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## News and Notes

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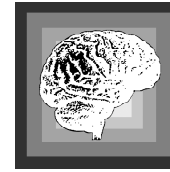
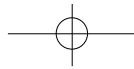
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## News and Notes

### The tenth anniversary of the Archives for the History of Psychiatry in Leipzig

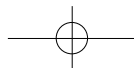
HOLGER STEINBERG,\* DIRK CARIUS and MATTHIAS C. ANGERMEYER  
*University of Leipzig*

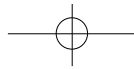
#### Why did Leipzig become a centre for the history of psychiatry?

It was in Leipzig that the first chair of psychiatry/psychotherapy in the Western world was established; this was in 1811 for Johann Christian August Heinroth who had given his first lecture here on 20 May 1806. From then on, psychiatry has been taught at Leipzig University without a break. In fact, the lecture programmes from earlier years suggest that neuroscientific topics were taught in Leipzig from the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus, our university was among the first, at least in German-speaking countries, to offer such lectures and seminars. Over the past 200 years many scientists and doctors who substantially influenced the development of psychiatry, neurology and related fields have worked in Leipzig, such as Gustav Theodor Fechner, Ernst Heinrich Weber, Carl Reinhold August Wunderlich, Wilhelm Wundt, Paul Flechsig, Wilhelm Erb, Adolf von Strümpell, Wilhelm His, Sr, Carl Ludwig, Julius Cohnheim, Karl Weigert, Paul Julius Möbius, Oswald Bumke, Paul Schröder (who was an early pioneer of the institutionalization of child and adolescent psychiatry throughout Germany) and Richard Arwed Pfeifer. Consequently, Leipzig University, which was regarded as one of the leading universities in Europe between 1870 and 1933, was a magnet for neuroscientists from all over the world. To mention just two examples: Wundt's first institute (worldwide) for scientific experimental psychology and Flechsig's brain research institute were both meccas for researchers, mainly from Eastern Europe and the USA. Throughout the twentieth century, Leipzig psychiatrists, neurologists and brain researchers also had an impact

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on the development of their fields. For example, working in difficult conditions Pfeifer put forward his theory of the angioarchitecture of the brain, and Klaus Weise established major theoretical and practical signposts for German social psychiatry.

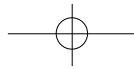
### **The foundation of the Archives**

In the late twentieth century, three Leipzig men, all working in mental health fields and interested in the neurosciences, realized that these rich traditions had not been explored in detail. They were: the mental health services co-ordinator of the Health Department of the City of Leipzig, Thomas Seyde, Psy.MA; the head of the Department of Psychiatry at Leipzig University, Professor Matthias C. Angermeyer, MD; and the former head of the Department's outpatient services, Matthias Uhle, MD. Acknowledging the enormous potential of this resource, they joined forces in 1996 and funded the setting up of a unit dedicated specifically to scientific research in this field: the Archiv für Leipziger Psychatriegeschichte. Funding and administrative matters were to be part of the city's job creation scheme. As a result, Kerstin Schilling, who held a qualification in the museum sciences, started work in the Archives on 1 September 1996 with a salary based on a social security benefits pay scale. The improvised Archives were located in a rather small side room in the outpatient services department building at 14 Emilienstraße. Ms Schilling's organizational skills enabled her to lay a solid material and technical foundation for the work of the Archives. As a fitting end to her contract on 30 September 1997, Ms Schilling's poster exhibition on the history of psychiatry at Leipzig University made a very positive impression.

### **Major research projects and methodology**

The first author of the present article (HS) was appointed as historian on 1 September 1997, and his contract was renewed in the following years, with financial help from several other funds and financial backers. Since the Archives did not possess many original or handwritten sources, HS's degree in history and German philology allowed a historical approach to research in the history of psychiatry, in contrast to the museum-oriented approach during the first year. Initially he concentrated on researching the early years of the life and work of Emil Kraepelin, one of Germany's leading and most important psychiatrists, who spent a major part of his student years in Leipzig where he also worked under Wundt and Erb and laid the basis for his future scientific career. In addition, research was also undertaken in the Archives into the broader and more general history of psychiatry at the University of Leipzig between 1870 and 1933.

