



Liebig's Sammelbilder: Vollständige Ausgabe der Serien 1 bis 1138. Bernhard Jussen, ed.,

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In 1875, the Liebig Extract of Meat Company began to distribute a series of pictures printed on small (11 x 7 cm), colorful, collectible cardboard cards along with its main product, *Fleischextrakt*. While not the first to adopt this advertising technique, Liebig quickly became the best-known purveyor of *Sammelbilder*. Between 1875 and 1940, it issued cards bearing 6,900 different images, grouped in 1,138 different series. These bore titles such as "Animal Scenes" (Series 48, 1883-1884), "Pictures from Holland" (Series 871, 1913) and "Folk Costumes from German Districts" (Series 1125, 1939). There were pictures of everything from historical events to famous buildings, from plants and flowers to fairytale characters. At the same time, there were few depictions of contemporary political events, although they were typical of other German *Sammelbilder*. Because Liebig was an international company headquartered in Antwerp, overt expressions of German nationalism were equally rare. Additionally, again in contrast to other companies' collector cards, National Socialism intruded only infrequently after 1933. The 1934 series "German Boys" and "German Girls" were exceptional for their exclusive focus on uniformed members of the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls, complete with swastika flags. The Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen has published the entire collection of Liebig's *Sammelbilder* on CD-ROM as the first volume in a digital at-

las devoted to historical visual knowledge (*Atlas des Historischen Bildwissens*). One could spend hours simply perusing the assorted images. But the compilation also has an important practical application for the study of history, according to the introductory booklet written by Bernhard Jussen. Here Jussen repeats what has become a somewhat familiar refrain. Previously, historians suffered from "text-fixation" (p. 5). With the exception of monuments or historical paintings, they paid little attention to visual material in their quest to uncover the contours of "historical culture" (*Geschichtskultur*), perhaps best defined as what version of which past dominated at any one time within any one group.[1] To gain a better understanding of historical culture, Jussen argues, historians must make the "iconic turn" (p. 5). We must be willing to use a wide range of sources, from advertisements to comic books, as actual visual evidence and not simply as illustrations for our texts. Jussen's introduction suggests a number of questions that historians might ask as they browse through this collection: "How did the series of images reflect political events--the wars, the founding of the Reich..., the end of the empire, the beginning of the NS period," etc.? "How quickly were the new circumstances translated into [this] ... mass medium?" "How were the rulers represented [and] did the manner of representation change over time" (p. 7)? Yet the *Sammelbilder* were, first and foremost, marketing tools, and very suc-

cessful ones at that. As such, they also raise questions about the relationship between popular historical consciousness and advertising, between public memory and consumer culture. How does commercialism intersect with the historical imagination? Can we conclude, by examining the images over their sixty-five-year lifespan, that customers' "conventions of taste" shape historical understanding?[2] <p> Jussen stresses the collection's potential for reconstructing past historical cultures, but only about one seventh of the <cite>Sammelbilder</cite> deal directly with historical themes. A longer introduction would have allowed him to outline how much more it has to offer. We could ask instead how people imagined the travel experience in the past, what image of a particular sport predominated in a given period, or how representations of "the mother and child" changed over time. The pictures provide an intriguing glimpse into these past visual cultures, or, at the very least, the visual culture transmitted to consumers by a successful commercial company. <p> In short, <cite>Liebig's Sammelbilder</cite> is an absorbing, user-friendly resource. The two CD-ROMs allow users to operate in either Windows (95 to XP) or Mac OS. The menu is easy to navigate and one can browse images either by year, by series number, or by various search categories (for example, <cite>Arbeitswelt</cite> or <cite>Verkehrsmittel</cite>). The full-text search engine enables users to search the images by person or place name. The quality of the scanned images is excellent, which makes for easy viewing and clear printouts. Even the explanatory texts on the back of the cards have been reproduced. Because the CD-ROMs include every single card issued by Liebig between 1875 and 1940, they will not become outdated, which makes the relatively low price (EUR 39.90) all the more attractive. While <cite>Liebig's Sammelbilder</cite> is not a "must have" for historians of modern Germany, those who do purchase it will undoubtedly discover a variety of uses for its images. Whether employed merely to enliven a classroom lecture or to

gain an entirely new perspective on German and European historical culture, this CD-ROM set is a valuable teaching and learning tool. <p> Notes <p> [1]. The term historical culture has a number of components, including people's "attitude toward and evaluation of the history of their city, region, country and the world" and the "types of everyday uses of history" in a given period. See Gerhard Pfeisinger, "Die Weltgeschichte aus der Sicht des 'Primo-Entchens.' Zu Geschichtsbildchen und Geschichtsbildern im Alltag," <cite>Zeitgeschichte</cite> 16 (1988): p. 23. <p> [2]. Rudolf Jaworski, "Alte Postkarten als kulturhistorische Quellen," <cite>Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht</cite> 51 (2000): p. 95.

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