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The German Resources and Projects at the Library of Congress

by *Margrit Krewson*

The German collections of the Library of Congress began with the acquisition of Thomas Jefferson's personal library in 1815. Although Jefferson's primary European interest was France, he collected works from other European countries, including Germany. Jefferson stated that he had standing orders the whole time he was in Europe, visiting its principal bookmarts, particularly in Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Madrid, London, and Paris.

The Library made no systematic attempt to develop a German collection, however, until 1867, when a joint resolution of Congress authorized the exchange of public documents with foreign governments.¹ The Librarian of Congress, Ainsworth Rand Spofford, recognizing that the Library was "greatly deficient" in foreign government publications had requested legislation to facilitate the exchange of public documents with foreign countries.² Although international conferences on exchanges at Paris and Brussels in 1885 failed to bring agreement from key European governments, an agent for the Smithsonian Institution in Europe was able to secure large numbers of public documents for shipment to the Library of Congress, specifically seven thousand volumes from the governments of Hungary, Saxony, Württemberg, Bavaria, and Switzerland.³ When the International Copyright Law came into effect in 1891, Switzerland became the first country with a significant German culture of letters entitled to benefits of copyright in the United States. This law was extended to Germany in the following year.⁴

In 1874, Librarian Spofford remarked that "there is almost no work within the vast range of literature and science which may not at some time prove useful to the legislature of a great nation."⁵ With this in mind, in 1882 the Library accepted, by a special act of Congress, the private library of Joseph Meredith Toner.⁶ The collection, numbering more than fifty thousand books, pamphlets, and periodicals, is primarily housed in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. Recognized as having great value in the study of American political and economic history, the Toner Collection also contains a large number of German scientific journals from the nineteenth century. Many important German-related items were acquired in the following year from the Department

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¹ Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress (1867): 5 (hereafter cited as ARLC).
² ARLC (1867): 5.
³ ARLC (1885): 6.
⁴ ARLC (1892): 5.
⁵ ARLC (1874): 8.
⁶ ARLC (1882): 5-6.

of State and the War Department, including a great variety of foreign newspapers and journals covering most of the century.⁷

The importance of collecting German-language materials was emphasized in 1898 when Librarian of Congress John Russell Long noted that “the Library would be justified in spending as much money on continental literature as upon that of Great Britain. . . . The large immigration of Germans, their widening influence in the formation of American character, their interest in German history, literature, and genealogy—an interest sure to remain with their descendants—would be the highest reason for a very full German collection in our National Library.”⁸ In this prescient statement, Librarian Long intellectually justified and encouraged the Library’s vigorous acquisition of German-language works, an acquisition policy that continues today.

The Library’s success in developing its diverse German collections owes much to its productive relationship with the firm of Leipzig bookseller Otto Harrassowitz. The Harrassowitz firm has long been the major source of German titles for American libraries: by the firm’s twenty-fifth anniversary in 1897, more than forty leading American research libraries—including the Library of Congress—had already chosen Harrassowitz as their supplier for current and antiquarian German publications. Amid the tumult of the twentieth century, Harrassowitz strove to maintain ties with libraries in the United States.

When World War I prevented Harrassowitz from delivering to North America, the firm collected and stored standing orders and subscriptions for North American libraries until the end of hostilities. And after the outbreak of World War II, shipments went to libraries overseas via Switzerland, Portugal, and Bermuda. Once the embargo tightened, however, Harrassowitz again collected and stored materials in outlying locations until the end of the war.

