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			Newsletter, published by the Reading Primers SIG of the International Society for Historical and Systematic Research on Textbooks and Educational Media		

□ Editorial

Dear readers,

An Estonian author of a primer provides insights into the development of the book and its context; a Latvian collector of primers reports about an on-going exhibition and one of his favorite exhibits; a Swiss specialist in Albanian studies writes about the history of Albanian media for beginning reading instruction: the multi-perspective and truly international approach that the Reading Primers SIG has followed right from the start is demonstrated once again in this new issue of RPI. We trust that multi-perspectiveness and cooperation across national and other borders will continue to remain fruitful principles in many spheres of life – well beyond the realm of historical studies on school textbooks.

As always, we look forward to your comments and your submissions to future issues of the newsletter.

Madrid/Essen/Wrocław, January 2017

Kira Mahamud Angulo

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- RP-SIG News
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October 2016: RP-SIG meeting in Oslo/Norway

The last meeting of members and friends of our network took place on Saturday, October 1, 2016, in Oslo (Norway), in the framework of the annual conference of our parent organisation, the International Society for Historical and Systematic Research on Textbooks and Educational Media (IGSBI). Special thanks go to Eva Matthes, president of IGSBI, and Sylvia Schütze, member of the IGSBI managing board, who also hosted this meeting. Among others, the participants discussed and welcomed a proposal submitted by the RP-SIG to prepare a panel 'Learning to read with catechetical texts – historical approaches' (working title) as part of the IGSBI conference 'Religion and Educational Media', scheduled for October 6 - 8, 2017 in Augsburg, Germany (see below).

October 2017: RP-SIG plans panel 'Learning to read with catechetical texts – historical approaches' at IGSBI conference in Augsburg/Germany

Across many language communities and well beyond Europe, the history of the reading primer encompasses the history of catechetical texts, i.e. texts for the instruction in the basics of a particular religious belief, as first reading matter. This phenomenon is not restricted to teaching and learning materials for beginning reading instruction controlled by Christian denominations, but also covers catechetical practices in other religious beliefs. Also, catechetical texts are pre-



Ambitious reading instruction for 16th century new school starters in and around Augsburg (Germany): *Elementa Puerilia Philippi Melancthonis*. Augusta Vindelicorum 1524, A1.

sented in various ways in these educational materials, ranging from primer-catechisms (Russian: *bukvarnye katehizisy*) in the Early Modern times to catechism primers (German: *Katechismusfibeln*) and to primers with one or two catechetical texts.

Following a proposal submitted by the RP-SIG, the forthcoming IGSBI conference on 'Religion and Educational Media' (October 6-8, 2017) in Augsburg/Germany will include a panel devoted to efforts of combined reading and religious instruction as expressed in early school readers. The purpose of the panel is to provide insights in historical manifestations and contexts of combined reading and religious instruction from a variety of perspectives, including the history of education, the history of religion and social history, thus enhancing cross-cultural comparison and transnational research in this particular field of the historical study of textbooks.

In preparation: JEMMS Special Issue on primers published around the end of WWII in European countries

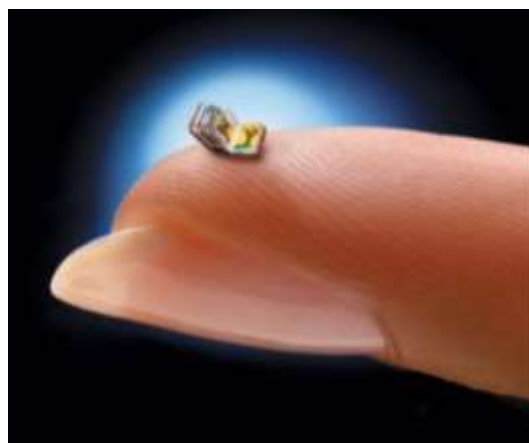
A selection of papers presented at the workshop 'After the War – A New Beginning? A Comparative Examination of Reading Primers Published and Used in 1945 in Europe' (November 2015 in Braunschweig/Germany) will be submitted to the Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society (JEMMS) as a special issue, with Simona Szakács (Behling) and Wendelin Sroka as guest editors.

▣ **Members' news**

An exhibition of ABC-books and primers from the collection of **Juris Cibuljs**, Riga (Latvia) is displayed in the Museum of Culture and History of Latgale [*Latgales kultūrvēstures muzejs*] in Rēzekne from January 4 to February 6, 2017. Currently the collector has 9,680 items in 1121 languages from 219 countries.



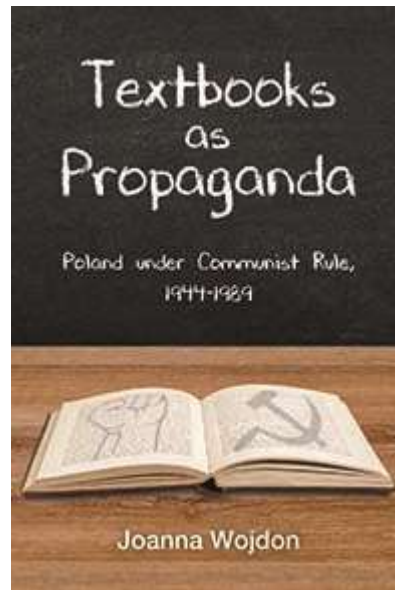
The visitors of the museum were surprised most of all to see the smallest book in the world. The leather bound book takes the art of printing and bookbinding to an entirely new dimension of precision. Renowned German typographer Joshua Reichert especially created a colourful alphabet for this tiny ABC-picture book, exclusively produced in the traditional book city of Leipzig where the idea was originally born. Measuring 2.4 × 2.9 mm and presented in a wooden box including a magnifying glass, this is the world's smallest book in a published edition (32 pages on fine Japanese silk paper).



Bilder-ABC by Joshua Reichert, Germany: Faber & Faber, no date [2000]

As part of the exhibition's supporting programme, a lecture by Juris Cibuljs 'Peoples of the World, their Languages and ABC-books and Primers' took place on January 21, 2017. The museum has developed a special programme 'We have our own ABC-book' for pre-school educational establishments and for the first form pupils that are welcomed to participate in the museum activity on both the Latvian and Latgalian ABC-books and also an ancient school atmosphere.

