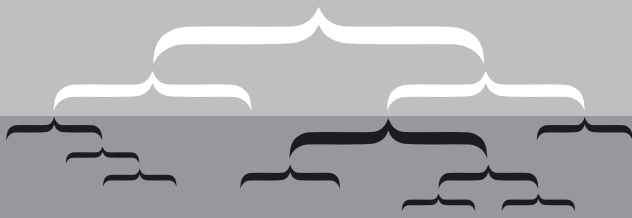


**Paul Michel  
Madeleine Herren  
Martin Rüesch (Hgg.)**

# Allgemeinwissen und Gesellschaft





## **Impressum**

### **Allgemeinwissen und Gesellschaft.**

Akten des internationalen Kongresses über Wissenstransfer und enzyklopädische Ordnungssysteme, vom 18. bis 21. September 2003 in Prangins.  
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### **Herausgeberschaft**

Paul Michel, Ordinarius für Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700 an der Universität Zürich.

Madeleine Herren, Ordinaria für Geschichte der Neuzeit an der Universität Heidelberg.

Martin Rüesch, lic. phil., wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter an den Universitäten Heidelberg und Zürich.

### **Redaktionelle Mitarbeit**

Ines Prodöhl, M. A., wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin an den Universitäten Heidelberg und Zürich.

### **Layout und Grafik**

Martin Rüesch, unter Mithilfe von Manuela Fischer, Atelier 22, Winterthur.

### **Umschlagsbild**

Die kayserliche Bibliothec [in Wien], aus: Happel, Eberhard Werner, Grösseste Denkwürdigkeiten der Welt oder so genandte Relationes curiosae, in welchen eingeführt, erwogen und abgehandelt werden allerhand historische, physicalische, mathematische und andere merckwürdige Seltzamkeiten, II. Theil, Hamburg: Wiering, 1685; Kupferstich bei Seite 300.

# General Knowledge and Civil Society

## *An Accurate and Popular View of the Present Improved State of Human Knowledge*

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 The Historicity of General Knowledge

In 1809, *The British Encyclopaedia* promised to portray *an accurate and popular view of the present improved state of human knowledge*.<sup>1</sup> In a period when sciences and education had already started to turn into political and economic forces, the combination of ›accurate‹ and ›popular‹ is a program and a problem at the same time. Another contradiction is concealed in the promise of ›present‹ but ›improved‹ knowledge. Are encyclopaedias a means of introducing new knowledge into a society? Are encyclopaedias far from being speculation and thus on the safe side of well established but dusty fundamentals? The subtitle promises human knowledge as a universal concern – but in the main title knowledge is explicitly British.

In questioning these kinds of encyclopaedic self-representation, our research objective is not to present encyclopaedias' self-portrayal,<sup>2</sup> but rather to focus on the aim shared by all encyclopaedias, namely the presentation of a supposedly exhaustive collection of essential knowledge. Vaguely described as a vessel of ›general knowledge‹, the appearance of this sort of intellectual matrix is a global phenomenon that can be seen at different times and in different cultures and places. The approach presented below understands encyclopaedic texts as a source of evidence for the social, cultural and political functions of general knowledge. Therefore, this kind of research on encyclopaedias challenges methodological and theoretical frameworks that lie beyond cultural anthropology and the history of science. If we consider the social dimension of collecting and presenting knowledge as equal to the development of important encyclopaedic examples and exceptional persons, an examination of encyclopaedias could contribute to new fields of research such as a hermeneutics of knowledge and a social history of intellectual essentials. Besides methodological reflections, in the analysis of encyclopaedias as an interface of knowledge and society, three key questions demand attention: Firstly, what is the impact of *chronology and time*? At first glance, the (mostly) alphabetical order of an

**1.1** Enzyklopädien werden als Ausdruck wandelnder Informationskulturen gelesen und als Speichermedien für jenen Teil des Wissens, der in einem sich verändernden historischen Kontext als gesellschaftlich nachgefragtes Wissen angenommen wurde. In den folgenden Ausführungen sollen dabei wandelnde Vorstellungen von Allgemeinwissen nicht in erster Linie thematisch erschlossen werden. Im Zentrum des Interesses steht vielmehr das Dilemma, dass Enzyklopädien einerseits die Existenz eines alle Kulturen und Zeiten umfassenden Bestandes von Wissen annehmen und andererseits deren gesellschaftliche Determiniertheit und identitätsbildende Funktion unterstreichen.

<sup>1</sup> Nicholson (Ed.), *The British Encyclopaedia, or Dictionary of Arts and Sciences: Comprising an Accurate and Popular View of the Present Improved State of Human Knowledge*, London 1809.

<sup>2</sup> Although different definitions of ›encyclopaedia‹ are available, we propose focusing on a few essential elements. In particular, an encyclopaedia addresses a general public, presents a collection of general knowledge by using ordering

**1.2** Enzyklopädien wurden bislang vornehmlich als spezifische Textsorten analysiert, in ideengeschichtliche Zusammenhänge gestellt und als Teil der Buch- und Druckgeschichte vorgestellt. In den folgenden Ausführungen sollen Enzyklopädien der Neuzeit dagegen aus geschichtswissenschaftlicher Perspektive als Handbücher der Zivilgesellschaft und als Schnittstelle zwischen Allgemeinwissen und Gesellschaft vorgestellt werden. Die Quellenbasis beschränkt sich dabei nicht auf selbstreferenzierende enzyklopädische Texte, sondern schließt die Seiten der Benutzer mit ein.

principles, and is structured as a hypertext. »Hypertext is a language for organizing knowledge on a modular rather than a sequential basis. While in a conventional exposition concepts are associated through linear steps, across time and space, hypertext creates multi-level and multi-directorial links between a word and its meaning: each term can be associated with (and described through) a number of related contexts.« Calise/Lowi, *Hyperpolitics: Hypertext, Concepts and Theory-Making*, 295.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html>

<sup>4</sup> With all due respect to the better-analysed French encyclopaedias, special attention was directed at the German book market. However, contemporary bibliographical search aids also included encyclopaedias from languages other than German. See Kayser, *Index locupletissimus librorum qui inde ab anno MDCCL usque ad annum MDCCCXXXII in Germania et in terris confinibus prodierunt, Leipzig 1834–1877*.

<sup>5</sup> Billington, *About the Library*, online on: <http://www.loc.gov/about>. For the history of the Library of Congress see Cole, *Jefferson's Legacy, A Brief History of the Library of Congress*.

encyclopaedia, its structure as a hypertext, and the pretence of presenting universal knowledge and unchangeable truth suggest resistance to time and history. Secondly, how do encyclopaedic texts connect space and identity? Encyclopaedias can be read as mental maps, where ordering principles act as a grid of parallels and meridians needing relations to a space for location. The encyclopaedias' imagination of spatial context works whenever potential users can see identification marks. The third question, how do general knowledge and civil society interact, is approached by focusing on both the producers' and the users' side.

## 1.2 Historical Source Material

Our aim is to analyse the presentation of general knowledge. We ask how encyclopaedias organise the sorting process, moving certain fields of knowledge into and certain issues out of sight. How and why does a general public accept or refuse such collections and who coordinates the whole puzzle of single pieces? For these kinds of questions, an interdisciplinary approach seems promising. However, historical change in the presentation of general knowledge is difficult to document, since publishers' archives are rarely available, and reports on the use of encyclopaedia casual findings. Therefore, a methodological abstract will discuss those domains in research on encyclopaedias which are less often considered by historical semantics and the history of sciences. Instead of being restricted to a specific encyclopaedia our approach understands encyclopaedias as civil societies' reference manuals, which are deeply involved in the political and cultural self-conception of a society. Thus, the chosen examples of encyclopaedias present the changing varieties of encyclopaedic texts from the 17th to the 20th century with regard to both producers and users. This focus on the idea of civil society, the users' side, is a neglected part of encyclopaedic research, and is of particular importance, although difficult to document. For this reason, besides information on private libraries, which can be found in The Federal Writers' Project,<sup>3</sup> contemporary bibliographical search aids<sup>4</sup> are completed by the Library of Congress' wealth of encyclopaedias. With the world's largest library, the users' viewpoint and the question of availability of general knowledge can be addressed by asking how many encyclopaedic texts achieved public acceptance, including those not written in English, French and German, the main three languages in the history of the encyclopaedia. However, completing a set of encyclopaedic texts by checking the Library of Congress is not a quantitative decision. In fact, the library's mission *to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge*<sup>5</sup> is based on a specific political understanding of general knowledge which goes back to America's ›first librarian‹, Thomas Jefferson. Following the enlightened concept of the ›citoyen‹, self-government is based on accessibility of information to all citizens, and therefore the Library of Congress has always been and still is primarily a parliamentarian and not a governmental instrument.

## 2 Methods in Historical Research on Encyclopaedic Presentation of Knowledge

In historical analysis, encyclopaedias from different periods are mostly used as a source in pointing out the development of historical semantics and as reference works in documenting the development of different sciences.

With regard to historical semantics, encyclopaedias are important sources for the documentation of change in the meaning of politically and socially important key words in the transition from the 18th to the 19th century.<sup>6</sup> The findings are impressive because they demonstrate that during the so-called ›Sattelzeit‹ society changed the language of politics. In this methodological context, encyclopaedias show the democratisation of political terms, the increasing significance of ideology, aims and expectations, and a growing tendency to explain progress as a historical development. Although modifications to the set of key words typically used in a society are important evidence, this approach is limited to specific contents (terms related to the development of modern Western societies). Moreover, it focuses on a particular timeframe (the ›Sattelzeit‹), and follows the transformation of single issues. In contrast, the encyclopaedia as a specific form of presentation and perception of knowledge is of minor importance; from this point of view, the development of lemmas is more significant than the kind of world an encyclopaedia not only presents but also constructs.

