

# The Rise of the Research University

A SOURCEBOOK

Edited by Louis Menand,  
Paul Reitter, and Chad Wellmon

The University of Chicago Press CHICAGO & LONDON

## C O N T E N T S

General Introduction	1
----------------------	---

### PART 1 German Research Universities

1 Report to King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Germany <i>Friedrich Gedike</i>	13
2 On the Importance of Protestant Universities in Germany <i>Johann David Michaelis</i>	22
3 What Is Universal History and Why Study It? An Inaugural Academic Lecture <i>Friedrich Schiller</i>	29
4 Occasional Thoughts on German Universities in the German Sense <i>Friedrich Schleiermacher</i>	45
5 A Plan, Deduced from First Principles, for an Institution of Higher Learning to Be Established in Berlin, Connected to and Subordinate to an Academy of Sciences <i>J. G. Fichte</i>	67
6 Lectures on the Method of Academic Study <i>F. W. J. Schelling</i>	84
7 On Germany's Educational System <i>Wilhelm von Humboldt</i>	105

### PART 2 Americans Abroad and Returning

8 Letters to Thomas Jefferson and Edward Everett <i>George Ticknor and George Bancroft</i>	123
9 American Colleges and German Universities <i>Richard Theodore Ely</i>	136

viii *Contents*

- 10 On German Universities  
*Henry Tappan* 144
- 11 German Universities: A Narrative of Personal Experience  
*James M. Hart* 154

PART 3 American Adaptations

- 12 The Morrill Act 165
- 13 The Utility of Universities  
*Daniel Coit Gilman* 170
- 14 Opening Exercises  
*G. Stanley Hall* 187
- 15 The Relations of the National and  
State Governments to Advanced Education  
*Andrew D. White* 203
- 16 The University and Democracy  
*William Rainey Harper* 215

PART 4 Undergraduate Education in the University

- 17 The New Education  
*Charles William Eliot* 229
- 18 Inaugural Address  
*Noah Porter* 248
- 19 Liberty in Education  
*Charles William Eliot* 265
- 20 The New Departure in College Education, Being a Reply  
to President Eliot's Defence of It  
*James McCosh* 280
- 21 On the Future of Our Educational Institutions  
*Friedrich Nietzsche* 295

PART 5 Diversity and Inclusion: Female University Students

- 22 Diversity and Inclusion: Introduction 309
- 23 Higher Schools for Girls and Their Mission: Companion Essay  
*Helene Lange* 314
- 24 Women at the German Universities: Letters to the Editor of the *Nation*  
*J.B.S. and M.F.K.* 320
- 25 Decree on the Admission of Women to Universities 328

PART 6 General Education

26	General Education: Introduction	333
27	Editorial: A Focus for Freshmen <i>Charles Sears Baldwin</i>	338
28	The New Freshman Course in Columbia College <i>John J. Coss</i>	343
29	General Education <i>Robert Maynard Hutchins</i>	346
30	The Higher Learning in a Democracy <i>Harry D. Gideonse</i>	356

*Acknowledgments* 367

*Notes* 369

*Bibliography* 383

*Index* 389

# General Introduction

The modern research university is under intense scrutiny. Some critics argue that with student debt at unsustainable levels, it is ripe for “disruption” by new digital technologies and the Internet. Some state legislatures seem eager to remake public research universities as institutions whose sole focus is teaching—the teaching, that is, of preprofessional and vocational fields. And within the academy, the professorial critique of the university has become a distinct genre.

Within the context of this debate, there has been much talk about the mission of research universities in the United States and their indebtedness to a model that developed in nineteenth-century Germany. Calls for new modes of organization as well as attempts to defend core structures are often tied to historical claims. What the research university should be is oftentimes framed in terms of arguments about what it once was. Thus, the present debate is the poorer for the fact that these arguments seldom engage with the history of the research university, and particularly with the issue of its German heritage, in a meaningful way. A more deliberate consideration of these complex origins and institutional influences will address many of today’s concerns and prove some of them misplaced. This book provides resources to facilitate just such engagement.