□ **Members' news
(continued)**



'Textbooks as propaganda. Poland under Communist Rule, 1944-1989' is a forthcoming book by **Joanna Wojdon**, Wrocław (Poland), to be published in mid-2017 by Transaction Publishers, New Jersey (USA), since February 2017 part of Routledge. It studies Communist propaganda in post-World War II Polish school textbooks. The study is based on an analysis of nearly 1,000 archival textbooks produced for classroom instruction from primary to upper secondary schools, reading primers included. School subjects considered include mathematics, science, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, Polish language instruction, foreign language instruction, art education, music, civic education, defense training, physical education, and practical technical training. The study considers both the development of education and of the broader context of a

changing political system in post-WWII Poland. It demonstrates that Communist indoctrination increased as students grew older, but its general themes and major ideas were consistent regardless of the age of the readers and the discipline covered. URL:

<http://www.transactionpub.com/title/Textbooks-as-Propaganda-978-1-4128-6558-6.html>

□ **Note by editors**

Next issue of RPI

The next issue of RPI will be published in July 2017. Among others, this issue will include articles about '*Načalnoe oučenie čelovekom, choťjaščym učitisja knig božestvennago pisanija* [Elementary instruction for people who wish to read the books of the divine scripture]', an old Russian primer with a remarkable history of reprints (see page 18 of this newsletter) and about 'Language and Literacy Education under Conditions of Societal Multilingualism: The '*Rucksack Schule*' Programme in North Rhine Westphalia (Germany) and the Role of Materials for Elementary Reading Instruction'.

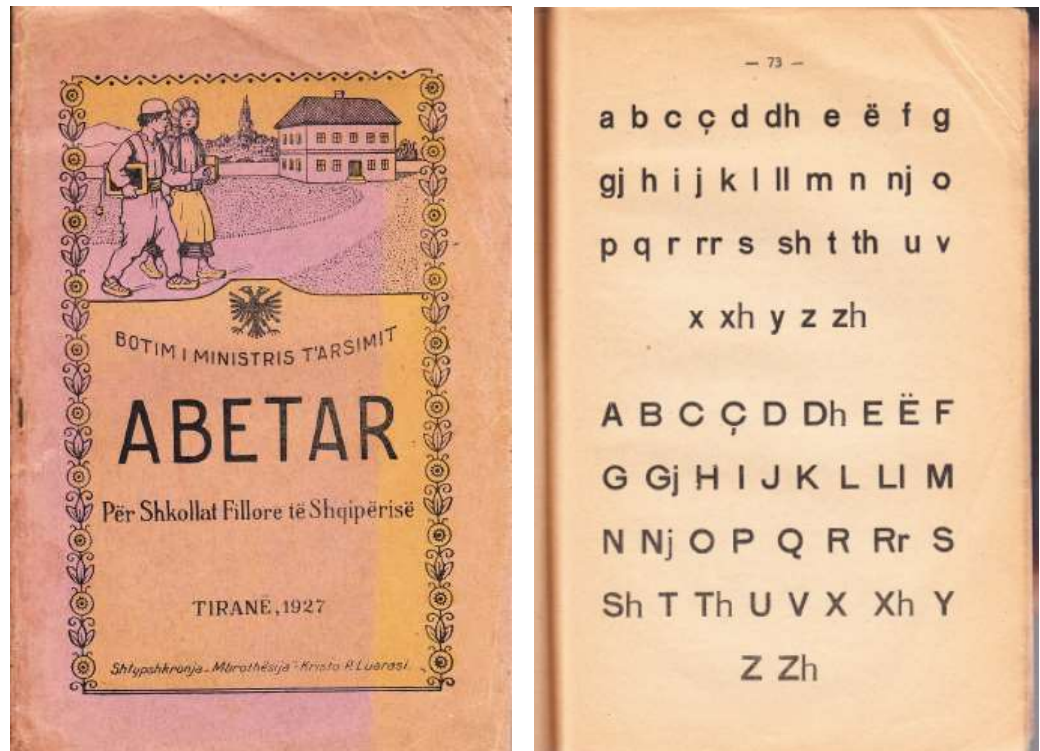
□ **Articles**

□ **Albanian primers**

A short history of Albanian media for elementary reading instruction¹

Basil Schader, Zürich University of Education (Switzerland)

In the beginning two historical and geopolitical facts should be taken under consideration: For nearly two thousand years, Albanian settlements were ruled by various occupying powers and were exposed to diverse linguistic influences. Today, these regions are part of no less than five states (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Monte Negro, and Serbia); additionally a considerable number of Albanians live in traditional as well as more recent migration areas, including South Italy, Northern Greece, Western Europe, and North America.



Pictures 1 & 2: Front cover (left) and p. 73 (right) of the 'Abetar për Shkollat Fillore të Shqipërisë' [Primer for Elementary Schools of Albania], Tiranë 1927. This primer introduces the alphabet that is also used in standard Albanian today.

Both facts had a strong impact on the instruction in the Albanian language – an independent branch of the Indo-European family of languages – and also on textbooks used for teaching reading. In modern times and before Albania gained independence in 1913 (1912?), Albanian settlements were part of the Ottoman Empire for around four hundred years; under the Ottoman rule the development of the Albanian school system was significantly delayed. As a result, the first schools which used Albanian as the language of instruction were established in the 1880s, and it was in those years that reading primers were compiled and printed in a considerable quantity. Yet the history of Albanian primers dates back to 1844, when Naum Veqilharxhi, a lawyer, scholar and prominent figure of the early period of the Albanian National Awakening, published *Fort i shkurtër e përdorshim ëvetar shqip* [The most useful and concise Albanian reading primer]. Veqilharxhi, in an effort to avoid the use of Latin, Greek, and Arabic characters created a new alphabet; today his booklet is considered to be the first Albanian reading primer (see Meksi 2011).

¹ Data on the history of Albanian primers presented in this article is primarily based on the book by Shefik Osmani and Njazi Kazazi on the history of Albanian primers (Osmani & Kazazi 2000). An outline of the history of Albanian primers in Kosovo since 1945 is provided in Nimonaj-Hoti 2014.

□ **Albanian primers (continued)**

Other factors which had a considerable impact on the development of Albanian primers were: 1) the split of the Albanian language into two main dialects, Gheg (Northern variety) and Tosk (Southern variety), and 2) the spreading of Albanian settlements in various countries with different writing systems. Primers were published in Gheg and Tosk until 1972, when a universal literary Albanian language was actually adopted.

In 1908, at the congress of Monastir, it was decided that the Albanian language would be written in a Latin script. Until that year various alphabets had been used, depending on regional and/or denominational affiliation, including the Greek, the Arab-Ottoman and also some 'private', tailor-made alphabets. This diversity was also reflected in the body of Albanian primers published before 1908. Along the primers that were written in the two major dialects there were also textbooks in Greek and Arab script as well as booklets where Latin alphabets were used, enriched with individual Greek or South Slavonic graphemes, e.g. "š".

