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History of Science, History of Text, 2011-2016

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Genres of writing in the history of ancient science

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History of (ancient) mathematics in the German biographical lexicon ADB

Abstract – A national biography might seem at first a strange place to look for the history of mathematics, and even more so for the history of ancient mathematics. However, there are quite a few entries on (German) mathematicians, as well as on (German) historians of mathematics in the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie (ADB) – a 56 volume national biography edited between 1875 and 1912 by the historical commission of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences in Munich. Who are the authors of those entries? What is the format of such an entry? What do we learn about the history and historiography of (ancient) mathematics? Is it possible to say something about the readers and possible uses of these biographical entries? In my talk I will try to explore this set of questions.