On the other hand, for the history of science, encyclopaedias document the organisation of coherence in science that dates back to Greek antiquity. The very aim of this well introduced concept is organizing coherence in the sciences, in practice as well as in teaching and learning.<sup>7</sup> Although books with the title ›encyclopaedia‹ were unknown in western culture before the 17th century, it is an important approach for historians of science to read published encyclopaedias as mirrors of an ›intellectual landscape‹.<sup>8</sup> However, supposed expectations of booksellers, social acceptance of sciences, societies' distinction between knowledge and science all move encyclopaedias away from mirroring intellectual values. In addition, a brief look into any encyclopaedia indicates that with its variety of technical and scientific information, cooking recipes and biographies, it is neither simply a repository of science, nor a reflection of mainstream terms, nor just an adviser presenting expert opinions. An encyclopaedia is better described as an interface where users are part of the presented world of knowledge and where accessibility of knowledge is an important controlling element in the building of social identities. This approach focuses on the intellectual needs of civil society and requires the social as well as the political history of general knowledge. ›Civil society‹ describes society's self-organisational aspect, which is influenced by, but not identical to the state, the market, and to the citizen's private sphere. Therefore, ›civil society‹ expresses the so-called ›third sector‹, described by Kocka as »Raum öffentlicher

2 Das Forschungsdesign ist auf drei Schlüsselbereiche ausgerichtet und fragt erstens nach der Bedeutung der chronologischen und zweitens nach der räumlichen Organisation von Wissen sowie drittens nach der Einbindung zivilgesellschaftlicher Adressaten und deren Verständnis von Allgemeinwissen. Die Einbindung von enzyklopädischen Texten in ein zivilgesellschaftliches Konzept entspricht einer gesellschaftsgeschichtlichen Erweiterung bisheriger Interpretamente, in denen Enzyklopädien vornehmlich als Quellen der Wissenschaftsgeschichte und als Indikatoren des Wandels in der politischen Sprache der Moderne erschienen.

<sup>6</sup> »Der diachrone Vergleich von Lexika eröffnet dem Forscher die Möglichkeit, die Wiederholbarkeit von Semantik und zugleich ihre Innovation empirisch nachzuweisen. Mit anderen Worten sind Lexika für jeden Versuch, das Tempo eines begriffsgeschichtlichen Wandels zu rekonstruieren, unverzichtbare Quellen.« Kosselleck, Hinweise auf die temporalen Strukturen begriffsgeschichtlichen Wandels, 46f.

<sup>7</sup> Yeo, *Classifying the Sciences*, 249.

<sup>8</sup> For Richard Yeo, encyclopaedias are »a manageable way of approaching a number of questions about the way contemporaries regarded their intellectual landscape.« Yeo, *Classifying the Sciences*, 249.

**3** Enzyklopädische Texte sind zwar als Hypertexte strukturiert, also in einer Form, in der Lektüre an jedem beliebigen Ort einsetzen kann und der kontinuierliche, mithin auch zeitlich strukturierte Prozess des Lesens durch die alphabetische Ordnung zusätzlich aufgebrochen wird. Eine historisch begründete Chronologie gehört aber zu den zentralen Ordnungskriterien der vom europäischen Modell geprägten Enzyklopädien der Neuzeit. Die Chronologie ordnet die einzelnen Einträge, weist der Vergangenheit Bereiche zu, welche durch eine zukunftsgerichtete Gegenwart überwunden wurde und legt durch Hinweise auf weiterführende Literatur die Basis zur Erfindung von Entwicklungsmodellen und Traditionen.

<sup>9</sup> Kocka, *Zivilgesellschaft als historisches Problem und Versprechen*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Hall (Ed.), *Civil society*.

<sup>11</sup> As an example for research on encyclopaedias focusing on the enlightenment, see Kafker, *Notable Encyclopedias of the Late Eighteenth Century: Eleven Successors of the Encyclopédie*; Kafker, *Notable Encyclopedias of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Nine Predecessors of the Encyclopédie*.

<sup>12</sup> Generally speaking, in European encyclopaedias, the admission price for a biographical article is death. Dedications to sovereigns apart, even in the 19th century, most personal articles describe people who had lived in the past.

<sup>13</sup> A good example can be found in articles on Descartes. From the 18th to 19th century, the philosopher's military career is carefully explained by mentioning his participation in many sieges. See ›Cartesius‹, in: Zedler (Hg.), *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon, Leipzig 1732–1754, Bd. 5, 1153–1157*; ›Descartes‹, in: Meyers *Konversationslexikon*, 5. Aufl.,

Diskussion, Konflikte und Verständigung, eine Sphäre der Selbständigkeit von Individuen und Gruppen, ein Bereich der Dynamik und Innovation, und ein Ort der Anstrengung für das Gemeinwohl [...], so unterschiedlich dieses in einer pluralen Gesellschaft auch verstanden wird.«<sup>9</sup> Although a theory of civil society is still missing<sup>10</sup> and despite the fact that the term ›civil society‹ has different meanings in different languages, the heuristic advantages are obvious: Both the concept of encyclopaedia and the theory of civil society show a long-lasting development with an important new orientation in the age of enlightenment. Without disputing the contribution of the enlightenment,<sup>11</sup> we choose to regard encyclopaedic presentation of general knowledge as negotiations on access to ›Herrschaftswissen‹ not exclusively associated with the enlightenment. Therefore, our approach discusses encyclopaedias in terms of bargaining on concepts that integrate society, by addressing the citizen and his/her cultural and political self-conception in a delicate form of interaction and communication: actually, we strongly support the assumption that encyclopaedias should be seen as the reference manuals of civil societies. This approach valorises the scientific significance of encyclopaedias as a source offering information on repression or support of social self-organisation. We are aware that the social effect of reference to general knowledge is difficult to analyse. On the one hand, anything but the encyclopaedia itself creates this combination of knowledge transfer and participation by naming a package of knowledge ›general‹ or ›universal‹. On the other hand, one of the assumptions of self-organised societies is that not only the availability of general knowledge but also the accessibility of information are crucial to the political and social system. Therefore, in the history of encyclopaedias an essential question is who controls, monopolises, manipulates and derives benefit from general knowledge by privileges, by censorship, by protecting encyclopaedias as trademarks, or today, by patenting encyclopaedic search programmes.

### **3 Keywords of Encyclopaedic Research: ›Time‹ and ›Chronology‹**

A precondition to a historical analysis of encyclopaedias is the immanence of the hermeneutic circle. Time, the basis of historical research in the form of past and present, is one of the most powerful ordering principles in encyclopaedic presentation of knowledge. Although the process of reading can be discontinuous and limited to certain articles placed anywhere, there is a chronology in the European type of encyclopaedia which is crucial despite being hidden behind the alphabet. In person-related articles, death follows birth,<sup>12</sup> and even in articles on philosophers' lives, historically identifiable events and not philosophy organise the presentation of knowledge.<sup>13</sup> In articles on science the date of discovery is as important as the actual findings, since the representation of progress requires the idea of a surmountable past. Even parts without chronology-related specifica-

tions are strongly connected to historical interpretations and references at the end of articles can be seen as invention of tradition. The explanatory importance of time setting is not limited to modern times. Salvific history and almanacs where knowledge is organised in season-related sections also argue in a timeframe. However, during the 18th century, the scientific paradigm on how to package knowledge shifted from theology and philosophy to history. Therefore, structuring knowledge is strongly connected to historiography (i. e. it is historicism-related) and to the political value history is accorded in society. The all-embracing approach of arranging knowledge in historical structures is obvious: *Partout le même ordre a présidé à la distribution de matières; des articles généraux présentent la définition, l'origine, les progrès et les développements successifs de la science, de l'art, de l'industrie de la littérature dont on s'occupe; une multitude d'articles spéciaux font pénétrer jusque dans les plus petits détails.*<sup>14</sup> The historical order of general knowledge accommodates civil society with several aspects of self-understanding: In the 19th century, a subtle form of eurocentrism can be detected in the avoidance of images of decay in European cultures, by contrasting past splendour with the unimportance of present times in the description of non-European cultures<sup>15</sup> In the 19th century, self-localisation in history is a commonly accepted aspect of encyclopaedic text: The ›Konversationslexikon‹ focuses on utility value by mentioning tradition and modernity.<sup>16</sup> As a form of protection against obsolescence some encyclopaedias transform their own transience into tradition. The editors of the never-ending 19th century *Allgemeine Encyclopaedie der Wissenschaften und Künste* understood the encyclopaedia as a monument documenting the beneficent reign of the sovereign who permitted its publication for future generations.<sup>17</sup>

In Western culture, historical organisation is a characteristic element in the presentation of general knowledge. This element is important enough to attract attention when missing, since encyclopaedias are a useful instrument to start another version of history and to establish new traditions by invalidating commonly accepted narratives. To give an example, the *Encyclopaedia Perthensis*, which was published in 1806, declared that the new encyclopaedia would replace all reference books published before it.<sup>18</sup> This declaration opened the way for a new history, not connected to a obsolete past.<sup>19</sup> Although history is a powerful instrument of inclusion and exclusion, its function in encyclopaedic texts is not limited to manipulation. Simultaneously, the historical ordering of knowledge maps development by reference to its sources. By naming sources, encyclopaedic knowledge seems scientifically proven, and although the placing of references invents and establishes a history of science, these footnotes guarantee a certain transparency. For the 21st century, the internet seems to present availability of knowledge in an apparently timeless and spaceless way. We have to ask how the ordering principles of general knowledge will work outside the regulating force of history.<sup>20</sup>

Leipzig/Wien 1893–1898, Bd. 4, 760–762. In the 20th century, the input of Descartes civil life is much more important than his military career.