Due to the strong and ongoing migration of Albanians, since the late 19th century primers reflecting practices of bilingual literacy acquisition play a particular role in the history of Albanian primers. Such titles included the *Abavatar Arbëror* that was published in 1882 for the Albanian diaspora in Northern Greece; the *Abecedario della Lingua Albanese* (1896) for Arbëreshe Albanians in South Italy and a bilingual *Abetari Shqip-Italisht / Il Sillabario Albanese-Italiano* [Albanian-Italian primer] in 1912. An example of a contemporary reading primer which was developed for the teaching of the Albanian language in Western Europe is the *ABC – Fibel für den muttersprachlichen Unterricht Albanisch* (Mehmeti 2012). This textbook, published in Austria with the financial support of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture was approved by the Austrian federal government to be used in Albanian mother-tongue instruction; it is based on modern principles of reading instruction that were consequently adapted for use in Albanian (see pictures 3 & 4).



Pictures 3 & 4: Front cover (left) and p. 100 (right) of Hazir Mehmeti: 'A-B-C. Fibel für den muttersprachlichen Unterricht Albanisch' [A-B-C. Primer for mother tongue instruction in Albanian]. Eisenstadt (Austria) 2013. This primer is published in large format (21,0 X 29,5 cm). It includes pages for writing exercises, and on each page tasks related to the content of the page are provided at the bottom of the page in German and Albanian, e.g. 'Sätze lesen – Lexo fjalitë' [Read sentences] on p. 100.

□ **Albanian primers
(continued)**

Two additional groups of Albanian primers deserve to be mentioned. The first group consists of textbooks for adult illiterates; their history dates back to the last decades of the 19th century and includes, for example, the *Liber per m'u msue me lezue Scciyp* [Book for learning to read Albanian], 1889). Since the reduction of the rate of adult illiteracy was among the regime's objectives in Socialist Albania (1944-1990) various primers and other teaching materials for illiterate adults were published in those years. The second group of primers includes textbooks for children and young people with special needs. In Albania, educational media for hearing and visually impaired pupils – for the latter group in Braille – were published since the 1960s.

Albanian reading instruction has by tradition been practiced in more than one country and in a variety of school systems. Accordingly the claim by Osmani and Kazazi (2000) that 180 Albanian primers were published until 1999 could be well justified; today this number may well be close to 200. But probably the time when a considerable variety of Albanian primers were available in the market may have ended. Since 2012, a common primer for beginning reading instruction, being a joint production of publishing houses in Albania and Kosovo, is used in both countries (Gjokutaj & Rrokaj 2012).

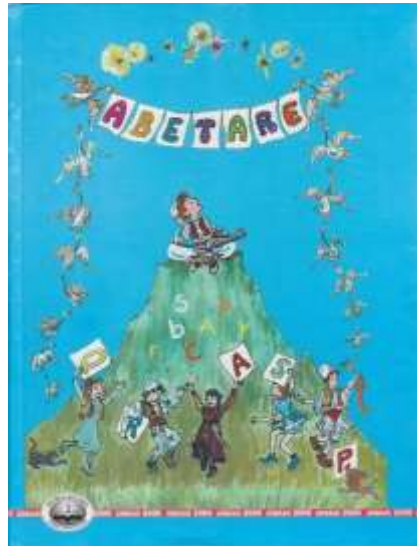
Traditionally, teaching methods applied in Albanian primers tend to reflect the state of the art of research in reading and literacy instruction. This is mainly due to the fact that the authors of these textbooks are often well-known scholars with well-established connections at a national and international level. Besides the works of the past which were based on synthetic concepts, textbooks which followed an analytic-synthetic approach were developed since the 1920s. This approach did not only dominate Albanian reading instruction well up to the 1960s, but – having been further developed and enriched – it provided the basis for contemporary educational media for reading instruction. From 1946 onwards the analytic or whole-language approach had a certain impact on the design of primers internationally. However as it had happened in German-speaking countries the analytic-synthetic or integrated approach which has been constantly improved, has prevailed in Albanian primers. Regarding their physical appearance, during the past 20 years Albanian primers were in most cases simple booklets of 50 to 120 pages, without any instructions to teachers. Illustrations used to reflect the contemporary aesthetic style, and even today they may not always meet western standards and expectations.



Pictures 5 & 6: Front cover (left) and p. 86 (right) of Qamil Batalli: 'Abetare' [Primer], Prishtinë (Kosovo), 12th edition 1999. The recent military conflict is present on p. 86 where the letter 'q' is introduced by an illustrated reading exercise devoted to 'Nëna qëndresë' [mother resistance].

□ **Albanian primers (continued)**

Today, teaching materials for elementary reading instruction, such as the *Abetare hap pas hapi* (Beci 2011) and Gjokutaj & Rrokaj 's *Abetare*, tend to include a primer and a workbook. The *Abetare* which was published in Kosovo in 2008 (Deva & Krasniqi 2008) holds a special place in the history of the Albanian primer. Presented in a cardboard box, this almost luxurious edition of a total print run of 50.000 copies includes, next to the primer, four workbooks, an extensive teachers' guide, three instructional games and a CD. All in all, the design is well-thought, meeting the standards of corresponding multimedia courses in Western Europe, and the illustrations are appealing. At the same time, the price of these materials will have hindered widespread use.



Pictures 7 & 8: Front cover (left) and p. 88 (right) of Kolë Xhumari: *Abetare [Primer]*. Tiranë (Albania) 2000. The last page of this textbook is devoted to the 'Festa e abetares' [celebrations of the reading primer].

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- Osmani, Shefik; Kazazi, Njazi (2000). *Abetaret Shqipe dhe Trajektorja e tyre historiko-pedagogjike* [Albanian primers and their historical-pedagogical trajectory]. Tiranë: Idromeno (includes a brief summary in English).