The nineteenth-century German university, both real and imagined, was especially important for the first American research universities. The key reformers of American higher education in the second half of the nineteenth century—Daniel Coit Gilman at Johns Hopkins, Charles William Eliot at Harvard, William Rainey Harper at Chicago, and Henry Tappan at Michigan, among others—either studied in Germany or cited the German university as

a model. When Johns Hopkins opened in 1876, nearly the entire faculty had studied in Germany.

The early textual formulations of the research university remain important for understanding how the institution has evolved since its inception. Yet access to many crucial sources is hard to come by. Most of the classic German writings on the university either have not been translated at all or were rendered into English long ago and not very well. Some of the most consequential English-language writings on the early American research university are surprisingly difficult to track down.

Our hope is that *The Rise of the Research University* will redress this situation. It provides a set of seminal writings on the university and attempts to make them more accessible by framing them historically. All of the translations are new, and some stand as the first English translation of a key source.

By focusing on the German origins of the modern research university, we are not suggesting that a particular *German* plan for higher education was ever fully implemented, either in Germany or in the United States. It is true that the concepts to which many German and American universities appeal today—the unity of teaching and research, academic freedom, the open-ended character of research—echo some of their earliest formulations in the work of writers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann G. Fichte, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Friedrich W. J. Schelling. But the evolution of the university was hardly a smooth and continuous process, determined only by the ideas of the most insightful reformers, and our volume is not an attempt to present a complete narrative in sources. Its historical frame stretches from late eighteenth-century German debates on the future of higher education to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American statements about the form and purpose of higher education. The book concludes with a series of texts related to the general education debates in and around American universities in the first decades of the twentieth century.

No work is more central to this history than Wilhelm von Humboldt's fragmentary text "On the Internal Structure of the University in Berlin and Its Relationship to Other Organizations" (1810), and yet it was not published until the late nineteenth century, too late for any direct appeal to Humboldt on either side of the Atlantic. In other words, the ur-text of the modern research university, often invoked but only occasionally cited, was not published until 1896, over eighty years after the University of Berlin was founded, when a German scholar named Bruno Gebhardt, who was writing a biography of Humboldt as statesman, discovered the fragmentary work in an archive and included it as an appendix in his own book. The manuscript breaks off almost

in midsentence. Almost immediately, however, this short document was held up by some German academics as the original, founding text of the modern university, and as espousing the underlying principles of the modern research university: the integration of teaching and research, academic freedom, and the unending nature of academic inquiry.

Humboldt was not the first to formulate these ideas, but he was the first to tie them so closely to a particular institution. Although this text came to represent *the* German model of higher education, many critics, especially over the last decade, have suggested that there was neither one *German* nor one *Humboldtian* model for the university. These criticisms—see, for example, the recent volume *Mythos Humboldt* for an overview of this debate—provide a necessary corrective to the more canonical, almost hagiographical texts from early twentieth-century German scholars such as Max Lenz or Eduard Spranger. They tend to overlook the fact, however, that the value of origin stories lies less in their correspondence to actual origins than in the history of the ends to which such stories are put.

Humboldt still offers perhaps the most perspicuous distillation of the underlying logic and ethic of the modern research university. First, the university exists for the sake of knowledge (*Wissenschaft*). In the university, “the teacher is not there for the students’ sake, rather they are all there for scholarship and knowledge’s sake.” Second, the academic freedom of the university must be safeguarded from external influences. Or as Humboldt puts it, “the state must understand that intellectual work will go on infinitely better without it.” Third, the nature of scholarly inquiry, or what Humboldt called research, is inexhaustible. These basic principles became the guiding assumptions of the institutions that we now call research universities.

