

Press Release

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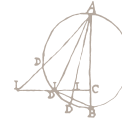
Berlin Welcomes a New International Max Planck Research School (IMPRS) on the History of Knowledge and Its Resources

A new International Max Planck Research School on “Knowledge and Its Resources: Historical Reciprocities” (IMPRS-KIR) opened at the Harnack-Haus in Berlin on February 6, 2023. The unique interdisciplinary graduate school is a collective undertaking by the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG), Freie Universität Berlin (FU), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU), and Technische Universität Berlin (TU), together with international partners in Singapore and the USA. Its research agenda seeks to unravel the political entanglements between knowledge and resources from a global and long-term perspective.

Opening speeches at the IMPRS-KIR launch ceremony were given by the Presidents of the three Berlin Universities and representatives of the MPIWG and Max Planck Society. Introductory remarks by the IMPRS-KIR Speakers and a keynote lecture by Simon Werrett (University College London) elaborated on the potential of exploring resources in the history of science and knowledge. The event, attended by over 100 invited members of the partner institutions, underlined the significance of the IMPRS-KIR in strengthening the humanities and social sciences, and in reinforcing Berlin as a central location in the global research landscape.

The IMPRS-KIR’s first international cohort of six doctoral students will pursue their own individual historical research projects that reflect the fundamentally global focus of the School. They cover a broad thematic, temporal, and geographical range in exploring the concept of resources, based on archival sources, digital humanities, and more.

Satria A. Quaijtaal investigates commentaries written on cuneiform tablets of Mesopotamia (1000 BC–1 BC) to understand the epistemic practices and ontological ideas of Babylonian and Assyrian scholars. **Riaz Howey** explores how, in which fields, and by which authority premodern New Persian agricultural texts (1300–1600) stake claims to contain knowledge, and whether they support or challenge modern constructions of a stable tradition of Persian agriculture. **Jakob K. Hellstenius** seeks to understand the reading practices of readers in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain deemed “ignorant,” looking to show how their understandings of religion, economics, human nature, and more were shaped by the texts they read, as well as to discern how their reading practices created knowledge by a different epistemology. **Zeynep E. Pulaş** analyzes telegraph and railway technologies in the Late



Ottoman Empire (1855–1922) through the lens of those actors involved in maintenance and repair, seeking to add a history of knowledge and technology that transcends Europe and innovation-centered approaches. **Lejie Zeng** examines how the encounter between synthetic dyes from Germany and natural dyes from China (1880–1950) shaped exchange between “nature-based” and “science-based” bodies of knowledge in the context of the industrialization of chemistry and global modernization. Finally, **Christopher Klauke** investigates ethnomusicological research (1900–1970) to understand from a postcolonial perspective how political structures and beliefs have influenced the development, establishment, and operativity of the knowledge techniques of music capturing systems.

“The first cohort of students explores the political terrain of past knowledges and resources in exciting, multidisciplinary projects,” explains Dagmar Schäfer, MPIWG Director and IMPRS-KIR Speaker. “The IMPRS-KIR will encourage students to contribute to making a difference in the future of global knowledges.”

“The School will prepare students to advance and lead scholarship that pushes our field further towards a global, environmental and long-term history of knowledge,” adds IMPRS-KIR Speaker Viktoria Tkaczyk (HU). “The critical resource reflection skills they acquire will also be relevant to practitioners in museum and archives, journalism, social media, the arts, and science and education policy.”

The IMPRS-KIR will continue to grow in its efforts to integrate and expand the field of history and philosophy of science, technology, and medicine towards a new history of knowledge. The second cohort, starting in September 2023, is currently being recruited. A third call, for the 2024 cohort, will follow in fall 2023.

Journalists are invited to contact Stephanie Hood (Deputy Head of Communications at the MPIWG) for further information about the School, its activities, and to reach out to its students.

Links

- IMPRS-KIR website: <https://imprs.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/>
- Opening event and photos <https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/news/opening-imprs-kir-2023>

About the MPIWG

Founded in 1994, the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG) in Berlin, Germany, is one of the more than 80 research institutes administered by the Max Planck Society. It is dedicated to the study of the history of science and aims to understand scientific thinking and practice as historical phenomena, with projects spanning globally and across all eras of human history.

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