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Michael Evans  
*Brigham Young University*

Robert McFarland  
*Brigham Young University*

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Michael Evans and Robert McFarland, Humanities

Introduction

The Sophie Digital Library is an online library and resource center for works produced by German-speaking women. These works are focused on the publications from pre-17th century through the early 20th century. Unfortunately, the group of women in Germany living during this time faced many challenges and one of them was being underrepresented in historical works published from their research and achievements. The Sophie Digital Library consists of works produced by German-speaking women from this time frame that help to highlight their successes that have assisted in shaping the future for other women who strive to achieve something great. My mentored ORCA project featured the Technology and Science collection of the Sophie Digital Library that includes works from women who have established the different fields that fall under technology and science.

For my mentored ORCA project, Professor Rob McFarland and I identified 25 Germanspeaking women who have played a role in technology in science. These women lived before the early 20th century and have accomplished many great things in the fields of zoology, gynecology, midwifery, surgery, biology, chemistry, and many more. Before the late 19th century, education at a university was almost unheard in Germany. Some of the German-speaking women that we were able to research and find further information were a part of the first groups of women who were privileged to further their education and finish with a doctorate degree. Clara Immerwahr (first German women), Laura Bassi, Dorothea Scholzer, Hertha Sponer, Charlotte von Siebold, Hilde Mangold, and Margarete Kahn were some of the women we were able to write biographies for that were included with German women who received their doctorate degrees. These women, along with the other identified in our biographies, have gone forth publishing scientific works, discovering stars, assisting in new mathematical equations, and revolutionizing the midwifery process. Our biographies and bibliographies highlight these incredible accomplishments of these German-speaking women.

Methodology

Together Professor McFarland and I identified different roles we were to have to complete the biographies and bibliographies that will be posted to the Sophie Digital Library. The first point of action was to receive a way to discover the women we wanted to research and write about. In order to accomplish this, Professor McFarland took upon him the first action point and while traveling in Vienna, visited a library that contained publications featuring German-speaking women scientist. During one of our earlier meetings, professor McFarland provided me with these archives and instructed me on how to structure the biographies and bibliographies. To further the process, the role I took upon me was to assist in identifying the German-speaking women we wanted to highlight for our ORCA project. With these publications and the help of other online sources, I was able identify the twenty-five women we wanted to feature in the Sophie Digital Library.

The process included first identifying the German-speaking woman of interest, and then discovering and recording as much information on that woman scientist we could find. The primary source of information
came from the Vienne library archives. Once we gathered all of the information we could retain from these publications we then went to other reliable online library sources, trusted websites, and online encyclopedias to obtain the remaining information needed to complete the biographies and bibliographies. The information gathered and the biography rough drafts written were kept and recorded on a Google Document so the information was kept ‘live’ between Professor McFarland and myself. Once the biography and bibliography drafts were finished, Professor McFarland helped identify weak points and gave further instructions to add or take away for the final drafts. With these instructions I was also able to put these biographies and bibliographies in their final form to be sent to Dr. Hacken and his Sophie Team for editing and formatting.

Results

During my time working with Professor McFarland, I was able to review articles and publications from and about these German-speaking women scientists who lived as early as the 11th century and as late as the early 20th century. The publications used for the biographies ranged from general books of science to biographies excerpts focusing on these women’s lives and accomplishments. I was able to gather enough information to create an 15 abstracts to a biography for each of these women and provided a bibliography to show which sources I was able to extract the information from. The final result of this ORCA project will be published on the Sophie Digital Library under the Technology and Science collections to be viewed and used by students and scholars from throughout the world.

Conclusion

Working with Professor McFarland to bring to light the work of early German-speaking women scientist has opened my own eyes to how powerful women have been in the history and development in science. Their roles and accomplishments have made the world better on both a wide scale and individual basis, from those they helped. I have learned skills of how to better extract information and condense them into only the most valuable information to share. This ORCA project has given me the opportunity to manage extra work on top of my regular work and school schedule. The opportunity to be mentored by Professor McFarland has also given me experience of being overshadowed by someone with more experience and will allow me to be better prepared for future internships and into my career.

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