<sup>14</sup> Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, Paris 1866–1876, t. 15, 1526.

<sup>15</sup> Herren, *Globalisierung des Wissens in Europäischen Enzyklopädiën des 18. Jahrhunderts*.

<sup>16</sup> This is true for the whole history of the Brockhaus encyclopaedia, even for the first edition owned by Renatus Gotthelf Löbel. The Loebel-edition presented a *Konversationslexikon mit vorzüglicher Rücksicht auf die gegenwärtigen Zeiten*, Leipzig 1796ff. The first edition of the *Konversations-Lexikon* edited by its new owner Brockhaus promised to consider *die Ereignisse der älteren und neueren Zeit* (*Konversations-Lexikon oder kurzgefasstes Handwörterbuch für die in der gesellschaftlichen Unterhaltung aus den Wissenschaften und Künsten vorkommenden Gegenstände mit beständiger Rücksicht auf die Ereignisse der älteren und neueren Zeit*, 6 Bde., Amsterdam 1809).

<sup>17</sup> Ersch/Gruber (Hgg.), *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste*, Leipzig 1818–1889, online: <http://www-gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/cgi-bin/digbib.cgi?PPN345284054>.

<sup>18</sup> *Encyclopaedia Perthensis, or Universal Dictionary of Knowledge, Collected from Every Source and Intended to Supercede the Use of All Other English Books of Reference*, Perth without Year [1796–1806].

<sup>19</sup> Replacement of all books published previously is a well known argument. See e. g. Mercier, *L'an 2440, Rêve s'il en fut jamais*, 69 and 163–178. In this utopian essay published in 1772, the ›grande encyclopédie‹ replaces all other books – the libraries are nearly empty.

<sup>20</sup> Haber, *Geschichte und Internet*.

4 Enzyklopädien basieren auf Raumvorstellungen, deren unterschiedliche Ausgestaltung den Wandel des identitätsbildenden Potentials von Enzyklopädien aufzeigen. Erschien die Enzyklopädie noch im 17. Jahrhundert als verdichtete Form einer Bibliothek, einer Wunderkammer oder eines Museums, so transformierten sich die Enzyklopädien im Lauf des 19. Jahrhunderts zusehends zu Landkarten und Gebrauchsanweisungen zur intellektuellen Besitznahme von Territorien. Kenntnisse über die Geographie der Erde und der charakteristischen Merkmale ihrer Bewohner unter Einschluss von Pflanzen und Tiere sind zwar auch in älteren Enzyklopädien nachzuweisen. Doch im 19. Jahrhundert gewann diese Sicht nicht nur eine neue, naturwissenschaftlich begründete Systematik, sie verband sich überdies mit dem Prozess nationaler Identitätsbildung. Bis in die Gegenwart gilt dabei, dass die Herausgabe einer Nationalenzyklopädie als Anspruch auf kulturelle Souveränität zu verstehen ist.

## 4 Keywords of Encyclopaedic Research: ›Space‹ and ›Identity‹

The introduction of space in the representation of knowledge is of great importance for content and structure of an encyclopaedia. Landscapes, places, cities, are crucial elements in the construction of identities. Maps illustrate most of the great encyclopaedias of the 19th and 20th centuries, and encyclopaedic maps go back even to the 18th century.<sup>21</sup> Room and space are ordering principles for inclusion and exclusion, instruments for the description of territorial claims, expansion and travel. Secondly, beyond space-related lemmas, encyclopaedias themselves imagine presenting places of knowledge in different ways. Always pretending to be more than just books, encyclopaedias are organised as rooms and spaces of different extent and size. Encyclopaedias of the 17th and 18th centuries invited readers to enter a room, imagined as a ›Wunderkammer‹, as a museum, or a library, with enough space for scientific debates on the display of general knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Nineteenth century readers were requested to leave the library and to use the encyclopaedia as a global map, and as a guide to a successful life. The shift from the inside to the outside is visible in the editors' promise to produce a book useful for conversation and in the increasing use of the title ›Real-Enzyklopädie‹. At the beginning of the 19th century, the German term ›real‹ means that the encyclopaedia in question deliberates on objects instead of dictionary-related definitions. At the same time, room and space lose their interpretations as religious and philosophical metaphors, appearing instead as a determinable location. To give an example: The *Real-Encyclopaedie des 19. Jahrhunderts* presents Jerusalem as a city in the Near East, whose religious significance is part of historical and archaeological considerations. A century and a half earlier, Jerusalem was a religious metaphor where the geographical location followed religious considerations.<sup>23</sup> Besides a different understanding of space in single lemmas, another concept of spatial organisation is not without influence on the epistemic determination of general knowledge. Diderot and d'Alembert modified the tree of knowledge,<sup>24</sup> but still accepted coherence in science as the most important element for the organisation of general knowledge. However, at the beginning of the 19th century, knowledge is no longer seen as a tree, but perceived as a space accessible rather by conquest than by discussion: *Unermesslich ist das Reich des Wissens; es umfasst die ganze Welt; Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Himmel und Erde, Land und Meer. Unser Streben soll dahin gehen, aus allen diesen Regionen, aus allen diesen Zweigen das Nützlichste und Neueste anzulesen und es auf eine möglichst gefällige Weise, welche Verstand und Phantasie zugleich angenehm beschäftigt, dem Leser vorzuführen.*<sup>25</sup> The global conquest of the world addresses larger communities of readers than the former republic of letters. The identification and ordering principle of general knowledge hinge now on the nation and the distinction between fellow countrymen and foreigners. With a growing number of

<sup>21</sup> Bonne/Desmarest, *Atlas encyclopédique*, Paris 1787–1788.

<sup>22</sup> For this type of encyclopaedia see Bayle, *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, Rotterdam 1720, or Chaudon, *Anti-dictionnaire philosophique*, Paris 1775.

<sup>23</sup> *Jerusalem. [...] die allerberühmteste Stadt der ganzen Welt*, see ›Jerusalem‹, in: Zedler (Hg.), *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, Bd. 14/I, 414–450.

<sup>24</sup> Darnton, *Philosophen stutzen den Baum der Erkenntnis*.

<sup>25</sup> *Das Pfennig-Magazin der Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung gemeinnütziger Kenntnisse*, 4.5.1833.

*Unermesslich ist das Reich des Wissens; es umfasst die ganze Welt; Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Himmel und Erde, Land und Meer. Unser Streben soll dahin gehen, aus allen diesen Regionen, aus allen diesen Zweigen das Nützlichste und Neueste anzulesen und es auf eine möglichst gefällige Weise, welche Verstand und Phantasie zugleich angenehm beschäftigt, dem Leser vorzuführen.*

Das Pfennig-Magazin der Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung gemeinnütziger Kenntnisse, 4.5.1833.

encyclopaedias describing themselves as national encyclopaedia, space is connected to a clearly defined social, political and cultural identity. In this setting of general knowledge, the interests in expansion and travel, in inclusion and exclusion by culture and language, and in territorial claims are obvious. Encyclopaedias are strongly related to the process of nation building described by Anderson as the creation of ›imagined communities‹.<sup>26</sup> Different proposals as to how to combine general knowledge and national identities are available. The national encyclopaedias of great powers can certainly be read as a form of cultural imperialism. On the other hand, at the very beginning of political nationalism, constructing communities by national encyclopaedias was an often-used strategy of national resistance against foreign rule and a form of presenting one's own national identities as well. Again, the findings show a great variety of possibilities. The colonial power may initiate an encyclopaedia for colonies,<sup>27</sup> but colonial societies wrote and used encyclopaedias as well. To give an example, in the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, published from 1897 to 1908, a colonial elite used an encyclopaedia for presenting herself: The publisher gave individual entries to each family or person who had paid five pounds.<sup>28</sup> The idea of an encyclopaedia as some sort of societal glue can be seen in not yet stable political and cultural entities and in unstable entities as well. While nationalities without sovereignty published their own encyclopaedia as a demonstration of opposition against foreign rule and/or as the demonstration of a right to independence,<sup>29</sup> multinational entities such as the Austrian monarchy claimed unity in an encyclopaedia.<sup>30</sup>

For the ›long 19th century‹, when nationalism appeared as a structural element of cultural self-representation, growing interest in national encyclopaedias is not surprising.<sup>31</sup> But the resistance of national identities in the development of encyclopaedias is remarkable and calls into question the alleged disappearance of nations as a result of globalization.<sup>32</sup> After the end of the cold war in 1989, newborn national sovereignties again expressed themselves in the publication of encyclopaedias,<sup>33</sup> most of which appeared in conventional form as printed books in a nation's language and not as English online versions. While there is still no European encyclopaedia, new Croatian, Czech, Slovak, Danish, Uzbek and Icelandic encyclopaedias have recently been published, and in 2003, the national encyclopaedia of Bangladesh merged encyclopaedia and national representation in the title *Banglapedia*.<sup>34</sup> In summer 2003, the information server of the Siberian

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation*.

<sup>27</sup> For example: *Grande encyclopédie de la Belgique et du Congo*, Bruxelles 1938–1952; Schnee (Hg.) *Deutsches Koloniallexikon*, Leipzig 1920.

<sup>28</sup> *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, Christchurch 1897–1908, partly online on: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nzlscant/cyclopedia.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> See e. g. the following Polish encyclopaedia: *Encyklopedya; zbiór wiadomości z wszystkich gałęzi wiedzy*, Lwów 1898.

<sup>30</sup> Gräffer/Czikann (Hgg.), *Österreichische National-Encyclopaedie oder alphabetische Darlegung der wissenschaftswürdigsten Eigenthümlichkeiten des österreichischen Kaiserthumes*, Wien 1835–1838.