This choice of research topics was obvious because the Archives, which had meanwhile come under the full auspices of the Department of Psychiatry



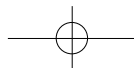
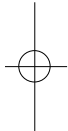
at the university, had meanwhile been integrated into its social psychiatric research unit, becoming its smallest organizational division. This amalgamation was completed in December 2000, when the Archives moved to a room in the research department at 20 Johannisallee.

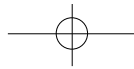
In spring 2000 the Archives were granted funding for two student assistants and for the occasional hiring of freelancers for individual projects, and we have been fortunate to have students of history, cultural studies and museum science. Increasingly, these people have been given their own defined projects to work on independently, with help and guidance in the practical scientific work, such as the use of libraries, databases, archives and other resources. The assistants have also gained experience in writing scientific papers and preparing them for publication. For some years Sebastian Schmidler (SS; student of history and German philology) and Ulrich Rottleb (student of cultural studies) have continued to work as student assistants in the Archives.

The latter currently leads the Archives' project on the presentation and description of psychiatric issues over the last 100 years in the city's leading local paper, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (the subject of his Master's thesis). However, he is primarily responsible for tracing and obtaining printed sources for the Archives' library, which at present consists of about 1100 volumes, the legacy of the once sizeable library of the university Department of Psychiatry. However, in 1943 Werner Wagner, then head of the Department, had part or all of this collection relocated to Hochweitzschen asylum to avoid its destruction in the Anglo-American bombing. Subsequent relocations, and also the selfish removal of books by department staff, have substantially reduced the size of the library. The Archives, under an agreement with the university library, now looks after this collection, and they have succeeded in building it up again by purchasing reference works important for the history of the Leipzig department from antiquarian bookshops and private collectors.

SS was actively involved in the research projects on the considerable, yet hitherto largely unknown, literary work of Heinroth, the first Professor of Psychiatry. A study on Heinroth's contact with the outstanding German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was carried out with SS's guidance and published with him as the first author. He also initiated and still supervises the project exploring the circumstances surrounding the death of the famous composer Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, the results of which are scheduled to be published very soon. Currently SS is mainly involved in the Archives' recent project of tracing, gathering and transcribing all sources, many of which were previously unknown, documenting the case of the murderer Johann Christian Woyzeck (well known through literary works and an opera); some of these have been published and others will be published soon.

The work of the Archives continues to develop into a lively multi-professional workshop – not least through the support of volunteers such as





the second author (linguist Dirk Carius, MA), who oversees several projects on language and psychiatry, the Archives' comprehensive website, and also the translation of the Archives' work into English. The enthusiasm of our staff continues to attract specialists from different fields, including doctors in our own department, to offer their experience in individual projects. A good example is Oliver Somburg who brought his psychiatric and neurological expertise into projects in which he has participated: (a) one on the Leipzig neuropsychiatrist P. J. Möbius's concept of akinesia algera (1891) as a coenaesthetic phenomenon, and (b) the Mendelssohn-Bartholdy project.

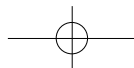
Undoubtedly, the New Historicism approach helps to maintain an intensive, problem-oriented working atmosphere. Thus, the staff consciously consider historical, social, biographical and local-historical circumstances in their research, and try avoid simply making surveys of literature published to date or arguing in purely theoretical terms. It has been a credo of all the Archives' publications to examine and include all relevant original files and records that are available in archives in Leipzig, Saxony and elsewhere, including abroad, and not merely to rely on already published sources.

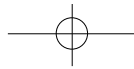
The life and psychiatric concepts of Heinroth and Möbius will continue to constitute a large part of the Archives' research. Much interesting material has been collected and is still awaiting full review and analysis. This is also true for the early years of Emil Kraepelin, the leader of German psychiatry between the 1890s and 1920s.

