

– Announcement –

A (New) Republic of Letters: Intellectual Communities, Global Knowledge Transfer

International Summer School, Marbach Weimar Wolfenbüttel Research Association

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German Literature Archive Marbach

Each Republic of Letters is based on words. They are, according to Anthony Grafton, ‘worlds made by words’ (2009). The booming research into global literatures allows us to see these worlds from a new perspective: What aesthetic, political, and social conditions are they based on? What rules does their communication follow and how is their media infrastructure built? What transformations have these worlds undergone throughout history and where are their archives? What terminology and methods are appropriate to describe the present literary and intellectual landscape on a transnational scale?

Attempts to simply adapt older terminology should be regarded with scepticism: When Arno Schmidt wrote *Die Gelehrtenrepublik (The Egghead Republic)* in 1957, the historical Republic of Letters had long ceased to exist. With the emergence of the modern publishing industry and university practices, the *Respublica literaria* of the seventeenth and eighteenth century has been reduced to a mere scientific and political metaphor, has served as material for literary utopias or dystopias, and has been employed in expressions of cultural criticism and intellectual self-stylization.

Today, the term is associated with forms of knowledge and modes of communication of the *Ancien Régime* and, as Pascale Casanova argues (1999; 2004), it transports ideas of imperial, linguistic and political hegemony. It is precisely because of these associations that the term has recently been picked up again, this time by Jerome McGann, who has announced a ‘New Republic of Letters’ (2014) in the digital age. For McGann, the term provides a framework of reference to describe the relationship between the humanities and the public sphere in the twenty-first century.

Over the past two decades, scholarly investigation into the historical Republic of Letters has shown it to be more than an intellectual community that came into existence at one specific point in the past. Instead, it emerges as interaction of different institutions and their respective spheres of knowledge and power, as a mechanism of cultural competition for literary and intellectual hegemony, and as social and gender conscious performances of the roles of producers and recipients of literature. This opens new opportunities for research: firstly, compiling and analysing historical accounts of the *Respublica literaria* during the early modern period, secondly, tracing early ideas regarding a global network of scholars, and finally, reflecting on the methods and implications of communication across vast distances. Beyond these considerations, the different

agents, roles, and functions during the processes of generating, transferring, and accumulating knowledge are yet to be explored, alongside the responsibility to critically reflect this process.

The international Summer School, hosted by the German Literature Archive Marbach, which makes numerous documents reflecting literary and scholarly collaboration available for research, becomes a vehicle for international exchange itself: Within the framework of the International Summer School, twenty doctorate students from around the world will have the opportunity to discuss the phenomenon of the Republic of Letters, its historical and theoretical manifestations, and the terminological challenges it poses.

The investigation into the structures of communication between intellectuals lies at the focus of the Summer School. Their exchange regarding scientific, political and social issues will be explored as it developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through letter exchanges, academic journals, periodicals, and the intellectual life in salons. The changes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by new inventions in technology and in the media will be an object of investigation, just as the introduction of the World Wide Web and its effect on academic collaboration and communication. The discussions thus address challenges research faces today by linking them back to our handling of digital storage of large volumes of data in academia.

The Summer School falls within the framework of the Marbach Weimar Wolfenbüttel Research Association, sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It provides an outlook beyond the German Literature Archive and its holdings to the Weimar Classics Foundation and the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel. More information about the Archive and library holdings of the German Literature Archive can be found in the [OPAC Kallias catalogue](#).

Partners: Stuttgart University and Freies Deutsches Hochstift, Frankfurt Goethe-Museum.

Application Process

There are twenty international scholarships on offer. Successful applicants will have the opportunity to work with academics from around the world during their stay on the Marbach campus. Graduate students studying towards a doctorate in the fields of literature, social sciences, and cultural sciences are eligible to apply. Dissertation topics may fall within the scope of the themes of the Summer School, however, those who do not will also be considered. Applicants must clearly demonstrate how participation in the Summer School and the accompanying archive stay makes a significant contribution to their dissertation project. Graduate students from emerging countries are strongly encouraged to apply.

International participants who travel significant distances (transcontinental) and who wish to pursue specific research interests in the archival holdings, may make an informal request to extend their stay for an extra week to work in the archive in the cover letter accompanying the application. The cost of accommodation for the week-long extension will be covered.

The application should include:

1. Application form
2. Cover letter of no more than two pages detailing reasons for the application (interest in summer school topic and relevant archival holdings; if applicable: proposal for one-week archive stay following the summer school/application for an exemption from the registration fee)
3. CV

4. Outline of the dissertation project (no more than five pages)
5. Copies of certificates and transcripts
6. Letter of recommendation from the applicant's home university

Application deadline

Applications must be submitted via the online [application portal](#) up to **28 February 2018**. Applications sent by post or via email will not be considered.

Applicants will be informed about the outcome of their application in April 2018. International participants will receive an invitation to apply for visas required for them to participate in the Summer School. Participation in the Summer School does not constitute any legal entitlement for an extended stay in Germany. There is no legal entitlement to participation.

Accommodation and Travel Costs

Participants will be offered free accommodation at the Collegienhaus of the German Literature Archive. Travel costs will be reimbursed to the value of the allowances set by the [DAAD](#).

Summer School Fee

The participation fee is 200 Euros. Participants may be eligible for a fee waiver, subject to inclusion of any relevant financial circumstances in the cover letter.

Programme

The programme details and speakers at the Summer School will be announced shortly.

Concept

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