<sup>31</sup> We should bear in mind that during the 19th century, not all states, but all great powers, had their own encyclopaedia. The question is whether the size of the market explains this phenomenon without reference to presentation of knowledge in a combination of space and national identity.

<sup>32</sup> Beck et al., *The Theory of Reflexive Modernization*.

<sup>33</sup> In most of the cases, national encyclopaedias published after 1989 were not the first of their kind. However, forerunners described countries from outside. For example, the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, the *Britannica* as well as the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* all published series on specific nations.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix: A Selection of National Encyclopaedias since 1991.

**5.1** Enzyklopädien sind analytisch nicht nur als spezielle Form der Aufbereitung von Allgemeinwissen zugänglich. Als Gebrauchsgüter der Zivilgesellschaft sind sie überdies Konsumgüter, Objekte, deren Gebrauchswert aus drei Perspektiven vorgestellt werden kann. Erstens aus der Sicht ihrer Produzenten, zweitens in der Begründung ihrer Käufer und drittens im Vergleich mit dem Angebot ähnlicher Produkte.



**Collage of recently published national encyclopaedias**

After the end of the cold war, newborn nations used printed encyclopaedias as a medium to express themselves. A selection of them is listed in the Appendix.

branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences reported that President Putin promised to support the publication of a new Russian encyclopaedia.<sup>35</sup>

**5 The Lady with the Pineapple Can: Characteristics of Civil Societies' Reference Manuals**

**5.1 Users not Readers**

In analysing the significance of general knowledge for civil society, a discussion is needed on interactions between the assumed and real use of encyclopaedias. Economic information on book production is more readily available than documents on the user's side, which normally appears as a projection of how the concept of an encyclopaedia integrates readers' activities. In addition, sources on the history of consulting encyclopaedias are difficult to find in the desirable quantity. Therefore, the history of how to use general knowledge in encyclopaedic form requires three different perspectives: At first (and best-documented) sight, the user is what encyclopaedia makers and public opinion suppose. This is how the user appears in publishers' advertisements and reviews. The second perspec-

<sup>35</sup> »President V. Putin has promised a support for the Russian Academy of Sciences in the publication of domestic encyclopedia during the meeting with the President of the RAS Academician Yu. Osipov on July, 23, 2003.«, Meeting in the Kremlin, online on: <http://www-sbras.nsc.ru/HBC/2003/n28/menu-en.html>.

tive is based on a weaker foundation of sources, and is interested in who owned encyclopaedias. The third perspective looks for publications which – without qualifying as encyclopaedias – are comparable in their ordering principles, but start from the opposite end by providing questions instead of answers.

Instead of a debate on definitions of encyclopaedia,<sup>36</sup> this approach focuses on the consultation of encyclopaedias, which differs from the reading of any other written texts. Due to the hypertext structure, the process of reading is normally short but endless. Encyclopaedias primarily have users, not readers, and they are probably better characterised as objects than books. They present just one item in a great variety of products promising increase of knowledge.

## 5.2 Advertising Knowledge

As marketable goods, encyclopaedias are attractive both as advertising media<sup>37</sup> and for the standardization of industrial procedures.<sup>38</sup> For example, in 1914, advertisement for the eleventh edition of the Britannica did not just offer books, but sold the way to consult them as well. Therefore, the Britannica came along with special bookshelves for the living room, and this first edition in thin India paper went along with the image of a comfortable reading situation: *Whereas the old volume required the support of a desk or table, the India paper volume is light enough to hold comfortably in one hand while the reader sits back at his ease.*<sup>39</sup> It is interesting to note that from the users' perspective, such claims gained a certain importance in the visual representation of interest in general knowledge.

The photograph of a lady studying the ingredients of a can of pineapple<sup>40</sup> with an encyclopaedia on her lap is more than a charming absurdity. The photograph shows vividly that gaining information can still be useful when applied in a context which is some distance from the encyclopaedic text. Although encyclopaedias present general knowledge as a product of doubtless value, the need for information is usually more important than interest in the encyclopaedic text, which is rarely claimed to provide exciting entertainment. Therefore, a further characteristic of these texts is the constant imagination of situations when general knowledge in encyclopaedic form is needed. Although justifications change over time from the keyword of ›emancipation by information‹ in the 18th century to ›information for conversation and education‹ in the 19th and ›efficiency‹ in the 20th centuries, ›information‹ is always a political term that describes social and not individual activities. In addition, in opulent subtitles and forewords, encyclopaedias address constantly changing requirements of information, reflecting the newest possibilities of gaining information at a given time. This specific sensibility for alternate forms of information is not limited to online encyclopaedias in the late 20th century. In fact, in the late 18th century, encyclopaedias copied the newest form of politically

**5.2** Enzyklopädien sind bis zur Durchsetzung der digitalen Revolution teure Anschaffungen und benötigten eine spezielle Werbestrategie. Als hauptsächlichstes Verkaufsargument setzte sich die schnelle Verfügbarkeit aktueller Informationen als Nachweis zivilgesellschaftlicher Emanzipation durch. Damit traten Verlage allmählich vor die Autoren und Herausgeber von Enzyklopädien, stieg die Bedeutung von Information als Konsumgut an.

<sup>36</sup> Facing the changing understanding of what an encyclopaedia is and considering the diffuse difference between dictionaries and encyclopaedias, a pragmatic understanding seems indicated.

<sup>37</sup> This is not a phenomenon of the 20th century. See e. g. Enzyklopädie des Zuschneiders, ein Wegweiser und Führer für alle, die nach den Modell-Schnittmustern ›The Taylor and Cutter‹ schneiden, Berlin 1888.

<sup>38</sup> Aldrich (Ed.), *The Packers' Encyclopedia, Blue Book of the American Meat Packing and Allied Industries*, Chicago 1922.

<sup>39</sup> Aked, Charles W., ›India Paper, ›an inspiration of genius‹, in: Dear Sir ... the last chance, 9, online on: <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/eea/ephemera/A00/A0060/A0060-09-72dpi.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Mrs. Meble La Grant holding and looking at a can of pineapples, sitting on a piano bench in front of a piano in a room in Chicago, Illinois, with an encyclopedia sitting open on her lap. The photograph was taken in 1929, Chicago Daily News negatives collection, DN-0089336, Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society.

The photograph of a lady studying the ingredients of a can of pineapple with an encyclopaedia on her lap indicates the vast variety of situations when general knowledge in encyclopaedic form is needed.

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relevant information transfer by using a format similar to journals.<sup>41</sup> An encyclopaedia is part of the book market, but its high price<sup>42</sup> needs special marketing strategies that cover both individual customers and libraries. In the 19th century, general knowledge is closely connected to individual ownership despite being accessible via encyclopaedias in public libraries. This ownership, however, is organised in quite an unusual form compared to other book acquisitions: from the 18th to the 20th centuries, financing by advance payment or payment in instalments is normal for the costly acquisition of an encyclopaedia. Property is a politically meaningful aspect to producers too, the question being who is entitled to benefit exclusively from the presentation of general knowledge. Fights about copyright and privileges, and lawsuits over plagiarism are continuously present in the history of encyclopaedia making. In the 20th century, the registration of encyclopaedia trademarks is of remarkably growing importance. A search in the database of the United States Patent and Trademark Office on ›encyclopaedia‹ and ›encyclopedia‹ as part of the title of trademarks produces more than 170 results.<sup>43</sup> In addition, there are several patents issued for the electronic organisation of knowledge listed in the databases of the U.S. Patent Office from 1976 to today.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Encyclopaedias referred explicitly to journals such as Hübners Zeitungslexicon, which appeared for more than 100 years in different editions. Other encyclopaedias copied the publication of journals in their cheap and regular editions. As examples, see the Encyclopédie Britannique and the famous Penny Cyclopaedias.

<sup>42</sup> Darnton, Glänzende Geschäfte.

<sup>43</sup> United States Patent and Trademark Office, online on: <http://www.uspto.gov>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

In the specific form of merchandising knowledge, authors have an ambivalent position. In the 17th and 18th centuries, charismatic intellectuals such as Bayle, Diderot and d'Alembert combined the difficulties of organizing knowledge with public fame or rejection. However, the personality of authors is of fluctuating importance while editors and printers continued to be central figures. During the 19th and 20th centuries, authors of encyclopaedias are a heterogeneous group; they do not always belong to the intellectual or political elites. In addition, encyclopaedia makers do not necessarily reflect all parts of civil society. One remarkable aspect is the absence of women. Although mentioned in<sup>45</sup> and explicitly cited as addressees of encyclopaedias,<sup>46</sup> and not without importance as translators and probably as writers of single articles,<sup>47</sup> women as organisers of knowledge are largely missing until the 20th century. Although more research is needed, women appeared more in the commercial side of encyclopaedia making. This is the case for Thérèse de Dillmont, who, in the late 19th century, published a famous encyclopaedia on needle work. She was a successful entrepreneur who wrote and edited an encyclopaedia on her own.<sup>48</sup>

In the case of encyclopaedia making, the missing presence of women does not confirm the importance of the encyclopaedic organisation of knowledge. During the 19th century, encyclopaedias of all kinds gained more and more institutionalized forms and individual organisers of encyclopaedic knowledge continually lost their reputations. For academics, making an encyclopaedia appears to be rather a sign of a failed career or financial problems. A well-known example for this phenomenon is Johann Samuel Ersch (1766–1828). His academic career as professor of geography and statistics at the University of Jena was based on his function as librarian. The life of his colleague Johann Gottfried Gruber (1774–1851) was a continuous fight against financial problems and the uncertain situation in the Napoleonic wars with a difficult way to the University of Halle. His function as an editor of the *Allgemeine Enzyklopädie* was one of numerous jobs and publication projects to survive.<sup>49</sup> Quite a lot of those who organised encyclopaedic knowledge remained in anonymity. On Charles Frederick Partington, who edited the *British Cyclopaedia of Literature, Geography, Law and Politics*<sup>50</sup> biographical information is very poor; we do not even know his year of birth. There is not much information available on the Australian lexicographer James Hardy Vaux either. His interest in Australia is part of his criminal career that brought him to the penal colony of New South Wales.<sup>51</sup> Even in the cases where academic encyclopaedia makers were successful, their names lost individuality and turned into trade marks. The name of August Friedrich Pauly, editor of the *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Alterthumswissenschaft* gained the significance of a brand name, comparable to Brockhaus.<sup>52</sup> However, the process of de-personalisation is complex and far from continuous, since well known personalities are especially important to encyclopaedias with an explicitly ideological profile.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Breiner, *Die Frau im deutschen Lexikon*.

