an International Catalogue of Scientific Literature, which was started in the 1850s. This approach allows us to look behind the attempts of the German government to establish a cultural exchange program for political purposes. I will concentrate not only on the political-administrative framework of intellectual relationships but also on its specific realization and results for the academic community. On the American side, the demand for the importation of German cultural and intellectual goods was closely connected to the spread of German culture. An important question, therefore, is why did various groups in the American intellectual community seek to import German ideas by giving German academics the possibility to travel to the United States? And vice versa; why did German academics, who belonged, in their own view, to the most developed intellectual culture in the world, want to travel to the academic "periphery"? Instead of constructing certain national types of science, I approach the topic by looking at the interaction of specific social groups and the dynamics of intellectual exchange.

In so doing, I hope to shed light on the workings of this process as well as on the potential for and the limitations of intellectual cooperation between Germany and the United States before World War I.

"Oral History and German-American Studies: Creating a Reference Resource"

(Robert P. Grathwol)

The German Historical Institute has engaged me to conduct a survey of oral history resources available in the United States that deal with Germany, German-American relations, and American policy toward Germany since 1945. The goal is to identify the location, nature, and quantity of such oral history interviews and to publish that information in a guide to oral history resources for use by scholars. The project also seeks to promote both the potential value of oral history interviews and a more professional approach to the practice and use of oral history.

This project arises from my own experience. For the past eight years I have been researching U.S. military construction in Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East since 1945. I also collaborated on the project, American Forces in Berlin: Cold War Outpost, 1945-1994 (Legacy Resource Management Program, 1994). Each research activity has profited tremendously from the extensive use of oral history to complement traditional documentary evidence.
In relation to recent German history, oral history has unusual potential. Many major topics are well represented in documentary evidence: the American occupation of Germany, the implementation of the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, and the evolution of American foreign policy toward West Germany. Nevertheless, official documents reveal only part of the American and German interaction since World War II. Governmental and agency documents often read as though no personalities influenced the process or the outcome; oral history interviews can reveal the thoughts of the decision makers, their personal intentions, and the struggles behind the scenes. Using oral history testimony in conjunction with the written documents leads the researcher to a more subtle interpretation of both policy and events. The interview process also frequently helps uncover new documentation.

Academic scholars in the United States have often dismissed the potential contribution of oral history, as a recent article in the Journal of American History demonstrates." Traditionally trained historians tend to ignore the oral history collections that do exist or to use interviews "primarily for color, not for revelations." When questioned, these historians too often disparage the oral history interview as purely anecdotal, question its accuracy, and cast aspersions on the skills and knowledge of the interviewer."

Unfortunately, even those historians favorably disposed to oral history as a research methodology show a startling lack of familiarity with the professional canons and guidelines of oral history. Scholars ignore the need for legal releases, keep poor bibliographic control of their interviews, and fail to make arrangements to deposit their interviews in archives where they will be available to other researchers.

The project began in January 1996. I have posted a project description and a request for information on the Internet and in newsletters of professional associations for historians, oral historians, public historians, and archivists.


** Professor Lloyd Gardner, as cited in Soffer, "Oral History and the History of American Foreign Policy," 608. The article explores the reservations concerning oral history sources that permeate American diplomatic history, and, drawing on methodological approaches developed by oral historians, suggests ways of viewing the sources that may enhance their value and credibility in the eyes of traditional historians.
I have also developed a one-page survey questionnaire to gather data and have tested it with several archivists, oral historians, and librarians. In early March, the questionnaire, a letter describing the project, and a return envelope were mailed to more than 2,700 individuals on the GHI mailing list. Surveys are being distributed this spring at conferences and through mailings. I will be surveying major oral history repositories and major German Studies institutions and associations. Some inquiries will be made by mail, some by telephone, some in person.

The initial response shows that there is considerable interest in oral history as a tool in exploring recent German history. As of March 29, I had received 92 written responses to the mailings. Of these, 25 indicated that they had no oral history material; the rest offered information on existing oral history resources, suggestions on potential interviewees, and offers of personal documents, such as family correspondence.

I encourage anyone with information about or interest in oral history to contact me at the Institute, or by e-mail at rgrathwo@tribeca.ios.com.

"Germany, the United States, and the War in Vietnam" (Wilfried Mausbach)

As can be expected, most scholarship on the Vietnam War has been done by Americans and has been devoted to the American side of the conflict. Until the early 1980s, the international dimensions of America's longest war were widely neglected. Then, coinciding with a debate among American diplomatic historians on the need to put their subject in a more international perspective, several studies that addressed foreign interest and participation in the conflict were put forward. The policies of France—Washington's predecessor in Indochina—underwent closer scrutiny, U.S. interests in Vietnam were confronted with those of Moscow and Beijing, and the North Vietnamese themselves were no longer neglected. The same holds true for Washington's allies, who were confronted by the White House and the State Department with ever-growing demands for various kinds of burden sharing. Thus, some European powers eventually found their way into the historiographical spotlight, and scholars are now beginning to make use of newly opened archival records to examine a variety of topics ranging from Great Britain's role at the 1954 Geneva Conference to the United States's quarrel with Sweden over the appropriate position to take toward North Vietnam.