In the aftermath of World War II, the firm established fresh ties with western libraries. Hans Harrassowitz sent Richard W. Dorn in 1947 to establish a branch of the company in Wiesbaden, then in the American zone, after it became apparent that their original location in Russian-occupied Leipzig could not continue international trade. Subsequently Richard W. Dorn reestablished business contacts with American libraries, and approval plans were negotiated for publications from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

At the same time, the Library of Congress, recognizing the urgent need to acquire German material published between 1933 and 1945, dispatched missions to the major German cities and made arrangements to obtain wartime publications. This gave rise to the Cooperative Acquisitions Project, in which the Library became the executive arm of an effort to procure and supply American libraries with important works that had appeared in Europe during the immediate prewar period and throughout the war years.⁹ Unfortunately, many of the publishing houses in Germany had lost their stock during the war, and those publishers that had stock available frequently sold out before the Library’s agents could place orders. Nevertheless, the Cooperative Acquisitions Project did distribute more than two million pieces, of which approximately 485,000 went to the Library of Congress.¹⁰

⁷ ARLC (1883): 4–5.

⁸ ARLC (1898): 87.

⁹ ARLC (1948): 82; *The Library of Congress Quarterly*

Journal of Current Acquisitions, 19 (July 1949): 61–62.

¹⁰ ARLC (1949): 115.

By 1947, Librarian Evans reported that the Library had supervised the completion of purchase orders in all four allied occupation zones for other American libraries. The Library was also able to procure one shipment of materials held on prewar orders for American libraries by book dealers in Leipzig, even though Leipzig was in the Soviet-occupied zone. In total, the Library acquired 615,027 wartime items from Germany; 6,984 from Austria; and 2,462 from Switzerland.¹¹

The overseas acquisition efforts of the Library in the postwar years did not go unsupported. In 1958, the Congress passed Public Law 83-480 authorizing the Library to use American-owned foreign currencies to acquire books and other materials overseas. This led to the establishment of overseas field offices for the acquisition of materials in regions where blanket order dealers either did not exist or could not be depended upon to gather the variety of resources sought by the library: scientific and gray literature, political pamphlets, and audio tapes as well as books and periodicals. The need for overseas offices in such places as New Delhi, Cairo, Jakarta, and Rio de Janeiro illustrates the crucial role that blanket order dealers filled in more established book markets, primarily in western Europe.

The Library of Congress had grown after the end of the Second World War into a truly universal, albeit selective, aggregation of collections drawing on the bibliographic resources of the entire world. In 1966, the Library established a field office in Wiesbaden to inaugurate the Shared Cataloging Project in conjunction with the Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt and Harrassowitz. It was not feasible, however, to have field offices in all the major book-producing regions. Hence, the identification of reliable blanket order dealers who could follow the Library's acquisition guidelines became a question of continuing importance. Such dealers would be expected to exercise discretion in the purchase of significant materials to build a balanced collection. While the Library's own reference specialists could augment acquisitions by using special funds in an "LC-Select" account, the blanket order dealers, with the guidance of their country's national bibliographies, acquired the core of foreign purchases for the Library of Congress.

Over the last two centuries, the Library's German collections have grown by purchases, exchange, and gifts. Today, the German collections in the Library comprise more than 2.5 million volumes, with an annual increment of thirty thousand volumes. Although a complete survey has never been made, comments from scholarly patrons indicate that the Library's collections of German history and literature are among the most extensive in the United States. It should also be noted that the German-language items in the Library's special collections (i.e., incunabula, manuscripts, maps and other materials) exceed those found in the general collections, numbering an additional four million pieces.

In order to make these collections more accessible to the public, we have compiled bibliographies and have organized lecture series, exhibits, and symposia highlighting works from the Library's German collections.

In 1995, we published *German-American Relations: A Selective Bibliography*.¹² In addition to sections on bibliographies and reference works and general works, the bibliography has sections on the colonial period through the eighteenth

¹¹ ARLC (1947): 61-62.

¹² Margrit B. Krewson, *German-American Relations: A*

Selective Bibliography (Washington: Library of Congress, 1995).

century, the nineteenth century, 1900–1933, 1933–1945, 1945–1990, and 1990 to 1994. The titles represent a cross-section of literature on German-American relations chosen from the vast holdings of the Library of Congress. They cover topics from religious questions to the history of the Amish and Pennsylvania Dutch; from German-American literature to the German-language press in the United States; from assimilation problems to the “invention” of ethnicity; and from questions of migration to those of acculturation. Listed are books on women’s, cultural, economic, military, political, and diplomatic history.