### **Publications, talks and other events<sup>1</sup>**

Since 1998 the results of the Archives' research have been published in journals of psychiatry, neurology and the history of medicine, as well as regional papers and magazines. Papers by HS have also been published in *History of Psychiatry*, thus making our findings more accessible internationally. It is a declared aim of the Archives to remind both the general public, especially in the Leipzig area,<sup>2</sup> and interested psychiatrists, neurologists and medical historians worldwide of the importance of developments in Leipzig's psychiatry, neurology and related neuroscientific fields. Two recent source-based contributions to the leading German neurological and psychiatric journal *Der Nervenarzt* have aroused the most interest: an account on the proceedings leading to the establishment of the first chair of psychiatry in Leipzig, and a presentation of the rediscovered testimonial from the Medical Faculty of Leipzig University in the Woyzeck case, which had allegedly been lost for more than 180 years.

In 2001 and 2002 two books were published recounting in detail Kraepelin's early years and his residence and work in Leipzig. These books were based on original sources, many of which were analysed and published for the first time. They also documented the life-long contact and friendship between Kraepelin and his mentor, the philosopher, psychologist and doctor Wilhelm



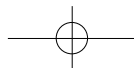


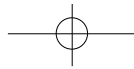
Wundt: their correspondence was edited and supplemented by detailed comments.

After these publications, the scope of the Archives' research activities widened to include Leipzig developments throughout the nineteenth century. This naturally led us to personalities such as Heinroth and Möbius and their work. In relation to Möbius, the history of psychiatric concepts and classifications around 1890 became another focus of our research activities, for he presented the first strictly aetiological classification of neurological and mental diseases, dividing them into endogenous and exogenous ones. Moreover, he went far beyond his French colleagues; he was very familiar with their work which he popularized and developed in Germany, by assuming close links between endogenous diseases and degeneration. Since this relationship was adopted by German psychiatry, Möbius' contributions had a lasting – and finally devastating – influence on the conceptual history of the whole discipline. Yet in the opinion of the public, Möbius is now generally perceived as a popular scientist who was a misogynist, mainly due to his pamphlet 'On Women's Physiological Deficiency' and his pathographic works on Goethe, Nietzsche und Schopenhauer. Clouded by this misconception, his epoch-making achievements in the fields of neurology and the conceptual history of hysteria (which, incidentally, reveal a totally different approach to women) need to be rescued from oblivion. Influenced by Jean-Martin Charcot, Möbius pioneered the psychogenic origin of this disease in the German-speaking countries, thus paving the way for the concept of functional diseases before Sigmund Freud.

To date, the Archives' research on Heinroth's very sophisticated and complex concept of mental health and illness has focused on his highly autonomous, holistically oriented understanding of the interactions of body and soul. Our publications have analysed the aetiological and therapeutic aspects and impact of Heinroth's teachings that are based on theological, philosophical and psychagogical<sup>3</sup> tenets. As far as the aetiological side is concerned, Heinroth's concept of 'sin' and the patients' own causing of their disease is of the utmost importance, as are, from the point of view of therapy, his 'ideas on a direct psychic method'. However, in publications on Heinroth, both these aspects of his work have so far received little attention and no satisfactory elaboration. For both Heinroth and Möbius, the Archives' publications have also introduced primary sources that shed new light on and provide more details of their life and work.

The year 2005 saw the completion of three major projects. First, HS published his comprehensive bio-bibliographical book on Möbius. Together with MA (the third author of the present article), he also published the collection *200 Jahre Psychiatrie an der Universität Leipzig. Personen und Konzepte*, focusing on the analysis of contributions of nineteenth-century Leipzig neuropsychiatrists to the development of their subjects. The third publication was *Leipziger Psychiatriegeschichtliche Vorlesungen* (Leipzig Talks



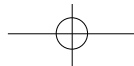


on the History of Psychiatry) – these had been delivered in Leipzig as part of an eponymous series of events organized by the Archives. This collection of contributions highlighting the importance of Leipzig as a centre and initiator in the neurosciences was chosen by the Committee on Research in the History of the University and of Sciences in Leipzig to be included in its series *Beiträge zur Leipziger Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* which is published on behalf of the Rector of Leipzig University.