□ Primers in Germany

Primers in beginning reading instruction in Germany – historical developments and current trends

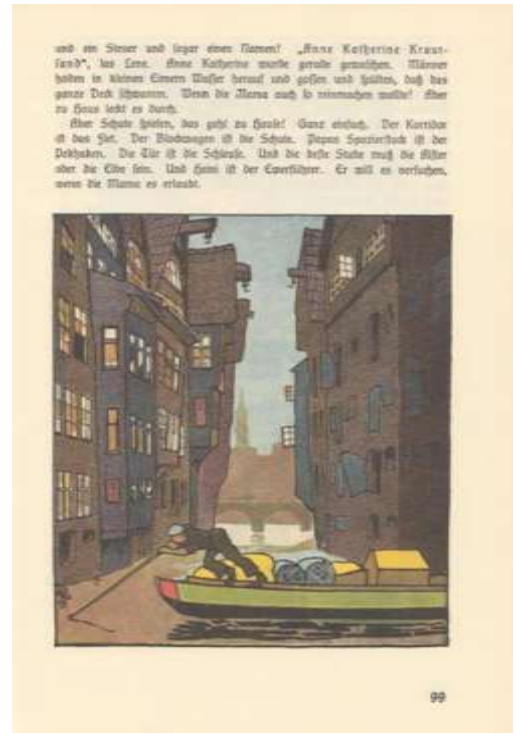
Verena Stürmer, University of Würzburg (Germany)

How should pupils learn to read and write – based on which methods and content? In Germany, these questions have been the subject of debates by experts and in the general public for centuries, and in the context of these debates, the role of the primer as the leading medium in reading instruction has time and again been questioned (see Stürmer 2015, p. 237).

In the early 20th century, for example, when approaches of progressive education [*Reformpädagogik*] gained momentum, the idea was promoted that primers should not focus first of all on religious or educational content, but rather consider and reflect children's interests and needs. Thus, primers for use in schools in particular regions of Germany were published, for example 'Hansa Fibel', compiled by Otto Zimmermann (1914) for pupils in the city of Hamburg or Fritz Gansberg's primer 'Bei uns zu Haus', commonly known as 'Bremer Fibel'. Following the request that content in beginning reading instruction should consequently be adjusted to the children and their experience, the primer was fundamentally questioned in this period for the first time in history. Prominent representatives of the teaching profession and textbook authors, inspired by the ideas of progressive education, started to argue in favour of 'hand-made primers' [*Eigenfibeln*]. Such primers were developed in collaboration with the pupils in the course of a school year, they should be based on texts written by the pupils, and, for example, be produced in the school printing room as propagated by the French educational reformer, Célestin Freinet.

During the period of National Socialism the central government sought to create a uniform primer for all schools in Germany [*Reichseinheitsfibel*], brought into line in terms of content and method. However, such a primer was never introduced because the relevant efforts continued to be disorganized (see Götz & Sandfuchs 2011). At the same time primers in this period were abused to follow ideological aims.

Between 1945 and 1990 the history of the primer in Germany was split in two parts: Whereas in West Germany, the traditions of primers published before WW 2 were resumed, both in terms of content and methods, East Germany experienced a fast centralization of the school textbook market. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), from 1950 onwards only a single primer was published, developed as commissioned work by authors – later: teams of authors [*Autorenkollektive*] – in close agreement with the Ministry of Education. This primer was based on an approach that integrated analytical and synthetic methods [*analytisch-synthetischer Ansatz*]. In the GDR the primer was never fundamentally questioned as the core medium of beginning reading instruction (see Stürmer 2014b).



Picture 1: Text (extract) and illustration devoted to 'Das Flet' (the fleet). From: *Hansa-Fibel*. Compiled by Otto Zimmermann. Illustrations: Eugen Oswald. Hamburg & Braunschweig: Georg Westermann, 7th edition 1925, p. 99.

□ **Primers in Germany (cont.)**

In West Germany, on the other hand, the debate between advocates of analytical and synthetic methods of reading instruction that had originated in the Weimar Republic was resumed in the late 1950s. Only when empirical research revealed that individual effects of these approaches on reading and spelling achievement were minimal, both methods were integrated in newly developed primers.

Primers published in the GDR were for decades designed to depict the socio-political setting of children's life (though in an idealised manner). In addition to situations of children at play – depicted very similar to those once found in primers of the progressive education movement – also content such as engineering, work and politics was represented. These primers were intentionally understood as instruments of socialisation, designed also to transmit political attitudes and socialist goals of education (see Stürmer 2014a).

In West Germany, the traditional content of primers, in most cases adopted from primers of the progressive education movement of the 1920s, became the object of broad "textbook scolding" [*Schulbuchschelte*] in the 1960s. According to the critics, this content was exclusively related to the world of middle class children, and crucial societal spheres (e.g. the world of work, but also problems such as unemployment) and conflicts were treated like a taboo (see Meiers 1972). From then on the content of existing primers was revised, and a considerable number of new primers were published, now representing a more modern picture of children's environment (see picture 2).

However, despite of all these efforts, the primer from now on continued to be the target of considerable criticism. The main point was – and still is – that, in view of new approaches of educational psychology and school pedagogy, this type of textbook is no longer seen as an appropriate educational medium. In particular, the critique focuses on the 'lockstep' of intended learning provoked by the primer, not taking into account the varying prerequisites of each child. In the early 1980s a group of authors, including Marion Bergk, Kurt Meiers and Hans Brügelmann, called for the abandonment of the primer as the decisive tool in beginning reading instruction, arguing in favour of using 'hand-made primers' or supplementary material for the reading course. Hans Brügelmann promoted a "language experience approach" [*Spracherfahrungsansatz*], teaching subskills of reading and writing competencies by means of various exercises set in a spiral, allowing children to learn without a primer and in an individual speed. Experts then started a new dispute over methods, with supporters of 'open' teaching concepts on the one side and advocates of concepts focusing on structured teaching, using a primer, on the other side.

1990 turned out to become a very important year in Germany's political and social history, but not so in the history of reading instruction and literacy acquisition (see Stürmer 2015, p. 258). In contrast to many other teaching subjects, the last primer of the GDR, entitled '*Meine Fibel*', compiled