Another popular bibliography is *Carl Schurz, 1829–1906: A Bibliographical Essay and a Selective List of Reading Materials in English*.¹³ Carl Schurz was one of the young revolutionaries who tried to unite the German states under a liberal constitution in 1848. Prussian military intervention shattered the dreams of these idealists, and Schurz found refuge in Switzerland and France. He emigrated to the United States in 1852 and settled on a farm in Wisconsin, near distant relatives. His real love, however, was not farming but politics. He soon became a well-known figure among the founders of the Republican Party of Wisconsin and was an active supporter of Abraham Lincoln in the election of 1860. He went on to become minister to Spain for the United States, a major general in the Union Army, a senator from Missouri, Secretary of the Interior from 1877 to 1881 (the first foreign-born Cabinet member in seventy years), a crusading journalist, abolitionist, and advocate of civil service reform.

The Carl Schurz papers, totalling some 24,500 items, were deposited in the Library of Congress in 1907. A significant addition to the collection was made in 1984, when the Arthur R. Hogue family donated letters that Agathe Schurz had withheld from the original deposit.

No German-born figure is as prominent in early American history as General Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben. A Prussian general, von Steuben is most famous for his efforts to instill military precision into the ragtag American army encamped at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, during the winter of 1777–78. In 1783, von Steuben commanded the American troops at the Battle of Yorktown, where the British forces, under the command of General Cornwallis, finally surrendered. Perhaps the most influential of von Steuben’s achievements was *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, also known as the “Blue Book.” His military guide book served as the training manual of the United States Army well into the nineteenth century. In 1790, Congress recognized von Steuben’s achievements by awarding him a life pension of \$2,500 per year. He died on November 28, 1794 at his 16,000-acre estate near Utica, New York.

The Library’s Rare Book and Special Collections Division holds many editions of von Steuben’s *Regulations*, dating from 1774 to 1810. The Manuscript Division holds various collections of papers and correspondence relating to von Steuben’s conduct of the Revolutionary War.

In addition to bibliographies, the Library sponsors public events that are designed to widen access to and appreciation for its German collections. One of the most successful of these events has been the Carl Schurz Lecture Series, created to highlight German intellectual, social, and economic contributions to American culture. Speakers in the series have included Hans Rudolf Vaget,

¹³ Clara Maria Lovett, *Carl Schurz, 1829–1906: A Bibliographical Essay and a Selective List of Reading*

Materials in English (Washington: Library of Congress, 1983).

Helen and Laura Shedd professor of German and comparative literature at Smith College, who spoke on “The Tragic German Patriot: Thomas Mann’s American Years.” Professor Charles Maier, Krupp Foundation Professor of European Studies and director of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University, delivered a lecture entitled “Fifty Years On: Defining Moments in the German–American Partnership,” in which he traced the course of the German–American relationship through the interactions of important German and American leaders of the past half century.

The Library of Congress has always welcomed cooperative programs with libraries and cultural institutions around the world. We have an especially strong relationship with libraries throughout the reunified Germany. On April 10, 1997, an exhibition entitled “Dresden: Treasures from the Saxon State Library” opened at the Library of Congress. The idea for this exhibition originated in 1992, following the collapse of communist East Germany, when the Librarian of Congress, James H. Billington, visited the Saxon State Library (*Sächsische Landesbibliothek*). The exhibition and its accompanying catalog¹⁴ are the result of four years of cooperation and planning between the Saxon State Library and the Library of Congress.

The *Sächsische Landesbibliothek* in Dresden, which was established by the Saxon State Electors in 1556, was for hundreds of years the leading library for the humanities and social sciences in German-speaking Europe. Because of its central location, Saxony was often at the crossroads of cultural, social, and political events, all of which are reflected in the collections of the Saxon State Library. In the twentieth century, the Saxon State Library has survived the devastation of two world wars, and subsequent political upheavals. Thus, through four and a half centuries of wars, political and religious turmoil, rapid social change, and astounding cultural and intellectual achievements, the Saxon State Library continued its evolution into a major European library. Until very recently, and certainly during the past fifty years, the splendid objects in its collection were largely inaccessible to scholars from the West.

