

Welcome Address

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JOHANNES GUTENBERG-UNIVERSITY MAINZ

The Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz is one of the oldest universities in Germany and with more than 36,000 students one of the largest as well. According to our mission statement, our university is a place of learning in the unity of research and teaching. It is characterized by a diversity of subject disciplines, specific fields of excellence and cosmopolitanism. Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz is divided into ten faculties including Mainz University Medical Centre (UM) and two art schools – unique within the German academic landscape. Covering almost the entire spectrum of university specialties, our university offers a wide range of courses across more 145 subjects – from the humanities, economics and business administration, social sciences, law, the natural sciences, medicine and dentistry up to artistic subjects, sport theology and interpreting/translation. This variety of subjects does not only provide our students a great personal fulfilment freedom, but also ensures excellent teaching and an interdisciplinary and internationally research.

As an inter-faculty and interdisciplinary institution for the networking and promotion of empirical cultural sciences, the Special Research Unit Historical Cultural Sciences is not only a prime example for interdisciplinarity but also for internationality.

The Special Research Unit links several departments and different academic disciplines within our university intending to interconnect and stimulate research within the cultural sciences. It combines empirical work and profound theoretical and methodological considerations in a historical perspective. The Research Unit is financially supported from 2008 to 2013 by the State of Rhineland-Palatinate and aims at developing a specific historical-cultural profile within the University's general academic portfolio. I am very pleased about all the activities of the Special Research Unit Historical Cultural Sciences:

- establishing a research library “Historical Cultural Sciences” at our university
- inviting several outstanding scholars in the field of “Theories and Methods of Historical Cultural Sciences” as fellows of our Gutenberg Research College
- hosting an interdisciplinary research symposium three to four times each semester in order to increase synergies between the different academic disciplines
- establishing a new historical-cultural book series called “Mainzer Historische Kulturwissenschaften” – twelve volumes are already published, five ones will appear in 2013
- initiating a project to develop a handbook on key concepts of the Historical Cultural Sciences, which will be published in 2013

One of the main concerns of the Research Unit is to strengthen the international networking and to implement the existing international co-operations in active formats, such as this third international conference. The conference in 2012 aims to examine how, in different contexts, the construction of sense was organized and implemented as a cultural practice. To broaden the perspective on this question, the Special Research Unit invited several scholars focussing on aspects of constructing meaning. The former conference as well as this volume shall introduce Historical Cultural Sciences in Mainz and to the international scientific community. It indicates the successful efforts of our scholars and their efficient international cooperation with other research groups and it additionally allows to fulfil another important task which is the support and bringing together of young academics. Our university gains much from such exchanges, and we greatly appreciate the contacts we have been able to make and maintain. The Special Research Unit Historical Cultural Sciences in Mainz are pursuing an excellent path – especially the conference and its volume is a good example for the way our university actively participates in the global academic community. Therefore I would like to thank Jörg Rogge and his team for organizing the conference and publishing its papers in the following volume.