<sup>46</sup> *Amaranthes, Frauenzimmer-Lexicon*, Leipzig 1715; *Illustriertes Konversations-Lexikon der Frau*, Berlin 1900.

<sup>47</sup> For the translation of Bayles dictionary into German, the wife of the German editor, Gottsched had some importance. On the other hand, Beatrix Mesmer drew our attention to the interesting fact that in Reichesbergs famous encyclopaedia, contributions were made by women. Reichesberg (Hg.), *Handwörterbuch der Schweizerischen Volkswirtschaft*, Bern 1903–1911.

<sup>48</sup> See Dillmont, *Encyclopédie des ouvrages des dames* (réimpression de l'original de 1886) Paris 1987.

<sup>49</sup> *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Bd. 6, 329–331; Bd. 10, 1–4.

<sup>50</sup> Published London 1835/36.

<sup>51</sup> Green, *Chasing the Sun*, 416

<sup>52</sup> Pauly's *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Alterthumswissenschaft*, in alphabetischer Ordnung in 6 Bänden. The first volume was published in 1839, the last more than 100 years later. However, this encyclopaedia is still known as Pauly. This is an interesting case of presenting general knowledge in academia too, by presenting research in Ancient History as the source of a tradition important to the culture of the Western World.

<sup>53</sup> For the *Encyclopedia Italiana*, Giovanni Gentile was the leading personality, although an institution, the *Istituto Treccani*, organised the work comparable to the *Bibliographische Institut* in Leipzig. In volume 13, published in 1932, Stefano La Colla's article encyclopedia presents a broad view through the history of encyclopaedia, including Chinese examples and the encyclopaedias of the Balkan states, founded after World War I. See *Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol. 13, 944–951.

<sup>54</sup> As an example see Rotteck/Welcker (Hgg.), *Staats-Lexicon*, that turned into a symbol of liberal opposition in the 19th century.

<sup>55</sup> As an example of gaining transparency in the sensitive field of foreign politics see Hoerschelmann, *Europäisches Staats- Kriegs- und Friedens-Lexicon*, Frankfurt/Leipzig 1765–1766.

<sup>56</sup> As an example see Cluskey, *The Political Text-book*, or *Encyclopedia*, Containing Everything Necessary for the Reference of the Politicians and Statesmen of the United States, Washington 1857. This encyclopaedia was reviewed as useful to every intelligent and competent elector, see *The United States Democratic Review* 42/5 (1858), 436, online on: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa.cgi?notisid=AGD1642-0042-62>.

<sup>57</sup> An American version of the *Britannica* followed in the ninth edition, published in 1883.

<sup>58</sup> *The North American Review* 34/74 (1832), 263, online on: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa.cgi?notisid=ABQ7578-0034-14> (27.12.2006). However, other reviews vehemently criticised the lack of American orientation, see e. g. *The New England Magazine* 2/5 (1832), 438, online on: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa.cgi?notisid=ABS8100-0002-136>.

<sup>59</sup> Review of Chambers' *Encyclopaedia*, *Dictionary of Universal Knowledge for the People on the Basis of the Latest Edition of the German Conversations-Lexicon*, in: *The Atlantic Monthly* 8/45 (1861), 126, online on: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa.cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0008-16>.

<sup>60</sup> Review of *The New American Cyclopaedia*, in: *The Atlantic Monthly* 2/9 (1858), 256, online on: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa.cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0002-43>.

### 5.3 The User's Side

In the social use of general knowledge, one of the key elements is the growing importance of leisure. The idea of leisure assumes a specific cultural and social context, where life inside and outside work is different, and where, since the 18th century, leisure has specific functions that are far from idleness. Leisure is the moment the ›bourgeois‹ turns into the ›citoyen‹, who takes responsibilities in the political self-organisation of society. From the user's side, this point goes further than creating national identities. One of the assumptions of democratic societies is not only the availability of general knowledge but also the accessibility of information crucial to the political system. This may be an important point for organising opposition<sup>54</sup> and also an opportunity for totalitarian manipulation. From this point of view, encyclopaedias presenting governmental activities have different meanings; not only are they manuals for administrators but also expressions of public control.<sup>55</sup> The beginning of the presentation of information as an instrument of political participation can be seen in the encyclopaedias of men of letters. However, the political input of popularized forms published in the 19th and 20th centuries should be discussed as well. The focus on leisure can be seen in a great variety of encyclopaedias promising general knowledge for home, conversation and politics.<sup>56</sup> The ›Konversationslexikon‹ type is crucial to this development. This type is the most important German contribution to the history of encyclopaedias, influencing as it did the shape of general knowledge globally. At the beginning of the 19th century, the *Brockhaus* type of encyclopaedia also appeared as Danish, Swedish, Dutch and Russian versions. Chambers' encyclopaedia as well as the *Encyclopaedia Americana* was nothing less than a *Brockhaus* adapted to a different nation.<sup>57</sup> Surprisingly, American reviews celebrated this product of the German ›Obrigkeitsstaat‹ as a step towards the democratisation of access to general knowledge by pointing out its lower price and its usefulness for those who neither had a library nor the leisure to read books. This was the result of a successful marketing strategy too: *The North American Review* quoted the German editor Francis Lieber, who focused carefully on the fact that the *Americana* presented issues of national interest as well as *subjects of general interest on the continent of Europe*.<sup>58</sup> Instead of an expensive encyclopaedia focusing on mathematics and physics, the ›Konversationslexikon‹ was celebrated for being cheaper than a *Britannica*, *less exhaustive in its methods and more diversified in its range*: it therefore served a *great class of general readers*.<sup>59</sup> With the triumphal procession of the ›Konversationslexica‹, two different models of general knowledge polarised debates on what a civil society should know. For the promoters of ›Konversationslexica‹, users' interests defined general knowledge. Instead of the coherence of science and education, *each reader is apt to have a pet interest in certain persons, events, topics, beliefs, which stand in his own mind for universal knowledge*.<sup>60</sup> In 1914, the advertising for the eleventh edition of the *Britannica* presented the battlefield of arguments in condensed form. The *Britannica* defended

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### Advertisement for the 11th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica

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the science-related idea of education by teaching a *fresh, complete survey of all human knowledge and achievement*, and underlined the scientific reputation of its authors.<sup>61</sup> The advertisement promised popular use but avoided accommodation to public interest. However, forced to present a more popular encyclopaedia, the new *Britannica* invented a new interpretation of encyclopaedic coherence. Instead of coherence in science, the new encyclopaedia promised user-friendliness and efficiency for a society working in assembly lines.<sup>62</sup> A good index and printing on thin India paper promised faster consultation.

However, the question of who the users are still remains. For the 19th century, contemporary lifestyle advisers recommended the possession of an encyclopaedia.<sup>63</sup> Although access to libraries grows continuously, encyclopaedias remain social markers. When, after World War II, the Belgian politician Pierre Wigny published his guide to the make-up of a bourgeois' library,<sup>64</sup> André de Staercke, who was responsible for the article on 'ouvrages généraux', confirmed the necessity to buy an encyclopaedia: *L'honnête homme se demande si son honnêteté exige le gros sacrifice pécuniaire que représente l'achat d'une encyclopédie. Ne peut-il la consulter dans les bibliothèques publiques? Dans le fond de lui-même, l'honnête homme sait que sa paresse et ses occupations le pousseront rarement vers une bibliothèque publique dans le seul but de rechercher un article dans un répertoire. Aussi consent-il au sacrifice nécessaire pour avoir une encyclopédie à portée de la main.*<sup>65</sup> Considering the political situation, the author's recommendation is surprising: In his list, the *Brockhaus* edition published in 1928–1935 and the *Encyclopedia Italiana* are musts, while French encyclopaedias are explicitly described as out of date. Even the contemporary *Britannica* had an inferior ranking: Staercke described the 14th edition, published for the first time in New York, as *plus d'actualité et plus populaire [mais] américanisée*.<sup>66</sup>

Closer to users is The Federal Writers' Project, a program for the support of unemployed writers. This program<sup>67</sup> produced precious descriptions of

5.3 Der Gebrauch von Enzyklopädiën setzt einen Bereich gesellschaftlicher Selbstorganisation voraus, der ausserhalb von staatlicher Kontrolle und ausserhalb von Arbeitsbeziehungen Allgemeinwissen als Kern zivilgesellschaftlicher Partizipation in der Ausformung des Gemeinwesens nützt. Quellen, die Aussagen über die effektive Verwendung von Enzyklopädiën erlauben, sind schwierig zu erfassen. Immerhin erlaubt das Federal Writers' Project, eine als Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm für intellektuelle konzipierte Befragung amerikanischer Arbeiterhaushalte, folgende Feststellung: Enzyklopädiën gelten nicht nur als Merkmal bürgerlicher Bildungsbeflissenheit, sie wurden auch in wirtschaftlich angespannten Situationen gekauft und als Instrumente eines potentiellen sozialen Aufstiegs verstanden.