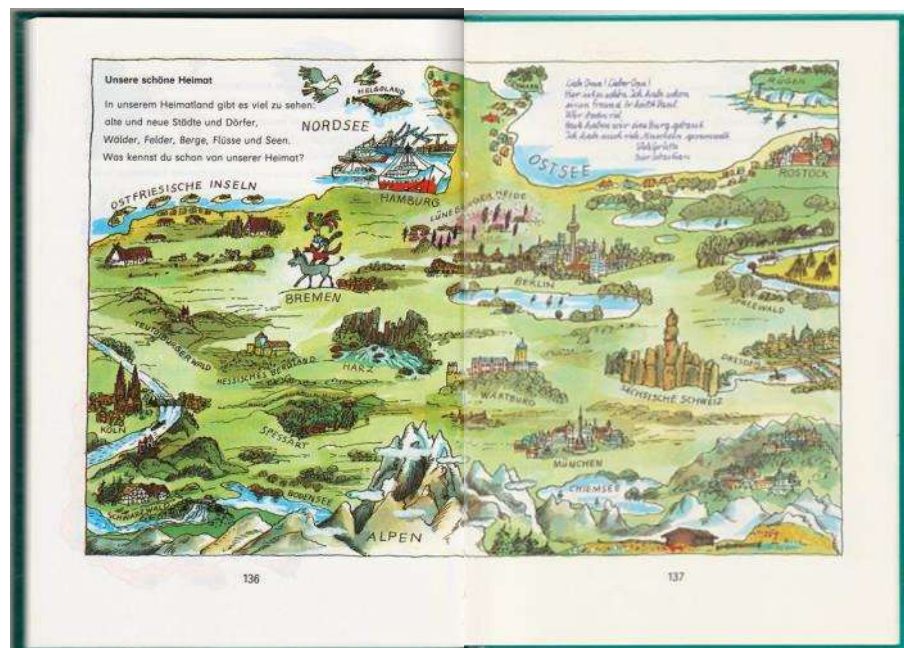
Picture 2: Text and illustration addressing a conflict between children. From: *Bunte Fibel. Druckschriftausgabe. Compiled by Helene Will-Beuermann, Jens Hinrichs and Hans-Joachim Reincke. Hannover, Dortmund, Darmstadt, Berlin: Hermann Schroedel 1977, p. 36.*

□ Primers in Germany (cont.)



Picture 3: SIC (Spatial Identity Construction) in 'Meine Fibel', version 1, 1990: 'Unsere schöne Heimat. Wir leben in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. Sie ist unsere Heimatland. [Our beautiful home country. We live in the German Democratic Republic. It is our home country.] From: Meine Fibel. Compiled by Gerhard Dathe et al. Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag 1990, p. 136-137. Yet on October 3, 1990, the GDR ceased to exist ...

in the 1980s and the first edition still published in the GDR, was used for many years with only slight adaptations in later editions (see pictures 3 and 4), despite the fact that now alternative first readers were available as well. Apparently primary school teachers valued this primer to provide a safe and well-known method of beginning reading instruction.



Picture 4: ... and SIC 1 was replaced in the next edition of 'Meine Fibel' by SIC 2, with a territory now enlarged, but unnamed: 'Unsere schöne Heimat. In unserem Heimatland gibt es viel zu sehen... [Our beautiful home country. In our home country there is much to be seen...]. From: Meine Fibel. Compiled by Gerhard Dathe et al. Berlin: Volk und Wissen Verlag n.d. (1991), p. 136-137.

□ **Primers in Germany (cont.)**

From 1990, methodologists of reading instruction in East Germany quickly studied the ideas of open instruction (see, for example, Dammenhayn 1991), and they integrated them in existing concepts. 'Meine Fibel' is published up until now, but didactic-methodological innovations were integrated very quickly, including a considerable number of materials for differentiation, as well as other supplementary materials. In addition, both content and illustrations of the primer were updated again and again, without questioning the basic methodological concept of the analytical-synthetic reading course. It deserves mentioning that in the 1990s experts in West Germany hardly paid attention to the East German tradition of beginning reading instruction, despite the fact that empirical studies revealed better learning outcomes of children in East Germany in reading and spelling skills, and also an overall lower variance of student achievement.

Currently, in Germany the question how new school starters should best learn to read and write is a topic of debate not only among experts but also in the general public. In June 2013, the well-known 'Spiegel' magazine published a cover story that announced a 'Rechtschreibkaterstrolche' [spelling catastrophe] for the current generation of pupils (see 'Der Spiegel' 25/2013). In this story, the rather mediocre reading performance of German 15-year-olds in the PISA test and the supposed low spelling skills of the current generation of pupils were described to be mainly the result of a "wrong" method in beginning reading instruction, focusing on ill-structured, open procedures of teaching. The article also warned against a 'neue Schlechtschreibung' [new corrupt spelling], systematically educating young learners to become 'spelling anarchists'. Nevertheless the 'new debate about methods' between supporters of 'open' concepts of literacy instruction and advocates of concepts focusing on structured teaching based on a primer can be seen as more or less settled today among experts. A considerable number of empirical studies were undertaken in the 1990s and 2000s, comparing the various methodological concepts. As a result, leading advocates of various concepts have come closer to one another, and both levels of arguments have been mixed quite often.

Other than suggested by certain mass media, in theory and in practice there is hardly anybody today in Germany who would seriously support either a purely open procedure of learning to read and write, solely determined by the children and without sharing of rules, or a procedure of learning to read and write based on the much-debated method of 'reading by writing' (Jürgen Reichen). Moreover, in the meantime it is generally acknowledged that

especially low performing pupils as well as children with a migrant background learn better when a well-structured procedure making use of a primer course is applied. On the hand, there is consensus today that beginning reading instruction cannot solely be based on a rigid primer, without differentiating exercises of possibilities for individualization and a variety of methodological approaches. Rather, individual didactical procedures are seen to carry a different weight for individual sub-competencies of literacy acquisition. Therefore



Picture 5: 'Schreibtabelle - Lauttabelle', a supplement of 'Jo-Jo Fibel'. Compiled by Nicole Namour. Berlin: Cornelsen 2016.

□ **Primers in Germany (cont.)**

an appropriate combination of various approaches is recommended (see Eichler & Brügelmann 2014), with the advantages of structured procedures making use of additional individualizing materials prevailing (see, for example, Metze 2008; Schründer-Lenzen 2013).

The fact that the current methodological development is highly differentiated in Germany is also reflected in the primers: Modern primer course books are based on a system of various materials aimed at serving especially classroom (internal) differentiation and individualisation. A 'Schreibtablette' (see picture 5), though much criticised, is enclosed in such course books either as a worthwhile learning aid (to support pupil's efforts to independently read words, containing letters which so far have not yet been elaborated) or as a tool for 'free writing'. In any case this device is regarded as a supplement, not as a substitute for a course-based introduction into written language acquisition (see Schründer-Lenzen 2013, 246). Also, nearly all primers contain elements of the language experience approach. In instructional practice, course books integrating a variety of methods are most common. Other course books follow either an approach with a focus on writing, without the introduction of letters that is typical for primers (see, for example, 'ABC Lernlandschaft'), where pupils are expected to start by a notation of sounds, or approaches with a focus on syllables, with the syllabic structure as the basic didactical reference point (for example 'ABC der Tiere 1', 'Karibu' and – providing for the integration of methods and considering syllables – 'Piri' or 'Jo-jo Fibel').

