
For summer 2017, I received $3000 to pay two undergraduate researchers, Christy Bohlman and Brandon German, who assisted me in a digital humanities research project that aimed to recover information about the lives of accomplished nineteenth and twentieth century women of Jewish descent. The final result of this research project will be a digital map created with CartoDB that will trace the geographic locations of 250 accomplished Central European women of Jewish descent over the course of their lives. The map includes chronological dates from 1870 to 1970 running along the bottom of the page. Visitors to the project page can click on a date to see the specific locations of the 250 women in our study. The map documents the exile of women of Jewish descent from Central Europe and presents the locations to which these women were able to escape or the geographic locations where they were murdered. The locations of individual women will be marked with small dots; clicking this dot will then bring up a short biography and a link to a record either that we create or that already exists in the Jewish Women’s Encyclopedia or in the Leo Baeck Institute library.

Initial conversations with staffs from the Leo Baeck Institute, the Jewish Women’s Encyclopedia, and the Gidalbildarchiv suggest that if the final project is a polished as we hope it will be, they would be willing to create a link to it on their websites. These connections should help this project draw many viewers.

Since the 1970s, researchers have written important texts on women’s history in Central Europe. Debates in the field continue, and a recent contribution by Luise Hirsch (2013) has emphasized the importance of pioneering Eastern European Jewish women in making possible university study for all women. New biographies on significant Jewish Central European women like Andrea Dilsner-Herfurth’s *Hedwig Burgheim. Leben und Wirken* (2008) will also be crucial for our project. Secondary source materials as well as lexicons and encyclopaedias have allowed us to build up our research databases. Our project, however, differs from existing studies in its approach and methods. Our plan has the potential to reveal new insights about geographic concentrations of accomplished women in space and time and in this way sets it apart from other research on Central European Jewish women.

Initial findings suggest that the map of the Jewish population in Central Europe differs substantially from our map of accomplished women of Jewish descent. Areas with small Jewish populations like Mannheim are overrepresented, while other areas with a larger Jewish population like Leipzig are underrepresented. In addition to these findings, which will draw the interest of historians specializing in a local area or region, a surprising finding of our research is the number of Jewish women who chose to return to Germany or Austria after 1945 and help to rebuild Europe. This project could also create the groundwork for a future project that could
map the geographic locations of women from different fields, for example, women involved in politics or women in science.

Over the summer, students studied encyclopedias, dictionaries, lexicons, and internet sources that allowed us to trace geographic movements of our study subjects. For the subjects with no Jewish Women’s Encyclopedia entry, students drafted a sentence or two about these women’s accomplishments.

As we collected data for the project, we often found holes in the available information about our study subjects. For example, available sources about the first woman professor in Europe Anna Tumarkin say that she is in Chişinău by 1885, but not when she arrived. This then led us to order the article by Franziska Rogger, “Anna Tumarkin (1875-1951) - erste Professorin Europas,” in: Martig, Peter (eds.): Berns moderne Zeit. Das 19. und 20. Jahrhundert neu entdeckt (Bern, 2011). Central Europeans often studied at a number of different universities in order to learn from different professors and experience different academic cultures. We found that it was often the case that a short description of a woman’s life might note that she studied in, say, Berlin, Munich, and Heidelberg between 1907-1912, but we would not know when she was in which place. It was often the case that we need to follow up with books and articles to locate a final year or two.

The difficulty of finding information held us up, and secondly we ran into trouble with CartoDB, which was not as user-friendly as the advertising had claimed and as we had hoped. By the fall, Brandon German encouraged me to hire a fellow Political Science student, Stuart Settle, who had some experience taking Computer Science courses. Brandon had been working informally with us through the fall and we thought he would be able to assist us more systematically if he were registered for a work study position through the history department. In the end, Brandon was mistaken about Stuart’s ability and interest in the project, and Stuart told me he could no longer assist me in December. By February, I had located another student to help with the final stage of getting our results up on CartoDB, but we had to wait for the work-study paperwork to go through. This new student, Neil Rippey, is now working with CartoDB, and he tells me that he has identified some of the technical problems that we needed solved. As an initial step, we have created a map with all the women for 1900. I will send an addendum to this report with the link to that map.

Results of the project:
* I presented on our work related to the project at the conference Doing History Globally – German Iowans and the Global Midwest Conference October 29-30, 2016. My paper was titled “Doing Digital History & Tracing the Trajectories of Women of Jewish Descent in German-speaking Central Europe: Selecting ‘German’ Subjects Among Accomplished Central European Women of Jewish Descent”

* I drew on the information we collected for a revision of an article that I co-wrote with former undergraduate student Jason Rose. It is currently being considered by the Journal of Social
History and has the title “Women of Jewish Descent and Marriage in German-Speaking Central Europe, 1830-1970.” I resubmitted this article in March 2017.

* Brandon German worked on Justin Chupp’s campaign for Indiana State Representative in District 7, and he used the knowledge he gained from the research project to make campaign maps using CartoDB. In general I hope that working with digital humanities technology and programs will help all of the students who have been involved in the project in that this gives them a set of skills that they might use in a variety of fields. Christy Bohlman has plans to become a journalist, and informational maps using CartoDB and other programs to illustrate points or present data are becoming more and more common in online and print publications. Neil Rippey is interested in graduate school in history and this chance to learn how to use CartoDB could be useful in future digital humanities projects.

Future projects:
A surprising result of our initial research was the number of women of Jewish descent who returned to Central Europe after 1945. A future project could expand our list to include women who were born through 1914 and see how many of them returned to Central Europe and in which fields they worked. This project could also allow me to collaborate with an undergraduate to uncover the key data.
The new expansion of work-study opportunities for students has allowed me to pay a work-study student to assist with research through the history department. These additional work hours should allow me to ensure that the maps are completed as well as some additional maps, for example that could include women involved primarily in academia or in politics, which will reveal the regions which allowed for this kind of work for women of Jewish descent.