<sup>61</sup> »What is This Extraordinary Book – What Is the Secret of Its Success«, in: Dear Sir ... the last chance, 4, online on: <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/ea/ephemera/A00/A0060/A0060-04-72dpi.html>.

<sup>62</sup> »An Efficiency Appliance«, in: Dear Sir ... the last chance, 6, online on: <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/ea/ephemera/A00/A0060/A0060-06-72dpi.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Linke, Sprachkultur und Bürgertum.

<sup>64</sup> Wigny (Ed.), *La Bibliothèque de l'honnête homme*, Bruxelles 1945. A new edition was published in 1968.

<sup>65</sup> de Staercke, *Les ouvrages généraux*, in: Wigny, *La Bibliothèque*, 17–23, here 20.

<sup>66</sup> de Staercke, *Les ouvrages généraux*, in: Wigny, *La Bibliothèque*, 17–23, here 21.

<sup>67</sup> The manuscripts are available on American Life Histories, online on: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpa-home.html>.

6 Enzyklopädien werden von einer zusehends wachsenden Anzahl von Neben- und Beiprodukten begleitet. Form und Intention dieser Begleitpublikationen bestehen darin, die an die Enzyklopädie gestellten Fragen mit den von dieser Textsorte aufbereiteten Antworten zu koordinieren. Der Bereich der Begleittexte ist bislang in der Literatur über Enzyklopädien nicht thematisiert worden und ein Forschungsdesiderat, das die allmähliche Annäherung von Rätselliteratur und enzyklopädischer Literatur berücksichtigen sollte.

<sup>68</sup> See description of the dining room of the librarian Mamie Brown, where the interviewer discovered a complete set of *Funk and Wagnall's standard Encyclopaedia*, in: *American Life Histories*, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/wpalh3/31/3103/31030109/31030105.tif>.

<sup>69</sup> »The Family of an Automobile Worker«, in: *American Life Histories*, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/wpalh1/13/1308/13080208/13080204.tif>.

<sup>70</sup> »Was born an idea«, in: *American Life Histories*, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/wpalh2/2/2307/23072004/23072004.tif>.

<sup>71</sup> »A Vast Storehouse of Classified Knowledge«, in: *Dear Sir ... the last chance*, 4, online on: <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/eaa/ephemera/A00/A0060/A0060-04-72dpi.html>.

<sup>72</sup> See e. g. Winkler, *Keine Angst vor harten Nüssen: das neue Rätselllexikon*, München 1964.

<sup>73</sup> For older collections see Cotin, *Recueil des enigmes de ce temps*, Paris 1655.

<sup>74</sup> As an example see *The Enigmatical Repository, or Museum of Entertainment, Containing Enigmas, Charades, Rebuses, Anagrams, Transpositions, Queries, Logogriphs, Acrostics, etc.*, Norwich [1828].

<sup>75</sup> »Vorrede«, in: *Auserlesene gute Räthsel*, Erfurt 1791, 2f.

American households between 1936–1940. Such documents give evidence that even during times of economic depression, owning an encyclopaedia is not limited to middle class households. In addition, the possession of one can be seen as a commitment to key elements of civil society, namely education and literacy, and political engagement as well. Although these books are described as part of the furniture, indicating a social environment where the bookcase is of the same importance as the goldfish bowl,<sup>68</sup> some of the people described in the projects mention the encyclopaedia's significance explicitly. An automobile worker's wife explains that they had bought an extremely expensive encyclopaedia for the education of their children.<sup>69</sup> A trade unionist, who proposed to play chess instead of cards during strikes, and went for ideological education to the Public Library for consulting the *Red Encyclopaedia*, because *the Red Russian Encyclopaedia is more words than the British, what it mean chess, and what the Russian leaders say about chess*.<sup>70</sup>

## 6 Preparing Questions: Additional Elements in the Production of Encyclopaedic Texts

The encyclopaedic meaning of chess emphasizes again the problem that answers given by encyclopaedias are not necessarily coherent with the users' questions. The relation between question and answer is crucial since questions are the input from the users' side. Relations between questions and answers are a neglected area of encyclopaedic research, although references are obvious and complex. In the understanding of encyclopaedias, the encyclopaedia is a *Universal Question-Answerer*,<sup>71</sup> as long as questions are limited to who, how, when, and where.

In the historical development of the encyclopaedia, there is a verifiable, but ambiguous connection to collections of puzzles. Although special dictionaries for the purpose of solving puzzles gain more importance in the late 20th century,<sup>72</sup> the use of an encyclopaedia for this purpose is considerably older. In the 18th century, collections of puzzles are already a well-known literary genre,<sup>73</sup> and their presentation as a hypertext is comparable to other collection-types related to encyclopaedias.<sup>74</sup> Specifying questions instead of answers, published collections of puzzles should be seen as an interesting complement to encyclopaedias. Furthermore, puzzles and encyclopaedias share two aspects that are important for the understanding of general knowledge and civil society as a form of social communication. Firstly, ordering principles are of great importance in the presentation of puzzles and encyclopaedias, although the reflection of order always comprises the possibility of disorder and anarchy. As an anxious author of the 18th century explained, many published collections presented puzzles, *worinne man unter zweydeutigen Worten Unflätereyen, wie unter einem durchsichtigen Gewande, mehr entdeckt als bedeckt hat*.<sup>75</sup> Some encyclopaedias reduced the possible ambiguity

*L'honnête homme se demande si son honnêteté exige le gros sacrifice pécuniaire que représente l'achat d'une encyclopédie. Ne peut-il la consulter dans les bibliothèques publiques? Dans le fond de lui-même, l'honnête homme sait que sa paresse et ses occupations le pousseront rarement vers une bibliothèque publique dans le seul but de rechercher un article dans un répertoire. Aussi consent-il au sacrifice nécessaire pour avoir une encyclopédie à portée de la main.*

de Staercke, »Les ouvrages généraux«, in: Wigny (Ed.), *La Bibliothèque*, 17–23, here 20.

of questions by publishing questionnaires for users. To give an example, books referring to the *National Encyclopaedia* organised the reading<sup>76</sup> as well as the questioning.<sup>77</sup> Secondly, encyclopaedias and puzzles are closely connected to oral communication. In the history of encyclopaedias, »Konversationslexika« transformed scientific disputes explicitly into conversation. It is interesting that knowledge transfer connects an exclusively written tradition of science to an oral tradition of knowing. This oral tradition in encyclopaedic use can be detected in the aspect of conversation, in provision for pronunciation and entertainment as well,<sup>78</sup> and perhaps also in the growing importance of illustrations. In 1843, the »Pfennig-Magazin« promised to focus more on entertainment than education. The magazine assured, *das ästhetische Element mehr hervorheben und die todte, den Leser kalt lassende Beschreibung nur da gebrauchen, wo sie unumgänglich nöthig ist, in anderen Fällen aber der lebendigen Schilderung den Vorzug geben.*<sup>79</sup>

Even though the type of the »Konversationslexikon« turns into an object of middle-class life style, science and encyclopaedia are more closely related than expected. From this point of view, more research is needed on the question of how fast encyclopaedias present inventions to a lay public. Once again, information transfer is not a continuous development. We can say that from medieval times up to the 18th century, encyclopaedias formed part of a delimited world of letters, addressed to scholars and enlightened administrators of states. To this part of society, encyclopaedias were an invitation to a state of the art debate rather than a reference work for gaining information. In addition, for the 19th and 20th centuries, apart from the development of special handbooks for a great variety of different professions, functions, and sciences,<sup>80</sup> general encyclopaedias gained a more educative aspect. Although education through information re-inforced the idea of transmitting well-established knowledge, mixed forms (of encyclopaedias) appeared in the first half of the 19th century. At this very moment, learned societies published various forms of »penny cyclopaedias«. <sup>81</sup> This cheap version of normally expensive encyclopaedias came together with a magazine of the same title. In this case, encyclopaedia and journal were different publications, although in the 19th century, a combination of both was not unusual.<sup>82</sup> In this form of popular encyclopaedia, a learned society could thus spread newly coined scientific terms for the very first time.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Course of Home Reading and study in the National Encyclopaedia, New York 1939.

<sup>77</sup> Suzallo (Ed.), Question manual for use with the National Encyclopaedia, A List of Three Thousand Five Hundred Interesting Questions, New York 1933.

<sup>78</sup> Colange, *The National Encyclopaedia, A Compendium of Universal Information*, New York 1873.

<sup>79</sup> *Pfennig-Magazin für Belehrung und Unterhaltung*, Ausgabe vom 7.1.1843.

<sup>80</sup> As an example for special encyclopaedias see Faber (Hg.), *Enzyklopädie des Staubes*, Halle 1936, or Aldrich (Ed.), *The Packers' Encyclopedia, Blue Book of the American Meat Packing and Allied Industries*, Chicago 1922.

<sup>81</sup> *Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, London 1833–1843.

<sup>82</sup> As another combination of dictionary and journal see *Bibliothèque universelle des sciences, belles-lettres et arts*, Genève 1816–1835.

<sup>83</sup> For example, the term »elimination«, »eliminate« appeared in the *Penny Cyclopaedia* in 1845. See *Earliest Known Uses of Some of the Words of Mathematics*, online on: <http://members.aol.com/jeff570/e.html> (2.8.2006). In addition, biographic literature on the British mathematician Augustus de Morgan underlines his introduction of the term »induction« in an article of the *Penny Cyclopaedia*.

