

Allies and Rivals: German-American Exchange and the Rise of the Modern Research University

By Emily J. Levine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.
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Sandra Singer

Alfred University

Emily J. Levine's latest work deserves high praise for the new ground it covers with such nuance in the densely researched field of the history of higher education in the United States and Germany. The focus of her book-length treatise is academic institutional innovations that arose through the German-American exchange of faculty, students, and ideas from the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 through 1933 and the years immediately following. Although this topic may appeal primarily to an academic audience, the text's clarity and organization make it accessible to a wider audience interested in German and American history. Levine wastes little time on more familiar accounts from American students of the nineteenth century, such as George Ticknor, which glorified the German universities. The reader is quickly introduced to the challenges faced by innovative thinkers on both sides of the ocean, including Daniel Coit Gilman and Felix Klein, who attempted to facilitate academic exchanges without setting off a wave of antisemitism or alarm bells about competition and threats to national interests. To the degree that this was possible, it is enlightening to see how both sides of the exchange eventually became dependent on each other, as Levine states, "to validate each other's institutions" (77).

Levine does not bemoan the ways in which Americans did not exactly reproduce the German university model but rather explains why the modifications and hybrid models adopted were more productive. At Johns Hopkins University, the new model, with its "hybridized Prussian-inspired changes" (106) and the "reinforcement of the bond between research and teaching" (147) as well as the inclusion of women in its medical school, was an invaluable contribution to American higher education. Levine's years of extensive archival work allow her to provide fascinating and detailed accounts of the struggles faced by American and German administrators as they adapted features from both university systems to remain competitive in the international arena of research.

But along with accounts of the positive nature of these academic exchanges there appear descriptions of the destructive elitism inherent to the modern research university model. This model denigrated the work of faculty at institutions that prioritized teaching over research. Those eager to be a part of the elite world of the research university accepted its racism, sexism, and antisemitism. In a chapter praising the role both M. Carey Thomas and W. E. B. Du Bois played in reforming education for women and Black colleges respectively, Levine points out that however impressive and admirable their institutional innovations were, both Thomas and Du Bois embraced the elitism of the German research university model in an attempt to escape their own marginalization. Their desire to be part of the elite establishment kept them from challenging the elitism at the very heart of the research university.

Pervasive antisemitism at elite institutions was countered at times by what Levine refers to, in this context and elsewhere, as "coercive philanthropy" (84). Donations from Jewish donors led to stipulations such as one included in the constitution of the University of Frankfurt (founded in 1914), stating that "religious or confessional status shall not in any instance be grounds for exclusion in filling a Chair" (184). Leopold Koppel insisted that Fritz Haber, a Jew, be made director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physical and Electrical Chemistry that Koppel was funding. Similar efforts by Jewish donors were made at Columbia University with varying success.

Experiments designed to avoid elitism and create a more democratic model of education did not necessarily eliminate discrimination and led to new difficulties. The progressive Black Mountain College in North Carolina welcomed Jews, but its efforts to create a truly democratic educational institution were diminished by racist and sexist policies. The New School in New York was a lifeline for many Jews and offered more opportunities for women as both faculty and students. But like Black Mountain, it began with an unrealistic business plan and almost ended in bankruptcy.

Even separate research institutions created to compensate for inadequacies of the modern research university had limitations. Levine writes of the marginalization of women at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. More troubling is the question she raises about whether things might have unfolded differently if researchers at such institutions in Germany had been embedded in universities. Would their critical voices have helped the German universities resist Nazism? That hardly seems likely but is worth considering.

In the brief concluding chapter, the reader is propelled forward into the post-World War II decades. Levine uses her sober analysis of the history of the modern research university and its alternatives to question the purpose and viability of current iterations of the research university and research institutions. She asks us to question much of what we have taken for granted about the structures of these institutions and lays down much fruitful ground for debate.

As for technicalities, the book is thoroughly and extensively documented, although the vast comprehensive online bibliography still leaves out some of the sources used and quoted in the text and includes others that are never mentioned or cited. The copyeditors deserve high praise as there were very few errors and only one deserves mention. In the famous photo from Clark University on page 59, G. Stanley Hall is wrongly identified as Sigmund Freud. Freud is not “front row, center” but rather is sitting to Hall’s right!

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Networks of Modernity: Germany in the Age of the Telegraph, 1830-1880

By Jean-Michel Johnston. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xii + 281. Cloth £75.00. ISBN: 978-0198856887.

Heidi J. S. Tworek

University of British Columbia

Jean-Michel Johnston has written a very useful and archivally rich monograph on nineteenth-century telegraphy in Germany. The book covers the innovation of telegraphy, its implementation in multiple German states and the Kaiserreich, as well as the reactions and interpretations of users. Johnston rightly asserts that the history of telegraphy in Germany is comparatively under-researched, and this book goes a long way to addressing that deficit.

The book proceeds chronologically and tries in each chapter to incorporate Prussia, Bavaria, Bremen, and other states where feasible. Johnston’s consistent attention to states and cities beyond Prussia provides a very different picture of the development of telegraphy in Germany. Through research at state, municipal, and private archives in Berlin, Bremen,