Also the factor that more and more children with a non-German mother tongue attend school in Germany is taken into account by specifically developed primers. These textbooks take into consideration characteristics and difficulties of such learners, emphasizing, for example, the use of the correct definite article of nouns right from the beginning, providing exercises to extend vocabulary or paying special attention to the morphological and syntactic structure of the German language (see, for example, 'Oskar-Fibel'). Attached to this course book is software which allows listening to tasks also in English, Italian, Russian, and Turkish. In addition, the presentation of content in more and more primers corresponds to that of textbooks for grade 2. Such textbooks are particularly well suited for use in mixed age beginner level classes, where 1st and 2nd grade pupils are educated together, because the sequence of topics in the primer as well as in the language and reading books for grade 2 is the same (see, for example, 'Kunterbunt', 'Tinto', 'Löwenzahn und Pusteblume').



Picture 6: Nouns with designation of articles and hand signals to symbolize gender. From: Oskar-Fibel 2014, p. 13

In the case of some primers, specific editions are designed for children with learning difficulties, i.e. for groups of learners who are more often taught in 'inclusive classes' today. Such primers are meant to be used alongside to the general edition of the primer; they have a lower steepness, and all-in-all they are less demanding (e.g. 'ABC der Tiere'). As a rule, primers are very varied as far as content is concerned. Heterogeneous patterns of childhood are presented in all primers, with children depicted in the primers coming from different family settings, some of them with a migrant background (that can indirectly be drawn from the name or skin colour), and depictions of classes also include children with special needs, often represented by wheelchair users.

□ **Primers in Germany (cont.)**



Picture 7: Pupils. From: 'Jo-Jo Fibel'. 2016, p. 4.

In addition, the primers contain literary texts of various genres, seasonal topics and texts about issues corresponding to the topics of science instruction for grade 1.

Finally, primers on the German textbook market today normally are part of complex packages of materials. Such packages may include, in addition, to the classical primer, pre-courses teaching skills that are pre-conditional for reading, work books and exercise books for reading, writing, free writing and spelling, but also extensive information and demonstration materials for teachers, including teacher's handbooks with basic information on instructional meth-

odology and proposals for course design, in part also digital master copies for work-sheets allowing differentiation as well as materials for observation and tests. The publication of entire school textbooks as e-books, however, is a rather new phenomenon in Germany: The current edition of the *Jo-Jo Fibel* (2016) is published in print, but there is also a digital edition, available online for teachers through a bar code label. Yet in teaching practice, especially in primary schools, digital textbooks (still) tend to play a minor role.

All in all, results of empirical results suggest that in beginning reading instruction most teachers in Germany trust in the structure of a primer-based reading course, developed by experts, and they use this course as the base of reading instruction. At the same time it is clear that the role of the primer as a medium of teaching reading differs today from the role it has had 30 years ago – mainly thanks to reform ideas such as the language experience approach and to the materials offered by textbook publishers as part of reading courses. Today the primer is not the only, perhaps not even the central medium of modern reading instruction in Germany. Yet in most classrooms it is the medium that can be regarded as the base of beginning teaching at school, thus representing the foundation of an instruction that, considering pupil's heterogeneous learning conditions, provides more or less differentiation.

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□ **Primers in Germany (cont.)**

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□ Country notes

□ Estonia

Mare Mürsepp, Tallinn (Estonia) has in RPI 12 (May 2016) presented 'Kodavere uavits', the first primer written in the Kodavere dialect of Estonian, published in 2015. From an international perspective, primers compiled in local dialects are a rare phenomenon nowadays. We have asked Mari Niitra, co-author – with Eevi Treial – of the 'Kodavere uavits', to share with us her perspective on the primer and its context.

Kodavere Uavits: an author's perspective

Mari Niitra, Juhan Liiv Museum, Rupsi (Estonia)

Let me first give a brief overview of the cultural context and of the area where the Kodavere dialect is spoken. The Kodavere Parish was historically situated in the Eastern part of Estonia on the western shore of Lake Peipsi, a lake that today forms a border between Estonia and Russia. The rather peripheral area is still culturally diverse; it includes alongside Estonian characteristic features also significant traces of the Votians, a small ethnic group among the Finno-Ugric peoples, and the so-called 'Russian Old-Believers', who three hundred years ago fled across the lake from persecution in Russia and settled down here.

These features can be clearly reflected in the local dialect, which forms a part of the Eastern Estonian dialect continuum. The impact of the Votic language is to be seen in the abundant use of the vowel "õ", but also in the vocabulary. In 1913, the Finnish folklorist Lauri Kettunen (1885-1963) wrote his PhD thesis on the Kodavere dialect. He believed that the dialect would fade in a century, but despite all the difficulties it has still survived, even though most of the children, born in 1970 and onwards, were not taught their local language by the parents. Fortunately, the context at the beginning of the 21st century has been rather supportive in Estonia toward regional linguistic peculiarities.

In recent years interest in local traditions and dialects has increased in many regions of Estonia. Dialects have preserved on the islands, e.g. on Saaremaa, Hiiumaa and Kihnu, as well as in the Southern Estonia, e.g. in Setomaa, Võrumaa and Mulgimaa. By now a number of primers, workbooks and even fiction in different dialects have been published. Therefore it seemed only natural to write a primer to learn the Kodavere dialect, too. The poems and stories written in the Kodavere dialect by the well-known Estonian



Picture 1: *Kodavere Uavits*, pp. 38-39.

□ **Country note – Estonia (cont.)**

writers Juhan Liiv (1864-1913), Anna Haava (1864-1957) and Mari Vallisoo (1950-2013) were of great help in compiling the ABC-book.

Besides, many active persons have made efforts to preserve and introduce the dialect by publishing collections of local people's memories. A small online-dictionary has also been compiled. So for me as director of the Juhan Liiv museum, a cultural institute located in the Kodavere parish and dedicated not only to the memory of the writer, but also of the area and its different cultures, it was somehow encouraging to start compiling the primer.

As I don't speak the dialect myself and having only a theoretical knowledge about it, it was a great opportunity to work with Eevi Treial, a so-called language-guide of the Kodavere dialect and literally a treasure for linguists and folklorists. Relying on written materials and dictionaries (some of them compiled by Eevi herself), I made the first draft where I chose possible topics, e.g. local neighbourhood and nature, aspects of traditional life etc. I also chose some intriguing words and idioms from the Kodavere dictionary, and then asked Eevi to translate the draft into proper dialect. We also used local proverbs, sayings and children's verses from folkloric collections. Although the range of words and texts was very basic, I tried to cover the most characteristic features of the dialect. The process was creative, and I think we both learned many new aspects about the language and the local history. Moreover, when we sent the manuscript to the illustrator, Piret Bergmann alias Pusa, being inspired by the text, she also made a number of suggestions, which words we could also include. As her artistic style is very playful, she added some quotes to the pictures, using various possibilities of visual narrative to introduce the language. Finally Eevi revised all the verbal material and, if necessary, suggested more typical versions of the words and idioms. So it was actually fun, not a hard work to compile the primer. The process took about a year.