Sixteenth century book collectors, or indeed collectors in general, were often members of royal families and the nobility. They had not only large financial resources from which to acquire pieces for their collections, but also the education necessary to discern which pieces were worth acquiring. Royal libraries, such as the Saxon State Library, would initially have been established primarily for the use of this ruling class. However, by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a rising middle class of comfortable financial means began to seek the education necessary to compete successfully with the nobility. To aid this search, the Saxon State Library opened its collections to scholars, thereby embracing one of the tenets of modern libraries: access to information.

In March 1993, the Library of Congress opened an exhibition entitled “Johann Georg Kohl: The Articulate Traveler.” A German-born geographer, Kohl spent only four years in the United States, from 1854 to 1858, but became one of the nineteenth century’s most influential chroniclers of North American geography and exploration. Kohl is known by specialists for his contributions to theoretical and historical geography but is remembered chiefly for his travel literature, much of which has been translated into several languages. His book on the Ojibway

¹⁴ *Dresden: Treasures from the Saxon State Library*, ed. Margrit B. Krewson (Washington: Library of Congress, 1996).

Indians of northern Wisconsin, *Kitchi-Gami*, has been hailed as a landmark study in ethnology and cultural geography, unique in its distinctly European perspective.

The exhibition, which was accompanied by a symposium of the same name and a catalog entitled *Progress of Discovery: Johann Georg Kohl*,¹⁵ featured selected items from Kohl's own works held by the Library of Congress. The Kohl Collection of Maps Relating to America consists of 474 skillfully hand-drawn copies of maps commissioned by the United States Coast Survey. Also included in the exhibition were items taken from Kohl's own collection of some 977 individual maps described as the *Codex Americanus Geographicus*.

In the fall of 1998 the Library of Congress staged a major exhibit on the achievements and legacy of Sigmund Freud entitled "Sigmund Freud: Conflict and Culture." While the Library was aware of the controversial nature of this subject, the exhibition, originally scheduled to open in 1996, was postponed for no other reason than lack of funds. The exhibition drew primarily from the Freud collections housed in several divisions of the Library of Congress, as well as from other library collections relating to Freud. The Sigmund Freud Archive of New York has been depositing segments of its vast collection of Freud papers and correspondence, books, photographs, paintings, drawings, home movies, and other materials on indefinite loan to the Library since 1942. In the 1980s, Freud's daughter, Anna, donated her papers to the Library. In addition, the Manuscript Division has also acquired the papers of many of Freud's friends and disciples. Thus the Library's unparalleled collections include a wealth of material providing a lively context for Freud's life and achievements.

As prelude to the Library's Freud exhibit and to celebrate Austria's Millennium in 1996 (for it was in the year 996 that the precursor of the country's name, *Ostarrichi*, first appeared in an official document), the Library invited Dr. Heinz Fischer, president of the Austrian Parliament, to open the Vienna Lecture Series with a talk entitled "Developments in Central and Eastern Europe from an Austrian Perspective."

Taken as a whole, the German collections illuminate not only questions about Germany itself. They are also of great significance for the comparative study of such diverse issues as federalism, industrial legislation, riverine pollution, and experimental films. Both the Congressional Research Service and the Law Library have many occasions to inquire about German experience and the bearing it might have upon American legislative and regulatory needs. Thus, not only do the German collections offer remarkable resources for research into all aspects of German life and culture; they also make possible comparative studies and interdisciplinary inquiries of remarkable depth and scope.

¹⁵ *Progress of Discovery: Johann Georg Kohl*, ed. Hans-Albrecht Koch, Margrit B. Krewson, and John

A. Wolter, with the assistance of Thomas Elsmann (Graz : Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1993).