

## 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War

**Veranstalter:** Freie Universität Berlin

**Datum, Ort:** 20.01.2012-21.01.2012, Berlin

**Bericht von:** Gundula Gahlen/Deniza Petrova, Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut, Freie Universität Berlin

The kick-off workshop of the international project „1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War“ took place on the 20th and 21st of January at the Freie Universität of Berlin. This project aims to develop an English-language virtual encyclopedia about the First World War under the Open Access paradigm over the course of three years. It will be managed and coordinated by a project board located at the Free University of Berlin. Around 40 renowned experts from 14 countries are participating in this international project directed by Oliver Janz, professor of history at the Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut, and Nicolas Apostolopoulos, director of the Center for Digital Systems (CeDiS). The project was initiated in cooperation with the Bavarian State Library and aims to provide a globally oriented historical overview of the First World War based on a closely collaborative international research network. On the technical side the project explores new navigational procedures for electronic encyclopedias and tests search engines and research tools. Important cooperation partners include the German Historical Institutes in London, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Moscow as well as the Library of Contemporary History Stuttgart, the University of Birmingham, the Military History Research Institute Potsdam and the European project CENDARI based at Trinity College Dublin. The German Research Foundation (DFG) is funding the project with a grant of around 1 million Euros. The encyclopedia is planned to be released in 2014, the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. The project's website can be found at: <http://www.1914-1918-online.net>.

In his official welcoming address the vice-president of the Free University of Berlin Michael Bongardt underlined the major significance of the international and interdisciplinary project [1914-1918-online](http://www.1914-1918-online.net) [U+009D]

to the Free University of Berlin because of its transnational, pan-European, and global historical perspective that promotes the university's philosophy of international networking and its academic information infrastructure that will spawn new ways of enabling worldwide distribution of scientific literature and materials. In his opening address OLIVER JANZ (Berlin) named the project's main objectives: With [1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War](http://www.1914-1918-online.net) one of the most comprehensive encyclopedias of the First World War with about 500 longer articles and up to 1.000 encyclopedic entries will be created. Pursuing a pan-European and global approach [1914-1918-online](http://www.1914-1918-online.net) [U+009D] will cover as fully as possible hitherto neglected or under-researched regions which are not fully represented in the general picture of the First World War (especially that of the broader public), namely Eastern Europe, South East Europe, the Middle East, East Asia, Africa and Latin America. NICHOLAS APOSTOLOPOULOS (Berlin) highlighted the great opportunity, presented by the online encyclopedia, to employ information technology for the innovative presentation of historical research.

The first section of the workshop, chaired by Sebastian Conrad (Berlin), was dedicated to new perspectives on the First World War. Keynote Lecturer HEW STRACHAN (Oxford) characterized the First World War as a global war, a war of mass engagement, with global economic dimensions. He outlined the challenge faced by World War One historians, to move beyond national perspectives towards comparative, transnational narratives of the war. The centenary of the outbreak of World War One provides an opportunity for historians to revisit and reconsider the war in order to deepen and diversify our understanding of the First World War. CHRISTIAN WESTERHOFF (Berlin), who is coordinating the project, presented [1914-1918-online](http://www.1914-1918-online.net) as a publication platform for a global history of the First World War. Articles with different perspectives on the topic, interlinked with each other, will form a [web of knowledge](http://www.1914-1918-online.net). The new, innovative navigation tools will allow users to discover new perspectives and connections. Contributions

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by renowned scholars, recommended and reviewed by an editorial board, will ensure the high quality of the articles. The comprehensive, transnational perspective and the high visibility of the project open new possibilities and information services for scholars and the public worldwide.

The discussion panel, in which ELIZABETH THOMPSON (Charlottesville) and STEFAN RINKE (Berlin) took part, brought forth a set of specific questions and helpful suggestions. Thompson noted the wide public interest in the First World War and that a broader studying of the period now allows a transnational perspective on its complex subjects. Rinke focused on the neglected areas in former historical research, for example Latin America, and stressed the revolutionary character of the Great War. He also emphasized the importance not only of talking and learning about the different regions, but also of talking with and learning from the local scholars. The need for a transnational perspective on the war was also an important topic of the discussion. In addition, the necessity of updating the encyclopedia and the search tools were discussed.

Section II chaired by Gregor Horstkemper (Munich) focused on e-History. Keynote Lecturer STEFAN GRADMANN (Berlin) spoke about the state of digital scholarly publishing. He presented "European Digital", a multi-lingual online collection of digitized items from European museums, libraries and archives, as a model for online publishing. KARSTEN BORGMANN (Berlin) presented the current status of the architecture and functionalities of the "1914-1918-online" encyclopedia. He pointed out that the Open Access paradigm will promote the access of individual users, search engines, and reference services to ensure free and unlimited dissemination of the content. The developed navigation schemes allow users non-linear access throughout the encyclopedia via thematic contexts, regional contexts and conceptual encyclopedic entries. In conclusion he outlined the technical possibilities for a rich indexing that will provide the encyclopedia with a high usability, benefiting in particular from the experience of the Bavarian State Library in this field. The platform will be designed

to enable users to follow threads according to their specific question of interest, integrating a broad range of texts from various contexts in a way that is appropriate to the hypertextuality of the medium.