The interest towards the primer after publishing was quite a surprise. People living in the region welcomed it very warmly. As the publishing was supported by a fund we were able to distribute the book freely in local schools, libraries and kindergartens. All children who were in first, second and third grades in Alatskivi and Pala schools got their own primer in September 2015. We also have arranged some workshops and encouraged teachers to use the primer in lessons. The primer has been used in classes as well as in children's camps. The next step would be to publish a practical workbook usable as an additional material. There's much work still ahead, and we hope the primer has helped people of the Kodavere area to acknowledge their roots and origin.



Picture 2: The creators of the 'Kodavere Uavits,' from left to right: Eevi Treial (text), Pusa (illustrations and layout) and Mari Niitra (text).

□ **Country note –
Germany / Russia**

bibliotheca.gym presents Russian primer from the early 18th century

Wendelin Sroka, Essen (Germany)



Picture: *Načalnoe oučenie ... (s.l., s.a.) [Moscow, early 18th century]; reproduced with kind permission of Felicitas Noeske, Hamburg (Germany)*

An article published recently in the blog 'bibliotheca.gym' offers a brief introduction and a digital copy of an early 18th century Russian primer. The original of this textbook is part of the distinguished teachers' library of 'Christianeum', a grammar school in Hamburg (Germany) established in 1738. The booklet in octavo format has 16 printed pages. Its title is 'Načalnoe oučenie čelovekom, choťjaščym učitisja knig božestvennago pisanija' [Elementary instruction for people who wish to read the books of the divine scripture]. More detailed information about this primer, its context and the considerable number of editions kept in various libraries will be provided in the next issue of RPI.

'Bibliotheca.gym', maintained by Felicitas Noeske, Hamburg (Germany), focuses on historical holdings of grammar school libraries and archives in German speaking countries.

URL (article): <http://histgymbib.hypotheses.org/2196#comment-1700>

URL (Christianeum teachers' library, Hamburg):

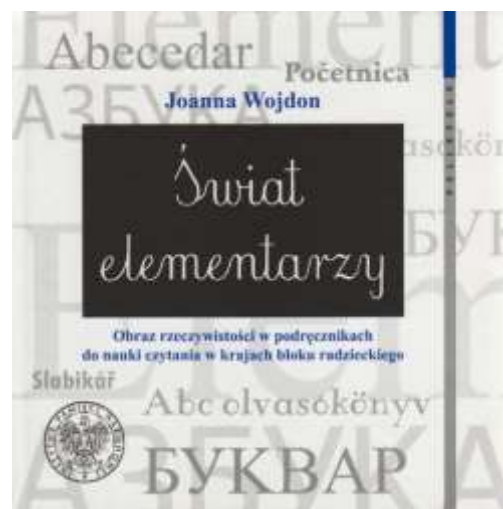
http://www.christianeum.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=164&Itemid=164

□ **Poland**

In RPI 12 (May 2016) Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, Wrocław (Poland) has published a review of Joanna Wojdon's book 'Świat elementarzy. Obraz rzeczywistości w podręcznikach do nauki czytania w krajach bloku radzieckiego [The world of reading primers. The image of reality in reading instruction textbooks in the countries of the Soviet bloc] (2015). In this note Joanna Wojdon informs about other feedback this publication has received in 2016 and 2017.

Feedback received in 2016 and 2017 to Joanna Wojdon's book about reading primers in the countries of the Soviet bloc

Joanna Wojdon, University of Wrocław (Poland)



In Poland the book remained largely unnoticed in the academia, but received a warm welcome in the mainstream press. 'Gazeta Wyborcza', the largest Polish daily, presented just a short note and a few pictures from the reading primers. 'Rzeczpospolita', its main competitor, published a longer review entitled 'Ala has a comrade cat' (referring to the most popular citation from the Polish reading primer of the communist period 'Ala ma kota [Ala has a cat]'. (S 1)

In the reputable Kraków-based weekly 'Tygodnik Powszechny', associated with the progressive wing of

□ **Country note – Poland (cont.)**

the Catholic church, a short review appeared in the column that regularly deals with children's literature. (S 2) The column is authored by Joanna Olech, a well-known author of children's books. She appreciated the deconstruction of the primers' narratives that revealed the omnipresence of the communist propaganda but at the same time its grotesque character. She found it interesting to see the differences between the Polish primers and the ones from other countries of the Soviet bloc and enjoyed the multitude of illustrations that make it possible for the readers themselves to observe the nature and changes in the primers.

Also, I was interviewed by Monika Odrobińska from the more traditional, Warsaw-based catholic weekly 'Idziemy' (S 3). We discussed the reading primers alongside other, more general issues regarding the links between education, indoctrination, promoting values, the role of school and family, creating a new man – in the past and today.

A summary of the book, whose author apparently shared the opinions from *Świat elementarzy*, appeared in the conservative web-portal *prawy.pl* (S 4), while a short notice and reproduction of more than ten pages were published in January 2017 on a blog of 'a provincial teacher' who wrote that she got the book by accident but was fascinated especially while comparing the (relatively free from propaganda) Polish primers with their counterparts from other 'socialist' countries. (S 5) To sum up, what the readers/reviewers liked most was the comparative approach and the pictures, particularly the one from the Polish primer *Litery* of the 1979 with the cat family (mother-cat serving dinner to father-cat and kittens sitting at the table).



An interesting academic review by M. Leskinen (M.B. Лескинен) was published in Russian in the book 'Dorogoy Drug', co-edited by Vitaly Bezrogov: *Дорогой друг. Социальные модели и нормы в учебной литературе 1900–2000 годов (историко-педагогическое исследование). Коллективная монография / Под ред. В.Г. Безрогова, Т.С. Маркаровой, А.М. Цапенко. (Труды семинара «Культура детства: нормы, ценности, практики», вып. 18.) М.: Памятники исторической мысли, 2016, 345–350*. The review thoroughly analyses the book from the Russian academic point of view that takes into consideration both the broad historical, pedagogical and anthropological research and Russian traditions of primers and education in general. The author opens new perspectives for interpretation of primers and calls for even broader comparative research that would include also the countries from the other side of the "Iron curtain".

I hope to be able to publish the book in English and am eager to hear the comments from the readers from other countries as well.

URL S 1: <http://www.rp.pl/Plus-Minus/312119985-Ala-ma-towarzysza-kota-elementarze-dla-pionierow.html?template=restricted> (behind a paywall).

