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Business history review

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VORAUSSETZUNGEN UND ENTWICKLUNGSLINIEN VON WIRTSCHAFTSARCHIVEN BIS ZUM ZWEITEN WELTKRIEG. ***By Klara van Eyll. (Schriften zur rheinisch-westfälischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Bd. 20). Köln (Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv) 1969, Pp. 224. DM 19.***

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The author thoroughly describes the development of ten business and economic archives in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands from their origins between 1904 and 1914 to 1938–39. None of them was affiliated with single firms — the corporation archives developing in Germany since 1904 are excluded from this study. They were mostly initiated and sponsored by business institutions (especially by the semi-public *Industrie-und Handelskammern* representing the business interests of specific regions) and by academic institutions interested in research and teaching economics. The archives collected printed and unprinted materials from business associations, chambers of commerce, and single firms. Annual reports, memoranda, statutes, papers and files, balance sheets, market surveys, statistics, periodicals, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and books are included in their holdings. They have served practical purposes of information and public relations. Especially when affiliated with institutions of higher learning, they have been used for teaching and research. They have been very useful to students of business and economic history. In great detail and on the basis of numerous published and unpublished sources, Klara van Eyll deals with the foundation, organization, personnel, and partly with the financing, holdings, and publications of the *Thünenarchiv Rostock*; the archives of the *Handelshochschule Köln* (today part of Cologne university); the archives of the *Hamburgisches Kolonialinstitut* (today *Welt-Wirtschaftsarchiv Hamburg*); the archives of the *Institut für Weltwirtschaft Kiel*; the *Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv zu Köln* (most thoroughly, including a list of its holdings from 1906 through 1939; *Südwestdeutsches Wirtschaftarchiv Saarbrücken; Archiv für Wirtschaftsgeschichte Leipzigs; Schweizerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv Basel; Archiv für Handel und Industrie der Schweiz, Zürich*; and the *Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief, Den Haag*. Students of European business and economic history will welcome this book as a useful introduction into the archives they might want to visit and as a very fact-oriented, descriptive contribution to the history of institutions which form an interesting part of the social and economic history of their countries.

Unfortunately, the author does not succeed in analyzing the historical causes underlying the foundation of these institutions (although this is stated as one of her aims), nor does she really explore their functions for business purposes and scholarly development. Even if the sketch of the situation in the fields of history and economics in German universities around 1900 were more substantial than it is (15–22), it would not explain the most influential factor underlying the wave of new economic and business archives after 1904: the rising interest of business groups in

influencing public and academic opinion. When social policy, responsive to public expectations, seemed to threaten business interests increasingly, when public opinion became influential in determining the outcome of the conspicuous labor strife of these years, and when the academic treatment of business and economics (strongly influenced by the reform-minded "Socialists of the Chair") displayed clear anti-business tendencies, some German corporations and business groups began to discover the importance of public relations. Since German business had much less access to the state-run institutions of higher learning than their American counterparts, new institutions and techniques had to be developed. The new archives — which certainly reflected other motives as well — responded to this need. This decisive connection between business interests in a specific historical situation on the one hand and the development of business and economic archives and history on the other is barely touched upon by this study. Some of the information in the book — for example on R. Ehrenberg (23–25) and on the initiative of the *Düsseldorf Handelskammer* (178) — can only be explained in this context. The author fails to take notice of important available information on this subject (for example in books by L. Brentano, R. Woldt, H. Kaelble). Further, she does not analyze the resulting methodological and political conflicts among scholars (e.g. Ehrenberg vs. Schmoller), nor between some scholars and some business representatives. (This context of the origins of German business history has been well discussed by D. Lindenlaub, "Firmengeschichte und Sozialpolitik," in *Festschrift W. Treue*, München, 1969, 272–285.) The study remains, nevertheless, an important, industrious and solid contribution offering plenty of new information which will be indispensable for a more analytical treatment of the topic within its larger economic, social, and general historical context.

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