7 Enzyklopädien sind Schnittstellen zwischen Wissen und Gesellschaft. Sie zeigen die Handlungsspielräume zivilgesellschaftlicher Selbstorganisation auf und leisten eine ›invention of tradition‹, welche die Spannung zwischen Aktualitätsbezug und gesichertem Allgemeinwissen interpretativ überbrückt. Indikatoren derartiger Veränderungen sind im spezifischen Gebrauch von Zeit und Raum sowie in der zivilgesellschaftlichen Projektion des Gebrauchs von Enzyklopädien im Anspruch auf Information festzustellen. Ein wesentliches Forschungsdesiderat stellt die Überprüfung von Zeit, Raum und Information als enzyklopädische Schlüsselbegriffe im interkulturellen Vergleich sowie die Bedeutung des Konstrukts Allgemeinwissen aus der Perspektive außereuropäischer Kulturen dar.

## 7 Conclusions: General Knowledge and Western Culture

This contribution proposes to understand encyclopaedias as an interface of knowledge and society. The approach assumes that in addition to epistemological debates, encyclopaedic presentation of general knowledge is useful for the reconstruction of civil society. Three main questions test whether encyclopaedic texts can be used as sources for the historical development of civil society by asking how time and space work as ordering principles and what the meaning of information in the concept of general knowledge is. The findings are promising: Different forms of encyclopaedias show that time, space and information are important elements in the historical development of civil society. This approach confirms that the combination of social and cultural patterns with political aims is a valuable method for the analysis of civil society as a form of political self-organisation not limited to institutions, single persons and centres of power. Therefore, the next step consists in using the comparative potential of analysing civil society in encyclopaedic texts of different cultures. Encyclopaedias are a global phenomenon. However, non-European encyclopaedias are rarely mentioned in other contexts than as early forerunners or as copies modelled on the *Britannica* or other Western encyclopaedias. Considering today's renaissance of national encyclopaedias, research on the encyclopaedic presentation of knowledge should discuss a transcultural approach. From the perspective of historical research, two aspects are crucial: Firstly, more research is needed to find out whether the organisation of general knowledge varies between different cultures with respect to the specific combination of space, time and information. Secondly, the understanding of general knowledge in other cultures could help to comprehend the kind of world an encyclopaedia not only presents but also constructs. From outside, it is probably easier to describe encyclopaedias as highly fictional worlds, where general knowledge is the result of momentary negotiations on the intellectual orientation of a society.

Prof. Dr. Madeleine Herren | University of Heidelberg

### Résumé

Cet article discute du dilemme fondamental des encyclopédies: D'un côté, elles supposent un savoir commun à toutes les cultures et tous les temps. D'un autre côté, elles remplissent également une fonction identitaire (comme c'est le cas par exemple des encyclopédies nationales) en offrant les informations dont la teneur est déterminée par leur contexte social. Le texte envisage les encyclopédies comme étant l'expression de certaines ›cultures de l'information‹ en évolution et les intègre dans un concept de société civile.

Partant de ces réflexions, l'article suggère donc d'analyser les articles ›temps‹, ›espace‹ et ›information‹ en tant que mots-clés encyclopédiques pour élaborer une comparaison interculturelle, ainsi que d'étudier

l'élaboration d'un ›savoir général‹ en particulier du point de vue des cultures extra-européennes. De cette manière les encyclopédies mettent en évidence les marges de manœuvre de l'organisation propre à une société civile, en tant que comme point de jonction entre le savoir et la société. En outre, elles documentent une ›invention of tradition‹, qui pallie la tension existant entre le rapport à l'actualité et un savoir général assuré.

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## Appendix: A Selection of National Encyclopaedias since 1991

At the end of the cold war, encyclopaedias rekindled as attributes of regained or aspired national sovereignty. The following selection of such encyclopaedias is based on a systematic search in the catalogue of the Library of Congress (14.2.2007). All diacritical marks have been removed.

### Albanien

*Fjalor enciklopedik*, edited by Pasho BAKU, Selim HOXHA and Muzafer XHAXHIU, 1 volume, Tirane 2002.

*Kalendar enciklopedik*, edited by Aristidh PLAKA and Ibrahim XHAMAJ, 1 volume, Tirane 1998.

### Armenien

*Haykakan hamarot hanragitaran*, edited by Viktor Hamazaspovich HAMBARDZUMYAN and Konstantin Surenovich KHUDAVERDYAN, 4 volumes, Erevan 1990–2003.

*Haykakan harts hanragitaran*, edited by Konstantin Surenovich KHUDAVERDYAN, 1 volume, Erevan 1996.

### Aserbaidshan

*Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyəti ensiklopediyası*, edited by Yaqub MAHMUDOV, 2 volumes, Baku 2004–2005.

### Belarus

*Belarus: entsyklapedychny davednik*, edited by Baris I. SACHANKA, 1 volume, Minsk 1995.

*Belaruskaja entsyklapedyia*, edited by Henadz P. PASHKOU, 18 volumes, Minsk 1996–2004.

### Bulgarien

*Leksikografieiata otzazhenie na bulgarskoto slovno bogatstvo*, edited by Emilieiiia Ilieva PERNISHKA and Marieiiiana PARZULOVA, Veliko Turnovo 1997.

### Estland

*Eesti noukogude entsuklopeedia*, edited by Ülo KAEVATS and Gustav NAAN, 14 volumes, Tallinn 1985–2003 (Revised edition of *Eesti noukogude entsuklopeedia*, 1968).

*Vaike entsuklopeedia*, edited by Rein ARO, 1 volume, Tallinn 2001.

### Kasachstan

*Abai: entsiklopedia*, edited by Rymghali N. NURGHALIEV et al., 1 volume, Almaty 1995.

### Kroatien

*Hrvatska enciklopedija*, edited by Dalibor BROZOVIAC, 8 volumes appeared until 2006, Zagreb 1999–.

*Hrvatski leksikon*, edited by Antun VUJAC, 2 volumes, Zagreb 1996–1997.

*Hrvatski opci leksikon: A–Z*, edited by August KOVACEC, 1 volume, Zagreb 1996.

### Lettland

*Alfa un Omega: enciklopediska rokasgramata*, edited by V. TERAUDS, 1 volume, Riga 1994.

*Enciklopediska vardnica*, edited by Andris VILKS, 2 volumes, Riga 1991.

## Litauen

*Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija*, edited by Antanas RACIS, 9 volumes appeared until 2005, Vilnius 2001–.

## Polen

*Encyklopedia »białych plam«*, edited by Marzena KORYTKOWSKA, Artur WINIARCZYK et al., 17 volumes appeared until 2006, Radom 2000–

*Encyklopedia popularna PWN*, edited by Adam KARWOWSKI, 1 volume, Warszawa 1995.

*Nowa encyklopedia powszechna PWN*, edited by Barbara PETROZOLIN-SKOWRONASKA, 6 volumes, Warszawa 1995–1996.

*Nowy leksykon PWN*, edited by Barbara PETROZOLIN-SKOWRONASKA and Andrzej DYCZKOWSKI, 1 volume, Warszawa 1998.

*Popularna encyklopedia powszechna*, edited by Anna JAMROZ, Magdalena OLKUASNIK and Elżbieta WOJCIK, 12 volumes, Krakow 2001–2003.

*Wielka encyklopedia PWN*, edited by Jan WOJNOWSKI, 31 volumes, Warszawa 2001–2005.

## Rumänien

*Cartier dictionar enciclopedic: 98 000 de definitii*, edited by Lacramioara CHIHAIA et al., 1 volume, Chisinau 2000.

*Dictionar enciclopedic*, edited by Marcel D. POPA et al., 6 volumes appeared until 2006, Bucuresti 1993–.

*Mic dictionar enciclopedic*, edited by Alexandru STANCIULESCU, 1 volume, Bucuresti 2005.

## Russische Föderation / Russland

*Novaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, edited by A. D. NEKIPELOV, 12 volumes, Moskva 2004.

*Novyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar*, edited by Aleksandr Mikhailovich PROKHOROV, 1 volume, Moskva 2000.

*Novyi illiustrirovannyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar*, edited by V. I. BORODULIN et al., 1 volume, Moskva 1999.

*Populiarnyi entsiklopedicheskii illiustrirovannyi slovar: Evropediia*, edited by Viktor Vasilevich OVCHINIKOVA, 1 volume, Moskva 2003.

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*Slovar induizm, dzhainizm, sikkhizm*, edited by Margarita Fedorovna ALBEDIL, Aleksandr Mikhailovich DUBIANSKOGO, L. B. ALAEV et al., 1 volume, Moskva 1996.

*Kratkii entsiklopedicheskii slovar*, edited by A. P. GORKIN, 2 volumes, Moskva 2000.

*Universalnyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar*, edited by A. P. GORKIN, 1 volume, Moskva 1999.

*Voennaia entsiklopediia v vosmi tomakh*, edited by I. N. RODIONOV, 8 volumes, Moskva 1994–2004.

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*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar iunogo istorika: vseobshchaia istoriia: dlia srednego i starshego shkolnogo vozrasta*, edited by N. S. ELMANOVA, E. M. SAVICHEVA, 1 volume, Moskva 1997.

*Bolshoi entsiklopedicheskii slovar*, edited by Aleksandr Mikhailovich PROKHOROV, 2 volumes, Moskva 1991.

*Bolshaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia*, edited by Iurii Sergeevich OSIPOV, 4 volumes appeared until 2006, Moskva 2004–.

### Slowakische Republik

*Encyclopaedia Beliana: Slovenska vseobecna encyklopedia v dvanastich zvazkoch*, edited by the ENCYKLOPEDICKY USTAV SAV, 4 volumes appeared until 2006, Bratislava 1999–.

### Slowenien

*Leksikon Cankarjeve zalozbe*, edited by Ksenija DOLINAR and Seta KNOP, Ljubljana 1998.

*Veliki splosni leksikon: v osmih knjiga*, edited by Marija JAVORNIK, 4 volumes appeared until 2006, Ljubljana 1998–.

### Tschechische Republik

*Encyklopedicky slovník*, edited by Jan BARTAK, Hana BRADNOVA et al., 1 volume, Praha 1993.

