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Review of Matthias Karmasin and Christian
Oggolder, eds, *Eine österreichische Mediengeschichte
Band 1: Von den frühen Drucken bis zur
Ausdifferenzierung des Mediensystems (1500–1918)*
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Reviews

Matthias Karmasin and Christian Oggolder, eds, *Eine österreichische Mediengeschichte Band 1: Von den frühen Drucken bis zur Ausdifferenzierung des Mediensystems (1500–1918)* (Berlin: Springer, 2016). vi + 253 pp. ISBN 978-3-658-11008-6

Scholarship on German-language media history has focused mainly — and perhaps unsurprisingly — on Germany, while Austria has been largely ignored. In the past few years, however, Austria has begun to appear on the scholarly radar thanks to digitization projects at the Austrian National Library (ONB). One such project is ARIADNE, which provides information and documentation on women editors specifically (for more information on ARIADNE, see also Larissa Krainer's contribution). Austria deserves more scholarly attention still. This handbook on Austrian media history will go a long way towards apprising researchers of its tumultuous history, diversified media, and European connections.

Matthias Karmasin (Prof. DDr Universität Klagenfurt) and Christian Oggolder (Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt) co-edited *Eine österreichische Mediengeschichte, Band 1: Von den frühen Drucken bis zur Ausdifferenzierung des Mediensystems (1500–1918)*. This title indicates an ambitious project, aiming to provide the reader with a hitherto unprecedented overview of four centuries of Austrian media history. This handbook will be the first of two volumes that should be considered together as one historical account of the Austrian media landscape. The overall structure of the handbook is easy to navigate and user-friendly, which makes it accessible for a broad audience, including students.¹ Each contribution builds upon the previous period, yet the book avoids becoming rooted in the kind of positivist optimism that is typical of most diachronic handbooks.² There are eleven

chapters — including the introduction — each addressing a different period and each dealing with a different print medium. The book takes a transdisciplinary approach in order to uncover social, discursive, and cultural change without excluding socio-economic and industrial contexts.

The fact that the book covers so much ground may seem overwhelming at first, but the editors have managed to provide the reader with a coherent and diverse account of media history. The handbook covers a wide range of topics including gender, religion, politics, economics, and sociology. The contributors focus on historical caesura such as censorship, war, and intellectual trends, to provide an accessible overview of different media across different periods. In essence, the book — like any good handbook — provides a general introduction to Austrian media as well as extending an invitation to the reader to dive deeper into the topics it covers. It includes more general contributions such as Seidler's essay on the development of Viennese periodicals in the second half of the eighteenth century ('Andrea Seidler: Zur Entwicklung des Wiener Zeitschriftenwesens in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts') or Christian Oggolder's research on typographical media in the confessional era (Christian Oggolder: 'Typographische Medien im konfessionellen Zeitalter'). However, the book also provides in-depth analyses of the multiple aspects and layers of Austrian media, including case-studies on the renowned 'Fuggerzeitungen' (Katrin Keller: 'Die Fuggerzeitungen: Geschriebene Zeitungen und der

1 Matthias Karmasin and Christian Oggolder, eds, *Eine österreichische Mediengeschichte Band 1: Von den frühen Drucken bis zur Ausdifferenzierung des Mediensystems (1500–1918)* (Berlin: Springer, 2016), p. 6.

2 Karmasin and Oggolder, p. 4.

Beginn der periodischen Presse') and editor and publisher Michael Hermann Ambros (Andreas Golob, 'Frühes Korrespondenzwesen. Michael Hermann Ambros und sein Grazer Zeitungsunternehmen'). The thematic overlap between case-studies and contextual framework fosters the handbook's transdisciplinarity.

Moreover, the book's scope includes lesser known media such as calendars [Almanachen], and women's periodicals [Frauenzeitschriften] are discussed as well. Especially *Almanachen* are under-researched, as they are not generally considered to be part of the same discourse as periodicals. With the exception of the last chapter, the editors have chosen to keep the focus on print culture more generally rather than zooming in on visual culture. The last chapter (Hannes Leidinger: 'Österreichische Medien und Medienpolitik 1914–1918 – Ein internationaler Vergleich unter besonderer Berücksichtigung visueller Kommunikationsformen'), which deals with authenticity and truthfulness of photography during WWI, gives the reader a taste of what the second volume will probably focus on: visual and spoken media.

In the introduction, the editors address their decision to use 'Austria' as a demarcated frame of reference within the book. Karmasin and Oggolder reason that since historical research has constructed the past by way of more 'national' discourses [die Vergangenheitskonstrukte], this Austrian perspective is justified by that dominant discourse which focuses on the development of a historical Europe as 'Nationalstaatlich', with nation states as discreet political and cultural entities. This creates a discrepancy between the emphasis on nation states in the introduction and the clear transnational approach of the contributors. The handbook does not underestimate the

importance of a larger international public sphere across Europe. For instance, the editors reflect on industrial growth as fundamental to discussions of media history. In addition, the contributions make assumptions about the German public sphere [den deutschsprachigen Raum] or focus on intercultural exchange of periodicals, calendars, or newspapers between cities. An interesting example is Keller's aforementioned article about 'Fuggerzeitungen' in which she mentions Prague, Turkey, and the south Slavic states, or Golob's contribution which dives deeper into the international networks of Ambros as an editor and publisher. Additionally, Golob zooms in on editorial strategies (p. 132) and the importance of editors,³ rather than focusing on the materiality of newspapers *an sich*.

The editors make it clear that the handbook revolves around a historical project, and that its ultimate goal is to give an account of Austrian media from 1500 to 1920. This makes for a very descriptive and detailed analysis of the historical context which affected several media. The focus is very much on societal changes that allowed certain newspapers or periodicals to exist (e.g.: 'soziale und ökonomische Voraussetzungen für die Entwicklung der Presse').⁴ However, where the book gets truly interesting is when it invites the reader to go beyond the scope of the overall research question, which is a descriptive overview of media history, and to take a look at political, social, and cultural changes [Wandel] that different media initiate. For example, in Oggolder's analysis of the confessional context of newspapers, he discusses how the religious context takes on a political dimension through these newspapers. As such, Oggolder draws attention to the agency of media. Rather than undergoing their context, media and its content create new ways to deal with the past. The handbook

3 Andreas Golob, 'Frühes Korrespondenzwesen: Michael Hermann Ambros und sein Grazer Zeitungsunternehmen', in Karmasin and Oggolder, eds, pp. 113–38 (p. 132).

4 Andrea Seidler, 'Zur Entwicklung des Wiener Zeitschriftenwesens in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts', in Karmasin and Oggolder, eds, pp. 139–66 (p. 140).

is at its best when it moves away from the medium as an artefact, and focuses instead on the medium as an active agent that is able to change discourse.

Eine österreichische Medien-geschichte offers considerable insight into Austrian media history from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century. The book not only anticipates further research, but it also seeks to introduce readers to a new segment

of media history. This makes the handbook an essential read for anyone interested in (Austrian) media history. The editors demonstrate a thematic heterogeneity and a structural homogeneity which every great handbook should have. Hopefully, an English translation will be published soon.

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