What is less often observed in Humboldt’s arguments, especially in English-language discussions, is the complicated relationship of the research university to the state. For Humboldt, writing as a Prussian bureaucrat charged with planning a new institution of higher learning in Berlin, the university should never be fully autonomous. The endless pursuit of knowledge by scholars, argued Humboldt directly to King Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1809, could only be guaranteed by the state. And if the state wanted useful knowledge, it would do best to allow scholars their academic freedom, that is, to leave them alone. For Humboldt, universities should be of use to the state and the broader public, but never immediately so. Scholars need time and space to pursue knowledge that might one day be of use beyond the university. As loud and as popular as the calls for a focus on vocational training and applied research have been, at times, over the past 150 years, it remains difficult to identify what is distinctive

about research universities without bringing up the features to which Humboldt gave such effective expression. Indeed, one of the better recent attempts at a definition of the modern university, *What Universities Are For* (2012) by the Cambridge scholar Stefan Collini, reads at crucial moments like a paraphrase of Humboldt's writings.

In *Schools and Universities on the Continent* (1868), the British school inspector Matthew Arnold attested to the extent to which the ideas of Humboldt and company had already traveled beyond Prussia: "Such is the system of the German universities. *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*, liberty for the teacher and the learner; and *Wissenschaft*, science, knowledge systematically pursued and prized in and for itself, are the fundamental ideas of that system. It is in science that we need to borrow from the German universities. The French have no liberty, and the English universities have no science; the German universities have both." The international reception of these concepts became increasingly central to the University of Berlin's own self-understanding as well. Observing the centennial celebration of the university in 1910, Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, wrote that the purpose of the entire event was "to acclaim the place of *Wissenschaft*" in an age of scientific specialization. The university was the metaphor for the unity of knowledge, a unity that was undergirded by neither a divine natural order nor a political one.

In the United States, James Morgan Hart, a German-trained philologist and future president of the MLA, had lionized the German university in *German Universities* (1874). His portrait of the German research university was perhaps an appeal to a myth—what many German scholars now dismiss as the *Humboldt Mythos*—but it nonetheless pointed to a model of an independent, internally coherent university, whose "researcher" embodied a different set of norms and practices than those of the genteel, liberal arts "professor" of the American college. Whether they were institutionalized or circulated in monographs or centennial addresses, the concepts first given shape in early nineteenth-century Germany became norms that guided the architects of the modern research university.

The continued presence of these norms in the American tradition is perhaps most evident in the university presidential address, whose basic genre convention seems to demand an appeal to some or all of these purportedly Humboldtian elements, especially the claim that the university exists neither for the sake of the church nor for the sake of the state but for the sake of knowledge itself. Humboldt's language embedded academic professionalization—the higher standards of entry and the division of intellectual labor according to specialization—in a set of ethical ideals that, over the course of the nineteenth



century, came to be embodied by the individual scholar and his particular virtues: industriousness, self-discipline, openness to debate and devotion to something that exceeded the self—science (*Wissenschaft*). For generations of American scholars, Humboldt's vision represented the reconciliation of modern, scientific research with the more traditional, collegiate emphasis on moral formation.

If, as we have suggested, the real Humboldtian legacy lies in an articulation of a broad cultural ethos, any attempt to understand the influence of the German university model in the United States is necessarily an exercise in cultural translation. It involves complex cultural transfers and borrowings through which German university ideals, themselves anything but monolithic, were taken up, altered and adapted in unique ways by different American institutions. The primary influence we enable readers to track extends well beyond particular institutional changes and into questions about the ends of scholarly inquiry and education.

Speaking at the University of Chicago's convocation in October 2009, President Robert J. Zimmer situates Chicago squarely in the German tradition:

In 1810, 600 years after the establishment of the universities in Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge, . . . the University of Berlin was founded under the leadership of Wilhelm von Humboldt. He was deeply influenced by some of the ferment in thinking about universities in Germany at the time, in particular by the thinking of the philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. In Humboldt's university, the spirit of the modern university was born, in what came to be known as the German model. This entailed three major ideas: first, that the goal of education was to teach students to think, not simply to master a craft; second, that research would play a role of central importance and teaching students how to think would be accomplished through the integration of research and teaching; and third, that the university should be independent, and not be in direct service to the state. . . . As we can imagine, the effort to create and instill a new system met with considerable opposition from faculty invested in other approaches, particularly those with no emphasis on research and independent thought. But the model was powerful in its results and became not only the dominant model in Germany, but slowly spread its influence through Europe over the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries.

