

University Anniversaries between History, Present, and Future A Workshop at KIT, June 19 – 20, 2020 – Call for Papers

Research into the history of universities and colleges is often associated with founding anniversaries. Since the history of universities and other colleges is written mostly from within the respective institution, it reflects an expression of the institutional self-image at the time of the anniversary, and is suitable for examining both deliberate and unaware self-attributions. At the same time, the study of past university anniversaries makes it possible not only to put in perspective the universities' past, but also their past future expectations, and the role that history should play in them.

Anniversaries prove to be a site of conflict concerning both their past and their future. Conflicts might arise within a university when different founding narratives and references to traditions compete with each other, and they may emerge between different universities disputing each other's anniversary celebrations, and eventually jubilees fail. In addition, anniversaries reveal further processes of negotiation. The (non-)selection of anniversary protagonists, i.e. actors in a position to discuss historical matters, is also an issue of power, as is evident from students' counter-memorial publications, not only in the context of "1968". Moreover, the allocation of funds associated with anniversaries can trigger power struggles, and knowledge interests of the historians in charge might clash with the goals of university management or press departments.

Indeed, anniversaries play a central role for university communication. This opens up another field of investigation. Anniversaries allow universities to distinguish themselves by claiming societal relevance and thus entangling tradition and innovation, past and future. The modes of ascribing future importance are shaped by the institutional self-image of a university, for example, as regards the applicability of knowledge. Contradictions arise not only between different types of institutions (e.g., between universities and institutes of technology), but also between departments and disciplines shaped by different academic cultures. Despite their disparate contents, such attributions of relevance are formulated against the background of conscious and unconscious assumptions about the future.

Finally, anniversaries are used to create institutional gravitas, regularly in the form of commemorative volumes that are often compiled in an all-institutional effort by dozens of authors. Such contributions, however, are not the only "type of history" produced by anniversaries; the range of doing anniversary history comprises exhibitions, plays, or websites, the solemn reception of public authorities, commemorative ceremonies, or parties of student associations and groups. The various historiographic methods address individual and collective identities and (re-)produce affiliations to (imagined) communities. Thus, performative social practices of various protagonists emerge from the anniversary, forming new ensembles through adaptation and alteration.

Contributions to the workshop, which will take place from June 19 to 20, 2020 at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, are expected to discuss the above questions or similar ones in the context of universities, polytechnic institutes and technical colleges, teacher seminars and pedagogical colleges, military academies, universities of applied sciences, special schools and academies, and privately sponsored colleges. The period of investigation is between 1750 and the present. Particularly welcome are approaches that discuss "past futures", connect different types of institutions, pursue a diachronic approach, or examine the roles of those university members involved in anniversaries who were paid less scholarly attention so far (e.g., technical and administrative staff). Critical reflections on current or planned university anniversaries are also welcome.

Against the background of a mostly segregated research landscape, which often separates the history of universities from the one of other institutions of higher education, the workshop aims at encouraging an integrated historiography of academia. The workshop thus ties in with the Karlsruhe lecture series "Technische Hochschulen. Perspektiven der Universitätsgeschichte" (Technical Universities. Perspectives of University History) of the summer of 2018.

Proposals (max. 2,500 characters, including spaces) along with a short biographical note **should be handed in via e-mail to anton.guhl@kit.edu and Gisela.huerlimann@kit.edu until January 31, 2020**. The length of presentations will be 20 minutes. The decision on the papers selected will be communicated by February 29, 2020. Conference languages will be German and English. We will try to cover travel and accommodation expenses for all speakers, but researchers without institutional ties or travel funds will be given preference. The aim is to publish selected contributions e.g., as the special issue of a (peer-reviewed) journal. Participation in the workshop is also possible without a publishing commitment; conversely, paper acceptance does not guarantee publication.