In the panel discussion with Nicholas Apostolopoulos and STEFAN SCHMUNK (Mainz) technology related questions about software, web architecture and meta-data-standards emerged. It became clear that historians and IT-experts will have to work closely together in the attempt to build the best possible user interface.

The third section, chaired by Albert Geukes (Berlin), was dedicated to the planned workflow of the project. Christian Westerhoff introduced the project structure, the editorial staff and partners. ANNE FRIEDERIKE HUNEKE (Berlin) defined the current state of the project, started in November 2011, and outlined the publication plan. The majority of the planned 1500 articles should be completed and released online by October 2014. The next presentation was held by JENNIFER WILLENBERG (Berlin), who is responsible for the copy editing process. She described article types, editorial work-flow and article structure. 120 thematic survey articles will provide a transnational overview on a specific subject. They will be accompanied by regional survey articles and thematic regionalized articles. All articles should be submitted in English. Articles will incorporate multimedia elements and will be fully citable as scholarly publications. The editorial work-flow with a consistent two-staged review process ensures a high standard of quality of the encyclopedia. In the following discussion specific questions about search engines and the user interface, among other issues, were discussed.

Section IV chaired by Oliver Janz was dedicated to section reports with the focus on the pilot study presented by the section "East Central Europe". RUTH LEISEROWITZ, STEPHAN LEHNSTÄDT, PIOTR SZLANTA (all Warsaw) and THEODORE R. WEEKS (Carbondale) shared their valuable experiences as section editors and authors. After a presentation of Piotr Szlanta on Poland and the First World War the discussion focused first on scholarly issues specific to the Central and East European regions

during the war (Baltic states, Poland, Finland) and secondly on more general issues about creating a section of the encyclopedia.

The following morning was reserved for the working groups of the Section and General Editors to coordinate their work, timetables, article outlines and author suggestions. In the plenary session chaired by Oliver Janz a lot of problems that had arisen during the workshop were discussed and summarized. These concerned in particular the section structure, the list of articles and authors, the recruitment of open positions and the possibilities of updating the encyclopedia. At the end of the workshop some questions remained open but enough groundwork was in place for the participants to be confident about starting the editing process.

To summarize, the workshop clarified that the project presents new challenges and is a unique opportunity for scholars to develop a digital history publication. The encyclopedia promises to become a representative multi-perspective and globally accessible reference work on the First World War. The next event of the project is a workshop on "World War I in Poland" taking place at the German Historical Institute Warsaw from 26th to 27th April 2012 where the contents of this section of the encyclopedia will be prepared and discussed.

Conference overview:

Michael Bongardt, Vice-President of the Free University Berlin: Welcome Address

Nicolas Apostolopoulos/Oliver Janz (Berlin): Opening Address

*Section I: The First World War: New Perspectives*

Chair: Sebastian Conrad (Berlin)

Keynote Lecture: Hew Strachan (Oxford): The First World War as Global War

Christian Westerhoff (Berlin): 1914-1918-online: A Publication Platform for a Global History of the First World War

Panel discussion with Elizabeth Thompson (Charlottesville) and Stefan Rinke (Berlin)

*Section II: e-History*

Chair: Gregor Horstkemper (Munich)

Keynote Lecture: Stefan Gradmann (Berlin): The State of Digital Scholarly Publishing and e-Humanities

Karsten Borgmann (Berlin): 1914-1918-online: Architecture and Functionalities

Panel discussion with Nicolas Apostolopoulos (Berlin) and Stefan Schmunk (Mainz)

*Section III: Inside the Project*

Chair: Albert Geukes (Berlin)

Anne Friederike Huneke/Christian Westerhoff (Berlin): 1914-1918-online: Work Packages, Milestones, Deliverables

Jennifer Willenberg (Berlin): Editorial Workflow

*Section IV: Section Reports*

chair: Oliver Janz (Berlin)

Ruth Leiserowitz/Stephan Lehnstädt/Piotr Szlanta (Warsaw): Section „East Central Europe“

Christian Westerhoff/Jennifer Willenberg (Berlin): Introduction: Objectives and Key Topics for Working Groups

*Plenary Session*

Chair: Oliver Janz (Berlin)

Nicolas Apostolopoulos/Oliver Janz (Berlin): Closing Remarks

Tagungsbericht 1914-1918-online. *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*. 20.01.2012-21.01.2012, Berlin, in: H-Soz-u-Kult 22.02.2012.