One of the basic assumptions of this book is that the purported crisis of the contemporary university—the increasingly acute demand that it justify itself in an age of shrinking budgets and rising tuition rates—is in part a failure to

reckon with this complex history beyond vague appeals to American traditions of moral education and the ever-presence of a German university model.

When the University of Berlin was founded in 1810, there was a perceived crisis of the university, and in no small part it had to do with the sense that the existing system of higher education needed to be reshaped in the face of a new age of (free-flowing) information. If contemporary universities are struggling to deal with a digital revolution and its effects on the university's monopoly on knowledge production, then late eighteenth-century German universities were, as Fichte put it, struggling to find a purpose amid the late eighteenth-century proliferation of print. The sense of crisis had to do, as well, with the question of academic freedom; with the relationship of teaching and research; with the obligations of the university to the state; and with related issues of class and prestige. Early on, as now, moreover, the cry of crisis could resonate even as the obvious accomplishments mounted. At the same time as the university system in Germany was becoming a model for other countries and thus also a national point of pride, some critics—for example, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche—were convinced that the system was in steep decline. Then as now, debates about universities were really debates about the state of the broader culture.

These German models and ideals were, as Roy S. Turner puts it, adopted and adapted to more particularly American needs over the second half of the nineteenth century. The American research university, as Laurence Veysey argued, assumed its basic form in the half century between 1870 and 1920. In terms of internal organization—disciplinary and departmental divisions, conceptions of research, the relationship between undergraduate and graduate education—the American research university is still the university that many of us either inhabit or assume to be the norm.

For the most part, the research university movement in the United States was led by Americans who had studied in Germany and embraced, as even a critic of the affection for German universities like Yale president Noah Porter put it, “the desire for research and culture.” The influence of these Americans was especially strong at newly established universities like Johns Hopkins, Chicago, and Clark, all of which were founded on a commitment to research—that is, to the production of new knowledge and not merely the defense and transmission of established knowledge or the moral formation of undergraduates. But American research universities developed in a different cultural and national context than their German predecessors. Proponents of American research universities consistently, for example, cast them as civic goods and appealed to distinctly American traditions of democracy and political thought.

Initially these reform efforts unfolded primarily at private, East Coast institutions such as Harvard, where Charles Eliot, as president from 1869 to 1909, fundamentally altered American higher education. Eliot's reforms are exemplary because of both their content and the extent to which they demonstrated the process of cultural transfer through which German educational ideals found their way into American universities. On the one hand, Eliot embraced the logic of research as central to the university's mission. Just as he professionalized schools of medicine and law by instituting higher standards of admission (principally by requiring a bachelor's degree for admission), he also professionalized graduate education by raising the standards of entry into academia. In particular, as he competed for faculty with Johns Hopkins, he made scholarly reputation—published scholarly work and study in Europe above all—the central academic currency at Harvard. He helped systematize scholarly standards. At the same time, he worried that the research mission might be injurious to undergraduate education. His solution was to sharply differentiate the two by making a liberal arts education a separate preparation and prerequisite for a professionalizing graduate education.

By 1890, public universities began to remake themselves more explicitly in the research university model. They expanded their graduate programs and added law, business, and medical schools. And in a significant departure from the German model, they also began to turn toward private foundations, like the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, to support research. In many instances they also began a gradual blurring of the distinction between college and graduate education that Eliot had institutionalized at Harvard and, in the long tail of the Morrill Act, focused on training students in more explicitly practical knowledge.

These early debates and transformations laid the groundwork for the increased federal funding (post 1945) and rapid expansion of university education (post 1960) that produced what Clark Kerr termed the “multiversity”—the university as a complex of various, often-competing communities engaged in myriad activities with a range of extra-university interests. And it is these kinds of tensions and questions that we will seek to highlight, because, in our estimation, these questions, hopes, and doubts about what the university once was or might one day be are still driving our contemporary debate about the university.