*Mala ilustrovana encyklopedie: A–Z*, edited by Jan BARTAK AND Eliska CHROBAKOVA, 1 volume, Praha 1999.

### Ukraine

*Entsyklopediia suchasnoi Ukrainy*, edited by Ivan M. DZIUBA et al., 3 volumes appeared until 2004, Kyiv 2001–.

### Ungarn

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**Allgemeinwissen und Gesellschaft. Akten des internationalen Kongresses über Wissenstransfer und enzyklopädische Ordnungssysteme, vom 18. bis 21. September 2003 in Prangins**

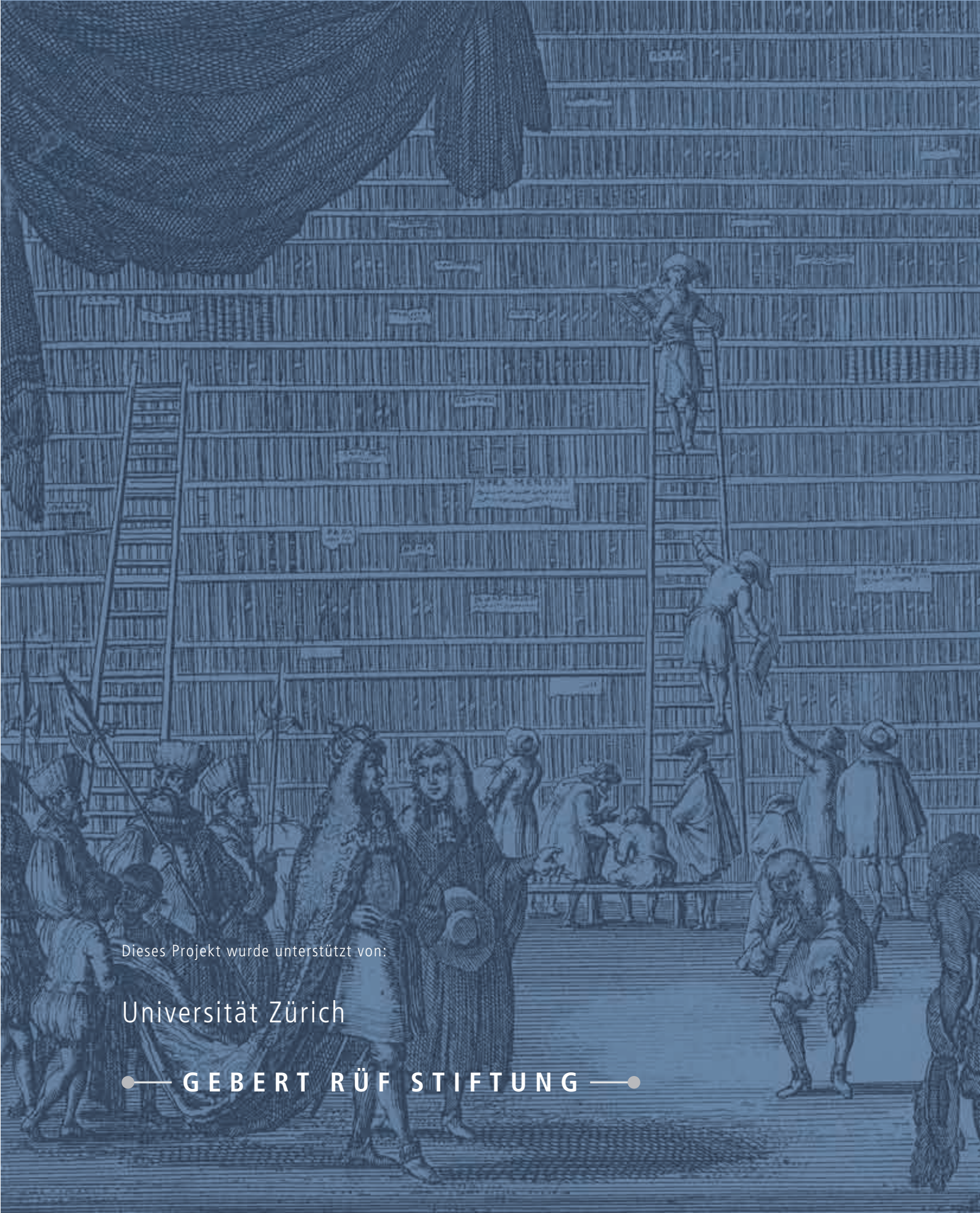
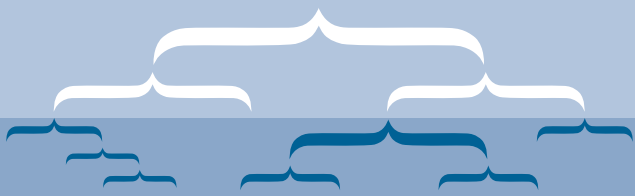
»Allgemeinwissen« ist ein gesellschaftliches Konstrukt, dessen Nachfrage ebenso erfunden ist wie seine Inhalte und die Formen seiner Anordnung – aber wer sind die Akteure im Prozess der Vermittlung von Wissen, Bildung und Information und in welchem Verhältnis stehen sie zur Gesellschaft? Der Band diskutiert die Problematik »Allgemeinwissen« am Beispiel einer scheinbar stabilen und angeblich einheitlichen Form des Wissens: den Enzyklopädiën. Wie sich diese Medien des Kulturtransfers verändern, wie sie mit dem Dilemma umgehen, einerseits stabiles und andererseits aktuelles Wissen zu reproduzieren, ist Gegenstand einer Debatte, die sich weder auf die Enzyklopädiën der Neuzeit noch auf ausschließlich europäische Beispiele beschränkt. Enzyklopädiën tragen zur Popularisierung von Werten und Ideen im Alltäglichen bei, und ihre Erforschung erlaubt es, die Verbreitung von gesellschaftlichen und politischen Ordnungsvorstellungen nachzuvollziehen. Die Beiträge sind interdisziplinär und global vergleichend konzipiert, sie untersuchen Verlegerdynastien, fragen nach dem Einfluss von Zivilgesellschaften und thematisieren die Rolle politischer Machthaber bei der »Bildung« von Gesellschaften. Die nationalstaatlichen Interessen im Entstehungsprozess von Enzyklopädiën in Indien und Australien stehen demnach ebenso zur Debatte wie die in die Antike zurückreichenden Vorstellungen, wie Wissen geordnet sein sollte. Die Mechanismen der Zensur in Frankreich des 18. Jahrhunderts wie auch Formen des Sammelns und Ordnen in demokratischen und totalitären Systemen der Neuzeit werden genauso berücksichtigt wie die Frage, durch welche deontologischen Grundprinzipien die Suche nach Wissen gelenkt wird.

**All you need to know. Proceedings of the international congress on knowledge transfer and encyclopaedic ordering principles: Prangins, 18–21 September 2003**

»General knowledge« is a social construction. All its aspects, ranging from the need for it, to its content and its forms of organisation, are invented. But who are the protagonists in the process of transferring knowledge, education and information and what is their role in society? This volume discusses the issue »general knowledge« using the example of an apparently stable and supposedly consistent form of knowledge: encyclopaedias. Questions like how these medias of cultural transfer change through time, how they deal with the dilemma of reproducing stable and at the same time current knowledge are treated through a wide range of examples, including non-European and non-modern texts. Encyclopaedias contribute to the popularisation of values and ideas in everyday life, and research on encyclopaedias can reveal notions about social and political order. The articles are designed to be interdisciplinary and comparative on a global scale. They examine publishing dynasties, enquire about the influence of civil societies and deal with the role of political rulers in efforts to »educate« societies. The interests of nation states in the production of encyclopedias in India and Australia are debated along with ideas dating back to the ancient world on how knowledge should be organised. Mechanisms of censorship in 18th century France and ways of collecting and organising knowledge in democratic and totalitarian systems of modern times are considered just like the question, through which deontological principles the search for knowledge is regulated.

**Les labyrinthes du savoir. Actes du congrès international sur la transmission du savoir et les principes d'ordre encyclopédiques, 18–21 septembre 2003 à Prangins**

Le concept de »culture générale« est une construction humaine. Ses exigences, ses contenus et la forme de sa présentation sont des produits artificiels – mais qui sont les acteurs dans cette transmission du savoir, de la culture et des informations et quel rôle jouent-ils dans une société? Le volume présente ces questions liées à la »culture générale« à partir d'un exemple du savoir accumulé que l'on croit acquis et uniforme: les encyclopédies. Quels transformations ont subi ces médias du transfert culturel? Comment ont-ils géré le dilemme d'être à la fois garant d'un savoir acquis sans pourtant négliger l'actualité? Ce débat ne se limite ni aux encyclopédies des temps modernes ni aux exemples européens. Les encyclopédies apportent dans la vie quotidienne des systèmes de valeurs et des concepts intellectuels; leur analyse permet de reconstituer la diffusion des systèmes de classification d'ordre social et politique. Les contributions reflètent une approche interdisciplinaire et comparative au niveau global. Ainsi elles analysent des dynasties d'éditeurs, l'influence de la société civile ou du pouvoir politique sur le concept de »culture générale« d'une société. Le débat s'ouvre sur des thèmes aussi variés que les intérêts nationaux dans la création d'encyclopédies en Inde ou en Australie, les concepts de classification remontant à l'antiquité, la censure dans la France du XVIIIe siècle et les différentes formes de donner un ordre aux collections dans des régimes démocratiques et totalitaires. Enfin, nous trouvons la question cruciale de savoir quels sont les principes déontologiques qui nous dirigent dans notre recherche du savoir.



Dieses Projekt wurde unterstützt von:

Universität Zürich

— GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG —