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From the Editors' Chair

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FROM THE EDITORS' CHAIR

We are happy to be able to bring you a special issue that focuses on the rich periodical culture created by immigrant groups in the United States. The articles gathered here suggest the breadth of periodical material available in the United States as well as a variety of possible approaches to it. They range from intensive studies of individual periodicals to surveys of the literature available in a given language or for a particular population. Two of the articles, along with the piece in our "From the Archives" section, focus on the German-American press, suggesting the size and scope of that publishing enterprise. The other offerings, on the Irish-American and Chinese-American press, reflect the varied nature of American immigrant populations.

Cian McMahon's "Ireland and the Birth of the Irish-American Press, 1842–61" traces the trans-Atlantic conversations, economies and political debates that shaped the Irish-American press in the mid-nineteenth century, arguing for a transnational approach to periodical studies, especially when focusing on newspapers and magazines that were particularly addressed to immigrant communities in the United States. The essay also raises provocative questions about the contextual nature of "immigrants" as a category, reminding us that Irish Americans saw themselves as holding a dual position as both "immigrants" and "emigrants."

In his essay "Between the Local and the Global: Characteristics of the Chinese-Language Press in America," Xiao-huang Yin begins with a close examination of the earliest Chinese-language paper in America (1854), demonstrating the dual agenda of both keeping Chinese Americans apprised of news of their country of origin and also assisting with American acculturation and adaptation by reporting on local cultural events. Yin points out that over the subsequent decades, the Chinese-language press in America was instrumental in constructing and unifying Chinese-American identity, since, despite the diversity of the Chinese immigrant population, "spoken Chinese is composed of a variety of mutually incomprehensible dialects [,] written Chinese . . . is read across linguistic lines and recognized as a common heritage by all Chinese." In the subsequent section of his essay, Yin describes the demographic shift in the Chinese-American population after the 1950s and its effect on the Chinese-language periodical press. Finally, Yin notes that in recent decades globalization has resulted in the partnership of the American Chinese-language press with "transnational

Chinese publication networks in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong,” through which Chinese-American writing is often reprinted in Chinese-language papers throughout the Chinese world, in effect re-integrating Chinese-language readers and writers in America with a global Chinese-language community.

In her essay on “The Politics of Humor” in the *Columbia* newspaper, Vanessa Steinroetter focuses on a German-American periodical published in Washington, D.C., during and immediately following the Civil War. Despite the political upheavals of this time period, as Steinroetter shows, the *Columbia* focused on entertaining its readers by publishing short fiction, satirical sketches, and human-interest pieces. As such, it marks a departure from the more typical news reporting featured in other German-language publications. At the same time, its history illuminates a number of other issues central to the immigrant press in the United States. Primary among these, and one that we see in all of the essays included here, is the balance between fostering a local community with connections to the homeland, on the one hand, and creating a national American identity on the other. The *Columbia* achieved this balance by importing some of the traditions of German satire while also publishing humorous sketches about American life as well as German translations of short stories by Fanny Fern and Louisa May Alcott, among others. It also published advertisements and sketches that interspersed English words with German. This hybrid approach not only entertained readers, but also indirectly helped them address some of the key political issues that they faced both as immigrants and as Americans.

Peter Conolly-Smith’s “Transforming an Ethnic Readership Through ‘Word and Image’: William Randolph Hearst’s *Deutsches Journal* and New York’s German-Language Press, 1895–1918” provides another important contribution to the history of the German-American press, offering an analysis of a German-American periodical not widely available in any form, which constitutes his project both as one of recovery and of analysis. Focusing on the years 1911–1918, he situates this magazine within its New York publishing context, contrasting its structure, contents, and editorial and social stances with those of rival publications and demonstrating its place within the history of the German-American press in New York. The *Deutsches Journal* negotiated contemporary debates about the place of women as well as its shifting political stances toward the First World War, when it moved from a pro-Germany position to one of American patriotism. Ultimately, he argues, the magazine functioned to help its readers transition from a distinct ethnic identity to a larger American one by sharing characteristics with other English-language Hearst publications, a transition that was encapsulated in the periodical’s own demise in 1918, by which time it had made itself obsolete.

This issue's "From the Periodical Archives," prepared by Rebekah Starnes, deals with material earlier than any of the other articles in this issue. It examines the *Philadelphisches Magazin*, which was published in 1798 by brothers Heinrich and Joseph Kämmerer and lasted only one issue. The introduction posits that this periodical represents the earliest American attempt to start a periodical with a focus on "entertaining" content, and in this section we reprint the front matter of this issue, in which the editors lay out their editorial policy and goals. This material, not available elsewhere in translation, has particular implication not only for the history of the German-American press, but for the history of early-American periodicals as a whole.

We anticipate that this issue's contents will interest not only scholars of German-American, Irish-American, or Chinese-American studies, but the community of periodical scholars at large. They bring into discussion material that is often inaccessible to scholars, whether because few copies survive or because of the challenges associated with studying non-English materials. Taken together, however, these articles suggest connections between particular groups of immigrant readers and sources of periodical material and more familiar figures, publications, and trends in periodical studies.

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