In selecting our texts, we have followed two basic criteria. 1) Historical significance: Each text affords insight into how the modern university developed over time. Some texts are representative of historical debates about curricular issues, the nature of academic work, or the place of the university in the

broader culture and society, while others are exemplary of how particular institutions (Göttingen, Berlin, Harvard, Johns Hopkins) dealt with important historical challenges and positioned themselves in terms of a larger university tradition. 2) Contemporary relevance: Each text is relevant not only to a specific historical context but to contemporary issues in higher education. These texts address questions that are basic to the modern university: the relationship between the state and the university, the proper ends of academic research, the place of the university in the broader culture, the ever-present anxiety that the university is irrelevant, or the challenge that new media (print then, digital now) pose to the university.

The book is divided into five sections: “German Research Universities,” “Americans Abroad and Returning,” “American Adaptation,” “Undergraduate Education in the University,” and “Aftermath.” The first section, “German Research Universities,” contains two texts on the University of Göttingen, which was established in 1734, well before the University of Berlin. In terms of its organization, funding models, and library, Göttingen, as the historian William Clark has recently emphasized in his book *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University*, may well have been the first proto-research university. These two texts will give a sense of some of the basic concepts that Humboldt and his colleagues were working with when they proposed a university in Berlin. This section also collects some of the most central texts from the decade preceding the founding of the University of Berlin. They represent the main arguments in a debate that lasted from 1795 to 1810 on whether an institution of higher learning should be established in Berlin, and they form a canon of thinking about the modern university to which many commentators regularly appeal but which few have read with care.

The second section, “Americans Abroad and Returning,” focuses on the experiences of Americans while studying abroad in Germany. These texts give firsthand accounts of what elements of the German university impressed American scholars the most.

The third section, “American Adaptations,” collects some of the most seminal texts surrounding the emergence of the modern American research university. Central to them all are questions concerning the ends of academic research, the place of the university in the broader culture, and the nature of academic freedom—all concerns that guided debates about the early nineteenth-century German university as well. But in contrast to the earlier German texts, most of these American statements, such as Andrew D. White’s 1889 lecture or William Rainey Harper’s “The University and Democracy,” offer still classic and compelling visions for the essential role of higher education in a democracy.

The fourth section, “Undergraduate Education in the University,” demonstrates that the changes in American higher education were not limited to private institutions. Each of these texts situates the debates about different university models into a larger debate about the role of higher education in the United States. This section also includes one key but highly representative instance of late nineteenth-century discontents with the German university system, Nietzsche’s “On the Future of Our Educational Institutions” (1872).

The fifth section, “Diversity and Inclusion: Female University Students,” contains documents that, in a way very different from Nietzsche’s text, address what was for many commentators one of the crucial challenges facing the German university in the late nineteenth century: How was it to retain its identity amid rapid expansion and the inclusion of new kinds of students, especially women?

The sixth section is a collection of primary texts related to the history of general education programs and how the American research university has historically struggled to accommodate them. They are chosen as reflections on liberal education specifically in its relation to the modern research university.

#### NOTE ON TRANSLATION

Two of the most central terms in the German texts, *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung*, are also two of the most difficult to translate. Depending on the specific context, we generally translate *Wissenschaft* as “knowledge,” but we also translate it as “science,” “systematic knowledge,” or “scholarship.” Broadly speaking, it refers in these late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century German texts to any systematic way of knowing or the pursuit of such knowledge. In Friedrich Nietzsche’s lectures, we also translate *Wissenschaft* as “academic” or “specialized” knowledge. The second key term is *Bildung* (from *bilden*, to form), which we often translate as “formation” but also as “education” in particular or “shaping” in general. *Bildung* was, and would remain, a key term in German culture, and it is worth noting that it had strong connotations of autonomy. That is, *Bildung* often connoted formation or development through a process of *self*-cultivation and *self*-education. To cite just one example, not long before Humboldt weighed in on reform in higher education, the philosopher J. G. Herder (influentially) defined the goal of *Bildung* as self-authorship—becoming the author of one’s own self. The translations of the German-language texts in this volume are all new and were made by Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon, unless otherwise noted.