

Thomas, R. K. (2012). Geissler, L. R. In *Encyclopedia of the history of psychological theories* (Vol. 1, pp. 465-466) New York, NY: Springer-Verlag

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Geissler, L. R.

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Without Abstract

Basic Biographical Information

Geissler (1879–1932) was born in Leipzig, Germany. After being graduated from the 8th grade in the public schools in Leipzig, he was graduated from the King of Saxony's Teachers Seminar at Loebau in 1901. He also received a State Teacher's Certificate and permission to enroll at the University of Leipzig; however, he began teaching and never enrolled at the University. He attended a few of Wilhelm Wundt's lectures as a *Hospitant* (Guest listener); Wundt is the generally acknowledged founder of psychology as an independent academic discipline. In 1902, Geissler immigrated to Galveston, Texas, where he had a brother, and in 1903 he enrolled in the University of Texas. Transferring course credits from the King of Saxony's Teachers Seminar enabled Geissler to be graduated from the University of Texas in 1905. In 1905, he enrolled at Cornell University as a student of Edward Bradford Titchener, who had earned his Ph.D. under Wundt. Geissler earned his Cornell Ph.D. degree in 1909, and his dissertation "The Measurement of Attention" was published in 1909 in the *American Journal of Psychology*. It also provided the basis for one of the tests included by G.M. Whipple in his pioneering *Manual of Mental Tests* (1910) to which Geissler also contributed in other ways (Thomas, *in press*).

Geissler remained as an instructor at Cornell until 1911, in part working with Whipple, before moving on to work as a research psychologist for the National Electric Lamp Association in Detroit, Michigan in 1911–1912. This appeared to have marked the beginning of Geissler's interests in applied psychology, the area in which he would make his greatest contributions. From 1912 to 1916, Geissler was an Associate Professor at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. He served on the faculty at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, from 1916 to 1920, and he served at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia, from 1920

until his death in 1932.

Major Accomplishments/Contributions

Throughout his career, Geissler kept his hand in basic research and theory, but his emphasis was on applied psychology. Despite not heretofore being recognized as such (Thomas [2009](#)), Geissler was the principal founder and coeditor (together with Granville Stanley Hall and James W. Baird) of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*; functionally, Geissler served as both the chief and the managing editor of the journal for the first 4 years. Geissler began working to found the journal while at the University of Georgia in early 1916. He moved to Clark University in September 1916, where the journal's first issue (March 1917) was published. Each of the founders contributed an article to the first issue, but it was Geissler's "What Is Applied Psychology?" that helped further define the field of applied psychology as well as the journal's intended scope. In the article Geissler compared and contrasted "general or pure or theoretical sciences" versus "practical or applied sciences and technology" in terms of "aim," "standpoint," "scope," "problem," and "method." His analysis of these differences between pure and applied psychology holds up well today. The following year in the journal, Geissler published "A Plan for the Technical Training of Consulting Psychologists" in which he outlined potential programs of study at the bachelors', masters', and doctoral degree levels where one might become an "assistant consulting psychologist," a "consulting psychologist," or an "expert consulting psychologist," respectively. Financial and other turmoil at Clark University that came to light in 1920 led Geissler to relocate to Randolph-Macon Woman's College, and when Hall retired as president of Clark University that year, the new president, Wallace Atwood, wrested the *Journal of Applied Psychology* from Geissler's hands.

In addition to his academic duties at Randolph-Macon, Geissler served in several consulting capacities during his remaining years, and he continued to publish both pure and applied research. He was elected president of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, and his presidential address, "The Objectives of Objective Psychology" was published in the *Psychological Review* (1929). It is an unheralded but modern discussion that bears meaningfully, for example, on theoretical tensions that arise today between cognitive psychologists and behavioral neuroscientists.

See Also

[Hall, G. Stanley](#)

[Titchener, Edward Bradford](#)

[Wundt, Wilhelm](#)

References

Thomas, R.K. (2009). Ludwig Reinhold Geissler and the founding of the Journal of Applied Psychology. *American Journal of Psychology*, 122, 405–413.

Thomas, R.K. (in press). Ludwig Reinhold Geissler (1879–1932). In J.L. Pate (Ed.), *Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, presidents and presidential addresses*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. (A prepublication manuscript for this chapter is available in the Ludwig R. Geissler Papers. Athens: University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library).