URL S 2: <https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/ksiazki-nieco-inne-33122>

URL S 3: <http://idziemy.pl/polityka/propaganda-w-elementarzu/>

URL S 4: <https://prawy.pl/11986-jak-indoktrynowano-elementarzem-w-krajach-okupowanych-przez-zsrr/>

URL S 5: <http://www.prowincjonalnanauczycielka.pl/2017/01/joanna-wojdon-swiat-elementarzy-obraz.html>

□ Country note –
Slovenia

Touring exhibition 'Paths of education in the Slavic world'¹

Maja Hakl Saje, Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Wendelin Sroka, Essen (Germany)

School museums, pedagogues and historians from ten Slavic countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine) have joined their forces in 2016 to prepare an international touring exhibition entitled 'Paths of education in the Slavic world'. In January 2017 actors from two more countries (Belarus and Macedonia) have joined. The exhibition was initiated by the Historical Association of Slovenia (*Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, ZZDS*), and prepared by a team of experts led by Branko Šuštar (Ljubljana) in cooperation with the Forum of Slavic Cultures (*Forum slovanskih kultur*) and with support by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia. Since December 22, 2016 and until April 21, 2017 the results of these efforts can be studied on the premises of the Slovenian School Museum (*Slovenski šolski muzej, SŠM*) in Ljubljana. In addition to the teams of the ZZDS and the SŠM, institutions and individual experts from the countries mentioned above provided exhibits and texts for this project. Among the institutions are no less than seven National Museums of Education: from Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, Bratislava, Prague, Kiev and Gabrovo (Bulgaria).



Picture 1: Not only Cyrillic script: Alphabets used in Slavic languages. Cut-out from the exhibition leaflet

Not unexpectedly, the paths of education in the Slavic world are very diverse. Education among the Slavs was influenced by the traditions of the ancient Latin and Greek world, characterized by Western Christianity with the Latin, and Eastern Christianity with the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets, as well as by multilingual education. Up to 1918 the development of Slavic education was influenced by the language of neighbours and different speaking fellow citizens as well as the political centres of the empires existing at that time.

The exhibition primarily considers developments from the mid-19th to the late 20th century. The scope is basically broad in terms of the stages of education, ranging from pre-school education to higher education. Nevertheless, the focus is on various aspects of general school education. This is, among others, reflected in the themes of the six sections of the exhibition, ranging from 'Steps in the development of literacy', 'Pedagogues, teachers, female teachers' and 'School buildings' to 'School lessons', 'School textbooks and pedagogical literature' and 'Teaching aids and school equipment'. Each Slavic country is represented on two panels where an emphasis is made on photographic material. Also, the exhibition is complemented with PowerPoint presentations and various materials, such as textbooks etc.

The exhibition is well worth a visit for various reasons: First, while the presentation is about the history of education in various countries of the Slavic world, it is far from propagating any sort of Pan-Slavism or addressing only a Slavic audience. Rather, it demonstrates what the organizers call 'a mosaic of education among the Slavs'. Indeed it stresses the diversity of education in specific

¹ The authors wish to thank Branko Šuštar (Ljubljana) for the support he has provided to compile this note.

□ **Country note – Slovenia (cont.)**

regions under quite different conditions, shedding light, for example, on the influence of both Western and Eastern Christianity or on education under conditions of societal multilingualism, often including non-Slavonic languages. Also, visitors without proficiency in at least one Slavonic language are welcome: Explanations of exhibits are provided not only in the respective national language, but also in English. Second, taking into account the situation of school museums in Europe in



Picture 2: School textbooks from Slovakia – detail of a presentation board on display in the exhibition. It demonstrates that hornbooks – even decorated with a picture of the cock – were not unknown in the Slavic world ...

general and the conditions of all those who work in the field of the history of education, the organizers of the exhibition have achieved a lot, and they deserve to be congratulated. Finally, all those with an interest in the history of elementary reading instruction and in the materials developed and used in this context will also find a wealth of information about this specific area of education (see picture 2).

□ **Spain**

Primers from the early years of the Spanish Civil War included in the 'Europeana Collection'

Kira Mahamud, MANES, Madrid (Spain)

The MANES research group was astonished and surprised with the news of the inclusion and presentation of two Spanish primers from 1937 in the 'Europeana Collection'. The *Cartilla Escolar Antifascista* [Antifascist School Primer] and *Cartilla Aritmética Antifascista* [Antifascist Arithmetic Primer] were published by the Ministry of Instruction of the Republican government in order to teach soldiers basic arithmetic, reading and writing. Both primers document the considerable efforts of the Republican authorities to fight adult illiteracy, including the use of new design features for textbooks, but also the importance of inculcating the values of the international communist movement.



Cartilla Escolar Antifascista (1937), front cover

The entry on the 'Europeana Collection' website offers historical background information on both primers

in English and a link to a digitized copy of the *Cartilla Escolar Antifascista*, provided by the *Centro Documental De La Memoria Histórica, Salamanca (Spain)*. The MANES Research Center provides access to digitized copies of both primers in its virtual library.

URL EC: http://www.europeana.eu/portal/record/2063609/ES_280_016.html

URL MANES (reading primer): http://www.centroman.es/?page_id=4381

URL MANES (arithmetic primer): http://www.centroman.es/?page_id=3744

□ Publications

Publications 2016 on primers and related thematic fields by members of the RP-SIG network

- Ascenzi, Anna; Mahamud, Kira; Patrizi, Elisabetta** (2016). Two Recent International Events on Textbook Research. The Symposium 'Education in Periods of Political Transition' and the Workshop 'After the War. A New Beginning?' // History of Education and Children's Literature XI, 2 (December 2016), Section Critical Reviews and Bibliography - *Rassegne critiche, Discussioni, Recensioni e Bibliografia*, pp. 573-587.
- Bellatalla, Luciana** (2016). What Germany? What Europe? A Diacronic Analysis of Italian History Schoolbooks (1950–2014). // Eva Matthes, Sylvia Schütze (Hrsg.): *"1989" und Bildungsmedien / "1989" and Educational Media*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, pp. 288-296.
- Bezrogov, Vitaly**; Kurowskaya, Yulia (2016). *Zapadnoevropejskie uchebniki dlya nachal'nogo obucheniya v 17 veke: invarianty i osobennosti* [Western European textbooks for initial training in the 17th century: invariants and features] // *Otchestvennaya i zarubezhnaya pedagogika*, 3, pp. 85-97.
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Online: http://childcult.rsuhr.ru/binary/object_72.1476273291.34759.pdf
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