Introduction

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The globalizing world with its entanglements and multiple interactions, shifting notions of place and time, unifying as well as fragmenting tendencies, new forms of boundary drawing, and old and new lines of conflict, influences our lives and public awareness in the “information age.” As far as education is concerned, this situation demands a critical stock taking and new reference frames for understanding this globalizing world, which on the one hand provides great new opportunities and on the other hand generates enormous risks. It requires teachers to offer guidance and teaching materials to provide young people with orientation. Rapidly shifting contexts demand new abilities to act and to maneuver. Collectives and individuals are equally impacted by the uneven processes that are customarily summarized as “globalization.” To understand what is happening in this complex world is crucial. From the perspective of old or insufficient reference frames, the world will seem erratic, unpredictable, and arbitrary. Schools as the transmitters of knowledge and as socializing agencies play a crucial role in preparing young people for this world of multiple modernities and development. It is their responsibility to provide orientation and guidance. How well they do this depends on any number of factors, and not least on the quality of educational materials. Such materials, however, are frequently more than simply educational media. They are sources via which the societies in which they are produced and put to use may be understood.

This first issue of the Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society covers a broad range of topics and world regions that are relevant for teaching and learning in a globalizing world, addressing the importance of textbooks for identity formation and the representation...
of culture. It also comments on the prominence of wars in historical narratives as well as the use of contentious pasts for socializing the young into a given society. It depicts issues of memory and agency. Shared histories that nevertheless divide people are addressed as are political and economic influences on the production of teaching materials. It focuses on the role and significance of controversies over textbooks in various national settings in and between nations and it describes mechanisms of “othering” in geography textbooks. It deals with the position of ethnic minorities toward majority populations and tensions that result from the dissolution of the Soviet empire. It depicts teaching as part of social legitimization processes and the political instrumentalization of textbooks by national elites to push their agenda. It addresses the sometimes difficult relationship between scholarship and what is written in school textbooks. Furthermore, it deals with the responsibility of professional scholars for what is taught in classrooms and what is written in textbooks as well as tendencies toward the internationalization of historical approaches and demands on teaching in this age of globalization. Teaching in multilingual contexts creates new challenges for teachers as does the factor of worldwide migration. Multiperspectivity as a response to the need to integrate immigrants is easier said than done. The same is true for the development of a global consciousness.

Geographically, this first issue of the *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* covers the United States, Mexico, Japan, India, Russia, Central Europe, and Germany. While it mostly concerns itself with history textbooks, it also deals with regional geography textbooks and the role of film and Internet debates as new media of public exchange and opinion making. The first articles comment on the situation in the United States. Thomas Bender is concerned with the public responsibility of historical scholarship in the teaching of history to young people. He also addresses the question of the traditional “framing” of American history within narrow national boundaries and pleads for a positioning of North American history within broader, global contexts. Dmitrii Sidorov’s article elucidates the legacies of the Cold War. He describes the visual representations of Eastern Europe in American regional geography textbooks, arguing that mechanisms of “marginalization” and “othering” have by no means ceased to play a role in the depiction of images of Central Europe. Wars persist as the major focus of historical narratives in U.S. history textbooks, in spite of the fundamental changes within historical scholarship and the evolution of new agents in the last decades.
Seth B. Scott researches the prevalence of war in U.S. history textbooks and the negative impact this focus has on how schoolchildren imagine the world. Elizabeth P. Quintero lays out pedagogical approaches for teaching in multilingual classrooms. She uses critical theory and the work of Paulo Freire to promote an approach toward what she calls “critical literacy” in multiethnic classrooms. Her focus is on understanding, learning empathic listening, communication, and transformative action.

The histories of Mexico and the United States are closely interwoven. Mauricio Tenorio Trillo puts forward what he calls the central enigma of U.S. and Mexican historiography, by which he means the inability to see the common ground of two deeply intertwined countries and the persistence of two nationalist historiographies. Recent controversies over textbooks and contentions over memory, historical justice, and inclusion testify to these limits of historical imagination in the U.S. and Mexican cases. Memory is particularly contentious in Japan and its former enemies. Yoshiko Nozaki and Mark Selden portray three textbook controversies of the last half-century in Japan. Nationalists have launched various attacks on the ways in which World War II and Japanese colonialism and its consequences have been portrayed in textbooks, this being a prime example of the ways in which history and teaching are prone to being instrumentalized to pursue political issues of the present. The 2000 textbook controversy in India is the focus of Deepa Nair’s essay. She argues that contestations over collective memory and identity can be fruitful if they are elevated above the binary concept of “secular” versus “communal” history. The role of Internet debates is gaining an ever-greater prominence in the present. Dmitry Shlapentokh researches the tensions between ethnic Russians and various minorities in post-Soviet countries by analyzing an online discussion on a recent Russian movie about Genghis Khan.

Charles Ingrao, who has coined the term “weapons of mass instruction” for textbooks highlights the contention over school textbooks which are relentlessly instrumentalized by national elites in former Yugoslavia. He addresses the vexing connections between re-nationalization, democratization, and the selective handling of historical truths. Migration as a given phenomenon of the contemporary world produces a variety of challenges for schools. Barbara Christophe looks at the ways in which textbooks implement multiperspectivity and concludes that pupils need to be orientated into a position from where they can critically reflect on public debates surrounding immigration issues that pose problems that schools alone cannot solve. My
own article describes history textbooks as sources of collective memory and “autobiographies” of nation-states on the one hand and as normative scaffolding for societies on the other. Focusing on the need for orientation in a globalizing world, I lay out a number of issues that characterize the globalizing process and need to be understood by pupils in order for them to develop a global consciousness and thus the cognitive and the emotional skills to not only understand the new world context, but also to act in it.

Some of the authors have reworked the papers they presented at the conference on “History Textbooks and the Profession: Comparing National Controversies in a Globalizing Age,” initiated and organized by Prasenjit Duara and Michael Geyer, held by the History Department at the University of Chicago in May 2007 and graciously agreed that their articles be published in the Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society. Others were kind enough to write especially for this first issue of the journal, which aims to broaden the scope of international textbook research and render this interesting and important field of study more accessible.

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