Universität Trier
FACHBEREICH I: PSYCHOLOGIE

COLLOQUIA TREVERENSIA

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Testing your memory: The many consequences of retrieval on long-term learning and retention

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David Shanks is Professor of Psychology and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Brain Sciences at University College London. He completed his PhD in Experimental Psychology at the University of Cambridge, where he also was a post-doctoral research scientist at the MRC Applied Psychology Unit. After a postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of California, San Diego, he moved to London where he became Lecturer, Reader, and finally Professor at University College London. His research interests include human memory and learning, judgment and decision-making, rationality, economic psychology, and computational modeling. His research has been extensively funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and published in many high-ranking journals. He has received early- and mid-career recognition awards from the Experimental Psychology Society. In his recent book, "Straight Choices: The Psychology of Decision Making", he wrote a very accessible introduction to decision science, highly readable for both students and advanced researchers. In this colloquium talk, he will present his recent research and ideas on the testing effect in human episodic memory.

Abstract: Memory tests do much more than simply permit an assessment of knowledge, they are learning events in their own right. In the classic testing effect, retention of tested material is enhanced. I report a meta-analysis revealing some of the moderators of this affect in educational settings. I then describe evidence that testing can have another powerful effect, namely to potentiate subsequent learning. The empirical evidence and putative mechanisms underlying this forward testing effect are described. I report experiments showing that the effect generalizes to a broad range of materials (e.g., vocabulary, text, concept learning), shows transfer across domains (a test on one form of material enhances learning of a different form of material) and test types (one type of test can facilitate performance on a different type of test), and is observed with a range of participant populations. Translating this research into classroom practice is greatly facilitated by online tools such as PeerWise, which I briefly describe. Deepening understanding of the many consequences of retrieval is beginning to have a significant impact on optimizing learning and teaching in educational settings.