The year 2015 has been an eventful one for the GEI and we are proud to be able to celebrate our 40th anniversary this December. If Georg Eckert, who died in 1974, were to return to his beloved Braunschweig today we believe he would approve of what we have accomplished in his name and what the Institute stands for today. Central to our mission are the people who work at the GEI and who shape its course and thematic focus. In October, we bade farewell to Simone Lässig who had been at the helm of the GEI for the past nine years and who oversaw our successful bid to join the prestigious Leibniz Association in 2011. She will spend the next five years directing the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. and we wish her all the best and every success for her tenure in the US capital. Alongside me is Sandra Maß as our new deputy director, a historian whose research interests cover nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western European history, cultural history of economics, history of childhood and European colonial history. Let me use this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to her as well as to our three new heads of departments Anke Hertling (Library), Felicitas Macgilchrist (Textbooks as Media) and Ernesto William De Luca (DIRI).

With our annual Eckert Bulletin we want to provide you with a taste of our research, share news from our library, give our early-career scholars a voice and report on the manifold projects our researchers are working on. Very much in the spotlight last year, and rightly so, was the publication of the German-Israeli Textbook Recommendations compiled by the German-Israeli Textbook Commission (see page 36) and the publication of a study on the quality and sustainability of research infrastructures based on a joint project within the Leibniz Association, both of which were presented to the public. In addition, the groundbreaking study “Migration and Integration in the Textbook” stressed the need for textbooks and other educational media to highlight the opportunities diversity brings (see page 46). As the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration Aydan Özoguz remarked on the study, “clichés or discriminatory portrayals have no place in our education system” (see page 45). We once more decided to introduce a special thematic focus for the Bulletin, and a hotly debated one: textbooks and religion. Our colleague Zrinka Štimac observes that debates around textbooks and religion reflect both a changing religious landscape and the new needs of young people (see page 10). We have invited specialists in the field to share their expertise on how changes in cultural and religious diversity have been reflected in educational media in the past and the present and the role these media have themselves played in these processes. We therefore invite you to explore the theme of Islam in American and German textbooks (see pages 18 and 22), the world religion Hinduism and the religious education for all approach in the city state of Hamburg (see pages 14 and 26). We are also pleased to introduce one of our newest partners, the Centre of Religious Education Research at the University of Jena (see page 28).

We hope that you will enjoy reading Eckert 15, learning about our multifaceted research and discovering new trends and challenges in educational media research while also revisiting some familiar topics. Have a peaceful and pleasant holiday season and a happy New Year!

With kind regards from all of us here at the GEI in Braunschweig.

Eckhardt Fuchs

DEAR READERS,