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Markus Krajewski Zettelwirtschaft

Die Geburt der Kartei aus
dem Geiste der Bibliothek

(»Notable Order. The Birth of the
Card Index from the Spirit of Libraries«)

exceptionally
reviewed



»Today, on just about every desk there is a gray box emitting a range of wires. 70 years ago, this data processing box was less conspicuous, non-electronic and made from wood—a literal paper machine. *Zettelwirtschaft* explores the way this indexing ›machine‹ set out on its triumphant march, entering offices and orderly rooms around 1930 as a universal and crucial instrument for data processing, and eventually transmuting into the ›Universal Machine‹ known as the computer. *Zettelwirtschaft* follows the development of the index card along its various historical breaches, beginning with the first references to the indexing of knowledge in early modern times. The book examines the almost accidental introduction and gradual assertion of card index boxes in libraries around 1800 and glances at the production conditions of literature with the aid of index files, before suggesting a discursive transference between the institutions of writing, that is, libraries and offices. Among its protagonists are, e.g., Melvil Dewey, known as the father of the Decimal Classification System, or William Crosswell, yet unknown as America's laziest librarian, but inventor of Harvard College Library's card catalog.

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About the author:

Markus Krajewski, born in 1972, is Assistant Professor at Bauhaus University Weimar in Germany. His main interests are: world projects around 1900 (history of globalization), female test pilots; technical history of illuminating systems (light bulbs) and their economy and cartellization; history of computer languages and their use of metaphor; research grants at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore and at the European University St. Petersburg, Russia.

Markus Krajewski presents a knowledgeable and highly entertaining history of the card index as a necessary precursor to today's computer - an eventful and often astounding history of failures.

Available reviews (a selection): Berliner Zeitung, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung (twice), Junge Welt, Bibliothek. Forschung & Praxis, IASL-online, Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften, Sehepunkte. Rezensionenjournal für die Geschichtswissenschaften, Zeitschrift für Germanistik, Biblos. Beiträge zu Buch, Bibliothek und Schrift; nominated for the book award »Das historische Buch« by H-SOZ-Kult (mailing list for Humanities, Social- and Cultural History)

media history, cultural studies, literary studies