Since 2000 the results of our work have also been regularly presented at annual conventions of the leading German professional association, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Nervenheilkunde (DGGN). The Archives organized and headed the 15th annual convention of the DGGN in Leipzig (15–17 September 2005). About 90 specialists, mainly from German-speaking countries and also elsewhere, took part in this meeting held in the historic surroundings of Leipzig's Neues Rathaus. There were 45 talks on a wide variety of topics in the history of the neurosciences; 14 of these were also open to participants of the 5th Mitteldeutsche Psychiatrietage, held at the same time and organized by the Department of Psychiatry of Leipzig University. Some talks attracted audiences of more than 200. The conference dinner jointly organized for both conventions presented a very special highlight: the world's first public performance of a series of seasonal poems by J. C. A. Heinroth set to music by Anhalt-Dessau composer Friedrich Schneider. Professional artists were engaged, including the Thios Omilos ensemble of the world-famous Leipzig St Thomas Boys' Choir. At the 2005 general meeting, HS was elected a member of the DGGN board.

'Talks on the History of Psychiatry' mentioned above were initiated by the Archives in 2001. They created widespread interest and were soon included in the official programme of training courses offered by the university's Department of Psychiatry. These talks have been acknowledged and certified by the Saxony Medical Council, establishing historic issues as fully recognized topics for postgraduate and resident teaching. The Archives will continue to organize similar events more often in the future, to provide opportunities for new insights.

Since the winter of 2001/2 the Archives have also participated in undergraduate teaching in psychiatry and the history of medicine, and have offered seminars. In the summer term 2005, history of psychiatry was included for the first time in the choice of optional subjects required during preclinical tuition. Encouragingly, the highest permitted number of students signed up for this weekly 2-hour seminar chaired by HS in co-operation with Prof. Dr Dr Ortrun Riha of the Karl-Sudhoff-Institute for the History of Medicine and the Natural Sciences, Leipzig. Once again we applied our source-based approach, allowing students to gain an overview of the history of German psychiatry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by studying and analysing contemporary primary texts. Due to the high demand we are offering the seminar again in future semesters. For the first time ever, historical issues have now also been



covered in the general psychiatric lectures compulsory for all medical students.

Due to growing historic awareness, the poster exhibition on the history of psychiatry at Leipzig University was completely relaunched and redesigned in 2003 and since then has been displayed at the premises of the research department at 20 Johannisallee, attracting and informing visitors about the department. In response to enquiries about an exhibition catalogue, we have prepared the main parts of the exhibition texts and documents for publication as a richly illustrated brochure *Bilder der Geschichte der Leipziger Universitätspsychiatrie*.

The Archives' internet website (see Note 1) has also proved an increasing success. This has been demonstrated by the large number of site hits and the steadily increasing numbers of specialist enquiries being processed by our staff. With increasing frequency, the website has fostered national and international co-operation on various research projects. Thus the boundaries of the Archives' research – previously laid down mainly regionally and locally – have been extended, making it possible to put the Leipzig institutions and their historical impact into a wider perspective. The basis for the continuation of the Archives' work has now been laid: in October 2005, MA, then head of the Department of Psychiatry,<sup>4</sup> ensured medium- and long-term funding of the Archives' post of historian through the Medical Faculty of Leipzig University. Thus, the Archives' achievements are acknowledged with an agreement to continue this research institution – one that is unique to a university department of psychiatry in the German-speaking countries.

## Notes

1. A full account of the works published by the Archives, including links to abstracts and further material, is available on our comprehensive website at [www.psychiatriegeschichte.de](http://www.psychiatriegeschichte.de) or <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~psy/archiv.htm#pub>. The site also provides: an illustrated overview on the history of psychiatry at Leipzig University; information on eminent neuro-psychiatrists who worked here in the past.
2. We are therefore always happy to accept invitations to give talks at special conferences or at festive ceremonies anywhere.
3. In English, the adjective 'psychagogical' (or 'psychagogic') is very rarely used; it first appeared in the 19th century, variously to refer to ideas which might influence, guide or persuade the mind or to techniques that might stimulate or arouse it. In German, *Psychagogik* and related terms are in use.
4. Retired in September 2006.

